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The Evolution of Mass Events in Prewar Japan

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The Evolution of Mass Events in Prewar Japan

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There are various cultural mechanisms in Japanese society today which act on people's ordinary consciousness in a vigorous way and transform it into the extra-ordinary. These range from sports events of every variety, for example professional and high school baseball, to cultural functions such as art exhibitions and fairs. Let us refer to these as "mass events."

It was in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods (1910s-1930s) that this system came into being and mass events became an everyday force in people's consciousness. In order to understand fully the way mass events took shape during this period we need to examine the interaction of three factors: what the event consisted of, who put it on and who went to see it. We then need to distinguish between (a) events which developed out of the culture of shows which had existed since the Edo period and (b) those which developed out of the process to establish national cultural festivals instigated in the Meiji period. As a first step in our efforts to do this, I want to look at the characteristics of mass events in the Taishō period, and focus in particular on the strategies of the newspaper companies, railway companies and department stores which were responsible for putting on fairs and sporting and other events.

1. MITSUKOSHI "CHILDREN'S FAIRS" AND THE BIRTH OF THE CONSUMER

From the Taishō period onwards we find department stores, railway companies and newspaper companies actively putting on mass events which were targeted at the urban middle classes. Through these events they celebrated the consumer lifestyle, each one treating the events as necessary capital which would mediate the circulation of "objects, people and words" through society in a consumerist manner. Let us examine the way they staged these mass events.

Of the department stores involved let us look at Mitsukoshi, the leading force of the department store culture in Japan towards the end of the Meiji period. In terms of scale the largest of the events put on by Mitsukoshi between the end of Meiji and the end of Taishō were the "Children's Fairs." The first of these, held in the spring of 1909, took up the square of the old building and also the neighboring buildings at the Nihonbashi main site. Mitsukoshi had already opened a children's department the previous year and held "Best Toys Exhibitions" in the spring and autumn. This was the point at which department stores began to recognise children and their parents as a vital consumer group. The "Children's Fair" of the following year was an ingenious ploy that focused in on children as consumers in the same way and tried to capture them and their families as a new market. Mitsukoshi announced the "Children's Fair" as follows:

We will be bringing together not children themselves, nor goods produced by them, but clothing, belongings and toys and games from around the world from every age—things essential for children, boys or girls, in every manner of normal activity, as well as special new products. We will be putting these on display for the public and hope thus to bring a sense of freshness to the new family of today's Meiji times. [*Mitsukoshi Times* 1909]

Behind this declaration was the criticism that children's fairs were up until then centered around products made by children and had not attempted to "unite pleasure and profit" by showing products *for* children. What the department stores wanted in the children was not the child as creator but the child as consumer. This is also clear in the remark made by a winning representative in the presentation ceremony for the exhibitors' awards:

Until now there has never been a fair to feast one's eyes and heart on, which everyone can come to, parents, children, wives, servants, all together. Here, however, such families have come *en masse* to see this fair and they have been made to forget the very passage of time. [*Mitsukoshi Times* 1909]

Let us give a short description of the set-up at the "Children's Fair." It was held in a temporary Exhibition Hall built on the roughly 3100 square metre open area in front of the Mitsukoshi main store on Nihonbashi Avenue. A further two buildings that had been used as offices were also remodelled for the event. Visitors turned right on the first floor of the department store and went through the Gothic entrance into the fair. On the right, where a long line of dolls stretched out representing the procession of a feudal lord, was the sporting section; along the left hand route lay the sections for education, art, clothing, music, technology and farming, military and mechanical equipment. In the sports section on the right of the entrance were children's tricycles and swings, prams, baseball gear, hammocks and so on. The tricycles seem to have been popular amongst people from the country, while swings were popular with Tokyoites. In the education section to the left

as one came in, what drew people's attention were toy organs and accordions, tin pen boxes and art boxes, dolls and national flags made from *origami*, and wind-mills. In the art section dolls with occidental eyes were received well, as were the utility suits, naval uniforms, pleated hats, floral hairpins and floral combs in the clothing section. Toy watches, *shamisen* (musical instruments), *zōri* sandals and tea sets were popular in the technology department, as were the model steam trains on show in the mechanical equipment section and the model battleships in the military section. In all over thirty thousand items were on display, with over 350 exhibitors coming to display them from every corner of the country.

