

Order and Disorder in Meiji Shrine: Festive Events and Practices in 1920

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Meiji Shrine was dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shōken, after their deaths in 1912 and 1914 (Figure 1).¹ The shrine celebrated its establishment in 1920 with various inaugural events held on and around November 3. The date designated as Meiji Shrine's annual feast day was November 3, Emperor Meiji's birthday. One and a half million people are said to have visited the shrine to participate in these events.

This paper explores two questions: Firstly, how and by whom were the celebrations determined? Secondly, how were these newly formulated ways of celebration in the newly constructed space of Meiji Shrine understood by the people of the day? My purpose is to clarify the process(es) through which celebratory performances became institutionalized, and to explore the dynamic aspects of the operation and acceptance of those performances.

One important fact that often goes unexamined is that the space of Meiji Shrine consists of various components parts. Moving outwards from the centre of the shrine, there are the shrine's inner precinct 内苑, the outer precinct 外苑, which itself includes different sites such as the art gallery and sports stadium, and finally the shrine's approaches (Figure 2). I am concerned with the social production of the apparently constant and unchanging space that was Meiji Shrine,



Figure 1. The inner precinct today (Meiji Shrine Archives).



Figure 2. The spatial structure of Meiji Shrine, 1926 (Meiji Shrine Archives).

¹ This article is based in part on Chapter 1 of my book, *Sacred Space in the Modern City: The Fractured Pasts of Meiji Shrine, 1912–1958* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).

and to investigate the dynamics of its production. The meanings of the terms Shinto, religion and shrine themselves have been in constant flux along with the changing nature of the nation state. The only unchanging element is the “place” of the shrine. The discussion begins with this fact, and examines the ways in which events occurring at the place were made, understood and situated in society.²

The Institutionalization of the Feast Day

In October 1920, the Home Ministry announced details of the shrine rites (*jinja saishiki* 神社祭式) to be held to mark the foundation of Meiji Shrine (*chinza saishiki* 鎮座祭式), and those for the shrine’s annual feast day (*reisaishiki* 例祭式). These were to be performed by priests on November 1–3 respectively, in the presence of government officials (Figure 3).³ This three day period was a grand occasion, as can be seen in the Taishō emperor’s dispatch of imperial emissaries to convey his greetings to the deities and by the visit to the shrine of the crown prince as imperial proxy on November 2. The Home Minister, Tokonami Takejirō 床次竹二郎, who was also present, wrote:

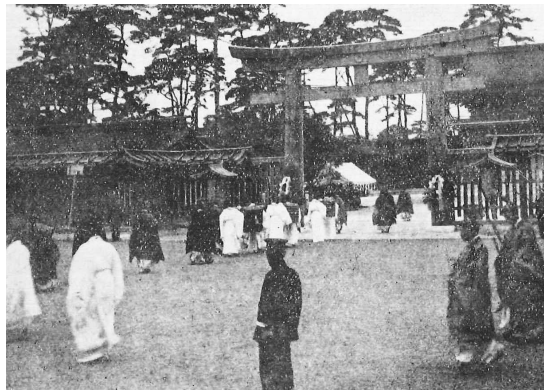


Figure 3. Meiji Shrine foundation rite, November 1, 1920. (Reprinted from *Meiji Jingū zōeishi*, unpaginated.)

One of the great achievements of Emperor Meiji was his foundation of constitutionalism... The Japanese nation was able to revive its great spirit by his deeds, and the great restoration was made possible by it... On the occasion of the establishment of Meiji Shrine, we, the nation, should promise to develop the great spirit entrusted to us by the emperor.⁴

This kind of narrative clearly indicates how the date of the emperor’s birth was celebrated in association with the rebirth of the nation, and indeed with the birth of the place for commemoration itself.

² General accounts on Meiji Shrine are drawn from: Naimushō, Meiji Jingū Zōeikyoku. *Meiji Jingū zōeishi* (Meiji Jingū Zōeikyoku, 1923); Meiji Jingū Gojūnenishi Hensan Iinkai, ed. *Meiji Jingū gojūnenishi* (Meiji Jingū, 1979).

³ Home Ministry Announcements 34 and 35. *Jinja Kyōkai zasshi*, *Meiji Jingū chinza kinengō*, 19 (11), 30 November 1920, pp. 44–45, 50–51.

