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## Yasukuni Shrine

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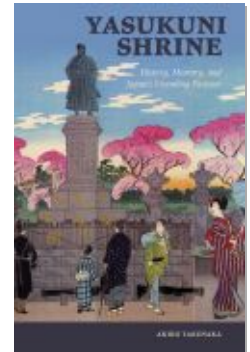
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## TWO

### INSTITUTIONALIZING JOY

#### *Turning War into Spectacle at Yasukuni Shrine*

Though she had hardly understood a word of what was being said, my master's eldest daughter had listened attentively while her mother and Cousin Yukie launched out upon their earnest discussion of the question of marriage. But suddenly, out of the blue, the little girl opened her mouth. "I," she announced, "would also like to get married." Though Yukie is herself so brimming with youthful ardor that she could well be expected to sympathize with Tonko's feelings, she was in fact struck dumb by such reckless lust. Mrs. Sneaze, however, took it all in her stride and, smiling at her daughter, simply asked, "To whom?"

"Well, shall I tell you? I want to marry Tokyo Shōkonsha. But I don't like crossing Suidō Bridge, so I'm wondering what to do."

Both Mrs. Sneaze and Yukie were distinctly taken aback by this unexpected declaration of an ambition to marry the shrine dedicated to the departed spirits of those who'd fallen in war for the sake of the fatherland. Words failed them, and all they could do was shake with laughter. They were still laughing when the second daughter said to her eldest sister. "So, you'd like to marry Tokyo Shōkonsha? Well, so would I. I'd love it. Let's both do just that. Come on. No? All right then, if you won't join me, I'll take a rickshaw and go get married by myself."

"Babu go, too," piped the smallest of my master's daughters. Indeed, such a triple marrying-off would suit him very well.

NATSUME SŌSEKI, *I AM A CAT*

A little girl in the novel *I Am a Cat*, by Natsume Sōseki, declares that she wants to get married at the Shōkonsha, and her younger sisters chime in, wanting the same.<sup>1</sup> This delightful episode takes place in the penultimate chapter of the serialized novel, originally published in the literary journal *Hototogisu* in April 1906. Due to its publication date—two and a half decades after the Tokyo Shōkonsha was renamed Yasukuni Shrine—it is

possible that many readers did not know the shrine when it was officially named Tokyo Shōkonsha. But even at the time of publication, the name Tokyo Shōkonsha was familiar to many Tokyo residents, who continued to use it for many years after the Imperial Army officially changed its name and status. It is not surprising, then, that the little girls referred to the shrine by its former name. The girl's curious desire to marry the shrine is a brilliant play on words, which cannot be rendered in English. Tonko, the little girl, announces, "Watashi mo oyome ni ikitai na," which can be translated as "I would also like to get married." But here, the little girl clearly misunderstands the concept of *oyome ni iku* as going somewhere. (The verb *iku* can be literally translated as "to go.") Thus, she mistakes the act of going to a Shinto shrine to be married (*oyome ni iku*) with marrying the shrine itself.

I begin this chapter with this excerpt because the lighthearted exchange between the little girls serves as a lens through which we may observe the presence that Yasukuni Shrine had for Tokyo residents in its early decades. A driving question is what may have given rise to idea of marriage at (or to, in Tonko's mind) Shōkonsha in the mind of the little girl. This dialogue, of course, is fictional. But if Yasukuni Shrine had always been a highly politicized war memorial associated with the commemoration and aestheticization of war death, then why would a novelist create a connection between the institution and a wedding?<sup>2</sup> The larger questions I pose here are the following: What kind of a place was Yasukuni Shrine to the Tokyo residents in its earliest decades? For the ordinary Japanese, and by this, I mean those who were not in high government or military positions, when and how did Yasukuni Shrine take on the qualities that attract so much criticism today?

In the previous chapter I examined the beginnings of the shrine from the standpoint of its creators and the men who fought against the bakufu during the restoration. With the exception of the *kiheitai*, which was formed in 1863 as a volunteer army of commoners, the men in the imperial troops, who were eligible for enshrinement at Tokyo Shōkonsha if they died in the Boshin War, were career soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Those who fought, died, and were ultimately enshrined had no knowledge of the shrine when they departed for war. At that time, the rest of the population considered warfare as something completely irrelevant, as we saw with the Tokyoites gathering to observe the Battle of Ueno. This contrasts starkly with the situation during the Asia-Pacific War, when Yasukuni Shrine was central to the Japanese state's attempt to aestheticize war death. Thus, questions arise as to when

and how the concept of Yasukuni enshrinement was popularized among the Japanese people and as to the role of the shrine grounds in this process.

In chapters 2 and 3, I cover the period between the early days of Tokyo Shōkonsha and the Russo-Japanese War years. I examine the development, dissemination, and popularization of what we have come to know as the Yasukuni ideology—the process through which “Yasukuni the belief” took on a shape not unlike George Mosse’s *Myth of the War Experience*.<sup>4</sup> While the previous chapter examined the shrine from the viewpoint of its creators, this and the next two chapters concern the users. In this chapter I analyze the presence of “Yasukuni the site” in Tokyo: how the shrine grounds gained popularity with local residents and how the imperialist government’s messages were disseminated through its events and facilities. In short, I examine the role of the shrine’s physical space (Yasukuni the site) in popularizing Yasukuni the belief. For the Tokyoites in the earlier years, the site had a much stronger presence than the belief. In chapter 3 I examine the contemporaneous dissemination of the belief in regional Japan, where few people had access to Yasukuni the site.

Initially the shrine grounds in Tokyo had little religious or political significance for the Japanese people at large. It was well known as a venue for popular entertainment such as fireworks, sumo matches, vendors of food and trinkets, and freak shows. This atmosphere of Yasukuni Shrine was not unusual for sacred spaces at the time. Religion and entertainment were closely related in early modern Japan. Temples, in particular, incorporated entertainment facilities, in part for financial reasons, and also because many forms of entertainment were considered to be offerings to the gods and one’s ancestors. The festive atmosphere at Yasukuni thus conformed to what its visitors expected at an urban shrine. It also offered the unexpected. To Tokyoites, many of the venues at Yasukuni Shrine—such as circuses, horse races, and a military museum—offered novelty, presented as what might have been characterized at the time as modern or Western. Yasukuni Shrine offered an enticing combination of the new and the familiar that was packaged as entertainment. Early visitors to the shrine grounds were typically drawn more by the diverse entertainment than by the shrine’s religious or political significance. Many, in fact, were not aware of its political significance.

