

Graves

Contributed by Lachlan
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Chinese grave shapes and furnishings, and their symbolic meanings, have to be understood within the context of the Chinese world view and of Chinese mythical beliefs in the origin of human life. Christians believe that the universe was freely created by God 'out of nothing'.¹ In prehistoric China, this concept of God as the creator was unknown.² The belief of the traditional Chinese philosophers was that the universe was indeed created out of nothing. This nothingness was known as wu (literally meaning 'without') ji (literally meaning 'limits'), i.e., the boundless, or the infinite. Out of this boundless nothingness, because of the movement of some mysterious forces, there evolved the dualistic elements of the yin and the yang. Upon their existence, the yin and the yang interacted and interchanged. As a result of these interactions and interchanges, like the way that live cells are produced and reproduced, more and more elements, including beings and non-beings, evolved and multiplied.³ To the Chinese, interactions between the yin and the yang are thus the basis of births, multiplication, and growth, including the conception and reproduction of human lives, as well as the generation and accumulation of wealth.

The dichotomy of yin and yang covers the duality of all elements in the universe.⁴ The yin stands for the female; the yang stands for the male. Yin is the moon; yang is the sun. This dichotomy can be extended to include virtually all features in life and human experiences, such as cold-hot, night-day, soft-hard, invisible-visible; implicit-explicit, passive-active, hidden-manifested, covert-overt, earthly-heavenly, devilish-angelic, and dead-alive.⁵ The yin and the yang co-exist in the universe. A person, when alive, stays in the yang world. When they die, however, they depart from the yang world and enter the yin world. Both the yin world and the yang world are eternal and they never cease to interact with each other.

Interactions can be, however, desirable or undesirable, welcome or unwelcome. To augment the possibilities of having desirable outcomes of such interactions, those who remain in the yang world try to maintain harmonious relationships with the yin. Since the yin is hidden and invisible, the yang can only interact with the yin on the basis of beliefs or guesses, and from people's perspectives in the living world. Since people have to live in houses, for instance, they believe that spirits in the yin world have to live in houses as well. To the Chinese, houses in the living world are thus known as yang houses, whereas those for the dead, i.e., graves, are known as yin houses. Moreover, as living people enjoy elegant and beautifully constructed buildings, they assume that spirits in the yin world have similar preferences. Because people in the yang world like money, yin spirits ought to like money too. To maintain harmonious interactions with the dead thus requires the living to respect departed spirits, and to take measures to enable them to live comfortably in the yin world. Such beliefs are further translated into the desire to construct elegant yin houses for ancestors, into the regular tending of graves, and into the showing of respect to spirits through the rituals of offering them food, money, and other objects that are believed to be pleasing for both the yin and the yang.

There is, nonetheless, no way to know for sure that yin spirits are pleased. People have to infer and speculate. If things in the yang world appear to them to be fine as manifested by, for example, prosperity and growth in the family, people will attribute that to harmonious relationship between themselves and yin spirits. They would, therefore, try to maintain the status quo and to follow the rituals that have appeared to be successfully working for them. This belief, too, partly explains why purging other people's ancestral graves was regarded as a most severe form of revenge in historic China, and why disturbances to people's ancestral graves, such as the necessity for relocation due to public works projects in Hong Kong, have on countless occasions received strong opposition. If, on the contrary, people have run into troubles, suffered losses in finance, or experienced the death of some family members, they might relate that to disharmonies in yinyang interactions and look for remedial actions, by, for instance, reconstructing or even relocating the ancestral graves.

Through years of experimental trial and error, part of the Chinese experience in yin yang interactions has been distilled into the theories and practices of fengshui, the principles of locating, orienting, and designing yin and yang houses. When a person dies, his family members will often consult a fengshui master for advice as to where, how, and when the body should be buried, and how the grave ought to be oriented, designed, and constructed. The outcome of the fengshui, however, will have to be attested by the subsequent development of the family. When the family enjoys prosperity after the burial, the members conclude that the fengshui of the chosen burial site is good. Otherwise, they would assume bad fengshui and would probably take action to correct it.

The On-Going Significance of the Ancestors

Yin and yang are inseparable. They make up a unity representing the whole of existence. Thus, the world of the deceased continues to influence that of the living. Families trace their genealogy back to a significant ancestor. The descendants of this ancestor form a lineage. The symbol of the lineage is the grave of this ancestor. Sometimes this grave contains the remains of his wife or wives; in Hong Kong, concubinage was made illegal as recently as 1971.⁶ Traditional graveside rites are part of the Chinese practice known as ancestor worship, clearly an inadequate and misleading term. The rites had caused problems in the past to Christian missionaries, who found it impossible to reconcile them with Christian beliefs, yet Chinese converts incorporated them into their new commitments.⁷ Ancestor worship has been part of Chinese culture for at least three thousand years, already ritualised by the time of Confucius (551-479 BC). It continues to form part of the culturally very important hierarchical pattern of Chinese social relations and appropriate behaviour known as li.

In Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, families gather at ancestral gravesides once a year at Qingming. This normally falls on April 4th or 5th. It is the occasion when people 'sweep the grave', which comprises worshipping the ancestors, making offerings, and sweeping away the year's accumulated weeds and rubbish. The Chinese have celebrated Qingming since before the Zhou Dynasty (eleventh century BC to 221 BC).⁸ The literal meaning of Qingming, 'clear and bright', probably denotes a festival for the celebration of the blossoming of the spring season. Symbolically, the Chinese regard spring as a season of

the utmost importance. In contrast to winter; which is 'gloomy and dark', spring stands for birth and rebirth, i.e. the beginning of new lives. It also signifies new opportunities and possibly new prosperity. Thus, sweeping the grave at this juncture reflects the wish for a harmonious transition between the season of winter and that of spring, and for favorable interactions between the yin and the yang. In some ways, the symbolic meaning of Qingming can be regarded as a parallel with Easter.⁹

At Qingming, the Chinese offer to their ancestor(s) presentations of food and wine, particularly pork, and have a picnic together. In Chinese culture, the pig symbolises food and the source of wealth, both of which are essential for the upkeep of the family. The Chinese character for 'family' or 'home' is made up of strokes that resemble a 'pig under the roof' (Fig. a).¹⁰ Offering pork to the ancestors denotes the wish for prosperity and wealth, and for an unceasing continuance of the family lineage.¹¹

Paper offerings are burnt at the graveside, in the belief that in so doing they are sent to the world of the ancestral spirits where they will make the spirits more comfortable.¹² Hence, paper offerings consist of representations of material goods, such as cars, clothes and money. Few ever question whether their ancestors have received and used the offerings. Figure b shows typical paper money available in retail stores in Hong Kong.¹³ All such notes claim to be issued by Hell Bank. Besides paper money, Hong Kong Chinese burn 'Rebirth Paper' (Paper for Rebirth in the Western Paradise, Amitabha's Pure Land) for their ancestors (Fig. c).¹⁴ Spirits receiving such papers are believed to become entitled to rebirth in this Paradise. This practice and belief reflect the absorption of Buddhist beliefs into the traditional rites of ancestor worship among the Chinese. It symbolises the wish of the living for the peace and eternal life of their ancestors.

In Hong Kong, urban cemeteries are crowded at Qingming, which is a public holiday. An alternative date in Hong Kong for such visits is Chongyang (literally 'double ninth', as it is the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, when, traditionally, Chinese people went walking up nearby hills). The trend to cremation since the 1960s means that many of the deceased now occupy a niche in one of several imposing public columbaria, the design of which allows for the circulation of crowds at the two festivals, and sometimes incorporates lawns for picnics.

