

Technological Innovation and Shifting Memorial Practices : Developments Since the 1990s and Future Perspectives

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In the early 20th century, with the spread of photography, ordinary citizens gained the ability to leave behind portraits of the deceased (*iei*). This marked the emergence of a new funerary practice, serving as an alternative to memorial tablets (*ihai*), which had long been enshrined in homes as symbols or representations of the deceased. Today, with the ability to preserve various forms of digital records, not only photographs but also a wide range of digital “information about the deceased” are now being used in memorial practices.

In this paper, we will discuss cases of digital technology being incorporated into memorial practices since the 1990s, alongside related technologies. Additionally, we will introduce my research into designing for mourning, memorialization, and remembrance through the use of digital technologies, as well as related works from HCI (Human-Computer Interaction) design research that explore the relationship between humans and computers. By analyzing these cases, we will present and examine key issues pertaining to near-future memorial practices.

The spread of cremation has dramatically improved the usability of cremated remains, enabling practices such as dividing ashes or relocating them (reburial). A quarter of a century has passed since the notion of “freedom of funeral” was advocated, and in recent years, funeral and memorial methods that do not involve storing ashes, such as scattering ashes or keeping small memorial items at home (*temoto kuyo*), have become increasingly common.

As cloud systems for managing digital deceased information become more widespread in the future, their usability will improve, allowing for access at any time and from any location. The distinction between in-home and out-of-home memorial practices will fade, and integrated systems for mourning and memorialization will progress. However, current general-purpose information devices remain inadequate as tools for memorial practices. Cutting-edge HCI design research will play a pivotal role in designing digital tools specifically tailored to future practices of mourning, memorialization, and remembrance.

Furthermore, the advancement of generative AI technology introduces a new issue—the concept of “AI of the deceased.” While many uncertainties remain at this stage, this paper will explore the direction and potential changes in near-future in-home memorial practices.

Key words: Death Ritual, Domestic Memorialization, Digital Technology, Design, *Temoto Kuyo*