As Japan engaged in repeated episodes of armed conflict—first domestic but mostly international—militarism gradually became more prominent in Yasukuni events. During the wars against China (1894–1895) and Russia (1904–1905), the shrine’s atmosphere was largely celebratory. Even during

events associated with the enshrinement of the war dead, the commemoration of lives lost, a central component of Yasukuni Shrine, was downplayed. Popular consciousness associated the shrine more with celebrating military victory than with commemorating war casualties. The spatial practices performed by visitors at the time did not fully align with the main objective of the shrine's creators. Although the Army Ministry seemed intent on establishing an official, national memorial for the war dead, Tokyoites who frequented the shrine went there for the entertainment. Through participation in events, however, the visitors themselves—often unconsciously—became an integral part of the state-sanctioned narrative that came to celebrate the successes of the growing nation, which ensued from the loss of lives.

### TOKYO SHŌKONSHA

As noted in the previous chapter, Yasukuni Shrine began as a group of temporary structures named Tokyo Shōkonsha, completed only two days prior to the start of its first memorial festival on June 27, 1869. There are not many sources pertaining to the shrine's earliest years. Excluding official documents compiled by officials of the shrine, records for this early period are limited primarily to published chronicles such as *Bukō nenpyō* (Chronicle of the Edo Period) and *Tōkyō shin hanjōki* (New Records of Tokyo Prosperity), brief entries in newspapers, and a handful of woodblock prints. I briefly return to Yasukuni Shrine's early years in order to look at its cultural representations as they give us some indications of the shrine's presence in popular imagination.

In July 1869 Kanda landowner Saitō Gesshin made an entry in *Bukō nenpyō*, his well-known Edo chronicle encompassing the years 1590 to 1873, which stated that the temporary structure was completed atop Kudan slope and listed its festival dates.<sup>5</sup> Gesshin failed to note the very first festival, but he went on to record the next event two months later: “On 22nd and 23rd (of September 1869) was a festival at the Shōkonsha in Kudan. Comedic dances (*dōke*), etc. took place in the neighborhood. There were many visitors.”<sup>6</sup> There are several more entries, including a complaint about the expensive entrance fee for a mediocre circus show on the shrine site that took place on a cold day.<sup>7</sup> Some entries concern the festivals, while others refer to significant changes in the Kudan area. But since his chronicle ends in 1873, it does not include, for example, the visit of Emperor Meiji in January 1874. Moreover, with the exception of a brief description of the Shōkonsha as a war memorial in his initial entry, Gesshin highlights the festivals and other

entertainment and does not refer to the shrine itself. Newspaper articles also focused on announcing events. It seems that there was little to report on in the early days of the shrine. In September 1875 the *Yomiuri* newspaper even featured an editorial by a Kanda resident, who lamented the lack of visitors on nonfestival days and recommended establishing commercial facilities on shrine grounds in order to increase the number of visitors.<sup>8</sup>

The subjects of Tokyo Shōkonsha and the Kudan slope also appeared in several early Meiji woodblock prints, yet with a peculiar absence. The print *Tōkyō Kudanzaka ue shōkonsha no zu* (Illustration of Shōkonsha atop Kudan Slope, Tokyo, c. 1871) is a case in point (see figure 1). It depicts the street outside the shrine busy with the comings and goings of people in a variety of attire from traditional kimonos to military uniforms and Western-style clothing. The impressive stone lantern at the shrine's main entrance gate—a cultural icon at the time—occupies the center of the print. But the shrine's presence is negligible: Only a sliver of its roof peeks above the clouds.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, other prints of Shōkonsha produced between 1869 and 1872 do not depict the shrine. Some include the wooden *torii* (gate) or the aforementioned stone lantern, but the shrine itself is absent or hinted at by the tip of its roof.<sup>10</sup> The representations of the Kudan area in these prints suggest the site's significance for local residents: They were aware of the site, but not as a shrine or war memorial. For Tokyoites, the shrine was a new *meisho*



FIGURE 1. *Tōkyō Kudanzaka ue shōkonsha no zu* (Illustration of Shōkonsha atop Kudan Slope, Tokyo), Risshō II, c. 1871. Used by permission of Yasukuni Shrine Yūshūkan Museum.

(famous site)—one of many that were emerging in and around the new capital at the time.

Despite the absence of the building itself from these early cultural representations, Tokyo Shōkonsha and the Kudan slope, with its spectacular view of Tokyo Bay, soon became an often-used subject in prints and other media. After the permanent structure was completed on May 7, 1872, the shrine gradually began to attract attention. Regardless of how the site was represented, its recognition at the time had little to do with its memorial aspect. Treatment of the dead had developed into a highly politicized act in the restoration years, as we saw in the previous chapter. Memorialization of the war dead was intended to build solidarity among loyalist domains during the Boshin battles; the imperialists' treatment of the casualties of the Battle of Aizu prevented Aizu residents from reclaiming their collective identity. This tradition was intended to continue at the Tokyo shrine. But the enshrined war dead held little political significance for typical residents (*shomin*) of Tokyo, the majority of Shōkonsha visitors. The Kudan site's character as a shrine was enhanced when the permanent structure was completed. Yet few visitors seemed to realize its memorial function or its difference from other Shinto shrines. In the early years of Meiji, entertainment figured prominently in Tokyo: The new government allowed numerous festivals and other events associated with shrines and temples as a way of appeasing Tokyo residents and easing their transition into a new social and political structure.<sup>11</sup> Yasukuni Shrine was one such venue. Visitors attended events hosted at the shrine as they would at many other shrines and temples in Tokyo in the early Meiji years. Thus, Shōkonsha (and later Yasukuni Shrine) was one of many locations for amusement in Tokyo. Tokyoites were not yet aware of the site's belief aspect, namely, its political implications.

