CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Inventing, Forgetting, Remembering

Today it is not unusual for historians and other historically minded analysts of culture to speak of the relatively recent "invention" of some of our most taken-for-granted customs, practices, symbols, ceremonials, and institutions. "Traditional" folk songs, national anthems, flags and costumes, monarchies, and many conventionally accepted practices have come under a new and critical scrutiny. The pomp of British royalty, "splendid, public, and popular," is now understood to be a construct of the years between the late 1870s and 1914 and not a venerable tradition at all. Bastille Day, it turns out, was not a spontaneous festival originating immediately after the French Revolution; rather, it was invented in 1880. In the United States as well, daily worship of the national flag apparently became a regular school practice only in the 1880s, during the great drive to make recent immigrants into Americans. This current focusing on the invented quality of many uncritically accepted traditions, this historicizing of the details of everyday culture, has contributed to a new kind of skepticism about some of our most deeply held notions. Not least of these has been the naturalness or timelessness of the nation and of national identity.[1]

Interestingly, Basil Hall Chamberlain, the learned pioneer in English-language studies of Japanese history and literature, had already made the same sorts of points about invented traditions more than three-quarters of a century ago. In 1912 he published a short, brilliant, but for the most part now long-forgotten essay titled *The Invention of a New Religion.* Chamberlain argued that while Japan's governing elites had begun to convince the Japanese people and the rest of the world

that the "new Japanese religion" of "Mikado-worship and Japan-worship" was of ancient vintage, they were in fact inventions of extraordinarily modern times. From a critical perspective that sounds surprisingly fresh today, he maintained that "every manufacture presupposes a material out of which it is made, every present a past on which it rests. But the twentieth-century Japanese religion of loyalty and patriotism is quite new, for in it pre-existing ideas have been sifted, altered, freshly compounded, turned to new uses, and have found a new centre of gravity. Not only is it new, it is not yet completed; it is still in process of being consciously or semi-consciously put together by the official class, in order to serve the interests of that class, and, incidentally, the interests of the nation at large."[2]

As proof of the newness of this religion Chamberlain pointed out that Shinto, "which had fallen into discredit," had been "taken out of the cupboard and dusted" in order to assist in the construction of the imperial cult. Only in recent years, he noted, had the Shinto priesthood been allowed to conduct burial rites and marriage ceremonies. Quite correctly, as we shall see, Chamberlain reminded his readers that historically the marriage ceremony had not been a religious rite at all; as for the "traditional" Shinto-style marriage, that was a complete invention. In schools, too, the emperor's portrait had only recently become an object of worship, and festivals celebrating official imperial holidays were also an innovation. In fact, despite a glowing emperor-centered official history filled with "miraculous impossibilities," he asserted that "no nation probably has ever treated its sovereigns more cavalierly than the Japanese have done, from the beginning of authentic history down to within the memory of living men. Emperors have been deposed, emperors have been assassinated; for centuries every succession to the throne was the signal for intrigues and sanguinary broils. Emperors have been exiled; some have been murdered in exile. From the remote island to which he had been relegated one managed to escape, hidden under a load of dried fish."[3]

But in his documentation of the apparently amazing gullibility of the Japanese people, Chamberlain's most acute observation concerned the credulity of people in general toward cultural inventions. The Japanese, he reminded his readers, were not the only ones who made up ideas and then fervently began to believe in them. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, had simply sat in a forest, invented man in a state of nature, and then imagined a "pseudo-history of man from his own brain." But, even more incredible, Rousseau "fanatically believed in this his pure

invention, and, most extraordinary of all, persuaded other people to believe in it as fanatically." In other words, Chamberlain did not assume that the Japanese governors, the manufacturers of the cult of the emperor and of the nation, remained cynical and detached as they busily tried to persuade others of the truthfulness of this new religion. Rather, he concluded that even those who had concocted the new creed had become believers in their own myths.[4]

But how could a religion, so recent a fabrication and so completely alien to the great masses, have come to have such veracity for enormous numbers of people that, as Chamberlain put it, a whole generation was "growing up which does not so much as suspect that its cherished beliefs are inventions of yesterday"? And more surprisingly, how could even the creators of the new ideas have come to believe in their own innovations? Chamberlain's main explanation for the phenomenon of mass belief was that "the spread of new ideas has been easy, because a large class derives power from their diffusion, while to oppose them is the business of no one in particular." As for the second matter, Chamberlain conjectured that the governing elites believed in their own inventions because people in general tend to take up ideas that will further their own interests. Since the Japanese rulers wished to have all the masses come under the sway of the new religion, the result was their belief in that very fabrication.[5]

