

## CHAPTER 7

# THE DAIJŌSAI CEREMONY AND THE TRANSMISSION OF CHARISMA

### 1. Succession of Blood and the Succession of Spirit

In May 1988, when François Mitterrand won reelection as president of France, a Japanese newspaper editorial asserted that there had been three “kings” of France—Louis XIV, Napoleon, and Charles de Gaulle—and speculated that Mitterrand might become the fourth. At the time, I had been reading the outstanding study of charisma, *Mana*, by the English anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers, who develops an unexpected treatment of de Gaulle at the close of his book.<sup>1</sup> Based on this work, it seemed to me that although de Gaulle might indeed have become a “king,” it was highly unlikely the same would be true of Mitterrand.

To focus on the crucial point of charisma here, let us first review briefly de Gaulle’s career. After World War II, he appeared on the scene of national politics as the hero who had saved the country, but shortly thereafter, in 1946, he withdrew from the position of prime minister, and in 1954 retired from politics altogether. In 1958, however, the problem of Algerian independence arose. French troops in Algeria rebelled, and there was danger of division within France itself. At this time of crisis, the country turned to de Gaulle once more, and the Fifth Republic was established with de Gaulle as its first president. Then in 1962, an agreement was struck leading to Algerian independence. During this period, it was widely felt that only de Gaulle could resolve the crisis. He had the trust of most French people, and he was brilliantly

successful in averting danger. Seven years later, in 1969, he retired for good.

The people of France, however, did not neglect him, and his authority did not wane. Major figures of government visited him regularly at his rural retirement home in Colombey. Moreover, matters did not end there, for though he died in 1970, within a year of his death his grave became a pilgrimage site for large numbers of people. One million pilgrims a year began visiting his grave. According to Pitt-Rivers, this was approximately the same number of visitors each year at the Versailles palace or the Louvre Museum. De Gaulle's grave rivalled these prestigious sites.

At this point, another "miracle" occurred. Sick people spontaneously began visiting de Gaulle's grave in order to pray for recovery. The ill touched the grave and dedicated offerings, which quickly piled up. De Gaulle had died only to be reborn as a "saint." His place of rest at Colombey became a sacred site that attracted pilgrims, reminiscent of the "spring of Lourdes" in southern France. Pitt-Rivers states that de Gaulle's charisma derives from none other than *mana*, and further that the wellspring of this *mana* lies in the fusion of political power and religious sanctity. While perhaps slightly out-of-date, this conclusion suggests the possibility of de Gaulle's taking a place together with Louis XIV and Napoleon.

What is the significance of this analogy in relation to the case of Japan? If we try applying the notion of "three kings," we might enumerate Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康, Emperor Meiji 明治, and Yoshida Shigeru 吉田茂, but an ineluctable sense of inaptness lingers. This is because France and Japan differ in the structure of royal authority. If there exists in Japan a kind of monarchical authority that can support a notion of "three kings," it surely lies in the *tennō* 天皇 (emperor) system or the *hossu* 法主 (head abbot) system of the Hōgōji 本願寺 temple. In the *hossu* system, the authority of the traditional institution derives from the blood lineage descending from the founder Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263); charisma arises out of this lineage itself. Thus, rather than taking up the issue of "kings" as individuals, we must consider the political

*court institution* and the religious *court institution*. Herein lies the divergence between regal authority in Europe and Japan.

There are, of course, significant differences between the *tennō* and *hossu* systems. In imperial succession the principle of the “emperor spirit” serves a major function, while in the *hossu* system, succession to charisma depends on the principle of “blood lineage” stemming from Shinran himself. Of course, the principle of blood is not absent from the *tennō* system, and in the *hossu* system, in addition to the principle of blood, the succession to spiritual authority may also be considered. Nevertheless, when we compare the two systems, it is apparent that the *tennō* system stands more often on the continuity of spirit, while the *hossu* system depends more often on blood descent.

No matter how distant the actual relationship to Shinran may have become among his descendants, blood lineage functions as a code that adequately ensures the transmission of the charisma of the founder. At the same time, the reduction in the concentration of Shinran’s blood may be connected to a thinning in the strength of the charisma. By comparison, the continuity of spirit undergoes no weakening in the process of transmission. In this, it possesses a relatively higher degree of stability than blood transmission. In comparing the *tennō* and *hossu* systems, we must emphasize this point, for it contributes to the durability of the *tennō* system. Whether we consider the Bourbons of France, the Tudors of England, or the Romanoffs of Russia, the royal houses of Europe all have relatively short life-spans. Their histories show repeated political upheaval and periods of foreign domination. By contrast, the *tennō* system in Japan is unique in the remarkable continuity of sovereign authority that it manifests. One key to this history, at least in terms of its structure, lies in transmission of authority based on the continuity of spirit. This issue may be explored by examining the Daijōsai 大嘗祭 rites.

## 2. The Theories of Tsuda and Origuchi

At one time, the Daijōsai was a comprehensive rite concerned with

maintaining continuity across the interval of the death of an emperor. Its overall outline has become nebulous, veiled by the accumulated meanings hinted at in the subtle procedures and multiple strata. Nevertheless, it continues to serve as an important guide for probing the deeper levels of the Japanese tennō system. To explore the Daijōsai is to ponder the very core of the tennō system.