State-sponsored events continued at Tokyo Shōkonsha after the completion of the new building. On January 27, 1874, Emperor Meiji visited the shrine for the first time during the annual festival commemorating the enshrinement of those who died in the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. This unprecedented visit, during which the emperor personally honored his fallen subjects, was meant to publicly demonstrate the tremendous value, honor, and significance of each life lost for the imperial cause. A concerted effort to enshrine the restoration fallen memorialized at various regional *shōkonsha* began in January 1875. In multiple rituals in the following years, the restoration fallen, along with those who died in subsequent military campaigns by the new state, including the Saga Rebellion (February 1874), the Taiwan

Expedition (April 1874), and the Ganghwa Incident (September 1875), were enshrined in Tokyo Shōkonsha.<sup>12</sup>

The list of armed conflicts and the ritual enshrinement of the casualties in the name of the emperor might suggest a military state that was rapidly developing under an imperial monarchy. The consolidation of all of the dead in Tokyo demonstrates the state's desire to transform the city into a new center of not only politics but also ritual. On the contrary, popular consciousness of the emperor was low in the early years of Meiji. Furthermore, pageantry showcasing the emperor to the people of Tokyo did not take place until 1889, after the emperor had moved into the newly constructed imperial palace immediately before the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution.<sup>13</sup> The central idea behind Yasukuni—the memorialization of the military dead—did not yet resonate with ordinary Japanese. The system of conscription was not well understood when it was launched in 1873, and, as I discuss in chapter 3, at first it affected only a few people. Despite this lack of recognition for its primary function, other factors led Tokyo Shōkonsha to rapidly become a famous and popular site.

#### YASUKUNI SHRINE AS A *MEISHO*

For most visitors, Yasukuni Shrine (Tokyo Shōkonsha) during its early years was a place for novel experiences. New types of entertainment—many of which were introduced from Europe—were often featured for the first time on the shrine grounds. On February 25, 1882, Yūshūkan, Japan's first military museum, opened to the north of the shrine. On February 5, 1893, the first bronze statue to be created by a Japanese artist was unveiled in the center of the outer garden (*gaien*). Events not yet familiar to the Japanese, such as circuses and horse races, coexisted with the traditional temple and shrine venues, including show tents, food stalls, Noh performances, sumo matches, and fireworks. The purpose of these events, however, was not the entertainment of nearby residents. Each event and facility introduced at Yasukuni Shrine had a military or a memorial objective. For example, sumo and fireworks had long been associated with memorializing the dead. And over time, the same kinds of events gradually took on an increasingly militarized quality. Visitors continued to enjoy the entertainment, at the same time becoming accustomed to its militaristic content. As Japan embarked on international warfare at the end of the nineteenth century, the shrine hosted celebrations to mark victories and to commemorate the military dead as heroes. Even though visitors may not have been fully cognizant of it, by



viewing and participating in the militarized events, they were becoming participants in the national cause: imperialism. Through their spatial practices within Yasukuni Shrine grounds, where they took in the various war-themed amusements, the visitors were, at least on the surface, performing the role of good Japanese supporting their nation's imperial quests.

That the military museum was completed as early as 1882 demonstrates the importance of Yasukuni Shrine for the armed forces. The construction of the museum was directly associated with warfare: It was funded with money donated to the Imperial Army during the Satsuma Rebellion.<sup>14</sup> The initial objective of this museum is unclear. In fact, the display of objects seems to be only a part of the original function. Documents proposing the museum refer to the facility as a votive gallery (*emadō*), a common feature at Shinto shrines.<sup>15</sup> But an 1877 newspaper announcement of the museum's completion describes its functions as an assembly room, library, exhibit hall for paintings, and, finally, display space for weapons.<sup>16</sup> The museum's primary function was to educate the general public, and its original inventory suggests that the collection at the time of the opening differed markedly from the current one.<sup>17</sup> Yūshūkan today is filled with ephemera of war, including articles left behind by the deceased, such as letters and sketches from the front, uniforms, and other belongings. In the words of a curatorial staff member, it “enshrines the belongings of those men memorialized at Yasukuni.”<sup>18</sup> But at first, paintings, documents, and weapons—most of which had little to do with the men enshrined—composed the museum's collection. Paintings included battle scenes and portraits.<sup>19</sup> Initially, the museum did not have enough material to fill all of the exhibition halls and resorted to loans of weapons from the Department of the Imperial Household.<sup>20</sup> The Army contracted Nakamaru Seijūro, a Western-style painter, to produce portraits of active generals at the rate of one per month. At the time, Yūshūkan was not a place for remembrance as it is today, nor was it geared toward commemoration of military deaths.

For the nearby residents, Yūshūkan was more notable as a component of Tokyo's modernizing urban fabric than as a military institution. The building was designed by Italian architect Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti, who came to Japan in 1876 to teach architecture at the Imperial School of Art as one of the “hired foreigners.”<sup>21</sup> To the Japanese eye, the symmetrical, brick-clad design was completely Western: a two-story central tower flanked by single-story wings with smaller towers at each end. The slender pilasters ornamenting the three towers as well as their roofline gave the structure a

fortresslike character. This addition to the shrine ground was a popular backdrop in Yasukuni-themed woodblock prints. Artists often juxtaposed kimono-clad women against the brick museum in the background. The museum was certainly a new and foreign introduction to both the shrine grounds and Tokyo, as buildings featuring Western-style architectural design were just beginning to be constructed in the city. Yūshūkan was the first military museum in Japan, as well as the second museum in the Western tradition. It opened just one year after the Imperial Museum at Ueno. Even the famed Rokumeikan (Deer Cry Pavilion)—the leading showpiece of modernized Japan, where French-style banquets were held for entertaining European dignitaries—was not yet built. It is also possible that Yūshūkan was conceived in part as a social space for the military, as it hosted dance parties for military officers in its early years.<sup>22</sup> Its function as a public museum was secondary: The exhibit space was open to the public only on Sundays. The visitors, then, most likely regarded the building as a fancy modern building for high-ranking people. It was not until 1904, with the addition of memorabilia from the Russo-Japanese War, that the museum opened its doors every day of the week.

It was not only as paintings in the museum building that notable military figures were celebrated. On February 5, 1893, a towering bronze statue was unveiled in the middle of the outer garden. It was a statue of Ōmura Masujirō, whom I introduced in chapter 1: the central figure in the founding of the Tokyo Shōkonsha. Ōmura himself did not live long enough to see the shrine flourish. As the vice minister of the Army Ministry, Ōmura was also the architect of a drastic restructuring of the Imperial Army, which he accomplished, in part, by replacing medieval weapons with modern ones. Consequently, he made enemies among the former samurai men, with their strong affinity to their class status as well as their swords: Ōmura was attacked by his dissenters on September 4, 1869, and died of his wounds later that year.

