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From Cemeteries to Luxurious Memorial Parks

With Special Reference to Malaysia and Indonesia

Des cimetières aux somptueux parcs mémoriaux, plus particulièrement en Malaisie et en Indonésie

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From Cemeteries to Luxurious Memorial Parks With Special Reference to Malaysia and Indonesia²

The second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries were characterized by high-speed urban development that resulted in the encircling of the old Chinese cemeteries by new settlements. In many cities, especially in Manila, Jakarta and Surabaya, incoming migrants squatted on cemetery land. Some municipal authorities issued new regulations intended to close old Chinese burial sites and eventually to demolish them and the process is still going on. In certain cities, ancient Chinese cemeteries were transformed into “heritage parks” or *guji wenhua gongyuan* 古蹟文化公園, which combine the significance of a historic landscape and the need for open space. The two most famous examples are: first, the cemetery of Bukit Cina “China Hill” in Melaka, created in 1984 (after an urban development plan and a private sector plan had attempted to destroy it).³ Second, was the Kwong Tong Cemetery—the biggest of all the cemeteries in Kuala Lumpur constructed in 1895 and the resting place of prominent city pioneers—.⁴ After several removal plans, the last in 2000, the cemetery was finally transformed

1. CNRS, Paris.

2. Our thanks to Ong Siew Kian, Ardi Halim and Yerri Wirawan who accompanied us during our visits of certain memorial parks, and to the personnel of these cemeteries. We are also grateful to Mary Somers Heidhues who read this article with care and insight.

3. See Carolyn L. Cartier, “Creating Historic Open Space in Melaka,” *The Geographical Review*, 83:4 (1993), pp. 359-373.

4. For a list of names, see Gu Yanqiu bianzhu 古燕秋編主, *Sisheng qikuo—Jilongpo Guangdong yishan mubei yu tuwen jiyao* 死生契闊—吉隆坡廣東義山墓碑與圖文輯要 / *For Life or for death, however separated. Important tombs, epigraphs, documents of Kwongtong cemetery Kuala Lumpur*, Kuala Lumpur, Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies & The Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management Kuala Lumpur, 2014, pp. 1-4.

into a cultural park, thanks to the strong resistance of the Cantonese community.⁵ As for public cemeteries, run by municipalities and religious institutions, their capacities are very limited, many of them are not far from being full,⁶ and burial plots are no longer available within the cities.

Various measures aimed at reducing the length of burial tenure, or at encouraging what is called “reburying,” that is interring one body over another several years later, or even cremating the remains of the third and subsequent persons in a family and placing their urns in the same burial plot.⁷ Simultaneously people started to resort to cremation and the placing of the ashes in private columbaria. Years ago, at a higher level, the Malaysian government issued directives on burial lands according to which developers must allocate lands for cemeteries, but the latter “have been constantly asking for exemptions because they are reluctant to have part of their land turned into burial land.”⁸ In a 2011 report, the Selangor Land and Minerals Department confirmed that the lack of burial grounds is one of the major problems the state is facing.⁹ Nirwono Joga (Chairman Indonesian Landscape Architecture Study Group, Jakarta) on the “Urgency of burial ground for Jakarta” (*Jakarta Post*, Dec. 3, 2002) reached a similar conclusion, saying: “The lack of seriousness in the management of cemeteries on the part of the Jakarta city administration has led the developers and planners of new satellite cities around Jakarta to be similarly negligent. None of them have allocated land for public cemeteries.” On March 12, 2011, the same newspaper stated that there was “no more space in C. Jakarta cemeteries.”

It is in the context of this grave burial crisis that the private sector came in. The private-led initiative into the memorial park business first started in the 1960s in the Philippines, when the multinational Castle and Cooke, “upon witnessing the congested and unpleasant sights of public cemeteries” and

5. Chen Yacai (Tan Ah Chai) 陳亞才, *Liu hen yu yihen, Wenhua guji yu huaren yishan* 留痕與遺恨。文化古蹟與華人義山 (To preserve the roots or to regret. Cultural relics and cemeteries), Kuala Lumpur: Dajiang shiye chubanshe, 2000; Ong Seng Hwat 王琛發, *Malaixiya huaren yishan yu muzang wenhua* 馬來西亞華人義山與墓葬文化 (Chinese cemeteries in Malaysia and funeral culture), Selayang: Yinpin duomeiti chuanbo zhongxin, Yin Pin multimedia Communication Centre, 2001, pp. 61-86; Yat Ming Loo, *Architecture and Urban Form in Kuala Lumpur: Race and Chinese Spaces in a Postcolonial City*, Farnham, England & Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2012, chap. 6. “Landscape of the Non-Descript: Kuala Lumpur Chinese Cemeteries”, pp. 145-178. See also the Kwong Tong cemetery site online: <http://ktc.org.my>

6. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) told *the Malay Mail online* that the public cemeteries in the city are now 80 per cent full; cf. Boo Su-lyn, “Even in death no escape from rising prices,” Kuala Lumpur, April 11, 2014: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/even-in-death-no-escape-from-rising-prices>

7. Cf. “No more Space in C. Jakarta Cemeteries,” *Jakarta Post*, March 12, 2011.

8. Vanitha Nadaraj, “Grave Situation as KL and Selangor Run out of Burial Land” (Dec. 10, 2014), online: <http://www.establishmentpost.com/grave-situation-kl-selangor-run-burial-land/>

9. Vanitha Nadaraj, “Grave Situation as KL and Selangor Run out of Burial Land.”

taking advantage of American models, conducted a study of the business for local consumption which turned out to be feasible. Manila Memorial Park (MMP) was born in 1964, after Castle and Cooke “approached some names of society.”¹⁰ That very year opened the era of a new concept of a deathscape in insular Southeast Asia. MMP was to become the largest memorial park company of the country in terms of numbers of parks and development. The first local real estate investor to venture into the memorial park business was apparently the TDC or Teresa Development Corporation (named after Teresa Cuaycong Lacson, grand matriarch of the Lacson family, large real estate owner of Bacolod city, Negros)¹¹ which in 1966 simultaneously opened the Bacolod Memorial Park and the funeral home Acropolis Garden, the building of which displays Greek-inspired designs.¹² In Malaysia, the concept of memorial park was not introduced until 1990-1991, and in Indonesia not until 2002-2003. In both cases, the initiative came from local entrepreneurs.

