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The Company Funeral as *Shaen* Culture

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CORPORATE RITUALS IN JAPAN

A company funeral called *shasō* is one of the Japanese corporate rituals and can rarely be found eleswhere, except for some cases in Korea. In Japan, company funerals generally mean funeral services dedicated to the deceased top administrators of a company, where the company is completely responsible, both in terms of finance and manpower, for organising the ceremony. These funerals are quite common across the nation, not only found in major companies and in urban areas, but also in smaller companies and in local regions. As represented by company funerals, Japanese business corporations organise a wide range of rites and events. These include an entrance ceremony for new-comers, a farewell ceremony for retirees, a ground-breaking ceremony, a ceremony to celebrate the founding of the company, a festival rite at the company shrine, and a memorial service for employees who died before retirement. I would like to call all these rites and events as corporate rituals.

Corporate rituals illustrate one aspects of business culture. The value of *shaen* (the association ties presented in the introduction of this volume), human and organisational relations in business associations in this case, are expressed and confirmed in the ritual process. These rituals are neither empty formalities nor ostentation; rather, they imply the sacred nature of the company. Furthermore the rituals are deeply and symbolically interrelated with the prestige and rebirth of a company. Company funerals are analysed from this perspective. With regards to the approach and writing style, I will basically follow an already published research paper [NAKAMAKI 1999a, 1999b], but I have also added the observations subsequent to that paper.

Prior to the analysis, however, I would like to outline briefly how religious facilities and ceremonies play important roles in Japanese corporations.

First of all, it should be pointed out that many Japanese companies have sacred spaces such as shrines and temples for worship. For example, we often find a small Shinto altar in the president's office or in other rooms. It is often the case that a *torii* (a gate to a Shinto shrine) and a small shrine occupy some space on the flat

roof of a company building or in a corner of a factory. Many companies, though not all, worship *inari* (originally a god of rice, later worshipped as the guardian deity of the market place) and many other gods at these shrines. The types of divinities are rich in variety, ranging from a guardian deity of an area, a deity specific to some industries, to a god worshipped by the founder of a company [UNO 1986]. Companies worship these deities to pray for their business success and safe operation [LEWIS 1986, 1993: 19-58; READER 1991: 73-76; NAKAMAKI 1992: 60-61, 65-79; READER & TANABE 1998: 202-204]. It is also noteworthy that some Japanese companies possess their own graves. This is a custom particularly conspicuous in the Kansai region. Many companies have their own graveyards on Mount Kōya and Mount Hiei, which are leading religious centres of Japan, and where companies hold memorial services in front of the memorial monuments both for the employees who died in service and for the deceased founders and administrators [NAKAMAKI 1992, 1993, 1995]. The monuments for deceased employees take on the aspect of a grave for corporate warriors, and the monument for the founders implies a grave for the ancestors of the company. We find in the latter Japanese traditional ideas concerning the dead of the household (*ie*).

As far as companies dedicate a part of their premises to religion, it is only natural that they spend some time for religious ceremonies. Some CEOs bow to an altar every morning and evening, and many big companies hold monthly services at company shrines built in their sites. Some companies make it a rule to recite a sutra every morning and evening, and others offer a silent prayer at every branch office throughout the country when a memorial service for the dead is conducted. In any case, however, outsiders rarely have a chance to gain access to these rituals and activities.

Company funerals, however, are both internal and external ceremonies. They are external ceremonies, because business relationships with customers, shareholders, other companies in the same industry, and politicians are fully involved. There are many people who attend the service just out of their business obligations, even though they have never met the deceased before. Prior to funeral services, companies have to make the necessary arrangements to inform all the parties concerned. They put an obituary notice on a newspaper, in which the schedule of the company funeral is written, and also send invitation letters. On the day of the company funeral, scores of managers are mobilised to implement the service effectively. For the preparation, the staff from key sections, such as the General Affairs Department and the secretaries, devote a considerable amount of their time and energy. The latest analysis of obituary notices shows that company funerals in the Tokyo area are held about twenty-five days on average after the death of a person [MURAKAMI 1999b: 272]. It is a common practice to hold a family funeral, called *missō*, soon after death. The distinction between *shasō* and *missō* is dealt with later.