The statue took many years to complete. More than a decade after Ōmura's death, plans for the statue emerged at a memorial event on November 15, 1882. However, due to the amount of fund-raising and research needed to construct the first European-style monument in Japan—the sculptor studied in Europe for eighteen months—the statue was not completed until more than a decade later.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the resulting monument was a greatly anticipated addition to the Yasukuni grounds. The Tokyo *Nichi-nichi* newspaper announced plans to erect the statue as early as

September 9, 1886. Work for the concrete foundation and the granite base started in August 1887, even before the sculptor left for Europe, and was completed in July 1888. The outer garden was packed with spectators on the day of the inauguration ceremony, which took place in February 1893, more than two decades after Ōmura's death.<sup>24</sup>

Atop a high, granite base in the middle of the outer garden, the bronze Ōmura stands with his left foot forward, a pair of binoculars in his left hand, and his gaze cast beyond the shrine grounds, across the entire city of Tokyo. The statue quickly became a popular icon among Tokyoites: It captured the attention of many cultural figures and became the choice subject matter of novels and woodblock prints (see figure 2).<sup>25</sup> Several writings on Ōmura were also published following statue's unveiling. The realistic three-dimensional representation of Ōmura sought to refresh the older generation's fading memories, demonstrate to the younger generation the importance of the Meiji Restoration, and commemorate Ōmura's groundbreaking modernization of the Imperial Army. In reality, however, Tokyoites most likely celebrated the statue for the novelty of its scale and form. Just like their interpretation of Yasukuni Shrine as a typical religious site filled with entertainment, the historical significance of Ōmura, the person, was lost to its viewers.



FIGURE 2. *Tōkyō meisho Kudanzaka Yasukuni Jinja no kei* [Scene from Yasukuni Shrine at Kudan Slope], Yousai Nobukatsu, 1899. Used by permission of Yasukuni Shrine Yūshūkan Museum.

ENTERTAINMENT, MILITARISM, RELIGION

The museum and the Ōmura statue were not the only draws to the shrine during its early years. Originally wider than it is now, what is today known as the outer garden (*gaien*) was once called the horse ground (*baba*). The area had already been named *baba* before the shrine was built since it was a training ground for bakufu infantry. But the term stuck due to the horse races that the shrine hosted regularly. The space was a popular park, known for the events held there. The shrine grounds were always packed during the spring and fall festivals. During these three-day celebrations, fireworks were displayed on the first night, followed by horse races on the second day, and a sumo tournament on the third.<sup>26</sup> Regular festival attractions such as vendors of sweets and snacks, games, and freak show tents (*misemono goya*) also contributed to the site's popularity. Artworks of the time suggest that the outer garden did not function as a shrine in the absence of the linear structure that exists today. Attractions at Yasukuni Shrine were similar to those typically offered at religious institutions in Tokugawa Japan, when religious spaces had strong ties with entertainment. Furthermore, early Meiji state regulations concerning venues offered at public spaces in Tokyo further influenced the popularity of Yasukuni events.

Western-style horse races, for example, were introduced to Japan in the late 1860s, when British residents of Yokohama's "foreigners' district" held horse races at a site in Negishi village that they rented from the Tokugawa bakufu.<sup>27</sup> But the races at Yasukuni Shrine, sponsored by the Military Horse Division of the Army Ministry, were the first to be hosted by the Japanese. These horse races took place at every regular and special festival, with as many as 268 horses competing in a single festival in 1896.<sup>28</sup> Prince Harunomiya Yoshihito (future Emperor Taisho) attended the races during the May and November festivals of 1887.<sup>29</sup> Horse racing, in the traditional Japanese style, was not an unusual feature at shrines. The most famous example is the annual horse race at the Kamo Shrine in Kyoto. But whereas traditional races had the horses run from the entrance of the outer garden straight up the main path (*sandō*), the events at Yasukuni were in the Western style, where horses raced on an oval track set around the Ōmura Masujirō statue. The traditional racers dressed in classical Japanese attire. But the Yasukuni horse races, in which men in military uniform competed, were a modern experience that allowed Tokyoites a glimpse of Western culture.<sup>30</sup> It also offered a very different kind of entertainment. The sharp curves of the track, necessitated by the shape and size of the space, resulted in frequent

falls, adding to the excitement. Since viewing was free of charge, the shrine ground was always packed for the races. Some visitors even climbed the trees for a better view.<sup>31</sup> The stated purpose of these early horse races was to promote horsemanship in the interest of national defense. But materialism quickly infiltrated the races: Prizes were given to winners, and many spectators took to betting on the outcome.<sup>32</sup> Popular woodblocks of the time caricatured the events and often emphasized the boisterous and amusing atmosphere rather than militarism and horsemanship.

Circuses, or equestrian acrobatics, also became a fixture at Yasukuni grounds. A woodblock print titled *Shōkonsha keidai nai nite: Furansu dai-kyokuba* (French Acrobat Horses at Shōkonsha Grounds), a triptych of panels each approximately 36 centimeters by 24 centimeters, dated around 1871 and attributed to Hiroshige III, showcases horses and acrobats in Western and Japanese costumes executing a variety of poses and stunts. This peculiar set of images, on which the characters and their props float randomly over a tricolor background with no scenery to provide a context for these performers, is a depiction of the very first circus event at Yasukuni Shrine. According to Saitō Gesshin in *Bukō nenpyō*, “on October 26, 1871, a show of foreign men, women and horses took place at Shōkonsha grounds. It was a performance by a group named Soulie from France.”<sup>33</sup> Gesshin was not impressed by the event: “[F]ew people in the audience. Highly priced for an uninteresting show. In addition, the day was short and getting cold.”<sup>34</sup> But these events soon became a fixture at Yasukuni Shrine. Other shrines hosted circuses on their grounds, but Yasukuni circuses are well known for the literature they inspired, such as Kawabata Yasunari’s “Shōkonsai ikkei (A View of the *Shōkon* Ritual)” and Yasuoka Shōtarō’s “Sākasu no uma (The Circus Horse).”<sup>35</sup> Yasuoka, in particular, whose short story was based on his fascination with the circus while attending an elementary school close to the shrine, later wrote *Dai seikimatsu sākasu* (End-of-the-Century Circus), based on the diary of Takano Hironachi, a member of the first Japanese circus troupe to train in Europe.<sup>36</sup> Ashihara Eiryō, another student at a nearby school, was equally captivated by the Yasukuni circuses and later wrote an important book on the history of circuses in Japan.<sup>37</sup>