Initially, the new burial sites were patterned after traditional cemeteries, especially in the Philippines, but gradually they developed into luxurious parks that look more like public gardens, microcosms of China, mini-worlds, and recreational parks. This change in nature gave rise to the coining of neologisms in local languages. In Chinese, the terms *yishan* 義山, *yizhong* 義塚, *fendi* 墳地, *gongmu* 公墓, *mudi* 墓地, *musuo* 墓所, *muyu* 墓域, *gongmudi* 公墓, *zhongdi* 塚地, etc., used to designate a traditional collective cemetery, were progressively replaced by those of *fengjing muyuan* 風景墓園, *yuanlin fengjing muyuan* 園林風景墓園 “garden cemetery,” *shanzhuang* 山莊, literally “home in the hills,” *shanzhuang gongmu* 山莊公墓 “cemetery in the hills.” Euphemisms such as *huayuan* 花園 “flower garden,” *renshenghou huayuan* 人生後花園 “flower garden of the afterlife,” which all convey a concept of cultural landscape. In Malay/Indonesian, the terms *tempat kuburan*, *perkuburan*, and *permakaman* were superseded by those of *taman makam* and *taman pemakaman* which are renditions of the English “cemetery garden,” and of *taman peringatan*, or “garden of remembrance,” by the composite expressions *taman memorial*, and the loanwords *memorial park*, *memorial garden*.

The sites themselves have appellations that evoke pleasant symbolic landscaped deathscapes, such as Taigong lingyuan 泰宮陵園 or “Peaceful Palace Cemetery,” Taman Memorial Graha Sentosa “Great Peace Memorial Park,” Fugui shanzhuang 富貴山莊 “Domain of Riches and Honour” / Nirvana

10. This is a quotation from MMP official website : www.manilamemorial.com/index.php/about-us/48-history

11. See Acropolis Garden site: <http://www.acropolis-gardens.com/component/content/article/83-terms-and-conditions>

12. See “Bacolod Trade Expo and Conference 2014 MassKara City SMX Bacolod Convention Centre October 17-19, 2014. Teresa Development Corporation”: <http://www.masskaracity.com/business/teresa-development-corporation>

Memorial Park, Tiantang huayuan 天堂花園 / Heaven Memorial Garden, and others. Some refer to real landscapes in Asia such as Taman Makam Quilin(g) / Guilin mushanzhuang 桂林墓山庄,¹³ Nilai Memorial Park, or to symbolic places in the West, such as San Diego Hills. Some others, such as Rulai Xiaoen yuan 汝萊孝恩園 “Nilai Garden of Filial Piety and Gratitude,” embody current perceptions of the traditional Chinese family rules bonding the living with the departed.

These appellations, which address a wide range of complicated dreams, show that the new cemeteries mirror the contemporary aspirations of certain developers of Chinese origin in their host countries and the relationships they entertain at the local and international level. Simultaneously, they inform us of the expectations of a wealthy urban population that is: willing to spend money so that the deceased should find peace in the afterlife and eventually realize their dream and return to greatness.

In the following, we will look at pioneers in the memorialization industry, then the development of memorial parks as gardens of dreams, new cemeteries as mirrors of cultural identities, the legal frameworks, the memorialization industry, and finally marketing strategies.

Profiles of Local Pioneers of the Memorialization Industry

Although the biographies of most of the pioneers in the memorialization industry in Insular Southeast Asia are difficult to document, we may however get an insight into the way some of them came into this sector. Since the memorial parks were foreign in their conception, the developers who ventured into this field had, for the great majority, benefited from familiarity with Asian and Western cultures, and had undertaken several visits abroad to study the feasibility of similar projects.

Philippines

As regards the Philippines, the founder of the first private memorial park outside Manila in 1966, Bacolod Memorial Park, is Ramon C. Lacson Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Teresa Development Corporation (TDC), a real estate development company in Bacolod City (Negros Island), that has been in existence for several decades. In the same year, he also ventured into offering cremation and mortuary services by constructing Acropolis Gardens. Having a De La Salle University (Manila) and a U.S. education in accounting and economics along with his various experiences in sales, Lacson Jr. was able to realize his aspirations. In 1980, the corporation developed Rose Lawns Memorial Park, which was designed to meet the needs of average income

13. Quiling should be understood as Quilin or Guilin 桂林, a city of Guangxi 廣西 Autonomous Region, famous for its beautiful landscapes.

earners. The park, now adjacent to Acropolis Gardens is a vast 20 hectare property. In 1988, TDC opened Goldcrest Village and in 1994 Octagon Village. The corporation also owns several commercial properties in the city. One may get an insight into its various development activities by consulting its official sites online.¹⁴

Malaysia

In Malaysia since the mid-1980s, two developers, the late Datuk Choo Ching Hwa 拿督朱正華 (1931-1996), and Datuk Tan Sri Kong Hon Kong 拿督丹斯里鄭漢光 (born in 1954) felt the need to create modern cemeteries, but it took them several years of research to accomplish their projects. The first founded Xiaoen yuan and the second Nirvana Memorial Park.

Datuk Choo Ching Hwa was a Hakka born in Terengganu. When he was 16 years old, he went to Meizhou 梅州, Guangdong, his family's place of origin, to continue his secondary schooling, but was obliged to return to Malaya due to the political situation in China. He was successively a school teacher and headmaster. Then he went to Australia to further his studies and came back to Terengganu as a certified accountant. He started an accountancy practice in partnership with his wife and his brother under the firm name Choo Brothers Properties Sdn Bhd. He was also the general secretary of Koperatif Serbaguna Malaysia Bhd, which was the major shareholder in MPH B (now known as Magnum Berhad) engaged in underwriting all classes of general insurance. His personal interests also included a substantial shareholding in Kesang Holdings Bhd, of which he was Chairman. He was active in politics when he was Chairman of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) Terengganu liaison committee.¹⁵

In 1971, he was shocked when he saw "the unkempt condition, the eerie atmosphere of the cemetery" in which his father was buried.¹⁶ By the mid-1980s, with his wife, he undertook several visits to Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and the United States in order to study all facets of modern memorial park planning, development, management and operations. He founded Xiao En jituan 孝恩集團, which is "a multicultural group built on the philosophy of filial piety," and on April 26, 1991, the Nilai Memorial Park (or Rulai Xiaoen yuan) held its ground breaking ceremony, and the cemetery was to open to the public in 1993.¹⁷ A few years later Xiao En Group developed Melaka Memorial Park in a joint project with the local

14. See <http://teresadevelopmentcorp.com/> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zm8hp3Ck-s>

15. *The Straits Times*, 13 October 1982, p. 22.