In the People's Republic of China, to which Hong Kong returned in mid-1997, the festivals of Qingming and Chongyang were for some time not recognised, being seen as typical of 'the "four olds" (old habits, ideas, customs, and culture) [which] have been confronted head-on as extravagant, wasteful, and/or meaninglessly superstitious'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, when Chinese officials began to relax their orthodox views of socialism, and to introduce reforms to their national economy in the late 1970s, the people - especially in rural areas - quickly revived their traditional rites of burials, gravesweeping and ancestor worship.¹⁶ Many Chinese cities have promoted cremation in recent decades, for example, as early as 1965 in Changshu City, Jiangsu Province, when coffin burial was prohibited, but, unlike in Hong Kong and Singapore, dignified public columbaria have not been provided. The strong resistance to cremation is illustrated by the practice of smuggling bodies from such cities into places where local law still permits coffin burial.¹⁷ In other cases, individuals have shown their resistance to the mandatory requirement for cremation by constructing elegant graves, in which they place coffins containing the ashes of their deceased relative. Such practices reflect the persistence of the strength of tradition as a determinant of human behavior - a tradition which cannot be simple-mindedly or high-handedly transformed through administrative edicts.

Traditional and Current Burial Practice

In a vast country like China, and especially in historic times when cultural diffusion was severely restricted by terrain and distance, there evolved unavoidably high degrees of localism in fengshui beliefs, and great varieties of 'correct' ways to perform the rituals associated with burial. Hong Kong is culturally part of Guangdong Province, despite the peculiarities of its political geography. Thus, it shares in the practice of second burial typical of southern China, including Zhejiang and Fujian.

By second burial is meant the practice of uncovering the remains of the dead after several years of burial and reburying them for a second time in situ or at an alternative site. According to Bin He, although the history of second burial in China can be traced to prehistoric times, most people in southern China tried not to disturb their ancestral graves, especially when nothing 'disastrous or weird' had occurred within the family. Nevertheless, 'if people had fallen sick often, or if some unexplainable problems had frequently occurred within the family,' they would then dig up the remains from their ancestral graves, clean the bones, and rebury them at sites with good fengshui.¹⁸

In Hong Kong, when the British introduced rules to control and manage burial grounds and cemeteries, they accepted second burial as a customary practice of the Chinese and institutionalised it without questioning the meanings behind it. In Hong Kong's public cemeteries, such as Wo Hop Shek Cemetery, second burial is mandatory; the remains in graves have to be dug up for relocation or cremation within a maximum period of time (normally seven years). The crematorium at Wo Hop Shek is specifically and exclusively for disinterred remains.

Remains are by no means always cremated, however. Cleaned bones (which are yang, whereas the flesh is yin) can be stored in a jintu, literally 'golden pagoda'. This is a large, brown, unglazed pottery urn. Such bone urns can be buried in small graves in public cemeteries. Urn graves are the only permanent graves available in public cemeteries except for prohibitively expensive, and scarce, coffin graves in one of the four Chinese Permanent Cemeteries, which currently (1997) cost approximately US \$35,000. Alternatively, bone urns can be placed, in the open, with or without a small, open-fronted shelter, preferably on a hillside with good fengshui, protected from water damage and with a good view (see Fig.1). Single, or more often clusters, of jintu are a common sight on wild hillsides in the New Territories of Hong Kong, but sites must have official approval and are restricted to the remains of the relatively small number of indigenous villagers. Urban residents can choose to deposit ancestors' bones in a columbarium, in a somewhat larger niche than those for urns containing ashes.

Second burial is a practice that can shock those to whom it is unfamiliar. However, there are benefits relating to it. In the past, it was more convenient to repatriate bones than bodies from overseas to China.¹⁹ Emigrant Chinese yearned for a grave 'back home', and a system developed using the good offices of the Tung Wah Hospital in Hong Kong to ensure that these wishes could be fulfilled.²⁰ Today, the practice makes it possible for a compromise to have been reached between the people and the Government of Hong Kong. The desire for a few years in a coffin, until the flesh has decomposed, can be met for those prepared to pay the rent for a coffin grave for six to seven years, while the space-saving option of ashes or bone storage afterwards satisfies the government's need to prevent too much scarce land being taken up by cemeteries.

Cremation immediately after death has become the preferred option for the majority, accounting for 68 per cent of deaths in 1993.²¹ Public columbaria (buildings providing niches where ashes are stored) are imposing buildings, the dignity of their design being essential in order for cremation to be an acceptable option in Hong Kong. Ashes, if not deposited in a columbarium niche, may be kept at home, scattered in one of the government's Gardens of Remembrance, or exported to relatives overseas, especially if the oldest son has emigrated. This last option poses no legal problems and allows the son to see to his responsibility of carrying out the regular ancestral rites. Rarely, urns containing ashes can be seen alongside jintu in hillside shelters. Ashes can also be entrusted to Buddhist or Taoist establishments, including the zhaitong, which are vegetarian establishments inhabited mostly by lay women. Here, services for the dead are regularly provided, and the ashes can be visited at festivals. Such establishments welcome the resulting income.²² This is particularly convenient when relatives leave Hong Kong permanently.

Finally, it must be noted that, as well as providing for physical remains, relatives also maintain another form of memorial to the deceased. This is known as the ancestral tablet. In fact, these tablets are far more than a memorial. The tablet is one of the three places where the ancestral spirit is believed to be present, the other two locations being at the grave (or niche), and in the underworld. The tablet can be kept at home, where it is often lit by a red light bulb at a small shrine. Offerings are made on special occasions. However, like the ashes, the tablet can be entrusted to a temple or zhaitong.

Grave Form and Furnishings

The morphology of Chinese graves varies from place to place and over time, reflecting social, cultural, and historic changes in the beliefs of what ideal yin houses ought to be. Nevertheless, most Chinese, especially those in southern China, have regarded the form of an armchair as the ideal shape of the grave (see Fig. 1). An armchair gives a sense of wealth, comfort and dignity. In historic times, only the elite class or the mandarin Chinese could afford armchairs. Moreover, armchairs symbolise authority and power, for in the olden days the armchair was the seat for the magistrate when he presided in court.²³ By erecting the grave in the armchair shape, people believed that their ancestors in the yin world could enjoy comfort, dignity, and pride. The interaction between the yin and the yang would thus be harmonious and beneficial. People might even wish anticipatorily that 'if my ancestors were to become magistrates in the yin world, they would be able to protect us and help us move upwards into the ruling class in the yang world as well' ²⁴

The history of building graves in the armchair shape can be traced to the years of the Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127 A.D.²⁵ In pre-modern times, as Fig. d, an illustration that first appeared in the 1830s, shows, the grave resembled an armchair in shape, with higher turf protecting its three sides, on its back, as well as to its left and right.²⁶ The front was left open to the field. Fig. 1 shows a modern armchair-shaped grave in the New Territories, Hong Kong, and also shows the worshipping platform at the front where lineage members stand when involved in the rites of ancestor worship.

This armchair shape for graves has thus persisted for a long time, reflecting its acceptance by the Chinese as a desirable

way for the construction of yin houses. Nevertheless, an armchair grave does take up considerable space and is expensive to build. Expenses escalate especially in urban areas where land itself is costly. Prices have risen now that building technology and construction material, such as the use of concrete and bulldozers, have become more sophisticated. People who find the armchair grave prohibitively expensive may have to opt for simpler methods to bury their ancestors, including cremation and columbaria.