In Article 11 of the former "Laws of the Imperial House" (*kōshitsu tenpan* 皇室典範), it is stipulated that "the rites of accession (*sokui* 即位) and the Daijōsai shall be performed in Kyoto." In both 1915 and 1928, the ceremony known as the "Great Rites" (*gotaiten* 御大典), which included both the accession rituals and the Daijōsai, was in fact held according to this rule. After defeat in World War II, however, when the new "Laws of the Imperial House" formulated under the direction of the occupation forces were promulgated together with the Japanese Constitution, the rule was changed. Article 24 states: "When there is accession to the rank of tennō, accession ceremonies shall be performed." Reference to the Daijōsai has been eliminated, along with the designation of Kyoto as the site for the accession ceremonies. In addition, all religious court rites have been eliminated. In the new "Laws of the Imperial House," it is determined that for succession to the rank of tennō, the regulations governing accession are sufficient, and no mention whatsoever is made of transmission involving the Daijōsai rites, which had had a tradition of nearly one thousand years.

In the original system, succession to the rank of tennō is accomplished only after the Daijōsai is performed in addition to the rites of accession. Here, there is a fundamental difference with the constitutional monarchy of England. Originally, the Daijōsai was a harvest rite (*Niinamesai* 新嘗祭) performed within the palace in the latter part of the eleventh month of each year, on the day of the hare. During this rite, offerings of the new grain harvested that year were made to Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 (or the kami of heaven and earth), and the tennō also partook of it. In other words, it was a harvest rite in which there was a joint feast of kami with a human being. When this harvest rite was performed at the time of a change in tennō, it was called the

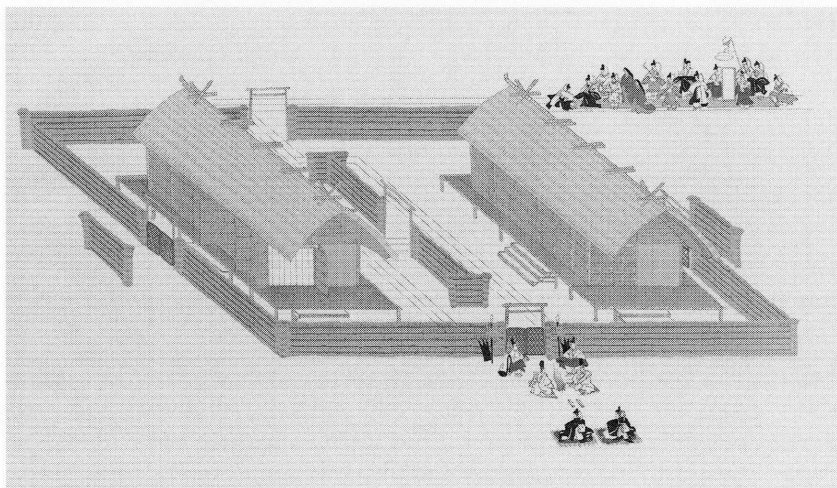


Daijōsai. The transmission of the harvest rite is mentioned as early as the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 and *Fudoki* 風土記, and it was widely performed among the agricultural people of ancient times. It was gradually adopted by the court, where it was refined into a religious court ceremony performed with the tennō as the central actor. It is conjectured that this occurred about the time of Tenmu 天武 and Jitō 持統 in the seventh century.

The Daijōsai performed at the time of a change in reigns serves the purpose of ensuring the continuity of the imperial line. With regard to the reins of government, this continuity is formally recognized through the accession rites, but mythologically, it is inseparably bound to the notion of the eternal continuity of the tennō's rebirth realized through the Daijōsai rituals. The conception of eternal continuity of the imperial lineage is symbolically expressed in the mythology of *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 by the arrival of the descendants of the gods. Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉 has indicated traces of political fabrication added from external sources at the roots of this mythological notion. By contrast, Origuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 pointed out, in the same mythology, a magico-religious basis for the immutability of the tennō's spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Tsuda's energetic study of the recorded mythology, undertaken during the first half of the twentieth century, greatly revised the prevalent conceptions of the history of the ancient period. The basic strain in his thinking about the tennō system may be summarized as follows. First, in the ancient period in Japan, there was no notion of ancestor worship possessing a religious character. In other words, the religious rituals conducted at the Ise shrine were originally for the worship of the sun deity, and it was only through fabrications of later times that they came to be viewed as fundamentally for the worship of the imperial line. Second, it is a matter of status or rank that the political ruler of Japan has the character of kami; it is not that the ruler as an individual human being is a kami. The "status" of the imperial house is seen to endure perpetually because it is conceived as symbolized by the eternality of the sun.

In contrast to Tsuda's discussion of the tennō system, Origuchi states in his study, "The Fundamental Meaning of the Daijōsai"



The Daijō-gū. To the right is the Yuki hall, to the left the Suki hall.

From *The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1972).

published in 1928, that rites for the pacification of spirits and rituals for the death—that is, the rebirth—of the tennō are interwoven into the Daijōsai. On the occasion of the Daijōsai, two temporary structures known as the Yuki 悠紀 and the Suki 主基 halls are constructed on the palace grounds, and within each, a place is prepared for the tennō to sleep, with mattresses (*shitone* 茵) and bedding (*fusuma* 衾). In order for the crown prince to complete his qualifications for succession, he must seclude himself in the sleeping chamber and enter a fast. In the passage on the advent of the descendants of the gods, *Nihon shoki* describes “bedding of the sleeping place” (*madoko ou fusuma* 真床襲衾) covering the body of Ninigi no Mikoto. Origuchi states that this corresponds exactly to the matting and bedding employed in the Daijōsai. It was believed that upon removing the covers and rising, the successor (*hitsugi no miko*) for the first time fully became the emperor. At this time, the spirit of the former emperor entered the body of the new emperor and began anew the activities of eternal life.