16. Cf. Nilai Memorial Park official site: <http://www.nilaimemorialpark.com/profile.phtml>

17. "Han Chunjin zhuchi Xiaoen yuan dong tu li cheng Xiaochu renmen yinsen ganjue, zhengfu guli fenu huayuanhua 韓春錦主持孝恩院動土禮稱消除人們陰森感覺，政府鼓勵墳墓花園化", *Nanyang shangbao* 南洋商報, 27.4.1991.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The new cemetery was completed in 2005. Today the group which has more than 20 subsidiary companies with a wide array of activities is headed by Datuk Choo's widow and children.

Datuk Sri Kong Hon Kong whose ancestors were native to Nanhai 南海, Guangdong, was born in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. When he was 18, he started to work, first in a pawnshop and then an insurance company, and became interested in finance. Later he became the manager of a credit company and earned a lot of money, but he went bankrupt when he was in his early 30s. In 1990, his financial situation restored, he founded Nirvana Asia Limited of which he became managing director, and bought a huge piece of land in Seminyih in the state of Selangor on which he was to build the Nirvana Memorial Park called in Chinese Fugui shanzhuang 富貴山莊. In 1999, he expanded into the funeral care business becoming "Asia's largest integrated bereavement care provider." In 2003, jointly with the Indonesian Company P.T. Alam Hijau Lestari, he developed Lestari Memorial Park in Karawang Barat (to the east of Jakarta).¹⁸ In 2008, Nirvana Asia Ltd set up the Nirvana Memorial Park in Shah Alam, and the following year opened Nirvana Memorial Garden in Singapore. In December 2014 Nirvana was successfully listed on the main board of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange Limited (HKEx). Today Nirvana Asia Ltd has thirteen branches all over Asia, and a fourteenth in Huizhou 惠州, Guangdong province, PRC, is currently under construction, in cooperation with Huizhou Longyan Art Cemetery Development Co. to provide services in management, operation and sales of no less than 30,000 double niches in its columbarium, as well as a non-exclusive right to provide other death services. In an interview given to Ho Wan Foon,¹⁹ Datuk Sri Kong said he wanted to be the global "funeral leader":

I am very ambitious. In the long term I want to be No. 1 in the world in the funeral service sector. I am planning and positioning my team. Organic growth is too slow. The quickest way is to go through M & A [merger and acquisition].

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the first developer to invest in the memorial industry, Suwito Muliadi (Chinese name: Li Weiqing 李圍慶), comes from a family that was involved in bereavement services. Those who followed in his footsteps were

18. The group intends to open another memorial park in 2016 in the area of Tangerang, and has entered into an agreement with landowners to acquire parcels of land located at Desa Bongkawan, *kecamatan* Sibolangit, *kabupaten* Deli Serdang, Sumatra Utara. The land is located adjacent to the main road, about 25 km away from Medan, the third largest city in Indonesia with a population of about 4,100,000.

19. See Ho Wan Foon, "Aiming to be global 'funeral' leader," *The Star Online*, 26 Sept. 2015: www.thestar.com.my/.../Aiming-to-be-global-funeral-

apparently engaged in the real estate business. As for Mochtar Riady (Lie Mo Tie, Li Wenzheng 李文正, born in 1929), the founder of San Diego Hills, the biggest memorial park in Indonesia, he is chairman of the Lippo 立寶 Group.

In an interview given to a journalist from *Bisnis.com*,²⁰ Suwito Muliadi said that his parents had had a business in coffins named Hiap Djie Hoo [協二]號,²¹ located in Toko Tiga, Pancoran Kota, Jakarta. After his parents passed away, in 1990 he founded Yayasan Pemakaman Pluit, an association aimed at managing the first funeral home or *rumah duka* in Jakarta with his brother. He parted from his brother, opened four other funeral homes, and in 2002 constructed Taman Makam Quiling (later also called Heaven Memorial Park), in the mountainous area of Bogor in Buana Jaya on a property he acquired in 1995, when the value of land in this area was still low. The five funeral enterprises and the cemetery garden are now under the umbrella of the limited company, PT Naga Sakti or Shenlong jitian 神龍集團, that Suwito Muliadi founded in 2002. In August 2015, he opened a landscaped cemetery in a scenic place in the area of Tangerang (to the west of Jakarta) named Heaven Memorial Garden / Tiantang huayuan 天堂花園.²²

Mochtar Riady, was born in Batu near Malang (East Java) into a family of batik traders. His ambition to become a banker began when he was 10 years old. He received a Chinese education and was an anti-colonial activist during his school days in Java, participating in anti-Dutch demonstrations. He was arrested and deported to Nanjing, China, and took this opportunity to study philosophy at Nanjing University. He returned to Indonesia in 1950. After having run a small store in Jember (East Java) that became the largest in town, in 1954 he moved to Jakarta where he took his first steps in banking management. In 1971-1975 he successfully developed Panin Bank (by merging four banks) into one of the largest banks in Indonesia. He is known as a specialist in helping ailing banks. Then he worked for Bank Central Asia (BCA), leaving in 1990 to focus on expanding the Lippo Group which he founded. By now “Lippo Group has become a multinational group of companies spanning the Pacific Basin with interests in financial investment, property and infrastructure development, retail, education and media.”²³

The story goes that San Diego Hills Memorial Park and Funeral Homes was developed where a memorial monument for the ashes of Mochtar Riady’s

20. “Suwito Muliadi: Tidak Boleh Tamak” (Rabu, 02/05/2012) online: <http://entrepreneur.bisnis.com/read/20120502/267/75177/suwito-muliadi-tidak-boleh-tamak>

21. Our thanks to Zhou Nanjing 周南京 for this interpretation.

22. *Yinni Xingzhou ribao* 印尼星洲日報, May 11, 2015.

23. Cf. Mochtar Riady’s biography by Hoon Chang Yau, in Leo Suryadinata (ed.), *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent. A Biographical Dictionary*, Singapore: ISEAS Press, 2012, vol. I, pp. 926-927.

parents had been located, a specific place in Cikarang Barat, some 15 km from Jakarta.²⁴ The project was initiated in 2006 and launched the following year.

New Cemeteries as Gardens of Dreams and Greatness

In the Philippines, the memorial park developers cater to Catholics of Chinese and Filipino origins who are quite westernized, whereas in Malaysia their counterparts have to deal essentially with Chinese customers who exhibit a wide array of cultural and religious facets. In Indonesia the clientele may include Sino-Indonesians, and other Indonesians without distinction of religion. To some extent the new cemeteries reflect the aspirations and dreams of the living, whether developers or customers. Here we present two memorial parks set in Selangor, West Malaysia that exhibit more or less adapted Chinese features, namely Rulai Xiaoen yuan and Nirvana Memorial Park, and two in Indonesia: Taman Makam Quiling closer to the traditional Chinese cemetery, and San Diego Hills, which displays multicultural and cross-religious characteristics.