Apart from the armchair-shaped grave, there were, in Imperial China, many alternative forms. It is not possible in this essay to go into these. J.J.M. De Groot provided a wealth of material in the last years of the nineteenth century from Fujian.²⁷ A century later, Bin He provides useful data for the neighbouring province of Zhejiang, to the north.²⁸ Her book, which is in Chinese, contains many photographs and diagrams, on one of which Fig. e is based.²⁹ This illustration indicates some of the different grave forms to be found in the area shown on the map. Graves in various forms can be seen in the oldest part of the Aberdeen Chinese Permanent Cemetery, which dates back to 1915. Managers of more recent cemeteries in Hong Kong limit the grave forms that are permitted.

Moving away from grave shapes to furnishings, graves in urban Hong Kong cemeteries today often have a concrete, moulded porch-shaped framework (Fig. 2) in which a tablet in polished granite or other stone is set. Bin Lie notes that, in the part of mainland China where she was researching, the tablet on a grave gives the name, and the dates of birth and death, of the buried person (see Fig. f).³⁰ As will be seen, in Hong Kong, the ancestral place of origin is also usually inscribed, as most of Hong Kong's residents are immigrants from mainland China.

Examples of Graves and Niches in Hong Kong

Chinese Permanent Cemeteries (CPC) are managed on a non-profitmaking basis by the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Board (CPCB), which comprises Government-appointed trustees. The Regional Services Department manages seven cemeteries and several columbaria in the New Territories and Outlying Islands, and the Urban Services Department manages three cemeteries and associated columbaria, two on Hong Kong Island and one in Kowloon. There are also six cemeteries and associated columbaria run by various Christian providers.³¹

Individual resting places described in the following pages were selected partly because colleagues volunteered to take one of us to resting places of family members, to provide information, and to allow photography at the sites. Fortunately, we were thereby able to obtain details about two very typical resting places, i.e. a niche, and a grave, in CFC facilities. The third resting place was less common, being a large, old-established grave plot in the oldest CP cemetery. The history of the fourth, a symbolic grave, which is a very important type in Hong Kong, was built up from the inscription near to it. Similarly, the history of the charitable grave was identified from the inscription on the grave itself. These last two graves were noticed during field work by one of the authors, who visited most public and Chinese Permanent Cemeteries in Hong Kong Island and Hong Kong's New Territories during 1995, 1996, and 1997.

1. Private Grave

The grave illustrated in Figure 2 is an example of a costly, permanent coffin grave. Such graves are now only available in the Junk Bay CPC, opened in 1989. This grave dates from 1992. The Junk Bay Cemetery is characterised by the uniformity of its grave furnishings, which are limited by cemetery regulations. The illustrated grave is typical.

The tablet at the back of the concrete, porch-shaped grave furnishing is in polished granite of a deep red colour; which we understand is obtained by staining. The inscription is in gold. The large characters in the central column give the woman's name. On the right, the two columns give dates of birth and death, in modern and then in traditional date form. The five characters, bottom left, indicate that the grave was set up by her sons and grandchildren. It is rare for a tablet to omit a reference to the ancestral place of origin of the grave's occupant, and this is omitted from Figure f. In Figure 2, this is mentioned, as is typical, alongside the photograph. The two characters on the right stand for Guangdong, and those on the left for the district and associated dialect group of Hoi Fung. However; this is, in fact, the ancestral place of the woman's husband, a fact which caused surprise and some distress to her daughter on first seeing the tablet. It has long been traditional for a woman to enter her husband's family upon marriage. Whether younger Chinese women in Hong Kong will continue, when they die, to have their ancestral identity subsumed by that of their husband, is an open question.

The marble pot in front of the tablet is a censer for incense (joss) sticks. Two vases match it, and are not shown. They

are to hold flowers. Behind the grave is the shrine to the earth god, appealing for his protection for the grave (Fig. 3). The characters mean, roughly 'Here is the land of [surname]'. Most graves in Hong Kong, apart from Christian graves, have such a shrine behind them - and sometimes in front as well.

This example was one of a row of fifteen nearly identical graves, some of which had small pairs of stone lions as additional 'guardians', acting like charms to ward off marauding spirits or humans, and thereby serving a similar function to the majestic stone animals that form the 'Spirit Road' to the Ming Tombs.³²

This woman's descendants are Christian. Thus, she has no ancestral tablet. However, her grave is visited at Qingming, and on other occasions when her family feels that it is appropriate. Flowers are brought, and incense is burnt, but there are no other offerings. The family feels that it is appropriate to 'pay respect' to their mother's grave, and they enjoy being together and sharing their memories.

2. Columbarium Niche

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate another typical resting place - a niche in a CPCP columbarium, in this case at Cape Collinson. This columbarium is nine storeys high, provides 19,926 niches, and is full. There is a newer one about a kilometre away with 29,071 niches.³³ Both are imposing and gracious buildings, this one being designed to a ground plan in the shape of the eight-sided baqua, one of the most ancient of all Chinese symbols. Columbaria may be regarded as collective tombs.

In the plaque seen on the left side of Figure 4, the occupant's name is given below her photograph, her dates of birth and death on the left and right, and her ancestral place of origin, Mei Xien in mainland China, on each side of her photograph. For reasons of cost and convenience, this woman was not returned to her ancestral home (which was the same as that of her husband) after her death, although this is where her husband was buried. The family was visiting the niche on the occasion of a family wedding, to 'pay respect' on this auspicious occasion, bringing along the new bride for the first time. The niche would be regularly visited at Qingming, when the columbarium would be crowded, the air thick with incense, and with fine grey ash from offerings being burnt at one of the many large burners on each floor. On this occasion, the columbarium was deserted except for this small family group of five people. Cemeteries and columbaria are avoided except on appropriate occasions, being seen as powerful and polluted places.³⁴

3. Lineage Grave

There are few graves in Hong Kong as large as that illustrated in Figure 6. Located in Aberdeen Chinese Permanent Cemetery (the oldest of the four, dating from 1915), it is five metres by fifteen metres. It houses the coffin containing the remains of the man who came to Hong Kong in the late nineteenth century to found a family line here. His son is buried in the same plot. The grave dates back to 1946. The four wives of the older man are buried elsewhere in the same cemetery in elegant but smaller graves. Here, the grave tablets could be oriented at the angle recommended by the fengshui master. Such personal attention is not possible in most urban cemeteries because grave spaces are tightly packed and laid out by cemetery managers.

Nevertheless, some tablets within the frame of the grave furnishings can sometimes be seen to be slightly angled. Rural graves, however, are oriented according to fengshui recommendations. In the case of this grave in the Aberdeen Cemetery, even the depth of the coffins was decided by the fengshui master.

The carvings along the top of the granite tablet frame (Fig. 7) are merely decorative. The tablets themselves consist of a fine-grained, dark green stone from a famous quarry Lin Zhou, near Guangzhou, much used for this purpose. The older man's tablet is not inscribed according to the standard layout depicted in Figure f. In the centre is his name. The bottom four characters in the right hand column refer to the part of China from which he originated. The top five characters state the direction in which the grave faces. Fengshui is a very important consideration for this highly educated, sophisticated, and growing family. It was regarded as most unfortunate that a little of the view of the sea from this grave plot had been blocked by the building of a columbarium in front and below. Here, the shape of the grave plot was not regarded as significant. It is the open aspect, with the hill behind and the water in front - very desirable from the fengshui point of view that makes it an excellent site.