As seen above, even with just a glance at company shrines and funeral services, it is not difficult to imagine how much importance Japanese corporations

place on religious events and customs. Although corporate rituals are occasionally affected by the founder's personal belief or his/her family religion, or in some cases a religion prevailing in the locality, it is more appropriate to take the view that it is a religious dimension immanent in a company. Robert Bellah has pointed out the existence of civil religion in America [BELLAH 1970: 168-186], a so-called company religion effectively functions in each Japanese corporation. In that arena, *shaen*, or associational relationships, being relatively independent from local community relationships (*chien)* and blood relationships (*ketsuen*), have a significant presence. In that sense, therefore, corporate rituals need to be understood as a culture unique to a company, or in other words, as company culture and *shaen* culture. However, *shaen* in this case only deals with internal/external associations of companies, unlike *shaen* with the wide implications proposed by Toshinao Yoneyama [YONEYAMA 1981: 112-137].

SHAEN AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

As civil religion in America does not specify a god to be worshipped, Japanese companies normally do not care about which deity is worshipped in their corporate rituals. As long as it is a traditional religion, not only Shintoism and Buddhism, but also Christianity, it does not create any inconvenience. As a matter of fact, it is common that various deities are worshipped in a company shrine, and it is not unusual to find a head office and factory worshiping different deities. A memorial monument is built for the souls of deceased employees irrespective of their religious convictions and affiliations. Naturally enough, some bereaved families take a firm position, due to religious reasons, on the the company's initiative to enshrine the departed soul of their beloved. Such a case, i.e. refusing corporate rituals, however, is quite rare.

In planning and holding company funerals, companies are flexible enough to accommodate themselves to any religion, whether it is Buddhism, Shintoism or Christianity. On these occasions, where priority is given to the religion of the deceased person or his/her family, companies never try to impose other religions or religious sects.

In recent years, there has been a growing number of company funerals that do not show the presence of any particular religion. This is the so-called "non-religious style." Silent prayer and flower offerings are employed as a standard style at these funerals, instead of practices unique to certain religions and religious sects, such as offering incense (Buddhist practice) or offering a sprig of the sacred tree (Shinto practice). The biggest advantage of the non-religious style ceremony is that the people attending a funeral are not forced to opt for religious practices against their will. Silent prayer and flower offerings are acceptable practices, regardless of the attendants' beliefs, whether it be a Christian who refuses incense burning, or a Buddhist who is unwilling to offer a sprig of the sacred tree. Company funerals held at a hotel, under the name "farewell ceremony", often follow a non-religious

style.

Taking into account all the necessary arrangements that should be made for *shaen*, the safest way for a company, both in terms of the operation and the budget, would be to hold a non-religious service at a hotel. This is mainly because hotels are generally very good at services, and parking is not a major problem, both of which are very important factors in conducting company funerals. Another big incentive is that companies do not have to make a monetary offering to priests in the "non-religious style." In addition, hotels recently have a policy of actively soliciting customers to use hotels for funeral and memorial services.

Western-style hotels in Japan have so far enjoyed popularity as sites for wedding ceremonies and banquets. Many hotels nowadays have a chapel or two to conduct a Christian style wedding ceremony, along with a small wedding hall for Shinto style. Okuninushi-no-mikoto, a man-figure deity worshipped at Izumo Grand Shrine, is usually enshrined in a Shinto altar as a patron god of marriage. Hotels have so far avoided as much as possible using their banquet rooms for Buddhist mortuary rites, which include funeral services and memorial services. This is because the smell of incense is not appropriate for an auspicious wedding banquet. However, with the coming of the aging society and the declining birth rate, hotels are compelled to cope with a decrease in the number of weddings, and are now paying attention to mortuary rites. Hotels are now looking for other business opportunities and welcoming non-religious company funeral rites, without any use of incense.

In choosing a site for company funerals, other than a hotel, it is religious affiliation that becomes an important factor. In this process, various statuses, such as that of company, the deceased, the site and the rank of priest, should be given careful consideration. Each city has renowned and high-ranking temples, where the service charge is naturally accordingly high. In the case of Tokyo, Tsukiji Honganji Temple (Jōdo-Shinshū Honganji-ha), Zōjōji Temple (Jōdo-shū), Tokyo Honganji Temple (Shinshū Tokyo Honganji-ha), Gokokuji Temple (Shingon-shū Buzan-ha), Kōyasan Tokyo Betsuin (Kōyasan Shingon-shū) are among those temples with a long and distinguished history. In Osaka, Kita-Midō (Jōdo-Shinshū Honganji-ha) and Minami-Midō (Shinshū Ōtani-ha) belong to such a category.