Rulai Xiaoen yuan / Nilai Memorial Park

In the preface to a book by Ong Seng Hwat (one of the tank thinkers of Nilai Memorial Park) on “Chinese cemeteries and funeral culture” published with the financial support of Xiao En Group,²⁵ Datin Choo Lim Sei Keng 拿汀朱林秀琴 presents the way her late husband conceived Xiaoen yuan, saying:

His original aim was not to make a profitable cemetery business, his main concern was to know how to realise a cemetery that could really embody the traditional rules regarding the manner one should attend to funeral rites for one’s parents and follow them when gone with due sacrifices. Such a cemetery, according to him, should combine the geographical layout with a forest garden design plan, *yuanlin shiji* 園林設計, so that the departed may rest in peace and dignity, and the living may enjoy a quiet atmosphere when they recall their dead and express their filial thoughts.

Datin Choo continues with her own views, that the cemeteries erected with much suffering by Malaysian Chinese, are symbols of their native places, and like their funeral culture itself, embody the priceless notions of *ren* 仁 “benevolence,” *xiao* 孝 “filial piety” and *yi* 義 “public duty,” and constitute “the traces of their history,” *lishi de zuji* 歷史的足跡. She adds that during the construction of the cemetery, Xiao En Group stressed the fact that the

24. Cf. Kemas, Ridwan Kurniawan and Lianita, Marketing Graves ; changing the paradigm of a burial ground from a city of death to city of amusement in San Diego Hill cemetery in Cikarang West Java. Paper presented in ARTEPOLIS 2 – International Conference and Workshop on Creative Communities and the Making of Place in Bandung, 8-10 August 2008, pp. 1-2 (accessed online in PDF, hereafter “Managing graves”). This paper is based on Lianita, “San Diego Hills Memorial Park & Funeral Homes Hiperrealitas pada arsitektur makam,” MA, Departemen Arsitektur. Fakultas Teknis, Universitas Indonesia, 2008.

25. Ong Seng Hwat, *Malaixiya huaren yishan yu muzang wenhua*, mentioned above note 5.

emphasis given to the present should not be at the expense of the past. Worthy of note is that to commemorate the 880th Anniversary of the birth of the Song philosopher and moralist Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), which was celebrated worldwide in 2010, his “Family Precepts” or *Zhuzi jiaxun* 朱子家訓, were engraved on a stele shaped as a wall which was dedicated on July 3, 2010.²⁶

The memorial garden, occupying a surface of some 44,5 hectares, was conceived by a foreign landscape architect in cooperation with local Chinese designers. (Plan 1) Developed partly on the site of a former hilly plantation it has preserved a small stand of rubber trees. The northeast side of the garden is planted with greenery. It encloses the reception hall, the columbarium garden including the Court of Faith, Xinde ge 信德閣, in a minimalist, subtle architecture, a meeting place that may be used by people of all cultures and beliefs. Slightly further on, the Court of Tranquillity, Jingtu ge 淨土閣, in an innovate bungalow-style columbarium, was designed for Buddhist believers. On the opposite side of the road and on a hill slope stand two Buddhist temples: Xiaoen si 孝恩寺, in Tang style, where funeral celebrations take place, which has a covered reception area, and Dizang dian 地藏殿, another sanctuary dedicated to the King of Hell, where ancestral tablets are kept and worshipped. Beyond these is a set of columbaria in Western-style houses, then others shaped like Chinese courtyard houses or *siheyuan* 四合院. Next, in front of the watercourse is the Peace Memorial Garden with a monument to peace, Heping jinianpai 和平紀念牌, in memory of all those who perished during the resistance against the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). A third set of columbaria called Xiaoen shuixiang 孝恩水鄉, the layout of which is based on the traditions of “water village” architecture of Jiangsu province (Plate 1), remind visitors of little China of old. Inside this complex is the stele engraved with the “Family Precepts” of Zhu Xi accompanied by a rather loose English translation. (Plate 3) Apart from Buddhist and Christian Garden niche walls, greenery areas, a lake planted with lotus, and a few pieces of land that await further development, the rest of the park is divided into various sections with burial plots of different sizes and prices, separated from each other by lanes occasionally planted with trees. (Plate 2) They include the Terrace of Honour, Jiazuo moqu 家族墓區, a specially designed luxury family burial plots; the Garden of Eternal Compassion, Renshou yuan 仁壽苑, for standard double burial plots; the Terrace of Merits, Changle yuan 長樂園, for single burial plots, the design of which is based on Buddhist teachings of *Pāramitā* or *Liudu* 六度, literally the “six means of passing [to Nirvana]”, and last, the Garden

26. Maguo shouxiang shubuzhang Xu Zigen boshi zhuchi shijie zuida “Zhuzi jiaxun” bei gemu 馬國首相署部長許子根博士主持世界最大朱子家訓碑揭幕 (Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Minister in the Prime Minister Department, unveiled the world’s largest stele engraved with Zhu’s family precepts), <http://www.xiao-en.org/cultural/magazine.asp?cat=35&loc=zh&id=1879>

of Benevolence, Cixin yuan 慈心苑, a burial ground for urns designed in accordance with *fengshui* 風水 principles. On the slope of an artificial mound are the collective tombs of the forebears of Choo Ching Hwa and of those of the Lins 林 whose roots are also in Guangdong province and with whom they are related by intermarriages. The third collective tomb, not yet occupied, was constructed by a certain Liu 劉 family from Johor. (Plates 4 a-b)

One peculiarity of Nilai Memorial Park is that it maintains a didactic and cultural site online entitled Xiao En Cultural (sic) or Xiaoen wenhua 孝恩文化²⁷ which presents diverse information about the understanding of filial piety, past and present, various religious festivals and customs, a digital journal entitled *Xiaoen zazhi* 孝恩雜誌, a collection, *Xiaoen wenku* 孝恩文庫, containing articles mainly written by Ong Seng Hwat, and current news about Chinese culture researches in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries. The website is still under development. The Xiaoen yuan also runs a foundation, which supports various cultural and religious projects, the details of which may be accessed online.