The left hand column indicates who erected the tablet, by stating: 'A hundred happy returns of the [name] clan'. This is the manner that the family has adopted in order to refer to the family consortium - to use the phrase that our informant used. He agreed that, maybe, 'clan' would be another suitable term. Whatever term is used, it refers to the descendants of this single ancestor; and a third alternative would be 'lineage'.

Only male ancestors, by edict of the oldest family member, can be buried in this plot, and only men gather at the Qingming and Chongyang festivals to make offerings. On these occasions, the most senior male family member present is the first to bow to the tablet. Others follow according to seniority. Other family graves in the cemetery are then visited, but only by family members who are more junior to the buried person. The patriarch, therefore, does not visit any other graves, nor would he attend the funeral of his son, should the son predecease him. At the festival visits, the men would arrive with all necessary offerings and with tools and paints to trim and freshen up the grave. Afterwards, they would join female family members for a meal, often in a restaurant.

Thus, this grave and its attendant activities symbolise geographic ancestral affiliation, the family lineage and its hierarchy, the traditional gender-specific nature of the rites, and the persistence of the ancient world view in which fengshui is so important. Ancestral affiliation is not with Hong Kong, despite the fact that it is here that the family has become established, but with that part of Mainland China from which the ancestor originated. This is typical of affiliations expressed on the overwhelming majority of graves and niches in Hong Kong, a community that has grown by immigration since 1848, and particularly after the Second World War. It is on their graves that people express their ties with the motherland, as, in life, many express it by speaking, as well as Cantonese, the dialect of their region, which can be specific to a very small locality. Not all retain ties with their community of origin, but, of course, many do, returning to visit their relatives from time to time.

The Aberdeen Cemetery is itself an important symbol of the commitment that successful Chinese residents of Hong Kong were prepared to make by 1915, when it was opened. For the first time, they were prepared to be buried here rather than back in their ancestral territory in China.³⁵ This Cemetery is, therefore, an example of 'place-making' in terms of making a public statement - through establishing an ancestral grave -that symbolises identifying with a community in a specific place.

4. Symbolic Grave

The grave shown as Figure 8 is striking, and most unusual in Hong Kong. It was erected sometime after 1957, and there is quite a story behind it. It is located in the Sandy Ridge Public Cemetery, which opened in 1950 and is run by the Regional Services Department of the Hong Kong Government. Shortly after the cemetery opened, a patch of about a hectare was allocated to members of the Fujianese community in Hong Kong, which by the early years of this century had become sufficiently well-established to have set up their own cemetery in 1919. A tablet fixed to an obelisk in the Sandy Ridge location (translated not character by character, but broadly so as to capture the gist) reads as follows:

The Fujianese Cemetery was originally set up in 1919 at New Kai Lung Wan Tung Wah Cemetery*. In 1947 we stopped operating this cemetery as the Hong Kong Government notified us not to. The Government assigned us temporary cemeteries at Ngau Chi Wan ** in Kowloon, and at Wo Hop Shek in Fangling for the burials of coffins. The current Fujianese Cemetery at Sandy Ridge was also designated to us by the Hong Kong Government for the burials of bones and golden pagodas (jinta). After much hard work, the Cemetery at Sandy Ridge was completed in March 1957. To enable our followers to remember all these, especially those who contributed much work and money to the establishment of this Cemetery, we have inscribed the history of the Cemetery and the names of the donors on stones. [Name of author and of calligrapher] March 1957. Board of Governors, Fujianese Cemetery.* Kai Lung Wan has now been developed into Wah Fu Estate, between Pokfulam and Aberdeen. This cemetery seems to have been part of the benevolent activities of the Tung Wah Hospital. * There is a street called Ngau Chi Wan Street in the present Choi Wan Estate near Ngau Tau Kok, which may indicate the location of this temporary cemetery.

It seems that the turtle-shaped grave is a symbolic grave. It is surrounded by several hundred graves with simple headstones and inscriptions. It may contain no remains; or it may contain remains of individuals who could not be identified. Its inscription reads: 'The beautiful city for deceased friends from Fujian'. The two characters top left and right refer to Fujian. It is elaborately carved from green stone from Lin Zhou mentioned previously, is guarded by two stone lions, and the stone altar on which offerings can be placed is inscribed in ancient seal script. A large

censer is for joss sticks. Graves in turtle shape (see Fig. g) 36 are seen only in Fujian and Taiwan, where many people

originated from Fujian.³⁷ Zoy Ming Zhou comments that in southeastern China the turtle is regarded as a symbol of fortune, nobility, longevity, happiness and wealth.³⁸ To shape a grave like a turtle shell thereby symbolises the wish for longevity, permanence, and peace.

This small Fujianese cemetery is set apart by a dilapidated wire fence from the rest of the sprawling, overgrown public cemetery. It is entered through an archway inscribed with a verse, through which one then proceeds up a gentle slope on a wide path lined with flower beds and leading to the obelisk with its inscription. There is a picnic pavilion near the archway large enough for thirty to forty people. The site is backed by a hill and has an open view - a first class site from the fengshui point of view.

Here may be seen an example of how cultural landscape reflects local and regional variations in disposing of the dead. It is also another example of the great importance to Hong Kong Chinese of localised, ancestral roots, and of the ongoing nature of such local affiliations in the Hong Kong community. During the field work, which was at Chongyang, 1996, groups of people were picnicking in the shelter pavilion, and small groups were visiting graves located in newer rows on slope beneath the 1950s reburials. The Fujianese community is not the only one to have set up a section of the cemetery for deceased members. The authors noted one at Sandy Ridge for Chao Zhou, which is in eastern Guangdong near Shantou. An inscription gave a similar story to that told above. Another was for the En Ping County, near Xin Hui County in Guangdong (n.b. both Counties were administratively upgraded to Cities in 1994; at the time the cemetery sections were set aside, they were still Counties). There are likely to be other such sections for people from specific localities in Mainland China both at Sandy Ridge and at the other large public cemetery, Wo Hop Shek.

Symbolic graves are an important type in Hong Kong. The authors have seen a very large one in the Aberdeen CPC, established for members of a particular lineage who died and are buried overseas. Offerings are made there at festivals by Hong Kong lineage members. Several others probably exist in Aberdeen CFC and elsewhere. There are certain comparisons to be made between symbolic graves and memorials in Britain (and elsewhere) in the form of 'The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier'. In such a tomb, remains of a soldier who could not be identified are buried, and his body represents others who died without identification being possible. Rituals are carried out at such a tomb, for example, on Armistice Day.³⁹ However, this is a site for national mourning connected with war and the tragic loss of many men and women. Symbolic graves such as those described in Hong Kong are the focus of rites from a small section of the society only, and do not commemorate violent, wartime deaths. Neither are they primarily a site for mourning, but for rituals of ancestor worship that are regarded as part of the regular routine of the yearly cycle.