Chamberlain was probably right, insofar as he went; but he might have gone further in addressing the issue of how it had come to pass that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Japanese people, governors and governed alike, learned to forget the invented quality of the modern cult of the emperor and of the nation. Most people must have experienced a massive and sudden case of what Pierre Bourdieu has termed "genesis amnesia." History had somehow produced a forgetting of history, to the extent that recent fabrications had quickly passed into the subconscious area of the seemingly natural and self-evident.[6] For while historians are generally agreed that common folk had little or no knowledge of the Japanese emperor during the Tokugawa period, during the Meiji era and later it became commonplace to think of the flow of time, the organization of political space, and even Japanese culture as converging on that very emperor. Even today high government officials and respected scholars continue to espouse the belief that history and culture for the Japanese people have almost always centered on the imperial institution.[7] And the Constitution of Japan proclaims that "the Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and

of the unity of the people." This paradox of emperor-centered nationalism is much like one of the great paradoxes of nationalism itself, in which, as Benedict Anderson has put it, "the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye" exists alongside "their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists."[8]

I am proposing that we remember—not the entire history of the imperial institution, for such a project, even if it were to be a critical one, would inadvertently contribute to the myth of the imperial institution's continuity. Rather, following a Foucauldian genealogical method that sees the principle of continuity itself as a metaphysical a priori,[9] I want to remember the instant of historical rupture, the moment of the imperial institution's new emergence in modern Japan. Thus my approach is absolutely opposed to the overall project of many new and widely read works on the Japanese emperor that either attempt to produce generalizations about Japanese kingship over time,[10] or explain modern kingship in Japan by resorting to metaphysical assumptions about Japanese mentality.[11] This is not to say that these books do not contain interesting and useful details about the imperial institution in particular historical periods. Moreover, I do believe that insights about kingship in other times and places can be used metaphorically to illuminate the nexus of culture and power in modern Japan. Rather, it is to say that the overall approach of these books—which tends toward hypostatizing and thereby essentializing Japanese kingship or mentality—runs the great risk of mystifying all those forces that came together in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to throw the emperor and the nation onto the center stage of Japan's modern history.

Nationalism and the Emperor in Tokugawa Japan

As a first move in this project of remembering discontinuity, it would be useful to briefly sketch the Tokugawa period as background to the later rise of nationalism and the modern imperial cult. It is obvious to sensible historians today—and it was all too apparent to the Meiji regime's leaders—that during the Tokugawa period the common people had neither a strong sense of national identity nor a clear image of the emperor as the Japanese nation's central symbol. Nowadays Japan appears to form an almost natural political community,

with its people possessing a remarkably uniform culture and national identity. Surrounded by the sea and set off at a considerable distance from the powerful cultural influences of the Asian continent, geographical circumstances also seem, at least superficially, to have been congenial to the development and preservation of a unique national culture. Even one of the most thoughtful of Japanese writers argued not long ago that Japan's physical insularity, complemented by "the same language and the same system of gestures[,] has unite[d] the population so that they feel almost as though they were distant relatives."[12] But the strong sense of national consciousness and identity that has characterized the modern Japanese is less a product of natural circumstances that can be traced back in time to the geological formation of the Japanese archipelago than of strategically motivated cultural policies pursued by Japan's modern ruling elites.

During the earlier Tokugawa period, the official discourse on ruling stressed that both society and polity were to be maintained by the accentuation of social, cultural, and even to some extent political differences, not by an ideology of social, cultural, and political sameness. Society was stratified into functionally interdependent but sharply distinctive horizontal estates or statuses—primarily the samurai, peasants, artisans, and merchants. The duty of the ruling elite, the samurai, was to see that rigid status distinctions were maintained so that the organically related parts of the body politic could function harmoniously. One historian of Japan has aptly called this system "rule by status."[13] Society, culture, and politics were also separated into vertical compartments. On the one hand, under a system that has been likened to a "federation,"[14] the political order was institutionally separated into largely autonomous domains, or *han*. On the other hand, particular local cultures characterized by distinct and often even mutually unintelligible dialects contributed to the insularity of local communities from each other within Japan, rather than the insularity of Japan from outside cultural influences.