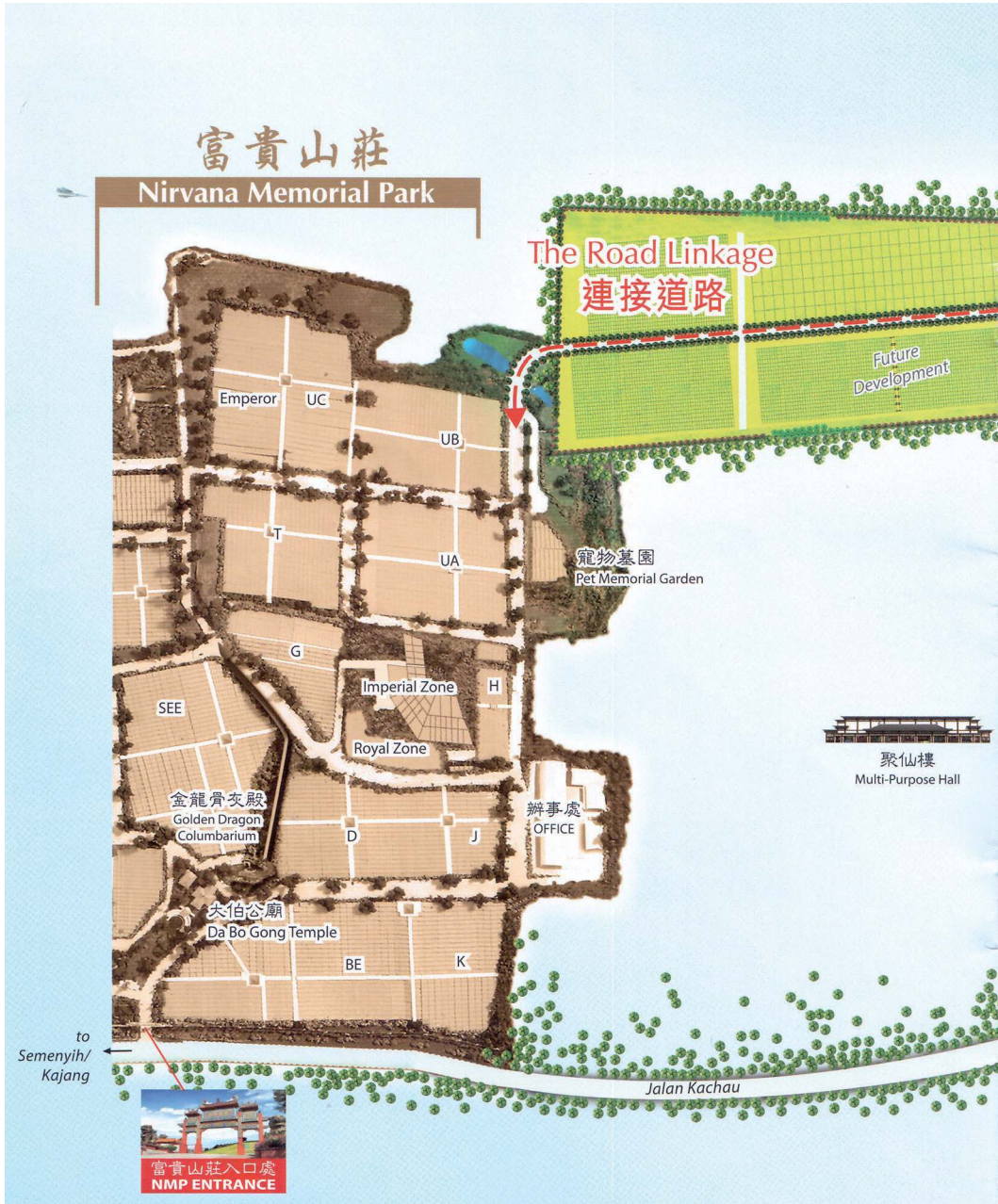
Nirvana Memorial Park, Semenyih / Fugui shanzhuang 富貴山莊

The Nirvana Memorial Park, Semenyih, is one of the world's largest memorial parks. It sits on approximately 323 hectares of land of a former plantation, and is accessible within 25 minutes by highways from Kuala Lumpur.

The park was designed with outstanding landscaping and lush greenery. Moreover, it has a wide range of hills with pleasant contours that are said to provide an excellent *fengshui*. (Plan 2) The landscaped park however does not convey a feeling of harmony because it lacks homogeneity, and exhibits certain extravagances, such as the Jinlong guhui dian 金龍骨灰殿, which is a columbarium shaped as a 1000-foot long undulating dragon's body (Plate 5), adorned with Chinese tiles, with an effigy of Guanyin perched on its head. However, most of the local Chinese appreciate it.

The cemetery has different zones for burial plots of varied prices, the most expensive are the Royal, Imperial, and Emperor Tombs. The park also includes the Peace Garden or Yishu lingyuan 藝術陵園 "Art Cemetery," with very modern-styled tombs (Plate 7), and next to it the memorial of the singer Bai Guang 白光 (1921-1999), including a piano, which plays her songs. (Plate 8) It is reminiscent of the private cemetery of Chin Pao San 金寶山 (located on a mountainside in Jinshan district, New Taipei) famous for the tomb of the Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng or Teng Li-yun 鄧麗君 (1953-1995) whose memorial garden features her life-size statue and a large electronic keyboard

27. See <http://www.xiao-en.org/cultural/magazine.asp?loc=zh-cn>





Plan 2 – Nirvana Memorial Garden and Memorial Park. (Source: Nirvana)