5. Charitable Grave

Charitable graves are a particular type of symbolic grave, set up by a charitable or regional association, or; as E. Sinn describes, in the nineteenth century by a guild.⁴⁰ It is believed that souls of those not properly buried were doomed to a miserable existence in the afterworld. Therefore, giving a decent burial to paupers was a characteristic charitable activity in imperial China.⁴¹ It brought great personal merit to benefactors. The Tung Wah (Chinese) Hospital - established by wealthy and influential Chinese merchants in 1869 - set an example in late nineteenth century Hong Kong by providing free burials for the destitute and a coffin home for bones returned from overseas. Sinn argues that this set an example that was followed by regional associations, at least one of which was specifically set up to care for the dead of a locality in Mainland China. Mass graves known as yizhong were provided by such associations, but some were merely symbolic, containing no remains. Sinn specifies that there were several such graves in the Mount Davis area of Hong Kong Island in prewar years and that several remain today. At festival times, members of the regional association gathered to carry out the necessary rites on behalf of those contained in or represented by the charitable grave. The Tung Wah Hospital continues to provide such graves for those with no relatives to look after the deceased.⁴²

Figure 9 shows two charitable graves in the Sandy Ridge Cemetery. The bottom two characters of the grave in the right foreground read 'public grave for the destitute'. The top two characters refer to He Shan, a county in Guangdong Province. It was erected, so the next five characters say, by the district association for its 'precious friends'. The grave behind is a similar grave for those from Xin Hui County, near Guangzhou, not far from He Shan. In grim rows to each side of these two graves stretch small tablets. Whether there are remains in the armchair-shaped graves is unknown. These graves are of the traditional armchair shape and are large and far more opulent than a single impoverished individual could afford. They represent the mutual commitment of immigrant groups and the great cultural importance of caring for spirits of all of the deceased. 'Unsettled' spirits - those who have had no proper burial rites - are greatly feared, and at the Festival of the Hungry Ghosts (Yulanpen) on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, offerings are made by families throughout Hong Kong to these unfortunate spirits.

Conclusions

This essay can only be an introduction to Chinese burial practices. Urban cemeteries, columbaria, and rural graves are striking, culturally important, and essential features of Hong Kong's cultural landscape. The situation in other cities with large Chinese populations, such as Taiwanese cities and Singapore, needs attention from researchers. As cultural landscapes, cemeteries, columbaria, and graves reflect the essential values of those who occupy and visit them. They contain a wealth of artistic motifs. They support essential occupations and crafts, such as makers of paper offerings, builders of graves, suppliers of special stone, and stone carvers. They pose ethical and practical dilemmas for planners. They cannot be seen in a purely maternal light; immaterial worlds are associated with them and must be invoked for a deep understanding of their nature.⁴³ They are landscapes that require interpretation in terms of time as well as of space, as they are associated with major popular festivals.

In the People's Republic of China, traditions relating to burial practice were for a time seen as an obstruction in the way of progress, an alternative irrational, superstitious ideology that challenged that of the Communist Party. Rural graves have been treated variously since 1949. Certain Chinese cities no longer permit coffin burial, and cremation is the only option. Nevertheless, since the late 1970s, and along with the open policies and reform movements in China, Chinese officials have relaxed the rigor of their control over people's ideological and cultural practices. The Chinese have quickly reverted to their traditional beliefs in burial rites and ancestor worship.

Finally in one specific regard, Chinese attitudes to graves and cemeteries are extraordinarily different from those of people brought up in the various western, Christian cultures. Death is regarded as polluting; the landscapes of death are regarded as potentially powerful and are avoided except at festivals or other appropriate occasions. Research such as that we have carried out for this essay is regarded with considerable reserve by Chinese colleagues, and it could even be said that the area is seen as taboo.

NOTES

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Moreover, we could not have written this paper without the offers of help from three colleagues from Hong Kong Baptist University and National University of Singapore, who escorted one of us to the resting places of their family members, spent time explaining aspects of decisions and practices relating to these places, and then read our paper to ensure we had reported their comments correctly. We place our deep gratitude on record. The photographs shown as Figs. 1-9 were taken by Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather. The sources of other illustrations are cited in the appropriate notes.

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4.2 CHINESE GRAVE DESIGN IN ROOKWOOD: THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED

Author: Doris Yau-chong Jones

The necrotectural(1) design of Sydney's Rookwood cemetery is a typical example of Victorian eclecticism.(2) It encompasses Roman and Greek Classicism, the Gothic in its several guises and even the borrowing of the traditional Egyptian motifs. Most of the graves of different cultural origin kept part of their own cultural or national characteristics but adapted some of the aforementioned classical designs. To a lesser degree, such adaptation is also found among the graves of the Chinese Sections: for example the grave sites fenced off with Greek columns; the placing of the deceased photos in the centre of the gravestones which is believed to be an Italian custom, and a modified version of a Greek urn capped with a Chinaman's hat as an incinerator (photo 1).

There is one grave design of semi-circular shape, found in Section 4 of the Chinese Section which is uniquely Chinese. (photo 2) The study of the Victorian eclecticism of the entire cemetery requires years of research, a task that is being undertaken by Lisa Murray, a Ph.D. student. This paper will focus on a small but significant part of the Chinese Section (Sections 3 and 4) for the purpose of examining the different gravestone designs from the early 20th century to now, with particular reference to the semi-circular graves.

It is appropriate at this point of time to give a brief history of the Rookwood Cemetery which is also known as the Rookwood Necropolis. Geographically it is situated about 20 kms west of Sydney's CBD, adjacent to the Sydney 2000 Olympic site. Covering 314 hectares of land, it is the biggest cemetery in the Southern Hemisphere. Its uniqueness

comes from being the burial grounds of 89 religious groups of diverse ethnic origins and it is proclaimed to be the biggest Victorian cemetery in the world. It came into existence in 1867 when the Devonshire (Sandhill) cemetery could no longer take any more burials because of its size and proximity to the residential areas. Out of concern of sanitation and public health for the community, and as a sign of respect for the dead, the government of the day decided to look for a place away from the metropolitan area with clayey soil and good drainage. Rookwood was chosen because it fulfilled all the conditions specified.

The land was allocated to different religious groups: the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, the Independent, the Presbyterian etc. The non-Christian groups were buried in the General Section which was also under the administration of the Church of England. (map 1) Each Section was given equal accessibility to the centre and the size varied according to the proportion of the groups in the population. In 1867, the Anglican Church group was given 53 acres of the best appointed location in terms of both visibility and accessibility. The Roman Catholic section covered 39 acres adjacent to Anglican Church section. By 1881 the sizes of the Anglican and Roman Catholic sections had increased to 190 acres and 131 respectively. Today 200 acres of land are under the administration of the Church of England and 230 acres under the Catholic Church. The Chinese Section did not feature on the map because they were buried in the General Section. The Anglican Church group, for humanitarian reasons, allowed the bodies to be buried in this Section for a period of 5-7 years before the bodies were exhumed and shipped back to China - a common practice until 1949. Many were exhumed and their bones/ashes returned to China (the sites of exhumation are still visible), but many others (at least 130) remained due to the lack of or the inability to raise funds for the transport by the Chinese Societies. The remaining graves near Blashki Avenue are the original graves. Most of the gravestones are still standing upright; a few had fallen due to years of neglect. (photo 3)

Fortunately for the researchers, even some of the badly weathered gravestones have the inscriptions which still could be identified, the reason being that the format of writing on the gravestones have not changed much:

The name of the deceased is always placed in the centre of the slab; the dates of birth and death and places of origins of the deceased can be either on the left or right of the name. The names of people or associations responsible for setting up the grave are always on the bottom left.