Origuchi emphasizes here that although the emperor’s physical

body changes with each generation, the spirit transmitted from body to body is unchanging. He regards this spirit as identical with the eternal "emperor's spirit" or soul. In addition, while succession to the throne may be considered to follow blood lineage, it is the transmission of the unchanging spirit (emperor's spirit) that is assumed as a matter of faith. That which ritually ensures the immutability of the emperor's spirit is essentially a harvest ritual conducted regularly each year as a rite for rebirth and for the pacification of spirits. At times of a change in reign, this ritual is performed as the Daijōsai.

### 3. Sacred Water Rites and the Heavenly Robe

From the above, we see that Tsuda focuses on the status of emperor in treating the continuity of the imperial line, while Origuchi treats the emperor's spirit as central. The point of contrast between these two positions may be considered central in investigating the fundamental nature of the emperor system, and underlying their positions is their difference in assessing the significance of the Daijōsai. That is, Tsuda sees in the Daijōsai only the traces of a magical fabrication born through a political myth; this view has been the mainstream among postwar historians. However, to approach more closely the "fundamental significance" of the Daijōsai, it is necessary for us to depart, together with Origuchi, from Tsuda's historicist stance.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, a number of rituals are conducted during the entire process of the Daijōsai ceremonies centering on the day of the hare of the eleventh month.<sup>3</sup> It is now difficult to ascertain the meaning of each of these rituals, but there are clues that allow us to glimpse the original nature of the still secret Daijōsai. One major symbolic theme is that of cleansing with sacred water, which is conspicuous in the rituals. As seen in the yearly schedule of rites above, prior to the Daijōsai the emperor repaired to the banks of the Kamo 賀茂 river and performed rites of ablution (*misogi-harae* 禊祓). This was a sacred water rite in which sins and pollution were washed away. Further, on the day of the hare of the eleventh month, the emperor performed

twice a secret rite called Oyu-dono-goto 御湯殿事 (matters of the hall of hot water).

Concerning the original significance of this rite of bathing using heavenly feather robes, Origuchi conjectured as follows. Because of the death of his predecessor, the emperor enters a period of fasting, and in observing his abstinence he wears the hempen garment called a "heavenly feather robe." Hence, removing the garment in the bath signifies withdrawal from the abstinence. At that time, the new emperor undergoes a renewal of life and gains the status of kami. Against this view of Origuchi, Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 and Takatori Masao 高取正男 assert that through wearing the heavenly feather robe in the bath in the Kairyūden 廻立殿 chamber, the emperor attains the magico-religious level of sanctity signifying that he has become a person of the heavenly realm. While Origuchi focuses on the removal of the garment, Saigō and Takatori focus on wearing it. In either case, it is clear that the use of the robe in the bath is a central factor in the magical transformation of the emperor's body and mind.

#### 4. Pacification of Spirits and Rites of *Mogari*

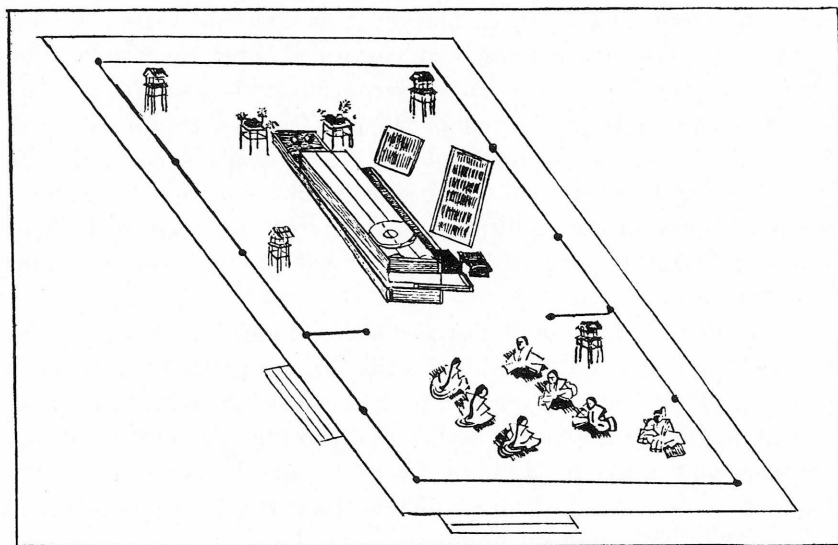
The second issue to be considered is that the Daijōsai was fundamentally a ritual for the pacification of spirits. This theme has been incisively discussed in Origuchi's "Daijōsai no hongi 大嘗祭の本義" (The Basic Meaning of the Daijōsai). He states that the term "emperor's spirit" (*tennō rei* 天皇靈) in *Nihon shoki* refers to the spirit of the previous emperor. In the Daijōsai, the new emperor takes this spirit into his own body, thereby acquiring his authority as the new emperor (this is the first aspect of spirit pacification). The new ruler who ascended to the rank of emperor divided the emperor's spirit and distributed it among those close to him. That is, he imbued robes (*gyo-i* 御衣) with the divided spirit and distributed it. This is called the "distribution of the emperor's robes" or *kinu kubari* 衣配 (this is the second aspect of spirit pacification). At the close of each year, in winter, the emperor's spirit weakens and drifts. In order to allay this unstable condition, in the palace, in the

eleventh month, on a day determined by divination, rites for the calming of the spirit (*tamashii shizume*) were performed. This was a strengthening of the spirit that was performed every year, and may be said to correspond to rites for the pacification of the spirit (this is the third meaning). In the Daijōsai rituals as prescribed in the *Engi shiki* 延喜式, on the day preceding the day of the hare in the eleventh month—that is, the day of the tiger—rites for the pacification of the spirit were performed. These rites were originally inseparably connected with the rites observed in the Yuki and Suki halls.