⁴ Tokonami Takejirō. “Meiji Jingū to kokumin no kakugo,” in *Meiji Jingū*, ed. Kishida Makio (Dōbunkan, 1920), p. 5.

The question here is whether these shrine rites, informed by the Home Ministry's regulations, were alone in constituting the performance dimension of Meiji Shrine. During these three days, "ordinary" people were afforded no opportunity to observe or participate in these rites, as they were not allowed access to the inner precinct before 1 p.m.⁵ What then was the attraction for the 1.5 million people? I suggest that it was the celebratory events (*hōshuku gyōji* 奉祝行事), as distinct from shrine rites, that were held in and around the shrine's inner and outer precincts and Hibiya Park. Celebratory performances for the shrine were geographically hierarchized, and in this process different places were also hierarchically combined together as a single performative space.

From the early 1920s onwards, independent plans for celebratory events were being put forward by various groups in competition with one another. The number and variety of these plans greatly bothered members of the Foundation Bureau for Meiji Shrine (Meiji Jingū Zōeikyoku 明治神宮造営局) in the Home Ministry, particularly those concerning inner precinct celebratory events. *Chūgai shōgyō shinbun* noted on August 1, 1920 that many proposals had been submitted to the Foundation Bureau by groups keen to display their prowess through demonstrations and performances, such as archery (both standard and horseback) and flower arranging. The same newspaper also reported the bureau's comment that "the Foundation Bureau does not have any criteria for judging the suitability of these events, and whether each event is relevant to the inner precinct is still under consideration."⁶

It was not only the Home Ministry and the Foundation Bureau for Meiji Shrine that ultimately brought order to the various proposals. Other interested parties were also involved, namely the trinity of Tokyo groups, Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture, Tokyo City and the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Tokyo Shōgyō Kaigisho 東京商業会議所).⁷ Together with the Home Ministry these Tokyo groups set up the Joint Council for Meiji Shrine Celebrations (Meiji Jingū Chinzasai Hōshuku Kyōgikai 明治神宮鎮座祭奉祝協議会) on September 1, 1920 in order to "resolve the appearance of a disordered situation" and to establish the criteria for "relevance." The council chose and organized the celebrations to be held, thus shaping a significant part of the performance dimension of the shrine's feast day. I have tabulated those events which were determined by joint meetings of these interested parties in Tokyo, as well as by the Home Ministry (Table 1).

It is important to note that there were a number of disagreements among the council members regarding the "relevance" of this or that event, and that the subsequent spatial distribution of these events was the result of a process of negotiation. From the very beginning the interested parties contested the Home Ministry's policies. An interesting example of such contestation concerned the suitability or otherwise of parades of portable palanquins (*mikoshi*). An original

⁵ Meiji Jingū, ed. *Meiji Jingū kiroku*. Reprinted in *Meiji Jingū sōsho*, vol. 12, ed. Meiji Jingū (Kokusho Kankōkai, 2000), p. 62.

⁶ *Chūgai shōgyō shinbun* (August 1, 1920).

⁷ Tōkyō Shōgyō Kaigisho. *Meiji Jingū chinzasai, Tōkyō jitsugyōka hōshuku ni kansuru hōkokusho*. 1921.

Table 1. Meiji Shrine Celebratory Performances in the Inner and Outer Precincts and Hibiya Park

Inner precinct	
祭式 Shrine rites	Meiji Jingū chinzasai, November 1 Meiji Jingū reesai, November 3 Sponsor: Home Ministry
奉祝行事 Celebratory events	Japanese fencing and <i>jūdō</i> demonstrations, November 2–3 Japanese archery demonstration, November 2–3 Co-sponsors: Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture, Tokyo City, Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Outer precinct	
奉祝行事 Celebratory events	<i>Sumō</i> , November 2–3 Horseback archery (<i>yabusame</i>), November 2–3 Horse racing (<i>keiba</i>), November 2–3 Horse riding performance (<i>horohiki</i>), November 3 Co-sponsors: Tokyo Metropolitan Prefecture, Tokyo City, Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Hibiya Park	
祭典 Ceremony	Celebration party with 2,500 guests, November 2 Sponsor: Tokyo City
奉祝行事 Celebratory events	Meiji Shrine celebration festival with comedy skits (<i>kigeki</i>), magic shows, puppet shows, <i>daikagura</i> performances, <i>sumiyoshi</i> and other dance performances, amateur <i>sumō</i> bouts, Japanese fencing demonstrations, <i>katsudō shashin</i> film presentations, chrysanthemum exhibition, November 1–3. Sponsor: Tokyo City