In short, politics, society, and especially culture under the ideal Tokugawa system of rule were marked by both horizontal and vertical distinctions and separation—a situation that the anthropologist Ernest Gellner has described as being typical of agrarian societies with a literate class of elites and not conducive to the formation of a modern nationalism, which is based upon "an ideal of a single overriding and cultural identity."[15] In his sociological formulation, Anthony Giddens would call this a "class-divided society," one in which "system integration . . . does

not depend upon the overall acceptance of symbolic orders by the majority of the population within these societies."[16]

It is certainly true, as some Japanese historians have argued, that the faint glimmerings of a sense of national identity at the folk level did emerge as early as the late seventeenth century in the cities of the Kyoto/Osaka region, that is, in the area near the imperial court. They maintain that at least within this energetic urban environment common people developed a consciousness of distinctly Japanese cultural traits, as opposed to Confucian ones, as well as an awareness of a land of the emperor or of the gods that was distinct from China. As evidence they cite such representative works of popular culture as the writings of Ihara Saikaku and the plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon.[17] And in his brilliant reading of Tokugawa nativism, H. D. Harootunian has argued that in the early eighteenth century new discourses began to challenge neo-Confucianism's overly simplistic division of society between the rulers and the ruled, between mental and manual labor, because this official discourse had become increasingly incapable of representing "the complexity and plurality of the social urban environment." Tokugawa nativism, in particular, contested the official representation of order while emphasizing that which made "the Japanese irreducibly Japanese—the same and thereby different from the [Chinese] Other."[18]

There were also opportunities for common city folk to learn about the existence of the emperor and his court. For example, during periods of mourning for deceased members of the imperial family there were sporadic public injunctions against the playing of musical instruments (*nari mono chōji*), and official notices of such deaths even reached villages far from Kyoto. Many people, ranging from those in some "outcast" groups to others as diverse as physicians and confectioners, also sought social prestige by claiming connections of their houses with the imperial court. In fact, Amino Yoshihiko has shown that many nonagriculturalists (*hinōgyōmin*) in the even earlier medieval period traced their lineages back to emperors or other imperial ancestors. In 1840, when the Tokugawa system of rule was rapidly breaking down, peasants in Shōnai *han* even talked of the possibility of a direct petition to the emperor and his regent after exhausting other avenues of protest.[19]

Yet all of this points to the existence of only an emergent and geographically limited consciousness of national identity at the *popular* level. When the Meiji rulers ushered in what they called the restoration of imperial rule, many of the common people looked with great expec-

tation to the arrival of a world renewed by the new regime; but this does not mean that they held strong beliefs about either the nation or the emperor. Rather, they longed for a bettering of their lives, for such concrete benefits as the reduction of taxes or the redistribution of land. When their hopes were shattered—by representatives of the state who attacked their religion and way of life, by compulsory education that was costly in terms of tuition and children's labor lost, by military conscription, and by even heavier taxation than they had experienced in the past—they reacted immediately and violently. The first decade of the Meiji era was rocked by a series of violent antigovernment uprisings, some of which—like one in Mie Prefecture in late 1876, touched off by demands for reduced and deferred taxes—began with a specific demand and exploded into wholesale attacks upon the central government itself. In the Mie uprising the rioters attacked all local figures and institutions connected with the central government: headmen (*kochō* and *kuchō*), schools, post offices, and central and local government offices. In the Mikawa region peasants led by Buddhist priests demonstrated their rejection of the new government by spearing and decapitating a government official, then burying him halfway in mud in an inverted position. When some of these rioters called the officials of the national government "traitors to the *kuni,* enemies of Buddhism (*hō*)," they obviously did not mean by *kuni* "nation," as it can mean, but "province."[20]

From the rulers' perspective, a major reason for the instability of the early Meiji government was the inadequacy of the existing popular image of the emperor. Susaki Bunzō, born on Amakusa Island (Kumamoto Prefecture) into a long line of fishermen, and a centenarian at the time he was interviewed in the early 1960s, remembered that one of the major reasons for the reluctance of villagers to become recruits to fight against Saigo Takamori's rebellion in 1877 was that they were not sure who the emperor was. Elderly women were saying, he recalled, that "even though it's said that the emperor's taken the place of the shogun, what kind'a person is he (*dogan hito ja*)? Must be the one in the *kyōgen* play who wears the gold crown and the full-sleeved robe with gold brocade."[21]