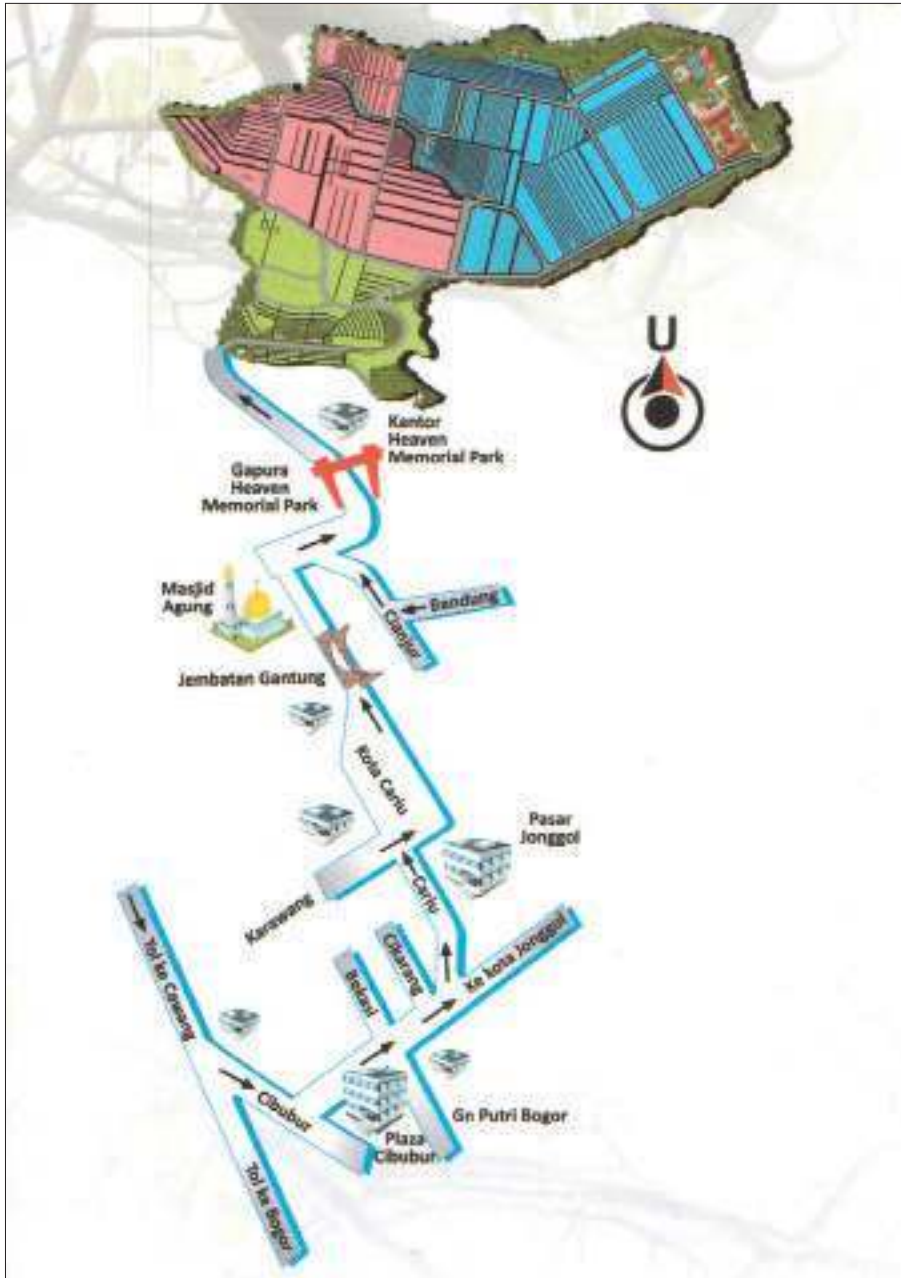
that can be played by visitors. Also included in the Nirvana Park are two temples dedicated to Dabo gong 大伯公, the Earth God.

About two kilometers away from Nirvana Park, the distinctive Nirvana Memorial Garden (which since 2015 is linked to the Park by an inner road crossing a newly acquired plot of land that is still under development) is located on 84 hectares of gently undulating land, creatively parceled into several zones for different purposes. One of these zones, called The Royal, includes the impressive funeral complex for the Kong family as well as the mausoleum of the late Master of *fengshui* Ye Qinghua 葉清華, which is adorned with a huge geomancy compass. This garden also includes a nicely designed Chinese garden. The name of this, Taoyuan guzhen 桃源古鎮 “The Ancient Town of the Peach Valley [i.e. Arcadia]”, alludes to the story of a man who went through a peach orchard and discovered a secluded valley where people were living in peace, ignorant of the changes of dynasty. The garden, set along a river, has various buildings in Chinese style, some of which sheltering burial urns. This memorial garden also includes a multipurpose structure, called Juxian lou 聚仙樓 shaped like a sanctuary with the effigies of the Buddhist Trinity and of the King of Hell. The Juxian lou is used for various Buddhist and Taoist ceremonies. The structure also functions as a columbarium, and as a place to display ancestral tablets made out of translucent plastic, electrically lit on various altars for worship purposes. A special altar is devoted to the tablets of aborted and stillborn infants. The structure also includes a memorial hall or *jinian guan* 紀念館, with photographs of various personalities. A special section for *shengji* 生基 or “foundations of destiny” also known as “prosperity and longevity tombs” or *shoumu* 壽墓. (Plates 9 a-b) The *shengji* installation is aimed at perfecting the course of a person’s destiny by harnessing the positive *qi* 氣 “life-giving principle” from the universe for better fortune, *zhong shengji, qiu haoyun* 種生基 求好運. The *shengji* installation has to be performed by a master of *fengshui*, on an auspicious date.²⁸

Moreover, the garden displays a collection of stone inscriptions called Zhonghua renwen beilin 中華人文碑林 or “Chinese Writing Stele Forest” (Plates 10-11).²⁹ The inscriptions were selected with care after several study visits to China. They offer a diachronic view of Chinese calligraphic masterpieces, thanks to 138 stone slabs, enlarged replicas of works by famous calligraphers, starting with the *jiagu wen* 甲骨文 or oracle bone inscriptions of the late Shang Dynasty up to modern times. Two extra sections display the masterpieces of forty former Malaysian Chinese calligraphers and a sample of works from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Apart from a calligraphy by Tang

28. Locally called “Chinese Calligraphy Stone Gallery”; address: Lot 1170, Jalan Sg Lalang, Batu 30, 43500 Semenyih, Selangor, Lot 1170, Jalan Sungai Lalang.

29. This old Taoist practice seems to have been reactivated for commercial purposes.



Plan 3 – Plan for accessing Taman Makam Quiling / Heaven Memorial Park. (Source: Heaven memorial Park)

Empress Wu Zitian 武則天 (624-705), no other women's masterpieces are displayed even for the modern period, which is, at least, shocking. The project plan was initiated in 2009 by the founder of Nirvana, under the influence of the Xiao En Group. The latter at the same time, on a smaller scale, planned the engraving of Zhu Xi's "Family Precepts" on a huge stele, which was erected inside Xiaoen yuan the following year, as we have seen. The Stele Forest was inaugurated on November 3, 2012, by Health Minister Datuk Sri Liow Tiong Lai 拿督斯里廖中萊 in the presence of the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Malaysia. It had taken about three years to complete, and is the only one of its kind in Southeast Asia.