Sources: E.g., Tōkyō Shōgyō Kaigisho. *Meiji Jingū chinzasai, Tōkyō jitsugyōka hōshuku ni kansuru hōkokusho*. Meiji Shrine Archives; Meiji Jingū Hōsankai. *Meiji Jingū Hōsankai tsūshin*, vols. 49–60, 1920; Sakatani Yoshirō. *Sakatani Yoshirō Meiji Jingū kankei shorui* vols. 2–3. Meiji Shrine Archives.

plan drawn up and proposed by the Meiji Shrine Support Committee (Meiji Jingū Hōsankai 明治神宮奉賛会) at the 1st of September meeting indicates that participants advocated festive *mikoshi* parades.⁸ As *Miyako shinbun* reported, parishioners of many shrines in Tokyo City had formalized plans to parade their own *mikoshi* locally and then head to the inner precinct.⁹ On September 16 the *Jiji shinpō* reported, however, that the authorities did not approve of any *mikoshi* entering into the inner precinct.¹⁰ The Home Ministry's opinion was that Meiji Shrine's feast day should differ from those of local shrines, and that typical local shrine events such as *mikoshi* parades were not suitable for Meiji Shrine because it was to be the national shrine.¹¹ The

⁸ Sakatani Yoshirō. *Sakatani Yoshirō Meiji Jingū kankei shorui*, vol. 3 (Meiji Shrine Archives, 1920).

⁹ *Miyako shinbun* (September 8, 1920).

¹⁰ *Jiji shinpō* (September 16, 1920).

¹¹ Meiji Jingū Gojūnenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed. *Gojūnenshi*, pp. 190–204.

comment made by the deputy chief priest, Suzuki Matsutarō 鈴木松太郎, on the occasion of the shrine's first anniversary in 1921 is also highly revealing of the division between the nation/government on the one hand and the local/private on the other.¹² Suzuki suggested that celebratory events held in the inner precinct ought to be considered “government festivals” (*kansai*) and those outside the precinct “private festivals” (*minsai*). *Kokumin shinbun*, amongst others, frowned upon the Home Ministry's decision, since the local Tokyo authorities “were not functioning properly as representatives of Tokyo's people.” They further declared that “the festive mood of the people had better not be interfered with.”¹³

Formation of the Formal/Festive

How, then, did these joint meetings ultimately solve its disagreements? The strategy they deployed involved a spatial reordering of various celebratory events. Thus, in the inner precinct, the Home Ministry hosted the aforementioned shrine rites according to its own regulations; meanwhile, in the outer precinct (and the grass area of the inner precinct) the Tokyo Metropolitan District and other groups jointly hosted “traditional” performances such as *sumō*; and, finally, in Hibiya Park, Tokyo City hosted festive entertainments such as *kigeki* comedies (Figure 4). It seems that the further removed the place was from the core shrine building, the more the Meiji Shrine celebratory performances shifted from the “formal” to the “festive.”¹⁴



Figure 4. *Sumō* wrestling and horse racing (*keiba*) in the outer precinct, November 2–3, 1920. (Reprinted from *Meiji Jingū*, ed. Kishida Makio, 1920, unpaginated.)

¹² Sakatani. *Sakatani shorui* vol. 3. 1921.

¹³ *Kokumin shinbun* (September 26, 1920).

¹⁴ On the discussion of the Hibiya Park as a space for festive occasions, see Ono Ryōhei, *Kōen no tanjō* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003), pp. 168–69.