The nonlinear configuration of the outer shrine that I noted earlier is key to the perception of the shrine grounds in its early years. Horse races were discontinued after the festival of November 1898, and the outer garden came to be known as the “old horse ground” (*kyū-baba*). Before construction in 1919 of the large *torii*, which now stands at the eastern end of the outer garden and marks the main entrance to the shrine grounds, the space

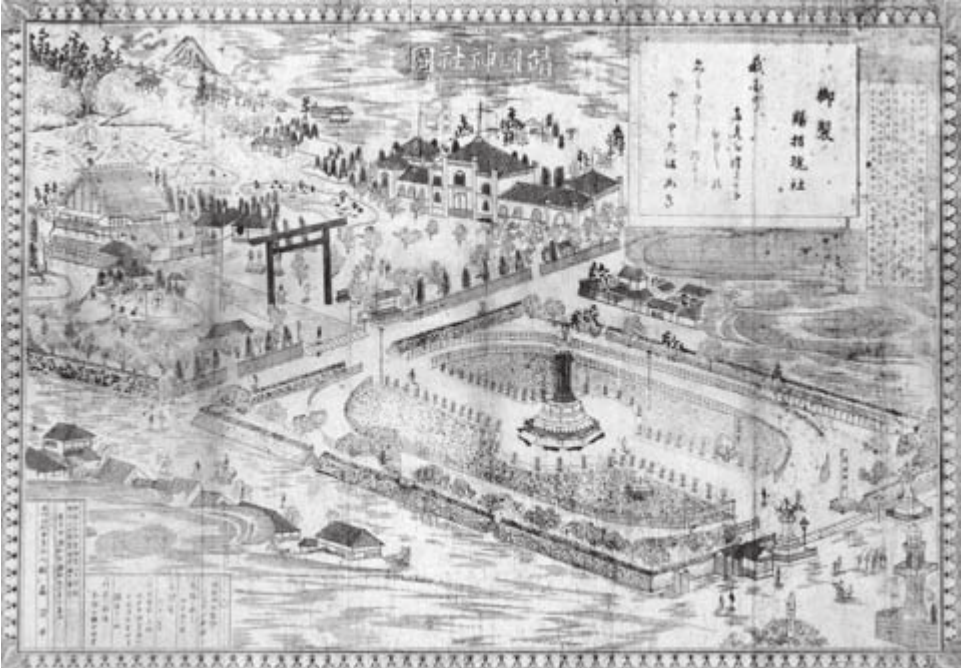


FIGURE 3. *Yasukuni Jinja-zu* (Image of Yasukuni Shrine), 1896. Used by permission of Yasukuni Shrine Yūshūkan Museum.

typically functioned more as a park (*niwa* or *kōen*) than as a path to the shrine. Unlike today, the bronze Ōmura statue did not impose itself in the middle of the *sandō*, obstructing pedestrian traffic, but functioned as the focal point of an open public space that suggests a Western-style plaza (see figure 3). In a 1902 essay, Masaoka Shiki called this space “the garden of Yasukuni Shrine” and analyzed the entire compound as a combination of Western, Japanese, and Chinese styles. He recalled his initial encounter with Yasukuni Shrine in the 1880s, when, as a child, he “did not notice anything other than the white cedar trees planted in a row on the beautiful lawn,” implying that he did not realize or care that it was a shrine.<sup>38</sup> Tayama Katai, whose father was enshrined at Yasukuni after the Satsuma Rebellion, titled the essay in which he describes his frequent childhood visits to the shrine “The Park at Kudan.”<sup>39</sup> An 1880 publication also notes a flower garden (*hyakka no en*) and a lake with a fountain.<sup>40</sup> Ōmura’s statue used to be enclosed by a fence, around which old cannons were placed as benches.<sup>41</sup> Modern novels such as *An Adopted Husband*, by

Futabatei Shimei, seat their protagonists on the cannon benches to evoke their pensive moods.<sup>42</sup> Yasukuni Shrine was the site of the first domestic exposition held in Japan.<sup>43</sup>

Thus an enormous gap existed between the creator's intentions for the site and the users' experiences of it. For its creators, Yasukuni Shrine was a national military memorial. For festival goers and everyday visitors to the outer garden, it was a place to play. In fact, the entertainment offered at the shrine was not unexpected for the visitors. The Ryōgoku temple Ekōin, built to pacify the dead from the Great Fire of Meireki (1657), often hosted sumo tournaments meant as "performance[s] to appease the souls" of those who were memorialized there.<sup>44</sup> The famous fireworks at Ryōgoku began in the early eighteenth century to calm the spirits of those who had died in Edo's many fires. Other kinds of entertainment presented at Yasukuni Shrine—those without any memorializing connotation such as acrobatic horse performances and freak shows—were also not out of character for a Shinto shrine. In the Tokugawa era, sacred sites were associated with public entertainment.<sup>45</sup> For example, Asakusa and Ryōgoku, Edo's two most popular amusement sites, were associated with the Sensōji and Ekōin temples, respectively.<sup>46</sup> In the case of Sensōji in Asakusa, an entertainment district was located adjacent to the temple grounds. The area became famous in the early twentieth century for its many modern features, such as the twelve-story Ryōunkaku tower, the Hanayashiki amusement park, panorama buildings, and movie theaters.<sup>47</sup> Behind Sensōji temple was Yoshiwara, the brothel district, relocated in 1657 from the current Ningyōchō area. A brothel district also adjoined Ryōgoku. Asakusa and Ryōgoku grew to be popular entertainment districts in their own right, but it was common practice for vendors and entertainers to open temporary businesses around temples, particularly for special occasions such as New Year's day or exhibitions of venerated Buddha icons (*kaichō*).<sup>48</sup> In some areas, the temples themselves operated amusement quarters. Inside the gates, temple grounds were landscaped into beautiful parks. This was in part an income-generating strategy for the temples. Fees paid by parishioners were the main source of their income. However, this source of income was limited because, under the *ujiko* (parishioner) system, only the residents of a designated district belonged to a temple and paid tribute. The commercial facilities attracted nonparishioner visitors and increased the temple's income through monetary offerings and sales of talismans.<sup>49</sup> In this context, it is not surprising that the visitors to Yasukuni Shrine had few to no reservations about enjoying the available entertainments.