In brief, Origuchi seeks to trace in the foundations of the harvest rites held near the end of autumn notions of the pacification of spirits conducted from autumn to winter. In the case of changes in the reigns of emperors, this was a stratified notion in which the spirit of the previous emperor was newly brought to adhere to his successor. Thus, the Daijōsai possessed a function which had the double significance of affixing the spirit and of pacification.

Above I have sketched the basic framework that Origuchi presents in “Daijōsai no hongī.” Concerning the issue of the adherence of the emperor’s spirit, however, Origuchi puts forth one additional theory that should be noted. The ritualistic core of the Daijōsai lies in the scene of the joint sleep of kami and human being in the Yuki and Suki halls. Origuchi conjectures that at that time, the new emperor lay down together with the corpse of the previous emperor. Concerning this, however, Origuchi is unclear, and he also appears to reject this idea. There are some complicated circumstances involved, but it became clear after his death that in addition to the study titled “Daijōsai no hongī” in his collected works, there was also another paper of the same title. In this second paper, he conjectures that the body of the previous emperor was placed in the bedding of the Yuki hall, and the new emperor secluded himself in the Suki hall. In other words, in the Yuki hall a pacification of the spirit was performed in order to revive the deceased emperor by infusing the spirit, and this was linked with the emergence of the new emperor, becoming the incentive behind the rites of the Suki hall.

As a prior stage in this way of thinking we may expect the view that



Sketch of the interior of the Yuki hall.

From *The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1972).

in the Daijōsai, the new emperor lies together with the corpse of the previous emperor. According to this view, through lying in the same bedding, the transmission of the emperor's spirit may be accomplished directly. Concerning this view, Origuchi himself touches on it in the version of his studies in his *Collected Works*; his attitude, however, was reversed in the version in the *Bulletin*.<sup>4</sup> In this latter piece, he notes the opinion that the bedding laid out in the Yuki and Suki halls was "in the form of the corpse of the previous emperor," and rejects such an interpretation. Thus, the versions in the *Collected Works* and the *Bulletin* differ, and we see that, concerning the question of the previous and new emperors lying together, there is a significant change in Origuchi's thinking. Later, in a lecture on "Shinto and Ethnology" in 1933, Origuchi took up this topic again, stating: "We would expect that a defiled corpse should not be laid in a sacrosanct place, but perhaps such was done."<sup>5</sup>

A detailed discussion of this problem has been undertaken by Hora Tomio 洞富雄, and it appears that Origuchi was at the time inclined toward the theory that the previous and new emperors lay down together.<sup>6</sup> Aware of the significance of the matter, he cloaked his statements in ambiguity, but he appears to have detected in the prelude portions of the Daijōsai ritual traces of the death or a funeral for the previous emperor.

If this is the case, we are immediately reminded of the *mogari* 殯 rites commonly practiced in the ancient period.<sup>7</sup> As we have seen, this was a funeral method in which the corpse is left exposed on the ground or placed in a temporary structure called a *mogari no miya* 殯の宮. There were of course a number of variations, but during the period rituals to call the spirit were performed, and after it was ascertained that there was no hope of revival, the corpse was buried. *Mogari* rites were also widely performed among the ordinary people, but in the case of the emperor, there were observed with the greatest solemnity. If one of the focal points of the Daijōsai, as noted earlier, is the infusing of the spirit of the previous emperor in the body of the new emperor, then the time of the *mogari* rites affords a crucial opportunity. It would have been natural for the rites for inviting the spirit to be linked to the spirit pacification rites for fixing or infusing the emperor's spirit. Far in the background of the rituals performed in the Yuki hall, there glimmers the notion of *mogari* with its images of death and beckoning of the spirit.

## 5. Memories of a Sacred Marriage

The third point I wish to raise deals with the configuration of the bedding in the Daijō halls and the symbolic world that it evokes. The Yuki and Suki halls face south, standing to the east and west of each other. The interior of each hall is divided into north and south portions, called the *muro* 室 and *dō* 堂 respectively. The *dō* area provides an antechamber for the chancellor (*kampaku* 関白), head priest (*miyaji* 宮主), and court ladies (*uneme* 采女), while in the center of the *muro*, bedding is laid out north and south, and on the east side, there is a small god-seat (food mat



for the god, *kami no sugomo* 神の食薦) for making offerings, and a seat (*mikura* 御座) for the emperor. The emperor's seat and the place for offerings are half a tatami mat in size, while the bedding laid out in the center is a full mat. At the south end of the bedding a wooden pillow is placed, and at the north end a pair of footwear is arranged. There, at the right and left, separated from the tatami mat and placed in bamboo baskets, are a sacred *nigitaе* 絵服 garment (minutely creased garment) and *arataе* 匳服 (roughly creased garment).