The exhibition center as a whole formed a sort of "U" shape and in the middle was a fountain. Around the fountain were flower beds with a bird house on the right and an animal house on the left. Behind it was a huge backdrop with a picture of the Swiss Alps. Behind this there was an entertainment hall with seating for four hundred people, and performances were put on of fairy stories, sword dancing, children's acrobatics, magic tricks, *rakugo* comedy, young girls' posture dancing and special *kagura*. On the upper floor of the clothing department a music hall had been built also, and there were performances here every day by the newly established Mitsukoshi Youth Orchestra. This Youth Orchestra had been set up to promote the "Children's Fair" in February 1909 when it was decided that the fair should take place, and the children that were assembled for it were all novices with no previous musical training. After two months of intensive practice they gave their first performance at the "Children's Fair" and won favorable criticism. At the "Children's Fair" they drew attention with their costume—each member wearing Scottish-style jackets and maroon shorts with plumed hats worn to one side on their heads. The Mitsukoshi Youth Orchestra went on to appear at the entertainment hall at the "Taishō Fair" in Tokyo in 1914 and the "Tokyo Peace Commemoration Fair" in 1922, playing three times a week and making an invaluable contribution to Mitsukoshi's plans to improve their image [YOSHIMI 1993: 36-42].

Information on what attractions and exhibitions would be on display was publicised before the event in Mitsukoshi's PR magazine *Mitsukoshi Times*; newspapers also carried reports while the public spread rumors themselves. Thus when the curtain went up on 1 April huge numbers of people descended on the fair and it was extremely congested. Mitsukoshi figures for the opening day report as many as sixty thousand visitors. We cannot be sure how accurate this number is, but certainly a tremendous number of people did go, as can be seen in newspaper reports such as this one from the *Mainichi* and *Tōkyō Nichinichi*.

On a beautiful, clear spring day people gathered from all different areas—finely dressed wives with their small children, beautiful young women appearing in their twos and threes. There was no room to stand upstairs or downstairs despite the Mitsukoshi exhibition center's size. By three o'clock it was completely full, with many people being turned away at the entrance, having to go home without gaining admission. [*Mainichi Shinbun* 3 April 1909] 60 per cent

were children, 40 per cent adults. Most of the adults were women, half a dozen of whom were foreign. [*Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun* 2 April 1909]

How, we might note, did the people of the time react to this new children's fair? It was an extremely interesting event, judging by the *Jidō Hakurankai Kansō* (*Impressions of the Children's Fair*) of Sugawara Kyōzō, one of the members of the judges' committee at the fair. He points out that there had been a shift, with the "Fifth National Industry Fair" of 1903, from fairs aimed to promote production to fairs aimed to expand markets. Fairs gradually "came to promote not products but consumption and to see their principal goal as finding outlets for goods, that is to say expanding markets. People thought about how they could sell successfully rather than about presenting their technical know-how, because if they made good sales that was a good advertisement for them." As a result of this there were a number of changes in the nature of fairs. This applied, for example, to the articles on show and the explanatory literature, since "the main purpose was to attract plenty of customers and the customers would struggle if confronted by something too specialised or difficult," as well as to other aspects: "One had to attract as many purchasers as possible, and thus, in order to provide some entertainment and draw people in, entertainment halls, recreation areas and restaurants were built." In short "fairs were a form of national festivity for the people. The geographical areas and the businesses concerned prosper as people flock cheerfully in and the goods on display sell out thick and fast."

In his remarks Sugawara is emphasising the fact that the market expansion oriented fairs are areas essentially in the same mould as the rapidly developing department stores. As he says, "the way in which department stores, the newest, most advanced figures in the modern retail trade, are organised is really nothing more than the way fairs are organised." Just as fairs can have special thrusts—children's fairs, women's fairs, inventors' fairs and so on—so department stores have their sale days—"Umbrella Days" and "Toy Days" for example. Yet whereas with fairs one cannot hold a fair on a particular theme at the same time and in the same place as one with a general theme, department stores can display all manner of goods together and still be able to have "sales" focusing on one particular genre. One can therefore say that, in terms of ability to target market expansion, the department store is "more perfectly developed than the fair." Thus "what with the similarities in organization we have noted, which stem from the close connection between them, the fact that Mitsukoshi was able to stage this 'Children's Fair' marks a great step forward when we look at the development of this style of trading [SUGAWARA 1909: 136-152]."