As described above, the religious affiliation of the deceased or his/her family seems to condition company funerals on the surface. In reality, however, there are other important factors, such as social position and the influence of the dead, and the social status of the company, which endow a subtle complexity to the rites.

EULOGY AND FAREWELL

At company funerals, attendants pray for the repose of the departed soul, and share grief with the bereaved family. In principle, however, company funerals do not invade the territory specific to religion, for example, the destination of the deceased spirit. The basic rule is that the rite will not deviate from *shaen*, or

business associations in this world.

Traditionally, religions have created images about the post-life world, which can be represented by heaven, hell, paradise, pure land, underworld of the dead, and have assumed spiritual immortality after physical death. A typical case is the motif of death and rebirth, and anthropologists and scholars of religious studies such as Robert Hertz and Mircea Eliade have studied abundant cases found in ethnic groups and religions throughout the world [METCALF & HUNTINGTON 1979].

In this country, when someone dies, people dress up the dead in a traditional travelling costume, a traditional practice widely seen even nowadays. Wearing *tekkō,* a covering for the back of the hand and wrist, *kyahan,* puttees, a pair of white socks (*tabi)* and straw sandals (*waraji*), and holding a cane in the right hand, the dead will pass to the other shore. Such a custom continues under the name of authentic tradition, no matter how much it is losing relevance. In Ghana, a coffin takes the form of a car or an airplane, while in Japan, a *rokumon-sen*, a small coin used in feudal times, is still put in a sack in order to be given to the boatman for crossing the Styx, and placed in the coffin.

At a company funeral, which is held after the family funeral, a decorated box containing the remaining ashes is placed on an altar and the image of starting on a new journey is completely absent. The same thing can be said of the photograph of the deceased person displayed on the altar. In most cases, attendants see a picture of the person in a business suit. A picture of the person at work has come to be used in recent years. In Bali, Indonesia, when a king died, women serving him plunged themselves into a fire and pigeons were released into the air, symbolising the departure of the soul. On the contrary, company funerals do not show any symbol of rebirth in the afterlife. During the funeral, no priest is given any opportunity to deliver a sermon, which just illustrates how carefully referring to the next world is avoided. We see, however, that some people ask the deceased to protect the company in the future as a guardian spirit.

Thus, supposing that there is no motif at all or scarce indication about a new journey and rebirth, what substitutes for it as a major theme? It seems to be a eulogy and a farewell. At the same time, it is indispensable to demonstrate internally/externally how successfully a company can continue its operation and achieve rebirth.

A business corporation organises a funeral service mainly because it needs an occasion to praise in public the deceased top manager who greatly contributed to the company. In a memorial address, a representative of the funeral committee repeatedly refers to all the achievements and contributions of the deceased person, and expresses gratitude for the services rendered by that person. Messages of condolence delivered by VIP attendants also emphasise how much the departed was devoted to the development of the company and the industry. The business achievements of the deceased are the major topic in the speech, and both the hosts and guests give unstilted praise to the person. It is the time when a set of certificates and medals placed on the altar shines even more brilliantly, and the life

of the departed is reflected on with a positive impression.

Both the personal preferences and the friendships of the deceased make the rite more distinguished. Among unique programs, one can mention a tea offering conducted by the head of a tea ceremony school, a live performance by an orchestra, a famous announcer acting as master of ceremonies, and a foreign VIP delivering a message of condolence [NAKAMAKI 2001a: 50-53].

VIPs from various organisations, including a representative of the funeral committee, are the people who will read the messages of condolence. More specifically, an incumbent president, a chief of trade groups, a head of corporate affiliations, a president of a main bank, a chief of a supervising agency, a leader of the business community, and leading politicians are expected to carry out such an important duty. The eulogists are chosen according to certain criteria, where the social status of the person in a company, industry, or business community, and in a political circle is given the first priority. Meanwhile, when people who represent a group of friends and employees deliver messages, the intimacy of the relationship with the deceased, both in private and public, has a great significance.