I would also argue that the spatial distribution of celebratory performances and the differentiation of spaces by these performances worked as mutually legitimating mechanisms. The formation of Meiji Shrines' ritual time and space should be understood as a process of legitimization. The entertainment companies which performed for the general public in Hibiya Park to celebrate the enshrinement were very popular at the time; many of them were re-inventions performed in recently imported Western styles.¹⁵

For example, the Shōkyokusai Company, which presented magic shows, was popular from the end of Meiji into the Taishō periods. The company specialized in “great Western magic shows,” and introduced vaudeville style attractions they had mastered when on tour in America and Europe in 1901 and 1905. Unprecedented in Japan, their variety show was well-known for various tricks with electrical devices and Western music.¹⁶ Another group performing in Hibiya Park was the comedy company Rakutenkai, which began in Kansai, and had become renowned throughout Japan by the end of Meiji. Unlike traditional *kabuki*, Rakutenkai's comic shows had much popular appeal.¹⁷ Puppet shows were also influenced by the West, in this case by marionette theatre. The popularity of these shows had been growing ever since the 1890s, when an English promoter introduced them into Japan. Soon after this, Japanese promoters developed new styles of puppet show, such as those at the Hanayashiki amusement ground in Asakusa. One of the puppeteers there was Yūki Magosaburō 結城孫三郎, whose success derived from his adaptation of marionette theatre; he also performed at the Meiji Shrine festival. Although he liked to be known as Yūki the ninth, legitimate heir of the Edo puppet theatre tradition, he was actually the son of a portrait artist (Figure 5).¹⁸



Figure 5. Puppeteer, Yūki the ninth. (Reprinted from *Ito ayatsuri no mangekyō*, ed. INAX, 2009, p. 60.)

¹⁵ *Niroku shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

¹⁶ Shosei Shōkyokusai Tenkatsu. “Tenkatsu ichidaiki,” in *Nihon no geidan*, vol. 7, ed. Sakuragawa Chūshichi (Kyūgei Shuppan, 1979), pp. 153–246; Horikiri Naoto. *Asakusa: Taishō hen* (Yūbun Shoin, 2005), pp. 116–17; Ōzasa Yoshio. *Nihon gendai engekishi*, vol. 2 (Hakusuisha, 1986), pp. 41–45.

¹⁷ Horikiri. *Asakusa*, pp. 124–32.

¹⁸ Kawajiri Taiji. *Nihon ningyōgeki hattatsushi kō* (Baisei Shobō, 1986), pp. 218–19, 258; Waseda Daigaku, Tsubouchi Hakase Kinen Engeki Hakubutsukan, ed. *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, vol. 5 (Heibonsha, 1961), pp. 473–74.

Many of these new styles were developed by travelling performers, or those who had settled in slum areas. For example, *daikagura*, acted by Kagami Sen'ichirō 鏡味仙一郎 and his Maruichi Company, and *Sumiyoshi* dance, by the Kunimatsu group of the Sumiyoshi Company, had originated as street performances. The sites for such performances had in fact been moved from the streets to designated areas such as Asakusa, under strict regulation of street performances during the Meiji and Taishō periods.¹⁹ The “festive” space of Hibiya Park in November 1920 should be located within a process of continual spatial ordering of these popular performances (Figure 6). It should finally be noted that large festivals, such as the Meiji Shrine celebration events, became occasions for the performers to legitimate their popularity and ability. The nature of the performances themselves was reordered through the power of spatialization, each finding its own position along a continuum from “formal” to “festive.”

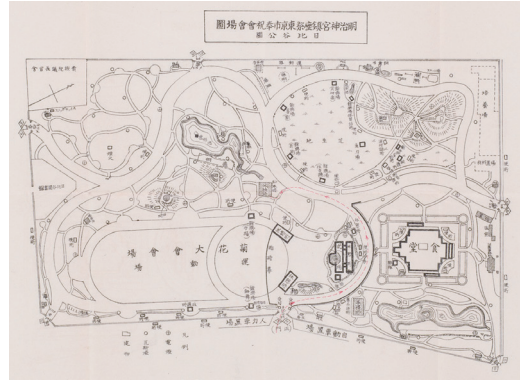


Figure 6. Meiji Shrine celebration festival in Hibiya Park (Meiji Shrine Archives).