A remarkable woodblock print depicting popular images of the emperor on the occasion of his first progress to Tokyo in 1868 reveals that some craftspeople of Edo, where little traditional knowledge of the emperor existed, surmised that he was in fact Shōtoku Taishi, a deity of popular Edo folklore. In "Craftspeople Praying to the Deity Prince

Figure 1. Woodblock print representing Edo craftspeople's images of the emperor around the time of his first entry into Tokyo. "Shōtoku kōtaishi no mikoto e shoshokunin ritsugan no zu," 1868. Courtesy of Asai Collection.

Shōtoku," the deity is seen descending on a cloud while Tokyo craftspeople implore him to grant them simple worldly favors (see Figure 1). A young apprentice woodblock cutter says, "I want to become head cutter quickly and fill up my belly with tempura and dumplings." The wife of a tilemaker would like to have something done about her husband: "I pray that my mate be cured of his laziness, that he earn lots of money, that I have *kimono* for summer and winter, and that we do not fall in arrears in our rent." A roofer asks "Taishi-sama" to protect him from falling off roofs and for plenty of work worth "three or four yen" to come his way. An ambitious carpenter prays for no less than "one hundred apprentices" and a lifestyle to match. "Please grant this wish," begins a plasterer, "that I get work in hundreds of mansions of the aristocrats and that I'll have nothing to do with such things as tenement houses (*nagaya fushin*)." A proud woodworker, apparently also a bachelor, fancies a sharp saw and the ability to do work vigorously. But that

is not all, for he also wonders if the deity can "fix him up" (*osewa*) with a "wife who can make a lot of money and feed" him. "My son is too good-looking," mourns the mother of a joiner, and "all the young girls in the neighborhood fall for him and he won't begin to work. Since his loafing around just won't do, please prevent girls from falling in love with him."[22]

In general, popular images of the emperor before the Meiji era tended to be nonpolitical and rooted in folk religions, rather than political and representational of the national community. The historian and ethnographer Miyata Noboru has used collections of popular legends of emperors to argue that the belief in emperors and imperial princes, which existed in some areas of Japan, overlapped with folk beliefs in *marebito*—that is, sacred beings who were thought to make visitations on the village world and who supposedly dispensed tangible this-worldly benefits to the people. The common folk believed that these emperors had brought or continued to bring such benefits as the creation of sacred rivers, bountiful and often unique crops (such as chestnuts bearing imperial toothmarks), and protection against various natural or magical threats to crops. Moreover, the *tennō* (emperor) was often fused in the popular mind with another *tennō, gozu tennō,* the deity of popular folklore believed to ward off evils and calamities.[23]

During the Tokugawa period, then, Japan was populated by a people separated from one another regionally, with strong local rather than national ties. Horizontal social cleavages also marked off each social estate from the others, thus precluding the development of a strong sense of shared cultural identity. In addition, the common people's knowledge of the emperor, potentially the most powerful symbol of the Japanese nation, was nonexistent, vague, or fused with folk beliefs in deities who might grant worldly benefits but who had little to do with the nation. Thus the leaders of the Meiji regime needed novel and powerful means of channeling the longings of the people for a better world and the inchoate and scattered sense of identity as a people in the direction of modern nationalism.

Mnemonic Sites

The new rulers could and did use speech and writing to explain the centrality of the emperor in national life. From the early