The next important issue after delivering condolence messages is the nomination of a person who offers incense (in a Buddhist service) as a representative of the guests. What concerns company staff most is whom they should ask to read a message and to offer incense, and how. This is because these decisions accurately reflect the view of a company about how they see each relation in *shaen*.

Another important rite, equally important as the eulogy, is a final farewell called *kokubetsu*. As discussed above, a company funeral service puts more emphasis on how carefully companies can manage a farewell ceremony, rather than creating an image of a new journey for the deceased. Although a farewell is an important element in condolence messages, various courtesy practices such as burning incense, offering a sprig of the sacred tree, observing a silent prayer, or offering flowers have also great significance. Guests who have finished offering incense or flowers express their deep regret in words and in attitudes both to the bereaved family and top managers of a company, who are standing and bowing to show their respect to the guests. Then, once the rite is finished, *shaen*, the business relationship surrounding the deceased person, diminishes.

Recently, it appears that company funerals at a city hotel under the name of an "*owakarekai* (farewell ceremony)" are on the increase. This indicates that a farewell among people related under *shaen* has taken a clear form. A "farewell ceremony" where non-religious practices, such as praying in silence or offering flowers are common, is an ultimate form of a rite, where bidding farewell to the departed person is a major focus. In these ceremonies, we find neither sutra recitation nor offering incense. Instead of conducting a service according to some specific religion, there is a wide range of unique programs dedicated to the deceased person, which might include a video-show on the life of the deceased, or the offering of songs loved by that person. Some companies even encourage

attendants to dress informally at such services.

Looking at this situation from an other perspective, religion has not established much of a presence in the concept of *shaen*. This is in striking contrast to *chien* and *ketsuen*. Whereas Shintoism plays an important role in festivals in a local community, and Buddhism in a consanguine cult for the dead, religion apparently shows no clear sign of importance in a company funeral concerning *shaen* relations.

PRIVATE FUNERALS AND COMPANY FUNERALS

One big question that arises here is why Japanese companies have to organise a funeral service, totally bearing the financial burden and devoting a huge amount of time and energy. On top of that, in most cases company funerals are quite big in scale, and need much time for preparation, and are generally held independently of private funerals. It was unlikely that a merchant family in the pre-war era held a showy funeral, and that only people in a limited range, i.e. mainly members of the family and kin, attended. On the contrary, what brought newly emerging companies to conduct such showy company funerals as we witness today?

According to an analysis of obituary notices, it was in the late 1960s that either a combination of a private funeral (*missō*) and a company funeral (*shasō*), or an informal funeral (*kassō*) and a formal funeral (*honsō*) became a prominent style [MURAKAMI and YAMADA 1999: 85]. Accordingly, a bereaved family is forced to conduct a funeral service twice. Especially for leading corporations in urban areas, it is common in *shaen* practices to organise company funerals as a second funeral. If the first private funeral, where family members are the major players, is a rite conducted according to the "religion of the *ie* (household)", the second company funeral is a ceremony of "corporate religion". In a parody of the 007 films, it can be said that "CEOs only die twice", first for *ie*, and then for *kaisha* (company).

There is a rite clearly demonstrating this. A representative of a family hands the remains of the deceased in a box to a representative of the host-company in organising the funeral at the site. After receiving it, either the representative of the company or an assistant of the funeral company places the box on an altar. Although such a practice cannot be found at every company funeral, it helps to impress people with the company organising all services, and where the representative of a company is playing a more important role than the representative of the bereaved family.

Many differences can be found between the two funeral services in various aspects. For example, whereas a private funeral accepts a funeral offering in the form of money (*kōden*) or flowers (*kenka*), a company funeral refuses, and thus does not give an obituary gift (*kōden gaeshi*) in return. Companies do not need extra revenues that are subject to taxation. There are also some differences in the ornaments of the altar. In a private funeral, the altar is decorated more or less with objects of religious implication. In the case of a company funeral, a company logo and a company crest are sometimes used as ornaments instead. When comparing

the expenses, whereas the estimate for a private funeral at home is 4.2 million yen, in the case of small and medium-sized companies, it costs 11.7 million yen on average for a company funeral [KATŌ 1997: 211-222]. However, the expenses for company funerals vary between companies, and hundreds of millions need to be allocated for a magnificent funeral. There is even a life insurance policy on the market, which is supposed to help to cover such an expense.