Regulations initiated by the Meiji government that sought to alter the cultural landscape of Tokyo also indirectly affected the growing popularity of Yasukuni events. The relationship between entertainment and Tokyo urban spaces, including religious sites, started to change in early Meiji as the new government attempted to modernize the physical fabric of the new capital and “enlighten” its residents. The first major modification in 1873 followed examples from European urban planning: The government designated five areas around existing or former temples in Tokyo, including Ueno (Kan’eiiji) and Asakusa (Sensōji), as official parkland.<sup>50</sup> Of the new parks regulated by the government, Ueno became the cultural showcase of the modern imperial capital. A part of Asakusa was transformed into a state park, and the remainder divided into seven districts.<sup>51</sup> Asakusa maintained its character as a site for entertainment, but businesses that the government deemed unacceptable were relegated to the Sixth District (Asakusa Rokku)—reserved for amusement—with higher taxes and restrictions on performances.<sup>52</sup>

In particular, the government focused on Ueno, the original candidate for Tokyo Shōkonsha, in their civilizing mission, which included new schools, museums, and libraries, as well as domestic industrial expositions (Naikoku Kangyō Hakurankai).<sup>53</sup> The construction of buildings that embody features of a modern nation, such as the museum of history (Daihakubutsukan, 1882), music hall (Hōgakudō, 1885), art museum (Nihon Bijutsu Kyōkai Reppinkan, 1888), and library (Teikoku Toshokan, 1906), followed one after the other in this area. A comparison between the imperial court’s interest in Ueno and Yasukuni Shrine is revealing. Emperor Meiji attended every one of the industrial expositions, the opening ceremonies at Ueno Park (1876) and the zoo (1882), and horse races (1884). He was always present at Ueno events associated with the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.<sup>54</sup> By contrast, Meiji attended the festivals of the Yasukuni Shrine a total of only seven times during his forty-four-year reign. This contrasts with the popularly held impression of the close ties between Yasukuni and the imperial family. Even in the Showa era the emperor became a regular presence at Yasukuni festivals only in 1937, the middle of the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that the emperor’s presence at Yasukuni was not emphasized until at least 1937.

New restrictions on the use of Tokyo’s urban spaces also affected the popularity of Yasukuni Shrine. From the beginning, the Meiji government was intent on “civilizing” the people of Tokyo as residents of a modern capital, passing rules and regulations to restrict Edo customs that officials considered vulgar. These measures were meant not only to civilize Tokyo residents



but also to reform them from bakufu followers to imperial subjects. For example, starting in 1870, a series of regulations was promulgated to control what the government considered Edo-style amusements in the capital. Between 1870 and 1891 a series of new regulations forbade the opening of shops and stalls in many places in Tokyo.<sup>56</sup> The Ishiki Kaii ordinance of 1872 restricted many activities central to street performance, such as opening new shops or performing without a permit; sumo performances between a man and a woman; pornographic shows or exhibitions of lewd images; and cross-dressing.<sup>57</sup> The display of persons with deformities, a popular feature of freak shows, was prohibited in 1873.

Despite its strong interest in civic reform and enlightenment in areas like Ueno and Asakusa, the government had little involvement in Yasukuni matters. Moreover, with its acquisition of the shrine in July 1869 and indifference to the government's reforms and enlightenment projects, the military (Heibushō) asked Tokyo to dissolve the government's control over Yasukuni grounds.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Yasukuni Shrine was not affected when the government issued a series of regulations affecting shrine and temple grounds, which, in principle, forbade the operation of *tokomise*, small shops and stands often used by vendors and street performers. Uprooted merchants and performers moved to less-regulated places, of which Yasukuni was one.<sup>59</sup> As a result, Yasukuni festivals came to be known for the number and variety of their attractions no longer available elsewhere in Tokyo.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to the cultural and imperial showcase of Ueno, which the Japanese government developed to symbolize the capital of modern Japan, Yasukuni Shrine continued to house forms of Edo-style popular amusements that the government was trying to eliminate in Tokyo. It established a solid presence in Tokyo's popular culture through its festivals and attractions, which had already been an important part of Tokyoite life since the Tokugawa period.

Yasukuni Shrine was thus not affected by the government's plan to modernize the imperial capital. Furthermore, despite their proximity to one another, little effort was made to establish a readily perceptible connection between the imperial court and Yasukuni Shrine. Between its inception in 1869 and the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, Tokyo was vastly transformed. The emperor now resided in the Imperial Palace and made regular appearances before Tokyoites. The year 1889 saw two milestone events that demonstrated Japan's status as a modern nation: the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution and the convening of the Imperial Diet. Western-style architecture, often employed for government and educational facilities, dotted the cityscape. A national framework for children's education was set in

1872. At the same time, Yasukuni Shrine, which had started its modernizing process early on, seemed outside the state's attempts to civilize the city and its residents. Nevertheless, the shrine continued to be a *meisho*—a popular and famous site—in the capital city, albeit not for the role intended by its creators. Popular perceptions of Yasukuni Shrine gradually began to change in the following decades as a consequence of Japan's imperial wars, but it was not until the final years of the Asia-Pacific War that the shrine took on the ideologically charged qualities that we are familiar with today.

#### TURNING WAR INTO SPECTACLE AT YASUKUNI SHRINE

Japan's wars against China and Russia provided a key turning point for Yasukuni Shrine's presence in Tokyo. The shrine's prominence grew considerably, as did the presence of militarism. The records of monetary offerings and the number of entrants to Yūshūkan show an increase in the number of visitors to the shrine during these wars. Monetary offerings increased by 50 percent in both 1894 and 1895, during Japan's war against China. The number of visitors to Yūshūkan increased nearly sevenfold in 1894. Revenue from donations nearly doubled in both 1904 and 1905 in response to the Russo-Japanese War. Visitors to Yūshūkan increased from 4.25 million in 1903 to more than ten million in 1904 and remained in excess of ten million in 1905 and 1906.<sup>61</sup> Festivals increasingly incorporated themes of war and victory through installations of weapons and large-scale paintings of panoramic battle scenes. For example, Yūshūkan Museum, which had struggled to fill its exhibit halls when it opened its doors to the public in 1882, overflowed with spoils of war from Russia. In 1905 plans were announced to construct a second-floor addition to the museum to house the growing number of acquisitions.<sup>62</sup>

The shrine's increase in popularity was no doubt tied to Japan's military successes and their representations at the shrine but not necessarily to respect for the war dead, as I demonstrate later. For the most part, visitors continued to be attracted to the festivals because of the entertainment. But the combination of amusements and military success proved effective for promoting militarism, as visitors took in the spectacles in a celebratory mood. In addition, technological developments in both military armaments and visual culture rendered representations of war more spectacular. With each development on the front and in technology, the prominence of militarism at the festivals increased in terms of the scope of its content and the scale of its representation. Battlefield success and the resulting popular

excitement increased revenue for the state and the shrine, which in turn funded more sophisticated and absorbing presentations of battlefield exploits.