Meiji years, government authorities in the provinces often wrote public notices for the common people about the emperor. An early notice drawn up by the Nagasaki courthouse explained in the easily understood vernacular that "in this land called Japan there is one called the Emperor (*tenshisama*) who is descended from the Sun Deity (*tenshō kōtai jingūsama*). This has not changed a bit from long ago and just like the Sun being up in the heavens He is the Master (*goshujinsama ja*)." In the "Official Notice to the People of Mutsu and Dewa" (*Ōu jinmin kokuyu*), the authorities explained the political and religious significance of the emperor in a similar way: "The Emperor is the descendant of the Sun Deity and has been the Master (*nushi*) of Japan since the beginning of the world. All the rankings of the various deities of the provinces, such as 'first rank,' have been granted by the Emperor. Therefore, He is indeed loftier than the deities, and every foot of ground and every person belongs to the Emperor."[24] Such government agents as *senkyōshi* (state propagandists) and later *kyōdōshoku* (national priests), who were appointed in the early Meiji years to preach to the masses, continued to edify the people with homilies. In late 1870 in Kikuma *han,* for example, the local representative of the central government designated two local Buddhist priests as educators (*kyōyushi*). They spoke on patriotism, the worship of national deities, Confucius and Mencius, and the proper method of prayer for worshipping at shrines.

While the central government could not strictly control all the activities of the *kyōdōshoku,* it directed these preachers especially to encourage patriotism and reverence for the emperor and the national gods. The government also instructed them to instill in the people a wide range of values and learning that together were deemed to form a core of knowledge for all Japanese. This knowledge ranged from the moral value of loyalty to international relations and "civilization and enlightenment."

The verbal exhortations sometimes brought completely unintended results. The people in Mikawa, for example, thought that the *kyōyushi,* dressed as they were in unfamiliar green garments and preaching what were to them unusual doctrines, were "Christians" bent on transforming their world. An antigovernment uprising ensued. Since the government appointed local religious leaders as *kyōdōshoku,* appointees often were more interested in using their positions to preach their own particular religious beliefs than in educating the masses about matters of national and political significance. The people also sometimes misconstrued the messages and hence the significance of the official agents.

This happened, for example, when the abbot (*monshu*) of the Nishi Honganji denomination of the Shinshū sect preached in Kyushu. The Shinshū believers treated the *monshu* as the Shinshū religious leader he was by spontaneously throwing money offerings (*saisen*) at him and reciting the Shinshū *nembutsu* prayer to Amida. Nevertheless, by 1880 there were more than a hundred thousand *kyōdōshoku* throughout the nation who expounded on the centrality of the emperor and the gods in national life.[25]

Yet the rulers' attempt to involve the common people in the culture of the national community was not limited to words and preaching. As a result of policies that Chamberlain described as "consciously or semi-consciously put together by the official class, in order to serve the interests of that class," the everyday world of the masses came to be filled with an extraordinary profusion of nonverbal official signs and the dominant meanings, customs, and practices associated with them. In this book I am attentive to two types of what I will call mnemonic sites:[26] that is, material vehicles of meaning that either helped construct a memory of an emperor-centered national past that, ironically, had never been known or served as symbolic markers for commemorations of present national accomplishments and the possibilities of the future.

The first such site was that of ritual. It is not at all difficult to establish that ever since the Meiji Restoration, ritual making has been a central concern of Japan's governing elites. This modern obsession with ritual can certainly be traced back to thinkers of the late Tokugawa era and to the policies of several important domains in that period.[27] But during the Meiji years and later, Japan's governing elites invented, revived, manipulated, and encouraged national rituals with unprecedented vigor. Through rites the rulers hoped to bring this territory, which had been segmented into horizontally stratified estates and vertically divided regions, under one ruler, one legitimating sacred order, and one dominant memory. From an early date the leaders of the Meiji government fostered rites at the tens of thousands of shrines scattered throughout the nation. Through an edict issued on 5 April 1868[28] only months after the restoration, they resuscitated the anachronistic-sounding Department of Shinto Affairs (Jingikan), encouraged rites for the national gods, and attached all shrines and Shinto functionaries directly to the Jingikan. During the course of the Meiji-Taishō period the government established uniform guidelines for rites to be performed at all shrines throughout the nation. The government's specialists on Shinto rituals generally modeled these newly prescribed rites for local shrines on rites

performed within the imperial household and thereby gave local rites an imperial and a national significance.[29] Just as they had promised in their early declarations calling for the "unity of rites and governance" (*saisei itchi*), the rulers had made the performance of rituals an inextricable part of governance. Local rites had become politicized as they became sites of official memories, and through them national politics became ritualized.