A private funeral and a company funeral are considered as one set, and are closely interrelated. As a matter of fact, when a company VIP passes away, the company is deeply involved even in the stage of the private funeral. Employees are dispatched to help the bereaved family deal with funeral attendants, and make the necessary arrangements to cope with obituary gifts given by attendants. The death of a company VIP forces the company to play an important role in a whole series of funeral services, even from the stage of the private funeral. Analysing the situation with the terminology used in business management, a company is challenged to prove how efficiently its risk management system is working.

At the same time, a company also offers very generous support to the families of people in a managerial position when they die. Although an official company funeral cannot be held for them, there is another category called "a semi-official company funeral". It is particularly noteworthy that a company does not only make reasonable financial contributions, but also dispatches a large number of employees to help the bereaved family during the wake and funeral service. Moreover, even at the funeral of a rank-and-file employee, the company has a greater significance than the neighbourhood or residents' association, especially in an urban area. In other words, every funeral service held for company employees is now becoming a "company funeral", though there is a big difference in size. *Shaen*, in a sense, is surpassing community relations in significance.

Meanwhile, in Japan, it is not company VIPs alone for whom funeral services are held on two different occasions. A state funeral (*kokusō*) for Mr. Shigeru Yoshida, an ex-Prime Minister, a national funeral (*kokuminsō*) for another ex-Prime Minister, Mr. Eisaku Satō, funerals conducted by a political party, funerals held by various organisations and school funerals are among the examples. In any case, a social unit other than *ie* becomes the organiser in these magnificent funeral services. While the spirits of the war dead are enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo, in the pre-war era, the spirits of "corporate soldiers" who died during their service are enshrined at a memorial monument of the company, as described before. In a broader sense, the monument also implies a second funeral for the dead employees, and they hold a unique position in a company together with VIPs.

With regards to the double funeral services, there is a concept of double obsequies in anthropology. There is a terminology indicating a very complex funeral service, under which two kinds of ceremonies are combined. According to Robert Hertz, it consists of processes in three stages, starting from carnal death and going on to the final rite after an interim period. For example, indigenous people called Ngaju Dayak living in the island of Borneo (Kalimantan), who have a

custom of washing the bones of the dead, see the dead body as something unclean until it turns into bones. During that period, they believe that the spirit of the dead remains with them, and continues to threaten the people. Therefore when someone dies and close relatives go into mourning, they are also living with the dead in a quasi-community. They finally return to a normal life after a series of mortuary rites, such as washing bones of the dead, and placing them in a charnel house. These rites might be called the first interment and the second interment. The most remarkable feature is, in sum, that two kinds of funeral rites are conducted after the lapse of time needed for the disposal of the body. Such mortuary rites are typically found in the Malayo-Polynesian culture of Southeast Asia and Madagascar. The custom of bone washing spread to the islands of Amami and Okinawa.

Another important feature is that multiple funerals in general are held for a person with a high social status. Company funerals have something in common with multiple funerals in that they hold funeral rites twice for a VIP. At the same time, there also exists a big difference between the two. What distinguishes multiple funerals from company funerals is that the former are exclusively devoted to the rebirth of the dead, while the latter leave the issue of immortality of the soul in the hands of the personal religion or the religion of the *ie*. In spite of those differences, however, it deserves special attention that both multiple funerals and company funerals are closely related with the social status and prestige of the deceased person in terms of the functional aspects of funerals.

SOCIAL *SHAEN*

It is self-explanatory that company funerals are conducted within a framework of business relationships among companies. Nevertheless, in order to verify how much company funerals are actually interrelated with *shaen*, it would be useful to take an alternative approach by shedding light on company funerals through negative aspects, such as taboos. The biggest taboo is not to hold company funerals on weekends, national holidays, *tomobiki* (literally "friend-pulling days"; days of the six-day week cycle on which one's luck affects that of one's friends), or new-year holidays. Japanese people in general keep up a custom of avoiding *tomobiki* and new-year holidays for funerals. Weekends and national holidays are also added to the list in the case of company funerals. It implies even that funerals should be conducted within business hours. In other words, very careful consideration is given not to have any company-related events on holidays.