From the arrangement in the chamber, it is clear that the matting in the center represents a sleeping place. Who was to lie here, and what sacred activities took place? Earlier, I discussed the theory that the corpse of the previous emperor was laid here, but there is no documentary evidence for this in the ancient records. The emperor secluded himself for approximately two hours in the Yuki and Suki halls, but the records speak only of the procedures for making offerings, stating that he sits in the emperor's seat, makes food offerings, and partakes of food with the god (Amaterasu Ōmikami). Regarding the sacred rites involving the bedding, the records are silent.

Concerning the issue of whether there was a partner who lay in the bedding, I wish to mention one other theory in addition to the view that the corpse of the previous emperor was placed there. This is the view that conjectures a partner in a "sacred marriage." Saigō Nobutsuna, for example, asserts that accession and the issue of marriage are inseparable, and that unless there is an accompanying sexual liberation, the magical power of the ruler, who is regarded as making nature fertile, would lack the finishing touch. He conjectures that since the new "son of heaven" is born as the child of Amaterasu Ōmikami, a sacred marriage for this purpose was performed here.<sup>8</sup>

A similar view is also given by Origuchi in his previously mentioned studies, although at first glance it appears to contradict his theory set out before. According to Origuchi, in the bathing procedures conducted in the Kairyūden hall, the emperor is attended throughout by a virgin priestess. It is her task to remove the heavenly feather robe while the emperor is in the bath, and at that moment the emperor attains



divine status and becomes free. Sexual desire is also liberated, and he is now permitted to touch the woman. When we consider the bathing rites in conjunction with the bedding in both the Yuki and Suki halls, the possibility that the secret rites involving the bedding were rituals of a sacred marriage conducted with the priestess arises. In actuality, in the *muro*, which was the lying place of the emperor, seats for waiting women (*unemedai*) were made at both sides of the pillow at the south end, suggesting the prominent presence of the woman who attended the emperor in the secret rite conducted in the deep of night.

## 6. The Death and Birth of the Ruler

Above, we have seen that elements of a variety of ancient rituals are interwoven in the Daijōsai. The significance of the different rites is not completely clear, but there are hints for treating the issues they present. Here, as a method for considering the ancient ritual concepts in the Daijōsai, I will propose two ritual frameworks in which to view it. The first is the ritual framework from the accession (*senso* 践祚) to the rites of enthronement, and the second is the framework from the funeral to the Daijōsai. The first framework corresponds to that of accession-succession in European royal authority. The accession ceremonies are those in which, on the death of the king, authority is immediately invested in the next king; in Japan, this is called *senso*. By contrast, succession rites are those in which, after actual succession to the throne, this fact is officially and publicly proclaimed; in Japan, this corresponds to the *sokui* rites, the state ceremony for the social and international recognition of royal succession.

This framework of accession-succession is widely used in treatments of European royal authority. With the Daijōsai, however, complex problems arise in that it possesses elements that do not necessarily fit within this framework. Of course, in a traditional context, the Daijōsai is conducted in connection with the ceremony of succession, but this framework cannot elucidate the particular significance of the Daijōsai. The outline of the Daijōsai cannot easily be seen in terms of an

extension of the Western framework of accession-succession.

Rather, the special ritual characteristics of the Daijōsai are better clarified when considered in relation to the funeral rites for the deceased emperor. This is a way of thinking in which the life cycle is assumed within the problem of succession of imperial authority, the problem of the death of the previous emperor and the birth of the new emperor. Based on this, I postulate another ritual process, funeral-Daijōsai, as a second framework. This second framework comprises a qualitatively distinct dimension from the first; nevertheless, it stands in a relationship with it of a tension of mutual attraction and antagonism. In order to illuminate the relationship of opposition, I will give a rough, basic sketch of the second framework. The issue to be considered is what sort of relationship was originally involved between the Daijōsai of the new emperor and the funeral of the deceased emperor.

In September 1988, Emperor Shōwa 昭和 (Hirohito 裕仁) suddenly took ill. From that time, rituals for the recovery of the emperor were performed in temples and shrines throughout Japan. These temple and shrine rites date back to the Nara and Heian period. Among them, the prayers performed in esoteric Buddhism hold particular importance and have been regarded as possessing great power as prayers for the health of the emperor and the well-being of the country. It was Kūkai who first performed such esoteric rites within the palace approximately 1200 years ago. From that time down to the present, most Japanese Buddhist institutions have performed prayers in some form for the emperor's health and the safety of the country.

A representative example is the "Latter Seven-day Rites" (*goshichinichi mi-shiho* 後七日御修法) observed for one week each year from January 8 at Tōji temple (the formal name of the temple is Kyōōgokokuji 教王護国寺) in Kyoto.<sup>9</sup> It is called the "Latter Seven-day Rites" because in the imperial court, the first week of the new year is devoted to new year observances called the *sechie* 節会. In the past, ancient Shinto ceremonies of the *sechie* were performed, and following on them the esoteric Buddhist rites were performed in the second week. The central purpose of these rites was to pray for the well-being of the

emperor.

Another example is the "Rite for the Security of the Nation" (*anchin kokka hō* 安鎮国家法) observed at Enryakuji 延暦寺 on Mt. Hiei. It is not conducted annually, but was observed, after a sixty year lapse, for one week from 4 April 1984. It is an esoteric ritual of high solemnity and formality with a tradition dating back to the Heian period, and, as its name indicates, is dedicated to prayers for the welfare of the country. It is notable that on the middle day of the observance, imperial emissaries participate. Inside and outside the central worship hall (*konponchūdō* 根本中堂), temporary halls were erected and the head abbot (Tendai zasu Yamada Etai 天台座主山田恵諦) conducted the services.