The "Mitsukoshi Children's Fair" was held every year for a further eleven years until 1921. There seems no need to introduce each one here. From the Taishō period on, Mitsukoshi began to hold not only the "Children's Fair" but a variety of other fairs and exhibitions also. 1913, for example, saw the "Japanese Cosmetics Show" and the "Umbrella Show" and the following year, 1914, the "Commemora-

tion Exhibition for the Re-establishment of the Japanese Academy of Art" and the "Mitsukoshi Art Exhibition." The trends became more pronounced with the completion of a new Renaissance-style limestone building in 1914, which had one floor below ground, five above and a total floor space of thirteen thousand square metres. Thus in 1915 there was a succession of exhibitions of, to name some, "Theater," "Edo Style," "Works of Kōrin in his Bicentenary Year," "Travel," "Nika Art" and "Works of Kōyō Sanjin." Of what was on show at the "Theater" exhibition, for instance, we hear that "starting from the famous *kabuki* acting families, every aspect of theater was covered; the organisers assembled and exhibited costumes and stage properties from well-known plays, portraits of popular actors and specimens of their calligraphy, and even programmes and scenery," while "since it was full to capacity every day the show was extended for an extra week." At the "Travel" exhibition, meanwhile, "all sorts of unusual objects related to travel were on display, while timetables and other travel information were provided along with special travel goods in information rooms which doubled as rest areas." This sort of trend continued, with 1916 seeing a further series of exhibitions—"Goods for Children," "Dolls and Toys," a "Mountains and Water Art Exhibition," "Paintings of Beautiful Women in Contemporary Culture," a "Nika Art Exhibition" and so on.

What we have said thus far about the department stores and fairs, using the example of the Mitsukoshi "Children's Fair," holds true also in the relationship between railway companies and fairs. In the Taishō period the Minoo-Arima railway company (Hankyū) under Kobayashi Ichizō's leadership, was one of the railway companies making active use of fairs to gain customers. Following its "Mountains and Forests Children's Fair" at Minoo Zoo in 1911, the company proceeded to hold a "Women's Fair" at Takarazuka New Hot Spring in 1913, a "Wedding Fair" in 1914, a "Home Fair" in 1915, and a series of small scale fairs on the theme of life in the home. They continued their activities in the Shōwa period with the "Takarazuka Women and Children's Fair" in 1932, the "Takarazuka Youth Fair" in 1934, the "Takarazuka Imperial Navy" and "Takarazuka Communications Culture" fairs in 1935 and then, from 1937 on, fairs with a strong military coloring such as the "Building Greater East Asia Fair" and the "National Defense Scientific Fair." The postwar "American Fair" shows the process continuing. Hankyū did not, however, put these fairs on single-handedly; they collaborated with the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* and *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* newspapers and we find a situation in which the individual contributions of both parties, railway company and newspaper company, are harnessed to complement each other [TSUGANEZAWA 1991; YOSHIMI 1990: 141-152].

2. THE ŌSAKA MAINICHI SHINBUN AND EVENT ORGANIZATION

From the Taishō period onwards newspaper companies joined department stores and railway companies in their eagerness to stage mass events. Looking just

at fairs we find that it was in 1906 that the earliest ones, the *Hōchi Shinbun*'s "Cruise Ships Fair" and the *Jiji Shinpō*'s "Steam Train Fair," were held. From 1912 the *Yamato Shinbun* staged events such as the "Summer Fair," the "Meiji Commemorative Fair" and the "Victory Commemoration Fair," while the latter half of the Taishō period saw papers like the *Ōsaka Nippō*, the *Ōsaka Manchōhō* and the *Yomiuri Shinbun* hold several summer fairs, for example, "Women and Children" fairs (by the *Yomiuri Shinbun*) and "Children's Fairs" (by the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*). We discover that the sponsorship for important elements in prewar event culture came from newspaper companies. For these papers, putting on fairs was part of an important strategy to enlarge their readership, and the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* enjoyed great rewards for its efforts. This company, which was involved with the fairs put on by the Minoo-Arima railway company, staged events which were, for a newspaper, extremely large scale—the 1925 "Great Osaka Fair," for example, also the 1926 "Children's Fair," the 1936 "Glorious Japan Grand Fair" and the 1937 *Ōsaka Mainichi* "Fairland."