It is now possible to make a simple cross-sectional study of Sections 3 and 4 tracing the change of the grave designs which include the inscription, the symbols which are exclusive to the Chinese culture, the shapes and size of the grave from the beginning of this century to today. (map 1)

The oldest graves are at the top of Section 3 which is nearest to the road (Blashki Ave.) The format of the inscriptions is only slightly different from that of today's. The centre column is where the name of the deceased is written (or carved); the dates of death are found either on the left or right hand of the names of the deceased. It is striking to see that on almost every headstone, the place of origin is written in the finest detail. (photo 4). When moving towards the newer section (Section 4) where most of the gravestones were erected in the post 1949 period, the places of origin are not longer written in detail. In its place the dates of birth and death are prominently displayed on the right hand side. The significance of the decreasing importance of carving places of origin on the gravestones is that prior to 1949, almost without exceptions, the bodies/ashes are expected to return to China after 5-7 years. If there were some delay for one reason or another, if the addresses are still known to the agents, the bodies would be shipped at a later date. Therefore the places of origin carved on the gravestones is tantamount to giving direction to the agents where the bodies should be sent. Since 1949, it was no longer the wishes of the dying or their friends and relatives to have the bodies of the deceased returned to China because of the political turmoil.

Along with the changing format in inscription, the cultural symbolic representation on the gravestones had also undergone a remarkable change, from many unadorned headstones in the older part of Section 3 to waterlilies, bamboos, carp and dragons found in Section 4 (photo 5). The reasons underlying this transformation can be (a) the bodies of the deceased are expected to remain buried there permanently, therefore more efforts are sought to make gravestones more decorative and symbolically Chinese (b) in the older part of Section 3, the gravestones were regarded as temporary markers and the bodies would eventually returned to China, and (c) the people buried in Section 4 (or their descendants) are wealthier. In approaching Section 4, the gravestones are more elaborate, more colourful, the sizes are more expansive and the shapes with a wide spectrum of designs varying from 2-D upright to aedicule (a canopy over the gravestone) to the magnificent, intriguing semi-circular monument.

The colourful material used, whether sandstone, marble, granite or gabbro is not the main determinant of the costs of building the graves. It is the elaborate finishing and shaping of the graves, which is very labour intensive that

distinguishes the very wealthy from the not so wealthy. Compared to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Sections, despite their somewhat ostentatious display, the lavishness in Chinese Section 4 is still nowhere near that of its counterparts. There is no imposing statues of the deceased on any grave sites, no lengthy epitaphs extolling the alleged virtues and accomplishments of the dead. In this section, some couplets in Chinese characters on the columns on either side of the graves are sighted, lamenting the loss rather than glorifying the dead. (photo 6) However, there is one exceptional style of grave, namely, those having a semi-circular shape. The gravestone in the middle with two arms extending from it resembles an arm chair, which has attracted a lot of attention and roused speculation relating to its origin. Some said it was built for practical reasons i.e. to protect the grave site from a hillside landslide; others looked at the shape metaphorically by likening it to an armchair for the comfort of the deceased. The more subtle explanation that seems to fit into the framework of Chinese philosophy is the one explained by the Form School. The Form School is one of the two schools of Feng Shui which specifies that to ensure the prosperity, happiness and long life of the living, it is paramount to choose a propitious site for a building, a town or a tomb. According to the Form School, the right/propitious site for burial is on sloping well-drained land, facing south (in reference to the Northern Hemisphere), a mountainous shield or a screen of trees to the north of the site to protect the site from malicious influences coming from the north. The landscape of the site is to represent the two different Ch'i currents in the earth's crust, the male (Yang) and female

(Yin). At the point where they meet is where the Ch'i (energy) concentration is the strongest. To illustrate this geographically, it is where two ridges of hills, instead of running parallel to each other, meet at one end to form a semi circle.

Metaphysically the two ridges are allegorically called the Azure Dragon (Yang) and White Tiger (Yin). The Azure Dragon must be on the left (east) and the White Tiger on the right (west) of any site. The most favourable site is where the dragon and tiger meet because at this point the two Ch'i (Yang and Yin) currents cross and that is where the Ch' i (energy) concentration is strongest. (fig. 1)

The semi-circular shaped graves seen in Section 4 in Rookwood as well as those in Hong Kong and South-east Asia are built on this model. (photo 7)

As far as the orientation of the graves is concerned, it is surprising to see that despite their low social status at the time they were buried, the graves in Section 3 all face east, a propitious aspect second only to facing north (i.e. in the Southern Hemisphere)

It is now reasonable to argue that Feng Shui is not something unreal and superstitious unless it is used interchangeably with "Geomancy", which is a form of divination practised by the Arabs. It is really the study of natural and man-made landform and land pattern (ti li), but it is not like Geography in English. Feng Shui in Chinese means wind and water, two natural elements flowing in the earth's atmosphere as well as through the earth. The power of these two elements combined is expressed in the landform sculpted. Realising the power and energy derived from wind and water, the Chinese have, for centuries, relentlessly searched for ways to harness this power and energy for their benefit. The selection of a good site is no more and no less the wishes of the people to live harmoniously with nature. Confucianism and Taosim are enlisted to reinforce the belief that by placing oneself in a favourable Feng Shui environment a good future, peace and a long life will follow. By choosing the right site to bury the dead, not only will the deceased be happy but they will also shower the descendants with blessings from the accumulated ch'i of the site.

This paper can be summarized with an aphorism ‘What is not obvious is obvious, and what is obvious is not obvious’. What appears to be some

unfathomable mystery when one looks at the semi-circular shaped graves in Rookwood transpires to be no more than choosing the right site for dead for the benefit of the living. The art of choosing the right site is based on the study of ti li (landform and land pattern) and reinforced by Confucius and Taoist philosophy.

The cross-sectional study of Sections 3 and 4 since the beginning of this century to now offers not only the deciphering of inscriptions and symbolic representations of the Chinese culture; it reveals the social position of the Chinese people in the Australian community, from being sojourners to settlers from being persons living in the margin to people of financial and political influence. There are signs in the community of becoming more aware of the necessity to preserve and maintain this national and cultural asset. It is not certain when this level of consciousness will significantly emerge. Could now be the time when the multicultural population begins to understand the meaning of "we don't know who we are unless we know where we are?"

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INTERVIEW

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PHOTOS:

(1) Incinerator - Greek urn with Chinaman's hat. DJ9/98

(2) Semi-circular shaped graves

Rookwood, Chinese Section 4 DJ9/98

(3) Older section of Section 3. DJ9/98

(4) Gravestones with place of origin in detail. JW taken in ParkesNSW

(5) Chinese cultural symbols on graves. Section 4. DJ9/98

(6) A typical elaborate semi-circular shaped graves in Thailand. WS.

4.3 Homes for the Ancestors: establishing new traditions of burial through the provision of columbaria in Hong Kong

Author: Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather

INTRODUCTION

Not only the living, but also the dead are accommodated in highrise buildings in Hong Kong. This represents a quiet revolution in Hong Kong Chinese burial practice since the 1950s. It is the result of the growing acceptance by Hong Kong's population of the official strategy, adopted in the 1960s, to encourage cremation. Today, Hong Kong's many large columbaria are striking buildings, the largest of which have offered architects a complex challenge. Columbaria are immensely important to the families concerned, and are the scene of huge crowds at the public holidays of Qingming and Chongyang, the gravesweeping festivals, when relatives gather to pay their respects to their deceased relatives.