Successful battles gave rise to new entertainment facilities on the shrine grounds. Kokkōkan, a panorama building that opened in 1902 as an annex to Yūshūkan Museum, was one such example. Panorama buildings, a European invention that offered the visitor a new kind of visual experience, were introduced to Japan in 1910 during the third Domestic Exposition in Ueno.<sup>63</sup> The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War four years later ensured ample material for these facilities: scenes from the latest battles.<sup>64</sup> Panorama buildings proved particularly suitable for realistic presentation of battle scenes due to its ability to completely surround the viewer with three-dimensional renditions of battlefield scenery. Battle scenes were often accompanied by the sounds of cannons and gunfire, providing visitors both a visual and an acoustic experience. At the Nihon Panorama-kan in Asakusa the display changed periodically following the Japanese Army's exploits in Asia, displaying the Boxer Rebellion and the 1901 attack on the Tien-tsin castle, the third attack on Lüshun (Port Arthur) in 1905, followed by the Battle of the Japan Sea later that year. The presentation of the Battle of the Japan Sea even incorporated real water with machine-induced waves.<sup>65</sup> Packaged as spectacular entertainment, the battle-themed panorama displays were also meant to inform, educate, and instill a sense of pride in Japan's military prowess.

Given their popularity, in 1902 a proposal was submitted for a war-themed panorama exhibit at Yasukuni Shrine. Entrepreneur Murakami Tsuruzō suggested building a panorama building that would “educate visitors on the bravery of Japanese soldiers in the Sino-Japanese War and consequently promote patriotism and loyalty.”<sup>66</sup> The result was Kokkōkan, a panorama building that opened during the festival of May 1902 as an annex to Yūshūkan at Gyūgabuchi, an adjacent site owned by Yasukuni Shrine. This new addition to Yasukuni proved a huge success, especially as the start of the Russo-Japanese War provided new themes to display. Kokkōkan functioned as an urban installation that both entertained and promoted militarism by obscuring miserable battlefield realities with a play of light. Soldiers were heroic in battle; new large-scale weaponry inspired awe. Panoramas, however, did not convey the horrific reality of war and the anguish of suffering and death.

The immediacy of the presentation, which stimulated multiple senses, was an entirely new experience for the visitors, who, until that point, had received news from the front through newspaper updates, sketches and prints, and the occasional photograph.<sup>67</sup> Novelist Edogawa Ranpo describes

an experience of a battle-themed panorama building: “What an incredible illusion. Outside the panorama building, trains were running and vendor stalls were lined up. I could even see my own house beyond the stores. But those things completely disappeared once inside the panorama building, and I suddenly found myself in the midst of a vast Manchurian field expanding to the horizon. And a bloody battle too terrifying to look at was unfolding.”<sup>68</sup> The panorama installations were active, the visitor’s experience passive. Immediately upon entering the building, visitors found that their five senses were stripped of their freedom, and they had no choice but to take in the highly controlled sensory input. In the panorama building, visitors could vicariously experience the excitement of the battlefield while staying in the safety and comfort of this contrived setting. Japan’s successful overseas campaigns, aided by their representations in visual media such as prints, paintings, and panorama buildings, sparked popular interest in battlefield exploits during and immediately after the Sino-Japanese War.

By the time Japan was fighting the Russo-Japanese War, technological advances had further transformed the visual representation of war. War photography that was used to a limited extent during the Sino-Japanese War became more common, and film was introduced. Theaters featuring newsreels gradually replaced panorama buildings. In Tokyo, key theaters, including Meijiza and Kabukiza, regularly screened footage from the battlefield.<sup>69</sup> Kokkōkan stayed in operation until early 1906, when the Tokyo City Railroad Company relocated the building approximately 15 feet to the southeast in order to accommodate a new railway. But what was to be a temporary closure turned into a permanent one due to the declining popularity.<sup>70</sup> The appeal of the panorama building waned with the rise of film, which quickly became the dominant medium for visual mass persuasion. Whether the viewing experience was through a panorama building or a film, however, the relationship between the viewer and the battlefield for the most part remained similar to that of the Battle of Ueno in the summer of 1868: Viewers could vicariously and safely experience the excitement of the battlefield. For the majority of visitors, battles remained spectacles and celebrations of victory, of nation, of imperialism. At that time, death played a minor role in the popular understanding of Japan’s wars.

#### A NETWORK OF SPECTACLE

With the increase in frequency and scale of victory-related celebrations during the two wars, Yasukuni Shrine began to function as a key site in the

visual network of war victory spectacles in Tokyo. The shrine became an integral part of a Tokyo-wide network of tools for war commemoration during these two wars, a network that mass media and technology later transformed into a nationwide one. In Tokyo, city-sponsored parades traveled to and from sites that included Yasukuni Shrine, Ueno Park, the plaza in front of the imperial palace, and other public spaces. Newspapers featured maps with parade schedules to assist readers in attending these events. Schools and other local organizations constructed triumphal arches, another popular European import that was adopted for Sino-Japanese war celebrations.<sup>71</sup> In the case of the Russo-Japanese War, victory celebrations at home started as early as August 10, 1904, a mere two days after Japan's surprise attack on the Russian Far East Fleet at Port Arthur, with thousands parading through Tokyo with flags and lanterns in hand.<sup>72</sup> Decorated trolley cars (*hana-densha*) traveled the streets of Tokyo for the first time during the Russo-Japanese War celebrations. On September 2, 1904, for example, the Tokyo Electric Railway Company (Tōkyō Densha Tetsudō Gaisha) and the Urban Railway Company (Shigai Tetsudō Gaisha) ran several trolleys decorated with flags and lights in honor of the victory at Luoyang.<sup>73</sup> Victory celebrations increased in size, intensity, and frequency with each military success. The tide of cheering people carrying lanterns and flags, along with the illuminated trolleys, created a network of spectacles across Tokyo. It connected the key sites associated with celebrations of Japan's imperialist nation building. During the Russo-Japanese War, the images of these spectacles, along with images from the battlefield, were reproduced and disseminated throughout Japan as prints and photographs.