The *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* began actively organising events to help enlarge its readership around the time of the Russo-Japanese War. A history of the company published in 1932 states as follows:

From the end of the Russo-Japanese war the company involved itself in social and competitive activities that suited the high spirits of the nation at the war's resolution. These activities, largely unprecedented in Japan, were extremely well received. A fashion for them grew as they spread around the country and this momentum continues even today. [*Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* 1932]

The first event of this type was a "Picture Postcard Exhibition," held in May 1905. This was a time when picture postcards were fashionable as a medium that combined in itself elements which promoted the spread of information and mass culture. Organised around a "Four Seasons" theme, it was opened as an exhibition-cum-convention for postcard design and "it sought to reject vulgar and crude postcards in a cultivation of artistic sensibilities and a quest after cards imbued with a sense of refinement and elegance."

Following the "Picture Postcard Exhibition," a "National Railway Mileage Competition" was held in July 1905:

Members of [the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*'s] staff were selected to head off east and west over the country's railways for a period of ten days. Whichever of them covered the most miles was to be designated the winner. The idea was for them to visit the five big religious institutions—The Great Shrine at Ise, the Konpira Shrine at Sanuki, Tenmangū at Dazaifu, Fudō at Narita, Zenkōji in Shinshū—and to send details of their experiences in every day by telegraph. [*Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* 1932]

The next month, in August, there was a ten-mile swimming contest held on the sea

in Osaka Bay for twenty-eight specially picked competitors “to encourage physical fitness and knowledge of the sea amongst our postwar nation.” Then in October a “Shikoku Pilgrimage” competition was organised around the Thirty-three Temple pilgrim route in Shikoku with prizes for readers who guessed how long a competitor would take to complete one circuit. In May 1906 there was a “Five Thousand Mile Railway Contest” and in July a “Life on the Mountains Contest”:

Two expedition groups were arranged; after they had sorted out special tents and the other equipment and provisions that they needed, they split up, one group heading east from Osaka, the other west. The groups then visited the great mountains of Japan—Tateyama in Etchū, Ontake in Shinano, Yamaegatake in Yamato to the east and Kenzan in Awa, Taisan in Hōki and Asō in Higo to the west—climbed to the summit of each and spent three nights there in their tents, reporting back by wire every day how conditions were on the mountain. [*Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* 1932]

There were plenty of others—a “Shikoku Eighty-eight Temples Pilgrimage Contest,” reports from the top of Mt. Fuji, an “Actors’ Disguise Contest” and so on—as the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* continued trying out these sorts of events during the first decade of the twentieth century [*Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* 1932: 180-198].

Worthy of particular note among the events organised by the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* during this period is the series of sports events held at Hamadera Bathing Beach and Toyonaka Playing Field. A large number of events were put on at Hamadera Bathing Beach, with one organised by the Nankai Railway Company in 1905 and the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* eagerly involving itself in promotional activities from the following year. The “National Junior High School Tennis Tournament” held there from 1908, preceded the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun* “National Middle School Baseball Tournament” by seven years and can be considered as the pioneer in such newspaper company sponsored events. It was held every year after this and it went on to establish Hamadera as a tennis mecca in Japan. All sorts of other sporting events followed there, tennis and swimming predominating: 1909 saw the first “Yacht Regatta” and “Student *Sumō* Tournament,” 1915 the first “National Middle School Swimming Championships” and 1916 the first “Business Tennis Tournament.” At Toyonaka Playing Field, meanwhile, a large number of track and field and baseball meetings were held, beginning with the Japanese Olympic Games, following the completion of facilities there in 1913. Tennis, baseball and track and field events were frequently held during this period in the Kansai region, with railway companies and newspaper companies joining forces and organising them at venues situated along the private railway lines.

The *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* was also very actively involved in organising fairs. One of these, the 1925 “Great Osaka Fair” which marked the paper’s fifteen-thousandth issue, was in operation for forty-seven days and was an extremely grand-scale affair, attracting in total some 1.9 million visitors. In the main area,

Tennōji Park, was a main pavilion, around which lay a Machinery Pavilion, a Panorama Pavilion, a Korean Pavilion, a Continental Pavilion, a Taiwan Pavilion and others still. There was also a Toyotomi Hideyoshi Pavilion at Osaka Castle, whilst in addition exhibitions of Osaka customs and fashions were mounted in related exhibition pavilions in the Osaka department stores run by Daimaru, Mitsukoshi, Takashimaya, Sogō and Matsuzakaya. The main pavilion was divided into twenty-seven sections, such as Water Osaka, Industrial Osaka, Business Osaka, Children's Osaka, Family Osaka and Electric Osaka, shedding light from a variety of angles on the present state and the future of Osaka as a big city.

