A Study of the Changes in the View of Fetal Life Seen in Memorial Services for Aborted Babies

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This paper examines how the memorial services for babies died as a result of abortion was established and accepted as well as what it is like now. At the post-Second World War period, the number of abortions rapidly increased, and memorial services for aborted babies were performed intermittently by medical workers involved in abortions. Subsequently, supporters for the Pro Life Campaign (an anti-abortion movement in the 1960s) contributed to the creation of a Statue of Kosodate Inochi no Jizōson (the Guardian Deity of Child-rearing and Life) in 1965 and started to hold memorial services for the general public. The services were held not only for aborted babies but also for children died from accidents. In 1971, Shiun-ji Temple was established as a special temple for memorial services for aborted babies. As soon as the temple started to hold memorial services for aborted babies (called as Mizuko Kuyō), the services prevailed. It is considered because the advancement of obstetrics technologies made it possible to recognize the fetal life and because people tried to resolve the domestic problems arising through drastic social changes during the rapid economic growth period by attributing them to aborted babies. The majority of the head temples of Buddhist sects expressly offer memorial services for aborted babies. Many temples without places for memorial services for aborted babies also hold such services when requested. Thus, memorial services for aborted babies seem to generally prevail today.

Key words: Aborted baby, memorial services for aborted babies, guardian deity for the spirits of aborted babies, fetal life, abortion, obstetrics