Among the festivals that Yasukuni Shrine hosted, those of 1906 and 1907 were particularly notable for their grandeur and scale. In the spring of 1906 the most spectacular of these applauded Japan's victory over Russia. The shrine was a central component of the Tokyo-wide celebrations. Festivities began a day after the triumphal military review that engulfed the entire city of Tokyo on April 30. The next night a *shōkon* ritual was conducted at Yasukuni, followed by a special festival on the shrine grounds that lasted four days. For six consecutive nights, various areas of Tokyo were illuminated, boasting numerous spoils of war. At Yasukuni Shrine, two towers made of guns that were obtained from the Russian Army marked each side of the entrance. On one tower was the word *chūyū* (loyalty and bravery), and on the other *giretsu* (nobility of soul). Midway to Ōmura's statue, a triumphal arch was constructed and decorated with cedar branches bearing the words *kokkō hakki* (manifestation of national glory) and *kōi sen'yō* (enhancement

of imperial prestige). All of the installations were illuminated at night. During the 1907 festival larger items confiscated from the Russian military, such as cannons and tanks, were on display at Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>74</sup> The emperor made an appearance for the May festival in both 1906 and 1907.

Although the main function of Yasukuni Shrine, according to its creators, was to serve as a memorial for military dead, the loss of lives received less attention. As I discuss in chapter 4, the ritual to call in the spirits of the dead for enshrinement became the central focus of the semiannual festivals in the last years of the Asia-Pacific War. However, while not as apparent to many visitors, Yasukuni Shrine regularly performed this ritual since its inception. Ever since the first *shōkon* ceremony on June 12, 1869, military dead were enshrined at Yasukuni in a ritual that took place on the night before the first festival day, and the two turn-of-the-century wars were no exception. For example, on December 8, 1894, *Jiji shinpō* newspaper listed the names of the 1,280 Sino-Japanese War dead to be enshrined during the upcoming special festival.<sup>75</sup> Several days later *Jiji* continued with lengthy reports on the three-day festival. But the only reference to the *shōkon* ceremony was the following sentence printed on December 17: “Yesterday the sixteenth, the loyal spirits (*chūkon*) of the army soldiers, who ran about exerting themselves for the sake of their nation, while tolerating the northern snows of the Liaotung Peninsula piercing their skins and the poisonous heat of Taiwan melting their bones, only to evaporate into battlefield dew, were enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine accompanied by a special festival.”<sup>76</sup> Detailed depictions of entertainment, the visitors, and the emperor’s visit on the second day occupy the remaining pages. It is likely that readers were left with the impression of an elaborate festival, one of many that simultaneously took place in Tokyo, rather than an event honoring war dead.

During the Russo-Japanese War, *izoku* (war-bereaved family members) were invited to visit Tokyo and attend the *shōkon* ritual. To reduce the expense of the trip to Tokyo they received discounts for railway tickets.<sup>77</sup> They also received permission from the Imperial Household Department to visit key imperial sites in Tokyo, including the detached imperial palaces in Hama and Akasaka, Shinjuku Imperial Park, and the imperial museum and zoo in Ueno.<sup>78</sup> Also during the Russo-Japanese War, the military had started compiling photo albums of the festival.<sup>79</sup> As I discuss in chapter 4, these albums were sent to the *izoku* families at a later date as another tool to disseminate the beliefs associated with Yasukuni enshrinement. Nevertheless, according to *Jiji shinpō*, for the *shōkon* ceremony of December 1895, only 130 bereaved families visited the shrine in response to 1,004 invitations, while, at the same

time, the shrine grounds were packed with people viewing the sumo matches, fireworks, military bands, and other entertainment.<sup>80</sup> Even the immediate families of the fallen were not interested enough to make the trip to Tokyo to attend this ritual, which was supposed to have been the highest honor that a Japanese could receive. The description of the *shōkon* ceremony in the *Jiji shinpō* increased to a paragraph in 1905, when the Russo-Japanese War deaths were memorialized, but, as I discuss in chapter 4, this is still unremarkable when compared to the coverage of the Asia-Pacific War years.<sup>81</sup>

As the new nation was taking shape with the completion of the new Imperial Palace (1888), the convening of the Imperial Diet (1889), and the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution (1889) and the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), observance rituals involving the emperor and his subjects who died in war also acquired more formal characteristics.<sup>82</sup> Informal amusement at Yasukuni festivals changed to more structured and institutional activities, while maintaining the quality of entertainment. Events at the festivals took on a more militaristic tone. The rambunctious horse races and lively circuses were gradually replaced with the military museum and battle scenes presented in the panorama buildings. From the Sino-Japanese War to the Russo-Japanese War, Yasukuni Shrine steadily evolved into a state military institution.

But despite the shift in the tone of the Yasukuni festivals from popular to military and the incorporation of lessons associated with the festival into the elementary school curriculum, public perception of and behavior regarding Yasukuni enshrinement remained undisciplined. According to newspaper editorials from 1895, few festival visitors showed the proper military spirit and respect, and some even ridiculed the battered weapons on display from the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>83</sup> Even after the Russo-Japanese War, some families of the war dead gave away their tickets to worship at Yasukuni or sold them to neighbors rather than attend themselves.<sup>84</sup> Similar trends appear in the pattern of participation in the national ceremonies, often mandated to promote patriotism and reverence for the emperor. While the majority followed the prescribed activities for national ceremonies, few participated solely on their own initiative. For example, schools lured students to ceremonial readings on national holidays by distributing sweets and combining the events with exhibitions, music festivals, or athletic meets.<sup>85</sup> Local governments needed to distribute official notices instructing residents to fly the national flag, take a day off from work, or hold local observances.<sup>86</sup> But even though the entertainment on the Yasukuni grounds successfully attracted Tokyoites to the shrine events, the visitors did not necessarily

subscribe to the beliefs these activities were promoting. Furthermore, the majority of Japanese people lacked easy access to the shrine and had even less appreciation for this national memorial. Nevertheless, celebrations in Tokyo and Yasukuni Shrine, with large numbers of participants, created a visual image of an entire nation fully endorsing Japan's imperialist endeavors. And this is the image that has been preserved to shape the Japanese collective memory. Through their actions the participants—visitors to Yasukuni festivals and revelers at the victory celebrations—were transforming themselves into full subjects of imperial Japan whether or not they were aware of the fact.