The emphasis at the "Great Osaka Fair" was on presenting a full portrait of Osaka, and there was no particular concentration on themes of "the family" or "children." Yet, as one can see from the Family Osaka and Children's Osaka sections in the main pavilion, both production and consumption aspects were featured at the fair. In the Electric Osaka section, for example, model rooms were put on display, with electric rice cookers, electric kettles and electric cooking hobs for the kitchen and electric clocks, toasters, heaters, radios and coffee makers for the dining room, all provided by the Osaka Electric Board for middle-class families who could "enjoy some music or the news as they were warmed by the heater." In the Light and Fuel Osaka section there were model kitchens full of gas appliances provided by the Osaka Gas Company—kettles, stoves, fireplaces and cooking appliances and hobs. Similarly, in the Osaka Clothing section, the main Osaka department stores dressed mannequins up in fashionable clothing and put them out on display; they also mounted exhibitions in their own stores around the city, of "Customs in Osaka," "Life and Art in Osaka," for example, and "Fashion Osaka."

Another feature of the Great Osaka Fair was the wide distribution of publicity designed to pull in crowds. The *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* announced the staging of the fair in their New Year's Day issue and went on to "report daily in great detail on how the various plans for the facilities were proceeding and on what was going to be on show," publishing over thirty further public announcements and over two hundred fair-related articles in the four months after New Year. In the company's subsequent celebration of the main reason for the fair's success as "the thoroughness of the publicity," they admitted that "it would have been absolutely impossible for any company other than a newspaper company" to achieve what they had achieved. As well as the newspaper space, the campaign also made use of posters, advertising hoardings, leaflets, cars, aeroplanes and even boats, while since the suburban private railway companies were involved with sponsorship, a large number of discount travel coupons could be issued to provide an additional incentive to visit the show. As a result of this great chain of publicity, the "Great Osaka Fair" attracted "tremendous interest, not only in the city which was holding it . . . but throughout Honshu (Kantō), Kyushu, Shikoku and Hokkaido, and even in the colonies too, in Taiwan, in Korea and in Manchuria [*Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* 1925: 591-619]."

Encouraged by the success of the "Great Osaka Fair," the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shin-*

bun went on to mount a "Children's Fair" the next year in Okazaki Park in Kyoto. There were various different areas—a Children's and Mother's House for instance, a *Kimono* Pavilion, a Sports Pavilion, an Education Pavilion, a Nutrition Pavilion, a North Pole Pavilion, an Underwater Pavilion, an Electric Pavilion, a Technology Pavilion—and among the exhibits were a radio room "where, with the numerous small children's headphones provided, you could hear JOBK broadcasts very clearly," a model of "a town tuned into the radio under the bright stars of a clear night sky" and a science show of "the household science that mothers ought to know." The biggest attractions were the North Pole Pavilion and its electric-powered blizzard and *aurora polaris*, the Electric Pavilion with its representation of the world of the radio under an electric tower "so bright it was blinding," the aquarium in the Underwater Pavilion, and the sports goods in the Sports Pavilion. The *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* claimed that the fair was a "manifestation of the three great forces in the world today: sports, moving pictures and radio." It goes without saying that the same sort of campaign was mounted for this as had been mounted for the "Great Osaka Fair" of the year before.

