An Examination of *Photo Album of the Funeral of Teru Araki* to Analyze the Process of Overgrowing of Funeral Processions in the Modern Age

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Today’s funeral rites have been basically molded by two factors: (1) the newly established custom of holding the final-farewell ceremony and (2) the development of the funeral industry. The final-farewell ceremony has become the most suitable way to grieve for the deceased in urban areas characterized by frequent population movements. In the meantime, the funeral industry is developing as a complementary alternative to the communities that have been undermined by frequent population movements. As revealed by recent studies on funeral rites, the final-farewell ceremony has gradually overtaken the role of the funeral procession, which had constituted the main funeral ritual since the early modern period but overgrown to the point where it was no longer suitable for urban residents who had embraced a fluid way of living in the process of modernization. Therefore, the process of how the funeral procession was overgrowing at that time is an important issue that needs to be analyzed in more details to uncover the changes of funeral customs after that period.

Most studies of funeral processions, however, took a document-based approach and an external point of view to analyze how the funeral procession had become spectacle without fully examining the subject itself to reveal what actually went on in funeral processions or how the ritual had overgrown. Therefore, the following process of its decline and the ritual elements taken over into the final-farewell ceremony have not been revealed.

*Photo Album of the Funeral of Teru Araki* held by the National Museum of Japanese History is a booklet of photos of a funeral process in the late Meiji Period. This is a very valuable material since there are not many photographic records of a funeral procession from the home to the temple in that era. The photo album not only reveals the actual form of funeral procession at that time but also shows some evidence of overgrowing of the ritual, which later led to the custom of setting up a funeral altar as a display at a memorial service, as well as the continued provision of many kinds of offerings, including lotus and other flowers, to decorate the alter and the drastic transformation of other funeral accessories to make the ritual more spectacle. Thus today’s style of funeral rites has taken form.

Key words: funeral rites, funeral procession, the final-farewell ceremony, funeral industry, photo