We see that the intimate relationship between Buddhism and the imperial court has had a long history. As a result, special high-ranking temples known as *monzeki jiin* 門跡寺院 were constructed as residences for emperors or members of the imperial family, and gradually these temples came to house the graves of persons of imperial blood. Such temples may be said to have served as places for prayer for the welfare of the imperial family and as sites for imperial graves.

It must further be noted that the founders and prominent figures of the various Buddhist schools have received titles from the emperors such as "great teacher" (*daishi* 大師) or "teacher to the nation" (*kokushi* 国師). Taking them in historical order, Saichō 最澄 of the Tendai school was given the name Dengyō 伝教 Daishi in 866; Kūkai 空海 was named Kōbō 弘法 Daishi in 921; Enni Bennen 円爾弁円 of the Rinzai Zen 臨濟禪 school received the name Shōichi 聖一 Kokushi in 1311; Hōnen 法然 of the Pure Land school received the name Enkō 円光 Daishi in 1688; Shinran 親鸞 finally received the name Kenshin 見真 Daishi in 1876; Dōgen 道元 the name Jōyō 承陽 Daishi in 1879; and Nichiren 日蓮 the name Risshō 立正 Daishi in 1921. The great differences in the times at which these names were bestowed has to do with the nature of the relationship between the religious institution and the imperial court, and also the political conditions of the times.

From such examples, we see that between the imperial house and

Buddhism there has existed very close contact. I will consider the significance of this with regard to two specific matters. First, the nature of the "Latter Seven-day Rites," which is discussed more fully in Chapter 5, and second, the problem of the funeral rites for the emperor.

## 7. The Latter Seven-day Rites and the Ceremonial Robe

As mentioned before, it was Kūkai who prevailed upon the imperial court to introduce the Latter Seven-day Rites as an observance in the palace. This occurred during the reign of Emperor Ninmyō 仁明 in 834, the year before Kūkai's death. Kūkai erected a practice hall called Shingon'in on the palace grounds, enshrined esoteric images including the two mandalas and Fudō Myōō 不動明王, and established a system for the performance of prayer rites for the emperor.

What was Kūkai's intention in this?<sup>8</sup>

To begin, we must first note that Shingon'in 真言院 was constructed almost at the center of the inner palace, so that it stood beside the Shishinden 紫宸殿 ceremonial court hall and the Seiryōden 清涼殿 imperial residence. Slightly apart from this central area was the Onmyōryō 陰陽寮, and further out was the Ministry of Kami Affairs (Jingikan 神祇官). The Onmyōryō was the Taoist center, which handled divination, and the Jingikan was the Shinto office that administered the shrines throughout the country. When we look at the relative locations of Shingon'in, Onmyōryō, and Jingikan, we grasp the great importance with which Kūkai's esoteric Buddhism was regarded at court.

Second, the early Heian period during which Kūkai was active was one in which the phenomena of angry spirits (*onryō* 怨霊) and spirit possession (*mono no ke* 物の怪) caused great fear. In terms of imperial reigns, it corresponds to the era from Emperor Kanmu 桓武 (r. 781-806) to Ninmyō (r. 833-850). *Onryō* are the angry spirits of people who die violent or untimely deaths because of political intrigue, and among them the most feared was the angry spirit of Sawara Shinnō 早良親王.

Shinnō was the younger brother of Emperor Kanmu, but was excluded from the line of imperial succession and died by his own hand

full of resentment. Thereafter, a series of strange events occurred around the emperor, and it was believed that the angry spirit of Shinnō was the cause. It was even said that Kanmu's death was brought on by the curse of Shinnō.

Examples of *mono no ke* may be seen in the later *Tale of Genji* 源氏物語. Like angry spirits, *mono no ke* spirit possession was considered the cause of extraordinary occurrences, disasters, and sickness, and it referred to living spirits and spirits of the dead whose curses took a variety of forms. It was during the period when *mono no ke* phenomena began occurring frequently that Shingon'in was built within the palace. Kūkai discerned the currents of the times with great sensitivity.

People of the period were eager to discover means by which to protect themselves against angry spirits and spirit possession. This was an urgent concern of the emperor as well. Observing this, Kūkai pronounced esoteric rites to be the foremost means for repelling the attacks of angry and evil spirits. His promotional efforts had their effect in his final years, resulting in the construction of Shingon'in. Shingon'in was an opulent and elegant ritual space for the extirpation of evil spirits that might have possessed the emperor's body from without.

Let us now consider the nature of the rituals of the Latter Seven-day Rites conducted in Shingon'in. The rites centered on burning *goma* at the *gomadan* 護摩壇 altar and chanting mantras and dharanis before buddhas and bodhisattvas; of prime importance, however, was the incantation rites called *Gyoi kaji* 御衣加持.

Like the Shishinden hall, Shingon'in was constructed facing south. In the center of the northern part of the interior, five great *myōō* 明王 statues were placed with Fudō 不動 at the center, and in the southern part of the hall, facing north, was placed a special seat called the seat of *kaji*. At the west side of the seat was the "table for the imperial robe" (*gyoi-zukue* 御衣机).

