How Should the Dead Be Dealt with in Cities?: A Study of the Urban Funeral System Designed by Kiyoshi Inoshita

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This paper presents an overview of the urban funeral system designed by Kiyoshi Inoshita (1884-1973), who was engaged in the administration of cemeteries as the engineer and director of Park Management Division at the Tokyo City Office for a long period of time, in order to contribute to the analysis of changes in folk rituals. He designed and managed Tama Cemetery as a cemetery park, and this style later spread into many other places, especially in the process of post-war reconstruction. The fact that the cemetery park style prevailed, especially after the Second World War, suggests that it is worth reviewing his concepts and measures as a start point of the social history of urban rituals for the dead from the pre-war and post-war periods up to the present.

An overview of his designed funeral system seen in his essays in his book, Toshi to Midori (Cities and Greenery), indicates that he had had an almost complete idea before the Second World War. As the reorganization of graves was the biggest concern to him at that time, he proposed a complete shift to cremation in the future and designed a cemetery with a public ossuary. His idea was radical enough at that time, when the Tokyo City Office was constructing the first ossuary in Zōshigaya Cemetery, yet he even considered proposing the scattering of ashes.

A comparison between this style of Inoshita and the contemporary style proposed by Ungai Hosono in his book, Fumetsu no Funbo (The Tomb of Immortality), shows that the latter designed cemeteries so that they could be the most effective places for education to help guide people in the right direction. It was an opposite approach to that taken by Inoshita, who aimed to develop measures to deal with an increasing number of neglected graves.

Here, the facilities required in Inoshita’s funeral system are listed in the order they are used: a mortuary (for keeping the dead body during the time between the death and the funeral), a funeral hall (for funeral and farewell services), a crematory (for cremation), and a cemetery (consisting of an ossuary, an ash scattering park, and a memorial hall). As the mortuary is assumed to have partially played a role of the present ceremony hall, the idea of Inoshita can be considered to have made the foundation of the current style of how to deal with the deceased in cities. For instance, Yokoamicho Park with Tokyo Memorial Hall in its center is an example of a cemetery with a memorial hall. Now the question left is how the experience of Inoshita in the management of Tokyo Memorial Hall affected his funeral system.