Secondly, business manners are given considerable importance in company funerals. Manuals on company funerals and business how-to books always spend some pages on how to behave on these occasions. They point out that ill-manners are likely to bring shame on a company, thus encouraging readers to be aware that each employee is a representative of the company. I would like to take up two examples:

> If you do something against manners, it will not only bring shame on your company, but also affect future business. (Excerpt from a book)

> Company funerals are very important events, where guests are likely to scrutinise every manner and behaviour of employees. Thus you have to understand that what you do will heavily influence your company's image. (Excerpt from a company manual)

Company employees are given instructions on what they should or should not do during funeral services. Examples are: always behave with sincerity; no crowding; no running around; no folding arms either in front or back; no chatting and no fooling around; no change in attitudes to others (i.e. showing the same level of politeness to everyone); behaving in a well-disciplined manner and being prepared to deal with guests whenever necessary. Some companies even go further: they produce a list of well-defined instructions on each issue, for example, avoiding wearing bright objects such as accessories; not cutting across guests; not smoking and distribute it to employees in advance. In addition, employees' posture is checked at the scene, and they are told to stand up straight with arms at their side during the service.

It is occasionally noticed that some major companies are producing manuals on company funerals. This means that they are working on establishing rules for *shaen*. However, on the whole, it is more common that professional funeral directors try to meet the request of a company on each issue based on their own manual on company funerals. With urbanisation going on, it becomes more evident that professional funeral companies are taking an initiative in funeral culture, by taking the place of community relations and blood relations, which traditionally have played an important role. The same thing applies to company funerals. A funeral company is the master of services, providing a basic model for company funerals, based on which companies are adding some characteristics unique to their own organisations.

One discussion of whether it is a funeral company or a company that takes the initiative in company funerals is set aside, all the questions come down to how to arrange company funerals. At company funerals, a company will make every effort to improve their external image for their prestige, and guests are also expected to follow manners for the honour of their companies. In this sense, both a host and a guest represent their *kaisha* (company). It is at company funerals that VIPs and other company staff become aware of a strong sense of belonging to their own company. It is just the same as when people have felt a strong sense of *mura* (village) or *machi* (town) on festive occasions.

PRODUCING INEQUALITY

As a patriarch has been bound by obligations to make the *ie* (household)

successful and to develop it into further prosperity, heavy responsibilities for the successful business of a company rest on VIPs' shoulders. VIPs, not only representing a host-company, but also being asked to read condolence messages and to offer incense, have to perform their parts effectively as ambassadors of their companies and industries. Even though they represent companies in rivalry, they are still asked to do so, since it is the duty of an official figure. Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist who studied the Bali of the nineteenth century, took the view that the state of Bali was a "theatre state", where inequality in society and a strong sense of pride in social status were dramatised. He further discussed a marvellous funeral in that "theatre state", and pointed out that more emphasis was put on loyalty and prestige than on territory or domain [GEERTZ 1980: 24-25]. Spectacular company funerals also internally seek for loyalty from employees, and externally ask for deepening relationships in *shaen*, which will result in keeping up the a high prestige of a company. In this respect, company funerals can be considered as "theatre", where VIPs are "stars" and perform major roles as such, while enjoying attentive services.

As a general rule, it is the company's employees who basically take care of visiting VIPs at funerals. A funeral company does not organaise everything. Certain employees are assigned to attend VIPs and lead them to waiting rooms especially arranged for them. Although companies make every effort to offer well-developed attentive services to VIPs, they even rank VIPs according to a certain standard. All the services offered, including the size of waiting rooms, serving tea or not, ushering to the service with time differences, are different according to their ranks, such as Super-VIPs, regular VIPs and secondclass VIPs.

The most important issue in dealing with busy VIPs is not to make them wait. For effective operation, some companies even hire professional doormen from leading city hotels or chauffeurs from luxury limousine companies as temporary staff who are expected to be experts in guest relations, particularly in dealing with VIPs, and make them receive the VIPs at a carriage entrance. These professionals are able to recognise the car of each VIP from far distance, and know all the appropriate manners when VIPs are getting in or out of a car. They also understand that offering a swift and well-mannered service in receiving and sending guests will give a big impact on the company image, even though there is not much difference in actual waiting time. Company funerals nowadays present a picture of a race against time, and schedules have to be worked out to the minute for effective time management.