In this case, the emperor sat in the seat of *kaji* to receive the prayers for sacred protection. When the emperor did not participate in person, a garment of his would be placed on the robe-table and mantras and dharanis would be chanted while facing it. Thus, through prayers and

incantations performed over a period of one week, special power would be imparted to the robe.

At first, the jewel-body incantation (*gyokutai kaji* 玉体加持) was performed, but gradually a change was made to the robe incantation, which became the standard practice. On conclusion of the service period, the emperor put on the robe, and evil or obstructive spirits that clung to him were exorcised. In this way, the emperor received new vital powers.

The Latter Seven-day Rites, as a religious event of the new year conducted to purify the emperor's physical body through Buddhist rituals, appears to correspond closely in significance to the Niinamesai harvest rite conducted in the palace each year on the day of the hare at the close of the eleventh month. This autumn ritual was a purely Shinto ceremony during which the emperor offered new grain to the gods of heaven and earth and partook of it together with them.

Through eating the new grain with the gods, the spiritual authority of the emperor himself was strengthened, and this in fact was considered the central purpose of the rite. From fall to winter the emperor's vital power (emperor's spirit) would gradually weaken, and the harvest rites served to invigorate that power and restore it to its original condition. The aim was to strengthen the inner spirit of the emperor, and on the occasion of a change in emperor, the rite was called Daijōsai. In this rite, the strengthened spirit of the emperor was transferred to the physical body of the next emperor.

Viewed in this light, we see that the Niinamesai harvest rites held annually in the eleventh month and the Latter Seven-day Rites held in the first month are related in meaning. The harvest rites had the purpose of strengthening the internal spirit of the emperor, while the seven-day service was conducted to eliminate spirits that had fastened on the emperor's body from without.

Moreover, if the Niinamesai held when the harvest rites had ended is considered a Shinto style winter ceremony, then the service held in the first month clearly has the character of an esoteric style spring ceremony. The Niinamesai and the Seven-day Rites together form a

complementary ritual system for strengthening the emperor's vital powers both internally and externally.

Observance of the Latter Seven-day Rites was suspended by proclamation of the government administration office in the ninth month of 1871, ending a long tradition within the imperial palace. Later, however, a revival movement arose, and permission was granted to perform the service from January 1883 in Kanjōin 灌頂院 at Tōji 東寺, where it continues to be performed today.

## 8. The Buddhist Funeral of the Emperor

Let us turn here to a consideration of the funeral rites for the emperor, in which, for over 1200 years from the time of Emperor Tenmu (r. 673-686), Buddhist monks and nuns were deeply involved.<sup>10</sup> The traditional practices were abandoned at the time of Emperor Meiji's funeral. The funeral of Emperor Taishō 大正 followed the example of Meiji, and the recent funeral of Emperor Shōwa continued the adoption of a Shinto style rite in which Buddhist monks were excluded. Thus, the changes during the Meiji era were not confined to the realm of politics with "the restoration of imperial rule." Even the methods of handling the emperor's corpse saw significant alteration. The political revival of imperial rule precipitated a radical reform of traditional rites.

At 12:43 a.m. on 30 July 1912, Emperor Meiji died. Accession rites for the new emperor were held immediately, and at dawn, the *mogari* hall (*mogari no miya*) was constructed for the corpse of Emperor Meiji. The corpse remained in the *mogari* hall for forty-five days and received the funerary partings of the imperial family and the chief officers of the state. Then at 8:00 p.m. on September 13, it was transported by carriage across the bridge of the palace to the funeral hall at Aoyama. It had been in *mogari* for a month and a half, through the heat of summer in August and September. After the funeral ceremonies at Aoyama, the corpse was immediately put on a train to Kyoto, where it was buried at the Momoyama 桃山 burial mound.

While the funeral ceremonies were being performed, there was no

participation by Buddhist monks, for state Shinto had already been firmly established as the backbone of the Meiji state. Through a policy of the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, the latter was completely excluded from state ceremonies.

Half a century earlier, however, conditions were quite different. Emperor Meiji's father Emperor Kōmei 孝明 died on 25 December 1866. On the ninth day of the first month of the following year (1867), the imperial prince, the future Emperor Meiji, underwent the ceremonies of accession in the Kogoshō 小御所 in the imperial palace. On the next day, monks from Sennyūji 泉涌寺 in Kyoto went to the palace, and from the hour of the monkey (4:00 p.m.), in the Seiryōden hall, performed rites for placement of the body in the coffin. The leader of the service, Jingen 尋玄, the abbot of Sennyūji, and the other monks decorated the chapel hall and chanted sutras. On the seventeenth day, the body of the late emperor was laid to rest in a burial mound in the precincts of Sennyūji. During the rites on this day, the leader was again Jingen. We see that in the case of Emperor Kōmei's funeral, the rites of the *mogari* hall are hidden in shadows, and it is the placement in the coffin and burial by Buddhist monks that emerges in the forefront. This was not confined to the case of Kōmei. Emperors up until the eve of the Meiji Restoration received their sending off to the world of death at the hands of Buddhist monks.

