This Paper aims to reveal that rituals using sake were an unexpectedly big obstacle to the teetotal movements in modern Japan as well as provide reasons for it. Originally, a groundswell of sentiment in favor of prohibiting habits related to morality, lifestyles, and education such as drinking alcohol by law was generated due to the effects of the U.S.

However, those who tried to develop a legal system to regulate moral issues and lifestyles encountered problems of whether it would be possible to do so and what the scope should be. In fact, these were basic reasons why the Minor Drinking Prohibition Act, first submitted in 1901, was rejected repeatedly for as long as 21 years. Because legislators and bureaucrats considered that once adopted, any laws should be applied to society, their discussions mainly revolved around to what extent they should regulate moral issues and lifestyles whose scope and standards would be difficult to determine.

Especially, discussions about whether ritual sake should be prohibited or not always led to a clash of opinions between those who actually intended to make Japan a non-alcoholic country and those who hesitated to regulate traditional customs or low-alcohol ritual sake. In the end, the Minor Drinking Prohibition Act was enforced because the teetotalers agreed at the Diet to impose no such strict regulations and because the anti-teetotalers made a slip of the tongue. Later, the teetotalers expressed their real intention to eliminate as much alcohol as possible from Japan by submitting an amendment bill to raise the drinking age to 25. However, their ambition to expand and strengthen interventions into moral issues and lifestyles aroused strong opposition at the Diet. Thus, after submitting the amendment bill, the teetotalers rather lost their influence.

Key words: Minor Drinking Prohibition Act, Amendment bill to the Minor Drinking Prohibition Act, teetotal movement, ritual, wedding ceremony, three-times-three exchanges of nuptial cups