3. THE YOMIURI SHINBUN AND THE GROWTH OF THE EVENT MASTERS

The *Yomiuri Shinbun* also actively involved itself in event organization from the Taishō period, beginning with a number of "Women and Children" fairs. The largest of them was the "Anniversary of the Transfer of the Capital Fair," held in Ueno Park in 1917. The focal point of this "Transfer of the Capital Fair" was a "panorama" recreating the Meiji Emperor's route on his way to Tokyo. Around Shinobazu Pond were reproductions of the imperial retinue leaving the old imperial palace in Kyoto—scenes of men and women, young and old, prostrating themselves before him along the streets as the procession moved through the city, and of the entourage as it crossed the river by boat. Equally popular were the colonial pavilions—the Taiwan Pavilion, Korea Pavilion and Manchuria and Mongolia Pavilion—and the Watching the War in Europe Flight Pavilion. A large number of different tropical plants had been planted in the Taiwan Pavilion, while native pestles and mortars, armour and helmets made from cane and fish skin, spears, bows and the like were also on display. Brightly colored gateways, from the top storey of which you could look out over the exhibition, had been built for the Korea Pavilion, while other exhibits included those of ancient Korean customs. In the Manchuria and Mongolia Pavilion, meanwhile, was a large model of the construction of the Harbour at Dairen, a salt mine and a panoramic view over the Mongolian plains. The visitors, who "flooded in in droves to sample the multifarious delights of other countries in the Colonial Pavilions," were also presented with a panoramic spectacle of First World War battlefields in the Watching the War in Europe Flight Pavilion. This was done in a way which involved immersing oneself fully in the scene, with the inside of the pavilion having been

made into a gondola, with a propeller at the front of it which made the seats jolt and rattle around, and with a panoramic backdrop of the European battlefields visible outside the windows.

It was not until 1924, however, when Shōriki Matsutarō took over the reins at the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, that the company began to apply itself to putting on true mass events, the events themselves serving as a front for circulation raising. In that year Shōriki planned his first event, a "Summer Fair" at the Kokugikan. According to Mitarai Tatsuo's *Denki Shōriki Matsutarō (Biography of Shōriki Matsutarō)*, the "Summer Fair" put ghosts and spirits in the huge Kokugikan, with refreshing things on show that used water and ice. . . . Shōriki hoped to "attract new subscribers for the price of renting the Kokugikan, having the newspaper issue entrance tickets and provoking interest by distributing free tickets all round downtown" [MITARAI 1955: 148-151]. Shōriki's ambitions were realised and from that point on this became the *Yomiuri Shinbun's* basic strategy. His company was the first to introduce radio broadcasting when in 1926 they organised a Hon'inbō-Karigane *go* competition and a chess masters championship in 1927. For the *go* match huge *go* boards were laid out in Ueno Park and Hibiya Park showing each move as it was made with expert commentators also provided. An "Exhibition of Rare Treasures" was held in 1929 and 1930, a "Franco-Japanese Boxing Match" in 1930 and then in the following year 1931 and again in 1932 famous American baseball players were invited to take part in an "American-Japanese Baseball Friendly." The enthusiasm which surrounded this subsequently led to the creation of the Yomiuri Giants and the start of the Japanese Pro-Baseball League.

Let us at this point take a closer look at the "Summer Fair" at the Kokugikan, the fair which marked the starting point of the *Yomiuri Shinbun's* activities in promoting sequences of fairs, of which only some feature above. After their first "Summer Fair" at the Kokugikan in 1924 the *Yomiuri Shinbun* went on to hold similar fairs every year. Themes changed, to "Yabakei" (a place in Kyushu), the "Japan Alps," "South Sea Tour" or "Manchuria" for example, but the Kokugikan events continued to draw large numbers of visitors up until and during World War II. In the later 1930s in particular these *Yomiuri Shinbun* events, now held in parks at places like Tamagawaen and Kagetsuen, became very militaristic in tone. The people contracted to look after these events, meanwhile, those responsible for the actual realization of a project, were companies such as Nomura Kōgei-sha, "event masters."

With the rapid increase in events put on by department stores, newspaper companies and railway companies in the 1920s and early 1930s, the event masters began to develop as a loose network of people specialising in the sort of work which the events entailed—drawing up plans for fairs and exhibitions, arranging the sites and putting them on. As specialist fair and exhibition organisers they gradually came to increase the influence they wielded. Nakagawa Dōji, himself an "event master," divides their work into four basic categories. The first of these was the planners, busy to and fro between the country's fair offices. *Au fait* with the ins and outs of

every situation, they dealt neatly with planning and publicity and had the influence to prevail upon the construction teams. There were those among them who sold bird's-eye perspective plans they had drawn up themselves to the administration offices, who obtained rebates from construction representatives and wined and dined exhibitors before making sure they were permanently available on site as the opening day drew near. The second category was the companies contracted to do the on-site construction, small and medium sized building companies and decorating companies. The third was the carpenters, construction workers, painters, electricians, gardeners, and so on, who worked under the supervision of the building and decorating companies. Their involvement with fairs was only coincidental, yet it led them to a life of following the fairs around from place to place. The fourth and final category was the tradesmen and so on who rented small spaces in long partitioned buildings known as "horse barns" for trade and on-site entertainment purposes [NAKAGAWA 1969: 10-12].