Sennyūji, which conducted the funeral rites for Kōmei, is at present located in Higashiyama-ku 東山区 in the eastern hills of Kyoto, and is one of the headquarters temples of the Shingon school. It is said to have been founded by Kūkai, but the origins are not clearly known. Sennyūji suddenly emerged into prominence on the stage of history during the Kamakura period. After the Jōkyū 承久 Disturbance in 1221, Shijō 四条 became emperor at the age of just two, and then died in 1242 after only ten years. Related temples of the various schools, fearing the bakufu, declined to conduct the funeral rites for the emperor. At that time, Sennyūji consented to perform the funeral and conducted the burial in a mound, the Tsukinowaryō 月輪陵, built within the temple precincts.

Thereafter, Sennyūji became the formal burial temple for the



imperial family, and came to be known simply as “the temple” (*mi-tera* 御寺). In the Edo period, funerals for empresses and members of the nobility were conducted at this temple, and mortuary tablets (*ihai* 位牌) are enshrined there. Correspondingly, in the palace also a structure in the style of a storehouse called the “black hall” (*o-kurodo* お黒戸) was built, Buddhist images were enshrined, and mortuary tablets for the successive emperors and empresses were placed there.

Nevertheless, in the eight month of 1871, the mortuary tablets and all Buddhist statues and implements were removed from the imperial residence and taken to Sennyūji and Hanjuin 般舟院. This was according to the policy of the separation of Shinto and Buddhism. At this time, the “black hall” was also moved to the inner precincts of Sennyūji. Further, the Buddhist-style burial mounds of emperors and graves of empresses and members of the nobility were confiscated and placed under the jurisdiction of the office of burial mounds of the Imperial Household Agency.

As noted earlier, for a long period the successive emperors were sent off to the other world by the hands of Buddhist monks. Let us explore this matter further.

From the Heian period, the practice of cremation (*dabi* 荼毘) spread widely both in the court and among the ordinary people, and the corpse of the emperor also came to be cremated. Later, on the burial mound only a stone *sotoba* was placed as marker. This custom, however, was abandoned with the great funeral of Emperor Go-Kōmyō 後光明, who died in 1654, and replaced by burial. That is, a change from cremation to burial is seen in the treatment of the corpses of emperors.

Remarkably, however, after this, the method of cremation followed by burial came to be practiced for the bodies of emperors. Further, with both the cremation and the burial, Buddhist monks were involved. The ritual performance of cremation in the funeral rites for the emperor indicates the depth of Buddhist influence. The custom of Buddhist-style cremation had a long tradition going far back to the Nara period, to the fourth year of the reign of Emperor Monmu 文武 (700) when the corpse of the Hossō 法相 school monk Dōshō 道昭 was cremated. The

connection between human death and the smoke of the fires of cremation was a crucial element in the development of the view of nature and the sense of impermanence among the Japanese people since the ancient period.

Needless to say, the succession rites for the emperor—the Daijōsai—took place while the death of the previous emperor was still fresh in the memory. Hence, the flow from the funeral rites to the succession rites consisted of an unbroken, unified ritual process, conducted within the memory of a crisis of death.

The transmission of the status of emperor was completed with the Daijōsai. It is conducted precisely at the point that the treatment of the corpse of the previous emperor has been smoothly managed. Moreover, the treatment of the corpse has been accomplished when the emperor's spirit has been fully separated from it. This is because the Daijōsai as the rite of succession, viewed conceptually, signifies the act by which the emperor's spirit, which has been transmitted and received by the successive emperors down through history, is received into his physical body by the new emperor. Rites of succession were undertaken precisely in order that, after the separation of spirit and flesh, the new reception of that spirit could be realized.

The fundamental character of the Daijōsai as a rite of succession was the reception of the eternal and immutable "emperor's spirit" from the body of the previous emperor. That is, the spiritual authority that departed from the corpse of the previous emperor, through specific rites for the pacification of the spirit, was brought to charge the body of the new ruler. This was the significance of the Daijōsai. If this is the case, the funeral rites for the previous emperor above all confronted the problem of how to bring about the separation of the corpse and the spirit. The entire process from the *mogari* rites immediately after death to burial rites was precisely for that reason carefully arranged. It was an urgent, indispensable ritual process undertaken in order to complete the Daijōsai.

## Conclusion

Viewed in this way, we see that in the Daijōsai, the memory of various forms of ancient rites are reflected in multiple layers. It is impossible to consider it a unitary rite developed from a concept as from a single light source. Concerning the Daijōsai rites, intricately related, and at times contradictory, interpretations have been put forth in juxtaposition. This has not been without purpose. In one sense, it may be said to have been an example indicating accurately how difficult is the task of grasping the deep strata of the foundation of kingship. Hence, in order to apprehend the overall form of the Daijōsai, we must understand that in the background many further worlds underlie it. This study has touched only on the themes of the sacred water and the incantation robe that appear in the process of the Daijōsai rituals, taken note of the problems of pacification of the spirit and the transmission of the emperor's spirit, touched upon the themes of the secret activities of the lying place and the funeral rites, and attempted to probe the problem of the emperor's death (*mogari*) and sexual activity (sacred marriage).

Max Weber, in his discussion of Asian religions, compares the Japanese emperor system and the theocracy of Tibetan lamaism, using the notion of secret cloistering (*Klausur*) as a key concept. Although he makes only brief comments, I have keenly felt the need to consider the "theocracy" based on transmigration of the spirit in Tibet and Japan, in contrast with the "Oriental autocracy" of China and India. The comparative religious examination of the Daijōsai has seemed prerequisite to the resolution of this problem. Comparative studies of accession rites among the peoples of north Asia and the Japanese Daijōsai have already been undertaken by historians and anthropologists, but numerous problems remain.

