
The Form and Distribution of Memorial Tablets in Modern Era

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This paper aims to examine the forms and distribution of memorial tablets in modern times. Buddhist altars are important spaces for worshipping the dead. This has become deeply ingrained in people's lives, not only as a place to enshrine the principal Buddha or bodhisattva, but also as a place to enshrine the memorial tablets of the deceased. Memorial tablets representing the deceased have played an important role, but research on them has not progressed much, and little attention has been paid to the actual state of memorial tablets commonly used today. Therefore, this report examines the characteristics and changes in the form of memorial tablets based on a catalog of memorial tablets. Currently, with the spread of furniture-style Buddhist altars, new designs of memorial tablets are gradually becoming more common. The traditional forms of memorial tablets, such as "Kasuga," "Katsumi," and "Aoi sumikiri," are not historically very old, and are thought to have developed mainly in the Kanto region before spreading nationwide. From the prewar period to the postwar period, variations such as "Nekomaru" and "Hannekomaru" were more common. On the other hand, in the Kansai region centered on Kyoto and extending to the Chukyo region, "Kasuga" did not appear before the war, and the basic design consisted of relatively simple pedestals with layers added on top, such as "Nijuza," "Sanjuza," and "Gojuza." Currently, "Chikura-za," which is popular throughout Japan, mainly in the Kansai region, and "Chudai," which is mainstream in Kansai, are also variations of "Sanjuza." Thus, it is thought that the form of memorial tablets has developed differently in the Kanto and Kansai regions since modern times, and each has been used separately, but recent developments in information circulation have gradually eliminated these regional differences.

Key words: Memorial tablets, Buddhist altars, the ritual for the deceased, distribution, photographs