National holidays were also an invented site or device for the remembrance of a mytho-history which had never been known. In the period through 1945, and even to some extent after the Second World War, Japan's national holidays have expressed the idea that the national community and the imperial institution are coterminous both forward and backward in time. The invention of Japan's national holidays began in January 1873, with the establishment of two holidays: one to celebrate the accession of Japan's first ruler, Emperor Jimmu, and the other to celebrate the reigning emperor's birthday. In November of the same year the government added six holidays, and in June 1878, another two. The ten official national holidays celebrated in the period between June 1878 and 1927 were the following: (1) Empire Festival (*genshisai,* 3 January), which commemorated the descent to earth of the Sun Goddess's grandchild, Ninigi-no-mikoto, and therefore commemorated the beginning of eternal rule over the nation by the Sun Goddess's descendants; (2) New Year's (*shinnen enkai,* 5 January); (3) Emperor Kōmei Festival (*Kōmei tennō sai,* 30 January), which was intended to memorialize each previously reigning emperor and which was therefore replaced by Emperor Meiji Festival (30 July) and Emperor Taishō Festival (25 December) during the next two reigns; (4) National Foundation Day (*kigensetsu,* 11 February), meaning literally the beginning of time, history, or narrative, which commemorated the accession of Emperor Jimmu; (5) Imperial Ancestors' Spring Memorial Festival (*shunki kōreisai,* vernal equinox); (6) Emperor Jimmu Festival (*Jimmu tennōsai,* 3 April), which memorialized Jimmu's death; (7) Imperial Ancestors' Autumn Memorial Festival (*shūki kōreisai,* autumnal equinox); (8) Offering of the First Fruits Festival (*kannamesai,* initially 17 September but moved to 17 October in 1879), which consisted of the offering of the first fruits of the harvest at Ise Shrine and from 1871 at the Imperial Palace's *kashikodokoro;* (9) Emperor's Birthday (*tenchōsetsu,* during Meiji's reign 3 November); and (10) Rice Harvest Festival (*niinamesai,* 23 November), which, although an agricultural festival, had from prehistoric times become associated with the ritualized regeneration of the

imperial soul within the reigning emperor. In 1927, the total number of holidays increased to eleven with the addition of Emperor Meiji Day (*Meijisetsu,* 3 November), a holiday commemorating Meiji's virtues.[30]

While the political rituals described above focused on the emperor's material traces, that is, on signs of the emperor's absent presence, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architects of the modern imperial institution also fabricated an enormous number of new rituals performed by the emperor himself. Murakami Shigeyoshi, a tireless compiler of information on religion and politics in modern Japan, has pointed out that the great majority of even those archaic-looking rites performed within the innermost recesses of the palace, the Imperial Household Rites (*kōshitsu saishi*), were invented after the Restoration; moreover, eleven of the thirteen rites performed by the emperor himself had no historical precedents.[31]

In fact, every major political event seemed to warrant the production of some new imperial ritual. On the day after the rulers established the Jingikan in April of 1868, the emperor conducted a specially devised ritual within the Kyoto Palace to set out the basic principles of the regime as outlined in the famous Charter Oath. A few days later he officiated at a military ritual held before the national gods to report a military expedition to the east against the last supporters of the Tokugawa *bakufu* (central government). The ritual makers also refashioned the imperial accession ceremonies, one of which took place in Kyoto (*sokui shiki,* 10 October 1868) and another in Tokyo (*daijōsai,* 28 December 1871).[32]

The most spectacular state ceremonials of Japan's modernity, however, were the great imperial pageants that brought the emperor, his family, and the military and civil members of his regime directly before the masses, and these constitute the main focus of this book. Until the late 1880s, the dominant form of public imperial pageantry was the progress—a style of ritual in which the emperor traveled around the countryside watching and being watched by the people who were becoming the Japanese. These progresses began with a trip from Kyoto to Osaka in the spring of 1868 and then another to Tokyo later that year. Such large-scale progresses continued through most of the first two decades of the Meiji era, taking the emperor as far north as Hokkaido and to the southern tip of Kyushu.

From the late 1880s, however, the Meiji regime's public rituals took on their full-blown modern form, with Tokyo and to some extent Kyoto used as central and open stages for a dazzling new assortment of

imperial pageants. All of these were influenced by Western models, even the most archaic looking of them, and some of them—such as imperial weddings and wedding anniversary celebrations—had no precedents whatsoever in the ceremonial vocabulary. The most spectacular pageants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included celebrations of political accomplishments such as the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution, war victory ceremonials, and imperial funerals, weddings, and wedding anniversaries.