Taman Makam Quiling / Heaven Memorial Park

Taman Makam Quiling, located in Desa Buana Jaya, Jl. Jonggol Cianjur, in *kecamatan* Tanjung *kabupaten* Bogor, is at two or more hours drive from Jakarta (Plan 3). The cemetery is located in a scenic and peaceful landscape watered by the natural river Cibebet and surrounded by a wide range of mountains that are reminiscent of those in Guilin, Guangxi, China, which earned it the "best possible *fengshui*," *zhishang fengshui* 至上風水. An arch, *pailou* 牌樓, across the road, with the English name of the burial site has replaced the Chinese one: Guilin muyuan shanzhuang 桂林墓園山莊, since 2015 and indicates the main entrance. (Plate 12) The cemetery garden measures 123 hectares of which about one-fourth is occupied by burial sites that have been sold. Apart from the Reception Hall, the park has a restaurant and a hotel. Diverse other structures are available for certain collective celebrations: such as the *Qingming*, and Avalambana or *Yulanpen* 盂蘭盆, the festival led by Buddhist monks dedicated to the liberation of errant souls, that is held on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month.

The different sections of the park, separated from one another by paved paths, are each allocated to a certain type of tomb. (Plate 13) The biggest burial lots or *kavling*³⁰ may reach some 200 square meters. Some of the most sumptuous tombs are in a richly elaborated traditional Chinese style, out of fashion in China proper, that is still produced for export in the vicinity of Huian 惠安, Fujian province, which remains a significant center of tomb manufacture. A few burial lots have been purchased by Taiwanese. The cemetery includes tombs of Christians as well as those of deceased who retained their traditional beliefs, and offers the services of a master of *fengshui* who helps families to find a suitable location for their tombs.

San Diego Hills and Funeral Homes

San Diego Hills Memorial Park is located in the industrial corridor of

30. *Kavling*, from the Dutch *kaveling*, refers to a burial plot.

Cikarang, West Java, about 15 km by road from Jakarta, and has its own helipad. The cemetery is set on a plot of land of about 500 hectares in area. The story goes that initially Mochtar Riady wanted to dedicate a memorial to his parents to receive their ashes. Later, perhaps in view of the success achieved by Lestari Memorial Park founded three years earlier, this plot of land was developed into a gigantic *public cemetery*, and given the exotic name of San Diego Hills. The master plan of the present memorial park (online) in fact indicates a special section, called “Mochtar Riady Heritage,” on one of the highest hills, that is devoted to the Lippo Group family.

The Riadys first had in mind a universal cemetery that could accommodate the dead without distinction of religion. However, during the initial planning, they reached the conclusion that this ideal was not necessarily suitable for the Indonesian people who worship their dead according to their respective faiths. Finally, the memorial park was divided into three areas, respectively the Garden of Creation for Christians, the Garden of Prosperity and Joy for Hindu-Buddhists, and the Heavenly Garden for Muslims respectively, all of which became elegant cemeteries. Each area is divided into compartments in order to create a number of spaces with pleasant English appellations, having different types of burial sites, ranging from standard single tomb to sophisticated gazebos, and family estates. A special burial plot called Heroes Plaza or “Taman Pahlawan versi San Diego Hills” is devoted to personalities who have contributed to Indonesian culture, literature, arts, social sciences, sports, and other fields.³¹

The Riadys’ dream was to construct a cemetery on the model of the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Los Angeles, California. Like the founder of the first Forest Lawn in Glendale, Hubert Eaton, they thought that a cemetery should be a pleasant place for the dead as well as for the living, “filled with towering trees, sweeping lawns, splashing fountains, beautiful statuary, and (...) memorial architecture.” For this purpose, they commissioned Edaw/Aecom, a firm specialized in landscape architecture, to design this new park, which spreads on the slopes of small hills surrounding the eight-hectare artificial Lake Angeles, while the main entrance is precisely southeast of the lake.³²

In the different sections of the Christian burial sites are numerous copies of European statuary, while the partially enclosed Columbarium “Breath of Life” looks like a Greek monument. The Chapel Square, which is just beyond the main entrance, displays two multipurpose monuments, a small-scale replica of Istanbul’s Blue Mosque, and a facsimile of the church located on the grounds of Forest Lawn in Hollywood Hills (itself a reproduction of Old North Church in Boston). As for the Muslim cemetery garden, which includes several

31. See <http://sales-sandiegohills.com/artikel-sandiegohills/taman-makam-pahlawan/>

32. Kurniawan and Lianita, *Marketing Graves*.

musyallas,³³ it takes its inspiration from the Mughal Gardens of India. The most sumptuous tombs include elegant *cungkups*.³⁴ According to Kurniawan and Lianita, one of the main architects of San Diego Hills was Ahmad Fauzi who works with RSP Architects Snd Bhd, Kuala Lumpur.³⁵

In a cluster of buildings called “Family Centre”, funeral, and leisure activities, weddings, and birthday parties may take place, side by side. The Centre, together with the Chapel, includes a restaurant, hotel, flower shop, meeting halls, sport facilities such as a swimming pool, and a jogging track....

San Diego Hills Memorial Park, which has a potential capacity of five million tombs, has had great success with the Indonesian elites. According to the estimations of its managing director in 2012, all the burial lots are expected to be sold before 2020.

Cemetery Gardens as Mirror of Cultural Identities

The fact that all these new cemeteries are enclosed inside walls (with the exception of Heaven Memorial Park), and guarded day and night, makes them protected oases, allowing their promoters to cultivate all sorts of dreams, that differ between Malaysia and Indonesia. Malaysian Chinese tend to use these gardens as a base for reviving diverse elements of a rather remote Chinese culture for their own benefit, but also to visualize the grandeur of Chinese culture, in order to disseminate it beyond the Chinese world. In Indonesia, where the ancestral culture has largely become oral, the descendants of Chinese are less inclined to elaborate on the merits of Confucian values or on those of Chinese calligraphy. Nevertheless, they maintain in their deepest hearts a traditional funeral culture, which they try to put into practice by accommodating it to the surroundings that affect them. They may even go so far as to relocate Chinese culture into a universe dominated by Western values.

Malaysia

In the following, we will show that the first cemetery garden conveys a permanent didactic message to the community, whereas the second equally relying on stone inscriptions, offers a visualization of the greatness of Chinese culture.

Xiaoen yuan as a New Place of Memory

Since its inception Xiaoen yuan has been the cradle of an active educative movement based on Confucian principles, which may be partially explained by the fact that Datuk Choo was first a teacher deeply imbued with Chinese moral values. Additionally, some Chinese had and still have the impression

33. A *musyalla* is a prayer house, a place where people can say their prayers.

34. A *cungkup* is a structure in the shape of a house above a tomb.

35. Kurniawan and Lianita, *Marketing Graves*.

that their cultural roots are threatened. After the passing of Datuk Choo, the movement continued under the guidance of Xiao En Group that shares the same philosophy.