The Spatial Experiences of November 3

I hope here to have hinted at the spatial strategies that were deployed to order the multiplicity of performances at Meiji Shrine. The final part of this paper explores the ways in which ordinary people understood and appropriated these seemingly well-ordered spaces and performances in their own contexts. There are several reasons for supposing that the situation on the Meiji Shrine's feast days was more complex than is indicated by the official story as narrated, for example, in the records of the Home Ministry. One reason is the sheer scale of the events. Visiting the inner precinct was for many people an occasion of great excitement, but also confusion (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Crowd in the inner precinct and on Omotesandō. (Reprinted from *Meiji Jingū oshashinchō*, ed. Teikoku Gunjin Kyōikukai, 1920, unpaginated.)

¹⁹ Ishizuka Hiromichi and Narita R., eds. *Tōkyō-to no hyakunen* (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1986), pp. 153–64.

Crowds who could not wait for the 1 p.m. opening time on November 1 turned into a mob and broke through the entry gate of the shrine, causing over 130 injuries and one death.²⁰ On one day alone, it was reported that over 4,000 pairs of *geta* and *waraji* sandals were handed in to the police as lost articles.²¹ So many shrine visitors wanted shrine amulets that the crowds became unmanageable, and the shrine staff had to abandon distributing them.²² Another reason for my supposing greater complexity relates to a reminiscence written by Mrs. Ieki Sadako 家城 定子, who was born in 1933 and raised in Harajuku town, located near the Omotesandō. Mrs. Ieki records the festive atmosphere that prevailed every 3rd of November from the late 1930s through to the early 1940s:

Every time I meet my childhood friends, we talk about how attractive the sideshows and street stalls were on the Meiji Shrine's annual feast days. These days were the most exciting in the year for us. ...The sound of fireworks pulled us into the festivities, and performances such as circuses and daredevil motorcycle riding thrilled us. One of the most surprising sideshows was the "snake woman." ... "Issun bōshi" (Tom Thumb) and haunted mansions offered similar kinds of attractions, and both trickery and being tricked were common experiences at these celebratory events.²³

So What Were the Experiences of 1920 Like for the Public?

Even after the inner precinct closed for the night, the bright lights of the evening entertainments continued to attract many people.²⁴ In fact, from October 31, illuminations covered much of Tokyo, from the Meiji Shrine approaches over Nijūbashi Bridge and through the Ginza area down to Asakusa. The lively atmosphere sometimes continued to midnight newspaper reports used the word "*fuyajō*," the "city that never sleeps."²⁵ On the evening of November 2 the police, worried about the disorder, took drastic measures and without notice turned off the lights around Omotesandō. Many newspapers the next morning reported how people disapproved of the authorities' behaviour; perhaps because of this, the police never repeated their action.²⁶ People found great enjoyment in watching the sideshows and acrobatic performances, sampling the food and shopping at the miscellaneous stalls. Through their walking, parading, and purchasing, those who lived the space of the shrine's festivals transformed the "spatial signifier into something else," and constituted it by their own experiences.²⁷

²⁰ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (November 2, 1920).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Miyako shinbun* (November 2, 1920).

²³ Ieki Sadako. *Harajuku no omoide* (Kōdansha Shuppan Sābisu Sentā, 2002), pp. 63–65. Translation by the author.

²⁴ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

²⁵ *Miyako shinbun* (November 2, 1920).

²⁶ *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* (November 4, 1920).

²⁷ Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 93–98.

The main locations for these shows and stalls were not the inner and outer precincts but the shrine approaches and paths around the shrine. In particular, the area from outside the west *torii* gate of the inner precinct along the tertiary shrine approach to the Yoyogi parade ground seems to have been very congested with tents and stalls, as well as with people.²⁸ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* reported that people were intoxicated with the festivities, suggesting that the events which attracted most people were indeed the entertainments, such as the Yoyogi circus troop and puppet shows.²⁹ An awareness of these street performances, many of them held in the evening, is important in appreciating how the authorities' spatial and temporal regulations were experienced by ordinary people. Although it is possible to say that the spatiotemporal restrictions were imposed on ordinary people from above, and that popular entertainments were relegated to a relatively low position in the hierarchy, at the same time the people themselves clearly did not see the streets and evenings as some kind of degraded space. It is evident that this distributed space was reordered through peoples' own festive experience.