The power of these ceremonials as mnemonic sites may perhaps be gauged from a particularly revealing memoir by the writer Tayama Katai. In his reminiscences of more than thirty years spent in Tokyo beginning in the early 1880s, Tayama recalled the days preceding the most dramatic of the national pageants he was ever to witness, the funeral of Emperor Meiji. The newspapers, he remembered, had informed the public of the emperor's critical illness in late July 1912. Within four or five days an endless stream of people began flowing into the area of the plaza facing the Nijūbashi entranceway to the palace to pray for the emperor's recovery. The following passage describes Tayama's feelings:

> His Majesty (*heika*) the Emperor Meiji, Mutsuhito the Great, the Lord of Restoration—as a young child His Highness (*seijō*) grew up through adversity, then overcame numerous difficulties and dangers, finally leading Japan to its exalted level of civilization in the world today. In reflecting on the life of His Highness there was no one who could hold back a flood of tears.
>
> I knew that I would someday have to bid His Majesty farewell. I could not have been alone. Surely all the Japanese people (*kokumin*) must have thought so. The Great Ceremony of Accession, the Rite Transferring the Capital—these I was too young to have seen; but whenever His Majesty's honor guards rode majestically through the streets I always mixed into the crowds of roadside onlookers and beheld his dignified countenance, if only from a distance. Then came the move from the Aoyama Palace to the Imperial Palace, the Rites of Investiture as Crown Prince, and the Grand Marriage Ceremony for our present emperor; at that time my wife and I went all the way out to Akasaka Mitsuke to view it. Yet I had never imagined that the Imperial Funeral would come so soon, before we could take part in the jubilee for the fiftieth year of his reign.
>
> The announcement of Emperor Meiji's death came on a hot, hot, day in late July that I will not forget . . . "Ahh, he has finally passed on."
>
> In thinking this an inexpressible feeling came over me. My mind was filled with a confusion of all sorts of things. The Saigo Rebellion (1877)—my father had died in that campaign. Then came the Sino-

Japanese War. During the Russo-Japanese War I served in a photography unit and saw with my own eyes the splendor of His Majesty's august virtue shine over the Eight Quarters of the World (*hakkō ni kagayaku miitsu*). When I saw the Rising Sun flag glittering from the enemy position at Nanshan in Jinzhou my heart leapt with joy. I could not help but feel that within my blood flowed the warm blood of the Japanese people. Philosophically, I am a "freethinker," but in my soul I am one of the Great Japanists (*dainihonshugi no hitori*) after all.[33]

By the end of the Meiji period the Japanese people had become accustomed to the observance of spectacular public ceremonies marking important moments in the life of the nation. For Tayama the death and funeral of Emperor Meiji brought back a torrent of memories in which these imperial ceremonies, national symbols, national wars, the nation in world civilization, the imperial family, the national monarch, and national sentiments came together in a dizzying circulation of signs and meanings. These memories evoked feelings of love and respect for the emperor, pride in being Japanese, and a sense of communion with other Japanese ("I could not have been alone. Surely all the Japanese people [*kokumin*] must have thought so") and helped overcome ambivalence about his father's death. They left him with the tragic conviction that while a "freethinker," he was in spirit a die-hard supporter of the Japanese empire who could even rejoice in the expansionist enterprise.

Yet imperial ceremonies, the many symbols of which they were made, the space in which they were performed, the sacred places that gave the ceremonies their cosmological meaning—these had not existed in their early twentieth-century forms since ancient times. In fact, many had been created out of whole cloth during Tayama's lifetime.

The invention of Japan's modern national ceremonies was, quite simply, a response to specific domestic and international political forces of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before then the open area in front of the Imperial Palace where the Japanese people went to pray for the emperor's recovery had not existed. The Imperial Palace had been an old and dilapidated castle. Nijūbashi, one of the most powerful of Japan's national symbols to which busloads of Japanese citizens still make their pilgrimages, had been little more than an aging bridge. The Japanese had neither a national flag nor an anthem. The great majority of common people did not recognize the emperor as the central symbol of the Japanese nation; nor did they have a sense of national identity. Thus, Tayama's memories—made of national symbols, imperial pageants, strong national sentiments, and adoration of