There are many areas of uncertainty regarding the evolution of the "event masters." It seems, however, that the world of craftsmanship displays in the Edo period may well have contributed to it. If one looks for example at the history of Nomura Kōgei-sha, which was a typical "event master" of the late 1920s, and which has expanded into one of the most prominent producers of exhibitions in Japan today, one finds a process whereby the Japanese event masters developed from the craftsmens' networks of the Edo period into modern exhibition organization companies.

The man who founded the company, Nomura Yasushi, made human effigies out of chrysanthemum blooms. He was born in Sanuki at the start of the Meiji period, an area bustling with people on pilgrimages to Shikoku and the shrine of the seafarer's god Konpira, and this is said to have had a considerable effect upon him. He trained in theater scenery, but in the Taishō period began making the chrysanthemum figures which were fashionable at the time and was active around Sakai, Suma, Maikata and Ikoma, where he used his theatrical scenery experiences to good effect. He expanded into Tokyo after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 and began organising a number of events, first at the Kokugikan at Ryōgoku and then in many other places. The mediating role in Nomura's switch from chrysanthemum figure displays to event production was played by the activities of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* in organising events. The "Summer Fair" at the Kokugikan mentioned above presented Nomura with his first opportunity to be really responsible for event production of this kind. From summer events such as the "Yabakei Fair" and the "Legendary Ghosts of Japan Fair" to the military propaganda of the "Manchuria Fair" and the "New China Fair," the arrangement whereby the *Yomiuri Shinbun* handled sponsorship and Nomura Kōgei-sha handled production became the basic pattern for events at the Kokugikan. Nomura, of course, dealt with other newspaper companies, not just the *Yomiuri Shinbun*, and undertook production for the "Settlement of Hokkaido Fair," which was sponsored by the *Asahi Shinbun* and the "Sign of the Times Fair," which was sponsored by the *Kokumin Shinbun*,

as well as for a series of "Manchurian and Mongolian Army" fairs in Osaka, Nagoya and Sendai sponsored by the *Yūkan Ōsaka Shinbun*, the *Shin Aichi Shinbun*, the *Kahoku Shinpō* and other papers. There was in addition another important factor in Nomura Kōgei-sha's development—its relationship with Takashimaya. From 1927 Takashimaya sponsored a number of fairs such as a "Toyotomi Hideyoshi Fair," a "Sakhalin Fair," a "Doll Fair," a "Taiwan Fair" and a "Children's Fair" and they were all put on by Nomura [NOMURA KŌGEISHA SHASHI HENSAN IINKAI 1991]. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Shōriki and Iida Naojirō, the president of Takashimaya, were school mates at high school and learnt judo together. This may have had something to do with the way in which a connection was forged between Shōriki and Nomura, who already had links with Takashimaya and again with the way that Takashimaya too began holding Kokugikan-style events.

4. THE BASIC FEATURES OF TAISHŌ PERIOD MASS EVENTS

In our examination of the evolution of mass events in the Taishō period thus far and our focus on the main groups responsible for staging them—department stores, newspaper companies and railway companies—we have considered a number of concrete examples. Our investigations have confirmed the various points set out below.

First, in terms of the changes in the content of mass events from Taishō onwards, there is a shift from the event for the producer to the event for the consumer. Meiji fairs and sports meetings directed the concern of every single Japanese towards increasing national productivity, as borne out in the slogans calling for "increases in industrial production" and "a rich country and a strong army." By contrast what we find in the Taishō period's enlarged mass-event style fairs and meetings is a trend towards presenting objects and people as models of an urban consumer lifestyle. We have seen this already in examples above but, to give another, in the *Kokumin Shinbun's* "Household Fair" of 1915 special emphasis was laid over and over again on the fact that the point of the fair was to introduce a new pattern for life at home. Thus we see:

As civilization progresses, as society changes, the problems of practical life at home become ever more complex. What sort of house should we live in? What sort of food should we eat? What sort of clothes should we wear? The problems of the home center, as they did in olden times, on the problems of clothing, food and shelter, yet naturally the clothing, food and shelter of the new age are bound to be different from those of ages past. Bypassing theory, the aim of our "Household Fair" was planned to show, as it actually would be, the right home and the right life to lead at home for this age. [*Kokumin Shinbun* 16 March 1915]

Second, what stimulated this shift was the growth of the newspaper companies,

department stores and railway companies that were the main organizations behind mass events. During and after the Taishō period each of these businesses developed rapidly as cultural industries propagating an urban consumer lifestyle. In Taishō Osaka, for example, the oligopolistic domination of the *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* and the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun* was near total and there was fierce sales competition between the two papers. The reason that the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*, whose circulation had fallen behind, chose fairs as a means to bolster sales and catch up was because "fairs were visited by large numbers of people from all different classes and therefore presented newspapers, which were trying to expand their circulation and readership, with a first rate stage for self publicity." "The change that took place in the newspaper market" following the end of the Russo-Japanese War "from specific, homogeneous classes of reader to unspecific heterogeneous classes changed the nature of the press itself. Fairs, which targeted a variety of classes and which appealed to all of them, raised a newspaper's position for it" [YAMAMOTO 1981: 315].

The same can be said about the Osaka-Kobe transport systems and the Minoo-Arima Railway Company, which joined the competition after the first company, the Hanshin Railway Company, had already started, and also about Mitsukoshi, which had taken the lead in the department store culture that arose in Japan at the end of the Meiji period. Whereas the Meiji state saw fairs and sports meetings as part of the "education" process intended to give birth to a nation of producers, for these cultural industries, fairs and sports meetings were part of the "publicity" process intended to expand markets and give birth to the consumer masses.

Third, in the establishment of an event production system centered around department stores, railway companies and newspaper companies, the mass events of the Taishō period changed the way of life of the showmasters who had been in operation before the modern period. The development of Nomura Kōgei-sha, which handled production for the *Yomiuri Shinbun's* "Summer Fair," sheds some light on the situation for showmasters in the Taishō and Shōwa periods. Since up to the end of the Meiji era fairs were held only once in a few years, while their thrust simply revolved around matters to do with industrial production, the role of showmasters in these fairs was only ever extremely partial. With the advent of the Taishō period, however, the establishment of mass urban society amid the rapid growth of capitalism demanded a more constant supply of mass events for the new middle classes. The department stores, railway companies and newspaper companies were the ones involved in bringing this movement in. Using the three mediums at their disposal—people, objects and language, which constituted their capital—they embraced the domestic scene as a fresh market, and the fairs and other mass events became a means to facilitate their reorganization of daily life. Events, therefore, needed to be put on more regularly, not as festivals held once every few years but as part of the constant move towards making daily life a "spectacle." As the showmasters saw it, on the other hand, if putting on events was to become more regular, then events could be seen as a fresh frontier for the entertain-

ment industry. With Taishō the cultural industries grew and, for the “event masters” to be able to specialise in fairs (as we have seen in the example of Nomura Kōgei-sha), a regular system of staging mass events was needed.

Finally, as something this paper has not been able fully to consider, we need to look at the general public, the people on the receiving end of the Taishō mass events: what sort of people were they and how did they react to these sorts of events? One will quickly appreciate that while fairs and sports events were growing as part of the Taishō period's consumer culture, the “salaryman household,” the consumer of these urban events, was evolving apace. The number of white collar workers—government workers, bank employees, company staff and so on—grew rapidly in the 1910s. Minami Hiroshi and others reckon that they comprised some 7 to 8 per cent of the nation around 1920. If we look at government workers, we find that in 1897 there were about 66,000 civil officials, while this number had nearly quintupled to about 308,000 by 1920. There was a great increase in the number of company workers also during the Taishō period and in 1925 96,000 people were employed in banks alone. The number of companies also grew from 100 in 1897 to 695 in 1920. By the end of Taishō, therefore, huge numbers of people, especially in cities, lived in white-collar households [MINAMI 1965: 183-195]. Their lifestyles had been established in the suburbs of the big cities in the Taishō period, and it expanded through society during the Shōwa period until it defined the way that the great majority of the population lived after the postwar high economic growth. In this paper we have looked at the production side, but we must take a second look and investigate the visitors' viewpoints.

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