Interestingly, it was not only in the 1920s but also in the wartime 1930s that such back alley amusements were enjoyed by the common people around the time of the Meiji Shrine festival. For example, according to the recollections of ex-pupils of San'ya Elementary School in Yoyogi, the most fascinating of the 1936 festival performances were motorcycle tricks, snake women and monkey shows.³⁰ Girls enjoyed receiving coloring books, *origami* and artificial flowers that opened when placed in water. A 1943 graduate from Seinan Elementary School, in Aoyama, has recorded how attractive were the sideshows and street stalls on the days of Meiji Shrine's festival.³¹ The days on and around November 3 were the most exciting time in the year, especially for children who lived near the shrine.

The Multi-Accentual Commemoration in Meiji Shrine

Each of the fifteen Tokyo wards exploited the space of the Meiji Shrine feast day as an expansion of their own mode of festival space and a celebration of their own locale. Take, for example, *mikoshi* parades; even after the Home Ministry forbade them to enter the inner precinct, wards and towns continued to compete in building new *mikoshi* and indeed organized *mikoshi* parades during Meiji Shrine's festival period.³² Local organizers reinterpreted November 3 by orchestrating the festival days of their own local shrines with that of Meiji Shrine, although

²⁸ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Shibata Yūji, ed. *Tōkyō-shi San'ya Kokumin Gakkō sotsugyō gojūshūnen kinenshi* (Sanya Shō, Shōwa Jūhachikai, 1995).

³¹ Ieki. *Harajuku no omoide*. See also, Watanabe Nagisa, ed. *Kanreki: Seinan Shōgakkō daisanjūsankai sotsugyōsei kanreki kinen shi* (privately published, 1988); Seinan Shōgakkō Sanjūrokukai Dōkikai. *Anokoro Aoyama/Seinan jidai* (Seinan Shōgakkō Sanjūrokukai Dōkikai, 1994).

³² *Miyako shinbun* (September 24, 1920).

the date of November 3 bore no relation to that of their local shrine's original establishment.³³ For instance, worshippers of Kameido Tenjin Shrine in Honjo Ward paraded their twenty-four *mikoshi* while clad in *happi* coats bearing Meiji Shrine's crest, and at Hikawa Shrine in Akasaka people also celebrated their own festival with floats. Meanwhile, those who lived in Harajuku and Aoyama were only permitted to parade along Omotesandō before and after November 1–5, although newspaper reports indicate that some parades were in fact held during this time.³⁴ In one case, more than twenty onlookers assisted the progress of a parade, by first blocking the representatives of the authorities intent on dispersing it, and then knocking them down and hurling them into a ditch.³⁵

Asakusa is a good example of how Meiji Shrine's festival worked to appropriate time and space. In his 1920 novel *Kōjin*, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 characterizes contemporary Asakusa through three observations, namely that it was visited by people of every class, occupation and age, that the entertainments enjoyed by these people ranged from opera through merry-go-rounds and noodle shops, to visiting prostitutes, and that finally, the diversity of both visitors and amusements was ever increasing, integrating and metamorphosing.³⁶ The Asakusa Rokku area was the most popular theatre district in the country from the end of the Meiji into the Taishō periods.³⁷ Even before October 31, 1920, this well-known amusement quarter had decorated itself even more gaudily than usual, enticing more visitors than ever before. Special film shows to celebrate Meiji Shrine's inauguration proved immensely popular, and were frequently advertised in the press (Figure 8). The Asakusa Opera Theatre, for example, advertised a film entitled "Meiji Shrine and the memoirs of General Nogi" under the banner: "Don't miss this chance in a million, a special occasion."³⁸ In advertisements on November 4, the Fujikan Cinema promoted its newsreels of the celebratory performances and new shrine buildings; the titles of the feature were "The Bustle of the Day" and "Mountainous Crowds and a Sea of People." In other cinemas, such as Denkikan and Chiyodakan, films of



Figure 8. *Kokumin shinbun*, November 1, 1920 (top); *Miyako shinbun*, November 4, 1920 (bottom).

³³ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (October 23, 1920).

³⁴ *Kokumin shinbun*, *Niroku shinbun* (November 2, 1920).

³⁵ *Miyako shinbun* (November 1, 1920); *Yomiuri shinbun* (November 6, 1920); *Niroku shinbun* (November 2, 1920).

³⁶ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. "Kōjin," in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū*, vol. 7 (Chūō Kōronsha, 1967), pp. 81–82.