However, it is not always the case that doormen from a leading hotel can provide the best service. An advertising company, for example, dares not hire professional doormen. One of the reasons is that employees in this company are naturally accustomed to deal with guests. Another reason is that company staff are better for enforcing systematic instructions. Moreover, there might be some differences even in the same situation between the perspective of a doorman who is hired only temporarily and that of a host-company. *Shaen* needs a sensitive and

subtle approach, which is beyond the capacity of doormen, even though they are specialists in guest relations.

When a funeral is held at a hall that can only accommodate 200 to 300 at maximum, the company has to carefully screen VIPs to whom invitation cards are sent. When the host-company draws a sharp line between VIPs and other guest attendants by inviting only VIPs to a funeral rite and others to a farewell ceremony, the company definitely gives the impression that it treats attendants unequally. To cope with this, the company makes every effort to cap the number of VIPs within a range of seating capacity, and how effectively to manage the situation is up to the parties in charge of organising a funeral. In recent years, thanks to IT, data used for the screening process can be effectively produced based on the lists submitted by each department.

The parking lot is another major concern for the host-company. In most cases, VIPs are the only people who come to the funeral service by car, and parking tickets are not distributed in many cases. Some companies even change the colour of ticket according to the rank of VIPs, such as Super VIPs, Regular VIPs and second class VIPs. When comparing the steward service in receiving and sending VIPs, the service at arrival is not so difficult, because there are some time differences in their arrival. However, since VIPs leave almost at the same time, there may be some problems in paging services when asking chauffeurs to come to pick them up. Mobile phones are nowadays fully utilised, and temporary telephones are sometimes installed at remote car parks to minimise trouble. Comparing funeral halls and temples with hotels and domes, the latter have bigger car parks. This is why the latter will be more favoured as sites for company funerals.

Despite a company's utmost efforts in serving VIPs, mishandling cases frequently occur. Thus, the staff of the host-company have to pay a visit of thanks to VIPs on the day following the funeral, or within a few days at the latest. This is common-sense in social manners of *shaen*. VIPs are usually very busy, and it is often the case that they are not even in their offices. In that case, visitors always have to leave their name-cards as evidence of their visit. The name-card is a convenient gadget indispensable to *shaen*. Moreover, this post-funeral visit is the best occasion to express an apology for any mishandling.

A host-company usually shows a courtesy to guests, not necessarily VIPs, for their attendance at a service. While gratitude is expressed through a newspaper advertisement the following day, the staff of each department and each level also express words of gratitude and apology as a courtesy. Failing in social obligations should be avoided in the world of *shaen*, too. By taking those opportunities, a company is also enabled to officially announce its new management system and ongoing concern.

Once these processes are completed, all the courtesy practices related to the company funeral come to an end. The relationship through company funerals, however, still goes on. This is because just as a reciprocal give-and-take relation

found in the *mana* of Melanesia makes a traditional custom continue with its marvellous compelling power, so reciprocal courtesy exchanges among companies are potentially expected to be maintained through company funerals.

A series of attentive services offered to VIPs only reveals that a hierarchy and an inequality lie in organisations. This is the major principle, by which company funerals are conducted, and is crucially important for a management body, such as a company, a trade group, an industry, and business and political communities. Although VIPs typically stand out because they are standing on the top of a pyramid as a symbol, a principle of hierarchy and inequality is thoroughly understood further down to the bottom of the pyramid. More specifically, it is clearly illustrated by the following: differentiation of guests by inviting them either to a funeral rite or a farewell ceremony according to their ranks or even a number of rank-and-file staff who are not asked to attend a service at all. In other words, company funerals just prove that well-designed differentiation tactics are crucially important for successful business operations.

New employees start their company lives together from the same starting point on the day of an entrance ceremony, usually April 1. However, their endings are far different based on hierarchy. Some restricted number of top management are honoured by ending their company lives with company funerals. From the viewpoint of rite of passage, company life begins with an initiation ceremony of equality and ends with a company funeral of inequality.