This paper will discuss the background to the widespread adoption of the practice of cremation in Hong Kong since the early 1970s. It will then look at the landscape artefacts that have resulted, by providing details of the current provision for cremation and ashes storage in Hong Kong. It will describe the principles underlying the design of municipal columbaria, of two of the columbaria built by the non-profit Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Board, and of the single large commercial columbarium. It will conclude by discussing some of the issues raised. It is a companion paper to others on Hong Kong's cemeteries (Teather 1997a; Teather 1997b; Teather 1998; Chow and Teather 1998).

A TRANSFORMATION IN BURIAL PRACTICE: FROM COFFIN BURIALS TO CREMATION

In 1993, 68 per cent of those who died were cremated, compared with 35 per cent in 1976 (Government Information Services 1977 and subsequent years). The full paper gives data on niche provision in 1996-7 in walls and columbarium buildings by the two municipal providers, by the three major private nonprofit providers, and by the single large

commercial provider.

Underlying the huge increase in demand for spaces for storage of ashes are two factors. The first is the influx of population to Hong Kong after 1949, and the second is the cultural need to keep ancestral remains intact and appropriately stored.

Population influx: in 1945, as a result of the wartime outflow of people, Hong Kong's population was a mere 650 000; six months after the British returned it was one million. Immigration from Mainland China in subsequent decades brought the population to 5 million by 1981. In 1995, it was 6.3 million (Skeldon 1994; Siu 1996). Many of those who fled to Hong Kong in the mid-twentieth century hoped eventually to return to their ancestral home in Mainland China, as had generations of previous emigres in the Chinese diaspora. In this case, however, this has not taken place. For the vast majority, the mention on headstones and niche tablets in cemeteries and columbaria of the ancestral home of the occupants (or the occupant's husband) has to suffice.

Cultural considerations: within the context of Confucianism, the ancestors' resting places have traditionally been of central importance. They are regarded by many as crucial for family fortunes, as the bones are believed to channel qi, the energy inherent in the physical universe, in a manner which brings good fortune to descendants. When cremation has been the choice, it is still important that stored remains of forebears are accessible so the family can visit them. The eldest son is charged with making offerings and carrying out other ritual observances to his deceased father and mother, whether at the graveside or at the niche, on the appropriate dates, such as Qingming, Chongyang and other auspicious occasions. Scattering of ashes, therefore, is not appropriate.

ADOPTION OF CREMATION

In encouraging cremation, the British in Hong Kong were attempting to establish a practice established in Europe and the USA during the 1890s (Curl 1993). The first columbarium in the USA mentioned by Curl is one in San Francisco, 1895, with 2000 niches. Although columbaria are a well-established European artefact, dating back to Roman times, the imposing columbaria of Hong Kong may well be without precedent in Chinese culture, or indeed anywhere else in the world.

In order to encourage Hong Kong Chinese to adopt cremation, close attention was given to appropriate columbarium design, in order that descendants feel that the niche, as the final resting place, is 'fitting', and that there is no loss of face involved. Future research may reveal that the failure to take this step is one reason for the continuing resistance to the official policy of cremation in Mainland China.

A TRANSFORMATION IN ARTEFACTS: FROM CEMETERIES TO COLUMBARIA

No new municipally-run cemeteries have been established in Hong Kong since 1950. In 1960, when land at Cape Collinson on Hong Kong Island was designated for a complex of private cemeteries to be managed by the Chinese Permanent Cemetery Board (CPCB), by the Roman Catholic Church, and by Buddhist and Muslim organisations, the municipal provision was for a crematorium, a series of public columbaria and a public Garden of Remembrance. Despite an increase in population from two to just over three million people from 1950 to 1961, public grave spaces were not provided. All further municipal provision has been in the form of columbaria within existing cemeteries, with the exception of a crematorium and columbarium at Fu Shan on a new site near Sha Tin in 1985. New coffin graves in public and private cemeteries alike are now managed on a cycle of exhumations after a period of six to ten years, with the option at that stage of cremation, or of transfer of remains to an urn grave. As a result of the exhumation policy, the two large public cemeteries established in 1950 still provide a reserve of land for permanent urn graves (900mm x 900mm in area). They do not provide for permanent coffin graves. The only new cemetery to be established since 1960 has been the Chinese Permanent Cemetery at Junk Bay (1989).

As cremation slowly gained in popularity during the 1970s, private cemetery providers began building columbaria within their existing cemeteries, first of all in the form of modest, freestanding walls, or in retaining walls on steep sites. Demand became such that public columbarium buildings as opposed to walls were erected at the public cemeteries at Wo Hop Shek (1975) and Tsuen Wan (1976). A larger public columbarium followed at Diamond Hill in Kowloon (1987). The first large private columbarium - commissioned by the CPCB at Cape Collinson and completed in 1981 - set a precedent for functional and culturally sensitive design. Two of the seven CPCB columbaria that now exist will be described in detail in

the full paper, together with a large, commercial columbarium complex, Po Fook, opened in 1992 at Sha Tin.

An attempt by another commercial firm to build a columbarium (and to develop associated lucrative activities) at Pat Heung near Yuen Long in the New Territories was stopped at a late development stage by vehement, persistent opposition from local indigenous residents, who claimed that the development would damage the fengshui of their village. Opposition to development on the basis of fengshui is an accepted part of the planning process in Hong Kong (Bristow 1989). In this case no solution could be found, and the Town Planning Board eventually rejected the project in 1991. Other non-profit, private providers of storage for ashes include monasteries, temples, and chaitong (Buddhist establishments for lay women), and there are small columbaria buildings on the site of the Buddhist cemetery at Cape Collinson.

MUNICIPAL COLUMBARIA: BUREAUCRATIC SOLUTIONS

Municipal columbaria are a mixture of the functional and the gracious. Older buildings are low rise blocks; newer columbaria are up to nine stories high with no concessions to decorative or culturally sensitive detail. Frequent signs give various instructions and information, blocks are labelled, corridors of rank upon rank of niches are clearly numbered, and stark, black and white photographs of the occupants in the style of identity cards stare back at the visitor. At Qingming and Chongyang, temporary toilets are parked in side roads, the big litter bins overflow and ash spills out round the blazing incinerators, while family groups picnic on the landscaped lawns. Plantings of trees and shrubs mitigate the starkness of the buildings.

NON-PROFIT, PRIVATE COLUMBARIA: RESTRAINED ARCHITECTURAL LICENCE

The most innovative provider of columbaria has been the CPCB. This is a body corporate, established in 1913 to provide permanent cemeteries for Chinese residents of Hong Kong. The CPCB now manages four cemeteries, three with two columbaria and the last with one. The newly completed columbarium at Junk Bay is the largest, with 49 884 niches. Whereas functionalism is the design principle behind the USD and RSD Columbaria, the firms of architects commissioned by the CPCB had the opportunity to create buildings that were not only functional but were also cultural statements. As a result, CPCB columbaria are, in several ways, powerful landscape elements. For example, the older Cape Collinson columbarium has a ground plan in the shape of the auspicious and ancient eight-sided bagua (Fig. 1; Chung 1989). Huge stone statues of mythical beasts, spirit guardians, flank the entrances to the second CPC columbarium on this site, completed in 1991. Further details of this and another impressive CPC columbarium will be provided.