³⁷ Horikiri. *Asakusa*, pp. 17–26.

³⁸ *Miyako shinbun* (November 4, 1920); *Yomiuri shinbun* (November 1 and 3, 1920); *Kokumin shinbun* (November 1–2, 1920); *Niroku shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

Meiji Shrine were shown as extras to Western movies, such as “Dare Devil Jack” starring Jack Dempsey and “The Walk-offs” starring May Allison.³⁹ Cinema companies such as Shōchiku and Nikkatsu filmed the commotion and energy of the shrine and its surroundings, and the chaotic situation itself became the object of an exhibition in Asakusa.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the same advertisements informed the passer-by that “our films enable ladies, children and senior citizens to ‘visit’ the shrine safely.” In fact, as *Miyako shinbun* reported on November 3, many people gathered in Asakusa in order to escape the crush, which actually killed and injured quite a number of shrine visitors.

For many enterprising merchants as well as Asakusa showmen, the Meiji Shrine feast day was above all a good business opportunity. By late October 1920, more than 500 stalls had begun to prepare for the inaugural events. They were able to make huge profits, charging prices two or three times greater than usual.⁴¹ *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (November 4) criticized the incompetence of the police, who took no action against these merchants. Among the cheapest souvenirs were post cards, which had become very popular collectors’ items from the end of Meiji into the beginning of the Shōwa periods.⁴² Celebratory post cards for Meiji Shrine completely outsold cards for the national art exhibition, which usually sold very well during November. Over forty different sets of post cards featuring Meiji Shrine were marketed by individual merchants as well as by the Home Ministry, and over 100,000 sets were sold in total.⁴³ Particularly popular were the wide variety of cards made by individual sellers, as these were cheaper than those produced by the Home Ministry, and had more up-to-date pictures; the most sought-after cards were always those portraying the latest festive events.⁴⁴ Furthermore, post cards made excellent advertisements: *Kokumin shinbun*, for example, released post cards in the sky over the Meiji Shrine area during celebratory fly-passes (Figure 9).⁴⁵

Newspaper advertisements indicate how diversely the occasion was utilized for commercial activities. Shops such as Kubohama Gofukuten and Chirimen Shōten advertised sales, imploring passers-by: “Don’t miss our special bargains



Figure 9. Flying postcards, around November 3, 1920. (Author’s collection.)

³⁹ *Miyako shinbun* (November 1 and 4, 1920); *Kokumin shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

⁴⁰ *Niroku shinbun* (November 3, 1920).

⁴¹ *Yomiuri shinbun* (November 2, 1920); *Niroku shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

⁴² Hashizume Shinya. *Ehagaki hyakunen* (Asahi Shinbunsha, 2006), p. 4.

⁴³ Fujii Eijirō. “Meiji Jingū chinza kinen ehagaki kō.” *Kitte shumi* 2:5 (1930), pp. 190–92.

⁴⁴ *Miyako shinbun* (November 4, 1920).

⁴⁵ *Kokumin shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

after your visit to the shrine.”⁴⁶ Tenshōdō sold gold and silver cups for the limited period of November 1–15; these were copies of trophies from the shrine, designed by “the foremost artists.” Similarly, Tōkyō Bijutsu Company used mail-order promotion to sell commemorative medals which portrayed Emperor Meiji and Meiji Shrine buildings side by side.⁴⁷ Companies producing portraits of Emperor Meiji or pictures of Meiji Shrine looked for local franchises: the agency Kokumin Kyōikukai, which sold memorial sets of Meiji Shrine photos, enticed local dealers with the promise of healthy profits, and the Chūgiaikai agency similarly sought distributors around the country for its Meiji Shrine hanging scrolls.⁴⁸

To conclude, what people actually experienced during the Meiji Shrine feast day of 1920 was far from the planned uniformity. People not only consumed the ordered space but also re-ordered it, in their own mode of appropriation. It was within this dynamic process of space production that the events of Meiji Shrine in 1920 unfolded.

⁴⁶ *Yomiuri shinbun* (November 1, 1920).

⁴⁷ *Miyako shinbun* (November 1, 1920); *Kokumin shinbun* (November 5 and 7, 1920).

⁴⁸ *Kokumin shinbun* (November 1–2, 1920).