One thing that should be pointed out here is that inequality in this case is not related to social discrimination. It is an inequality needed to form a hierarchy in organisations, and introducing a principle of equality can reduce the level of inequality to a certain degree. The case of a company funeral at Osaka Dome serves as a good example [NAKAMAKI 1999b: 227-237].

On January 28, 1998, the first company funeral was held at Osaka Dome, which is used as a baseball field during the season. It was a funeral for a founder of a small company with about 250 employees. Despite the scale of the company, approximately 1000 people attended the funeral. The second president, who was the son of the founder, avoided temples that could only accommodate around 200 people at maximum, and looked for alternatives, where the risk of discrimination against guests can be minimised. Then, after careful considerations, Osaka Dome was finally chosen as the most favourable site. The most remarkable aspect at this funeral was that there was no distinction between funeral rite and farewell ceremony, which would naturally differentiate VIPs from other attendants. A spacious dome enabled all the guests to take seat in an order based on first-come-first-served, except for some VIPs who were asked to read condolence messages. It should be pointed out that the program also attracted remarkable attention. The first part of the program, an official funeral service, was followed by the second part, in which live music was performed for the deceased, who had loved Japanese popular songs and folk songs. Needles to say only a dome, a multi-purpose and non-religious hall, made it all possible.

PRODUCING IMMORTALITY AND REBIRTH

With the completion of all the processes related to a company funeral, a company returns to normal life. One big question here is: are there any changes before and after a company funeral? When focusing on the deceased person, a company funeral is not involved at all in the rebirth of the dead soul. When looking at the situation through *shaen*, however, it is a different story. This is because a company always faces the problem of the rebirth of its organisation. The sudden death of an incumbent president or chairman may potentially cause big trouble in appointing the most appropriate successor. A Tōei film "*Shasō* (Company Funeral)" (1989) satirically featured that turbulence through confrontations between a chairman's group and a president's group [MURAKAMI 1999a: 139-141; NAKAMAKI 2001a: 14-16]. One of the challenges of company funerals is to iron out those conflicts, and to announce that, both internally and externally the company will effectively continue its business and has successfully gone through a reorganisation process.

When an incumbent president passes away, a new president or a successor will normally direct the company funeral, though there are some exceptional cases, such as a senior board member playing this role as a transitional phase. In any case, the chairman of a funeral committee will play a pivotal role in the new system, and that person is expected to carry out the first important duty at a company funeral. Company funerals are given a significant meaning as a rite of passage in the succession to position and power within a company. When a founder with great charisma dies, the company funeral is likely to be more dramatic.

One remarkable aspect is that the number of company funerals for an incumbent president is unexpectedly small. According to a survey of recent obituary notices, it was found that, in the Tokyo area, no more than 22% of the deceased served as a president during their lifetime, and moreover if it is an incumbent president, the rate becomes much lower [MURAKAMI 1999b: 268]. The majority are those who served as presidents and became advisors at large companies and the founders of small and medium-sized companies. The former group consist of executives who have already handed over the position of presidency or chairmanship to successors. The latter group mostly consists of entrepreneurs who started their own business during the time of economic recovery after World War II. In the meantime, the same survey also reveals a clear difference between large companies and small and medium-sized companies. In the former group, the president serves as chairman of a funeral committee, and in the latter group, a board member who has become the successor serves as chairman.

In any case, companies change themselves in various aspects, once they complete all the necessary processes of eulogy and a farewell ceremony for the deceased who once served as a member of top management. At least it is true that the deceased will be extremely less influential in the company. With fulfilling important obligations for the deceased, a company will naturally be less restrained

by the departed VIP. By taking the opportunity of a company funeral, corporations will become clearly determined to start afresh their business under a new administration. Sure enough, companies must feel relieved when they have finished a rite to pacify the spirit of the dead, though this does not necessarily imply exorcising the ghost.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that company funeral is a rite of formality to praise and bid farewell to the dead. Companies can also take this opportunity to assert that they will further continue their business despite the loss of the VIP, and *shaen* will be renewed through the death of the VIP. Although praising and bidding farewell to the dead will be a major focus at company funerals, companies themselves can gain prestige and experience a symbolic process of "death and rebirth". A company funeral is nothing but a cultural performance to revive a company and *shaen* through materialising the death of VIPs.

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