A COMMERCIAL COLUMBARIUM: POSTMODERN VERNACULAR

The last columbarium to be discussed in detail will be the commercial venture, Po Fook (Fig.2; Leung 1992; Anon 1990). Unlike the seven CPCB columbaria, it does not have a backdrop of hillsides of terraced graves, but is seen instead against an attractive, bush clad mountainside. The architectural solution to this steep site is ingenious and echoes traditional village vernacular. Banks of little halls, each one in the style of the

traditional ancestral worship hall (still existing in many New Territory villages) rise in ranks in two wings up the steep slopes. The niches at Po Fook are differentially priced according the auspiciousness of each position; fengshui is exploited for profit motives. The Hong Kong Buddhist Association (HKBA) has strong reservations about this development, in that it also blatantly exploits a commercially-provided Buddhist environment for profit. At present, no other such commercial columbarium exists in Hong Kong. The developer of the ill-fated, proposed Pat Hung columbarium intended to run activities such as orchestra concerts, car and pet shows, in order to entertain the crowds attracted to columbaria and cemeteries at Festivals, and possibly at other times (Ng 1991).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There can be few modern cities in which provision for the dead in this way is so striking; so closely integrated, in terms of distance, with the residential, commercial and industrial quarters of the city; and so integrated into the pattern of the year, with the gravesweeping festivals included in the public holiday cycle. Singapore offers an important comparison (Yeoh and Tan 1995). A systematic comparison of the two cities, examining contemporary practices and landscapes of death,

would be useful.

Hong Kong's society and economy have been transformed since the end of the Second World War, and the adoption of columbaria as the major means for providing for the dead is part of this transformation. Whereas the population in the early post-war decades comprised, in the main, poor and poorly educated refugees from villages and towns, the last two generations of Hong Kong residents have experienced a Western-style education. Despite this powerful challenge to traditional beliefs, they still persist, and no more so than where death is concerned. However, the traditional omega-shaped grave with its worshipping platform was an architectonic expression of the ancestor veneration that underpins Confucianism (Teather 1997b), whereas, in contrast, the niche is no such symbol. It must be asked whether the persistence of the practice of visiting the niches containing ashes of deceased relatives at Qingming and Chongyang reflects the persistence of long-established cultural beliefs embedded in the world of fengshui, or whether it is today more of a welcome duty carried out through a wish to 'pay respect'. It would be inappropriate for a non-Chinese such as myself to debate this question.

The emergence on to the scene of Po Fook columbarium, as a commercial enterprise, reflects not only the fact of Hong Kong's increasing affluence, but the fact that the Hong Kong Chinese are prepared to invest considerable sums of money in providing for their own or their parents' remains - and possibly to trade in such provision before it is, in fact, needed.

The still-powerful nature of the yin world of the dead (its counterpart is the yang world of the living), interpreted through fengshui, inhabited by both evil and benevolent spirits, patterned by a distinctive, ritualistic, ever-recurring periodicity, is indicated by the feuding in 1991/2 over the proposed new private columbarium at Pat Heung. The clash of discourses here would be a fascinating project for an appropriate researcher. The players in this present-day scenario comprise the continuing presence of a traditional cosmological world view; the social structures of Confucian familial responsibilities; commercial motives; the marshalling by one player or another of gang violence; and the bureaucratic state underpinned by the rule of law. There could be no better example of the interpenetration of yin and yang worlds.

There remain some final points to be made. There is a widespread view among Chinese cultures that the world of death is polluted in the sense of 'taboo'. An impediment to the development of further research in the area tackled by this paper is the limited number of such scholars, particularly geographers. The fact that most such scholars are Chinese may hamper further research, as they may well share the view that research into the worlds and landscapes of death is inappropriate and possibly unpropitious. Finally, I am conscious that this research raises more questions than it answers. Ethical questions arise in terms of an Anglo Saxon Australian researching Chinese cultural issues. A more informed planning perspective on the questions raised here would be useful. At the very least, this paper attempts to take the study of urban history and the interpretation of contemporary urban landscapes into realms rarely explored.

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4.4 Restoring Old Chinese Headstones in the Andersons Bay Cemetery, Dunedin.

Author: Leslie Wong.

Throughout the Otago region there are many lost Chinese graves in or out of cemeteries whose locations can only be found by local knowledge or in cemetery ledgers and historical accounts. In many historic places the cemeteries themselves have long disappeared. Dunedin has 3 major cemeteries that span the periods from the early Chinese gold miners, to the Chinese labourers of the 1920s to 1950s. One of the older cemeteries has its Chinese graves so desecrated that no amount of effort could restore the gravestones.

Luckily, at a once neglected place in the cemetery at Andersons Bay, Dunedin, there is an unique collection of 53 plots of which there are 46 restorable headstones. This area was originally considered to be wasteland only fit for the burial of aliens and the Chinese were segregated there into their own subdivision. Many names written into the official records had no resemblance to the transcribed names on the headstones. No major attempt had been made to produce an accurate transcript and find the full origins of those buried there.

By a twist of fate, trees and overgrowth had sheltered this location from the elements and public view for over 30 years. Today, we have an almost complete memorial to those early Chinese from the 1920's to nearly 1950. Unfortunately many headstones have been vandalised and broken, while others had tree branches growing against them, pushing them over and smashing them. In spite of what has happened, this is the best repository of Chinese headstones in Dunedin that could be restored to commemorate a chapter in our history.

Many Chinese came to this country with nothing but a suitcase full of hope, and when their time was up, they had even lost the suitcase. Few had the good fortune to realise their dreams and prosper.

The restoration project began 'secretly' by myself in 1996 and was planned to restore headstones in 3 phases with a time span of 2 years per phase. Originally it started with scrub cutting and clearing of a small section to see if the project was feasible and to see if some way could be devised to clean and glue together the broken headstones. If no solution could be found, the project could have been abandoned there and then.

The easy tasks were taken first in order to develop the skills necessary to tackle the more difficult problems. Many of the original white marble stones were green, having been eaten into by moss and the lettering badly weathered.

A few of the unbroken stones were chemically washed and bleached to make them white again. Special tools were devised to recut the lettering that had all but faded. Because some stones were too old and brittle, the use of the traditional hammer and chisel method was not possible. Original carving mistakes or missing lines are left uncorrected. A restored white stone could not be photographed to record what was written and the lettering had to be hand painted in black or gold for the final photograph.

A broken stone found in the soil was taken home to see if it could be cleaned and glued together. Fortunately, a modern epoxy glue was found and the join was stronger than the original stone. It was necessary to clamp the two halves together for the glue to take hold. At the gravesite a concrete base was cast to hold the restored headstone. Many broken headstones had to be restored at home and where possible the missing piece had to be fabricated with a concrete aggregate and colour matched, with the missing characters remade. To passersby, my front lawn often resembled a cemetery with several headstones in various stages of restoration.

There are a few headstones that have the lettering inlaid with black lead. These should have been everlasting, and are the most difficult to restore. When the lead was first hammered in, the carved lettering beneath fractured. Over the years a fungus grew between the fractures and the lead, and eventually the lead and pieces of marble fell out leaving a crater. The damaged areas had to be refilled and new lettering cut with a dental drill. Finally, a matching imitation filler is inserted. Sadly, some headstones cannot be restored.

It is always easy to take a backward glance at what may have been our heritage, but when time has taken its toll, we realise that it is there no more. Through our hands we must preserve what is precious, to pass down through the generations for all time to come.

View of some restored Headstones June 1998

Initial Trial Clearing 1996

Same Site Restored AUGUST 1998

