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Cut-flower Usage for Ancestral Tombs in Kagoshima, Japan

Eisuke Matsuo

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Summary. Japanese people offer a great variety of cut flowers at their ancestors' tombs during four major events each year. In Kagoshima, however, they offer cut flowers throughout the year. Their basic offering combines cut-foliage plants, e.g., *Eurya japonica* Thunb. and colorful plants like chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum morifolium* Ramat.). Frequently used plant types have good keeping quality and are quite colorful and economical. Cultural and religious differences in the areas influence local use patterns.

The Japanese people offer a greater variety of cut flowers at their ancestors' tombs during four major events in a year—New Year's Day, spring equinox, Obon (Japanese Parentalia), autumn equinox—than on ordinary days. However, people in Kagoshima, located in the southern part of Japan, offer cut flow-

ers at the tombs of their ancestors throughout the year (Fig. 1). Thus, Kagoshima has the highest cut-flower consumption in Japan, ≈ 1.5 times the Japanese average (Stat. Bur. Management and Coordination, 1991) and a bigger market for chrysanthemums, the most popular tomb flower in Japan, than other areas of the country (Kagoshimaken Kakiengi Nogyo Kyodo Kumiai, 1989; Nippon Kaki Oroshiuri Shijo Kyokai, 1988).

Therefore, I compared the mode of flower dedication in Kagoshima and Fukuoka cemeteries, and surveyed the frequency of species and plant types used for floral tomb offerings. This survey was conducted in the Toso-bochi cemetery, Kagoshima City, in 1988-89 and in Heiwa Reien cemetery, Fukuoka (300 km north of Kagoshima) in 1988-89. Plant species offered at 200 tombs were recorded mainly around the 20th of each month.

Fig. 1. Cut-flower-decorated tombs at the Toso-bochi cemetery in Kagoshima, Japan (20 Feb. 1990).

Fig. 2. Percentage of cut-flower-decorated tombs in Kagoshima and Fukuoka, Japan (1988-89).

Monthly changing pattern of cut-flower offering

The percentage of tombs decorated with cut flowers, the number of tombs with cut flowers relative to the total number of tombs observed, increased during the four special events (Fig. 2). This percentage was consistently higher in Kagoshima than in Fukuoka. The difference was especially pronounced during ordinary days. This is because people in Kagoshima usually offer flowers once a week (Matsuo and Nonaka, 1989), while those in Fukuoka do this mainly during the four religious events.

Plant type used for floral tomb offerings

Herbaceous plant species accounted for $\approx 60\%$ of the 162 plant

Fig. 3. Monthly changes in number of plant species observed on tombs in Kagoshima, Japan (1988-89).

species observed, exceeding woody plants (Table 1). Around 80% of the plant species were colorful, and flowering plants (65.4%) exceeded any other types.

Changing pattern of plant type offerings

Many plant species (33 to 52) were used for decoration (Fig. 3). More species were used in January, April, May, June, and July than in October, November, and December. The number of species used to decorate a given tomb was greater in January, March, August, and September, the four months with special events, and fewer in October and November. The ratio of woody : herbaceous plants was almost 50:50 from January to March but gradually increased to 70:30 during summer and fall. On two-thirds of the tombs, colorful plants were combined with green cut foliage. Fewer tombs were offered with only green plants during the four religious events.

Plant species used frequently

Usage point was defined as the percentage of tombs on which the plant was observed among 200 tombs in 12 monthly inspections in 1988. Table 2 lists plants with >50 usage points. Among these, chrysanthemum,

Table 2. Plant species used frequently at the Toso-bochi cemetery in Kagoshima and their keeping quality, color, and price. Plants with >50 usage pointed are included¹.

Plant species (Japanese name)	Rank	Usage point ²	Keeping quality ³	Color ⁴	Relative unit price ⁵
<i>Chrysanthemum morifolium</i> Ramat. (Kiku)	1	846	++	++	100
<i>Eurya japonica</i> Thunb. (Hisakaki)	2	526	++	-	(100)
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> Endl. var. (Hiba)	3	254	++	-,+	(94)
<i>Lilium longiflorum</i> Thunb. (Teppoyuri ⁶)	4	159	++	++	223
<i>Sedum spectabile</i> Boreau (Benkeiso)	5	130	++	-	157
<i>Limonium</i> spp. (Sutachisu)	6	122	++	+	84
<i>Dianthus caryophyllus</i> L. (Kanshon)	7	113	-	++	85
<i>Dracaena</i> spp. (Dorasena)	8	89	++	-,+	253
<i>Gladiolus gandavensis</i> Van Houtt. (Gurajiorasu)	9	74	++	++	138
<i>Matthiola incana</i> R.Br. (Sutokku)	10	64	+	++	102
<i>Antirrhinum majus</i> L. (Kinyoso)	11	61	-	+	40
<i>Litsea citriodora</i> Hemsl. (Aomoji)	12	59	++	-	(91)
<i>Illicium religiosum</i> Sieb. et Zucc. (Shikimi)	13	56	++	-	(244)
Asiatic hybrid lilies (Sukashiyuri)	14	54	++	++	234

¹Data were based on the 12 surveys around the 20th of each month in 1988.

²Usage point = percentage of tombs where the plant was observed among 200 tombs × 12 times a year, 1988.

³++, superior; +, moderate; -, poor.

⁴++, colorful; +, partially colorful; -, green.

⁵Relative unit price = yearly wholesale unit price of chrysanthemum for colorful plant (or that of *Eurya japonica* for cut foliage, in parentheses).

⁶This includes *L. longiflorum* and *L. formosanum*.

a colorful flower, and *Eurya japonica*, a green cut-foliage plant, were most popular.

Due to the exposed nature of the tombs, plants with good keeping qualities are obviously preferred. Of the 14 plants in Table 2, 12 have good keeping quality. In addition, six are green plants and the rest are colorful, which supports the above-mentioned observation that the combined use of

green and colorful plants is popular. The relative unit price (Table 2) is the wholesale unit price (yearly average) of the plant, expressed as a fraction of the unit price of chrysanthemum for colorful plants or *Eurya japonica* for green cut foliage, both of which are used most frequently.

There was no relationship between unit price and usage point. However, all plants with a higher unit price have

Table 1. Classification and percentage of plant species used for tomb dedication in the Toso-bochi cemetery, Kagoshima, in 1988¹.

Type of plant	Colorful plants (%)			Subtotal (%)	Green cut foliage(%)		Total (%)
	Flower	Fruit	Branch and/or leaf		Branch and/or leaf		
Herbaceous plants	50.6	4.9	2.5	58.0	3.1		61.1
Woody evergreens	4.9	3.7	4.3	13.0	13.0		25.9
Woody deciduous plants	9.9	0.0	2.5	12.3	0.6		13.0
Total	65.4	8.6	9.3	83.3	16.7		100

¹Data were based on the 12 surveys around the 20th of each month in 1988. Total number of plant species observed, 162.

superior keeping quality. This indicates that plants with good keeping quality are preferred, even though they are expensive. People will buy plants that have good keeping quality and are colorful and economical.

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