The worldwide celebrations of the 880th Anniversary of Zhu Xi's birthday were an opportunity to strengthen its mission, by putting the emphasis on the "Family Precepts" of Zhu Xi. Linking its efforts with Zhu surname associations or Zhushi gonghui 朱氏公會 in six different countries in Southeast Asia, Xiao En Group took the initiative of organizing commemorative celebrations. For the purpose, they decided to erect a huge stele (2.3 m high and 6 m long) engraved with the original text of Zhuxi's Precepts, accompanied by an English translation. (Plate 3) The stele would stand as "a concretization of consciousness," *yishi jingxiang* 意識景象, to raise awareness of the historical memory of traditional cultural values. In so doing, Xiao En Group also wanted to make Xiaoen yuan a "New Place of Memory" or *Xin de jiyi changsuo* 新的記憶場所.

According to Ong Seng Hwat, who wrote a very interesting article³⁶ on the meaning of the *Zhuji jiaxun* Stele as regards the institutional transmission of collective memory, the Chinese people at the sight of the stele will first be moved, then will respond from their depths of their hearts, and will finally reach historical memory. Still according to Ong, from the point of view of the historical experience of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, this stele will be a "firewall" *fang huo qiang* 防火牆 against "structural amnesia" or *jiegouxing shanwang* 結構性善忘.³⁷ The author continues by saying that the bilingual stele will also be a tool to open a dialogue with the Chinese who cannot read the characters any more, as well as with the outside world. In brief, this monument has transformed a simple burial ground into a place of historical memory. In order to better propagate the message, before the launching of the stele, Xiao En Group had 20,000 copies of Zhu Xi's Precepts circulated among the pupils of primary and secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur and in the state of Selangor in order to make sure that they would understand the importance of this historical message.³⁸ In order to create a link with the wider Chinese world, the famous Taiwanese calligrapher Tian Fengsheng 田豐盛 was commissioned to execute the calligraphy of the Precepts in regular Kai 開 Style, while the engraving of the latter was made in Huian 惠安, Fujian, under the supervision of Liang Shuangjin 梁雙金 from the University of Guangxi, History of Arts Department.³⁹

36. Ong Seng Hwat, "Zugou jiyi chuancheng : Malaixiya luocheng 'Zhu Xi jiaxun' bei de yiyi 組構記憶傳承：馬來西亞落成《朱熹家訓》碑的意義," Xiaoen wenhua: <http://www.xiao-en.org/cultural/magazine.asp?cat=34&loc=zh&id=1911>

37. Ong Seng Hwat, *Op. cit.*

38. Ong Seng Hwat, *Op. cit.*

39. Ong Seng Hwat, *Op. cit.*

The importance given to Xiaoen yuan in the making of an “historical memory” should be understood in relation to the fact that the Sino-Malaysians feel completely deprived of their role in the development of the city of Kuala Lumpur,⁴⁰ as well as in the making of Malaysia as the memorial in honor of all those who resisted the Japanese during the Occupation attests. The fact that Xiaoen yuan is also the meeting place of contemporary Malaysian Chinese poets further shows the importance of Xiaoen yuan as an epicentre of ancestral culture.

Nirvana Memorial Garden as a Platform for Visualization of Chinese Culture

On a bigger scale, Nirvana followed in the footsteps of Xiao En Group, first by borrowing its concept of filial piety for its own motto⁴¹ and second, in its idea of relying on its deathscape to visualize Chinese culture, in this case by displaying a permanent collection of enlarged replicas of masterpieces of Chinese calligraphy. Datuk Sri Kong Hon Kong intends this Chinese Writing Forest of Steles, “inspired by the beauty of ancient wisdom,” “to serve as a platform for the public, especially youths, to get a better understanding of Chinese culture.” Datuk Sri Kong Hon Kong further said: “These days, youths are more exposed to Western culture. They should also make time to understand their own culture.” According to chairman Datuk Fu Ah Kiow of *The Star*, the company also planned to hold calligraphy competitions, talks and other related activities so the public could appreciate the antique artwork.⁴² The Stele Forest is open to the public, and entrance is free. Moreover, an official website (www.beilin.com.my) and Gallery Master Plan provides detailed information on the stone inscription calligraphers and reproductions of the calligraphies.

Indonesia

The two memorial parks envisaged here present opposite visions: one locked in an imaginary Chinese world, and the other opened to a cosmopolitan universe.

Taman Makam Quiling: A Little China in an Indonesian Setting

Seemingly the founder of the Taman Makam Quiling, Suwito Muliadi, had no difficulty in transposing his dream. The evocation of a Chinese name was enough to give shape to a whole funerary complex in Chinese style. The cemetery garden was designed without reference to any historical event, as if in a timeless space. Only the dates of the tomb inscriptions given according to

40. See Yat Ming Loo, *Architecture and Urban Form in Kuala Lumpur*, chap. 6.

41. The motto reads: “以孝為本，給生命永恆關懷 or Filial Piety as the core value, to serve life with eternal care.”

42. Cf. “Gallery of Chinese Calligraphy Stones Launched in Seminyih”: <http://zyx1007sandra.wordpress.com/2012/11/19/gallery-of-chinese-calligraphy-stones-launched-in-semenyih/>

the Gregorian calendar, and perhaps the epitaphs (some of which are written in Indonesian instead of Chinese) may remind the visitor that he or she is no longer in the China of old. The replacement of the cemetery garden Chinese name by that of Heaven Memorial Garden only has to do with the fact that its owner wants to imitate his competitors.

Worthy of note is the fact that the Heaven Memorial Garden, or Tiantang huayuan 天堂花園, which Suwito Muliadi opened in August 2015 in the area of Tangerang is more clearly divided into sections according to religious faith, including a “Land of the Buddha” and an Immanuel Garden, as well as a playground for children. Muliadi is also said to have in mind the inclusion of a Memorial Hall or *jinian guan* 紀念館 to commemorate those of its “residents” who, during their lifetime, played a significant role.⁴³

San Diego Hills: Chinese among Other Indonesians

Things were perhaps much more complicated for the founder of San Diego Hills who still nourishes deep feelings of filial piety,⁴⁴ but who, having lived several years in the USA, has acquired a new *Weltanschauung* or conception of the world, and of “the American way of death”⁴⁵ which he introduced into his landscaped-memorial park project and adapted to local conditions. Mochtar Riady’s bet was this: There existed in Indonesia a multi-cultural elite mentally prepared to accept this new type of cemetery garden that, like its Lawn Forest model, is both a burial place and recreational park, and that they could afford the expected expenses. Such people would come to celebrate happy events, or just to enjoy some fun, alongside those who bury or worship their dead. The bet proved right, and San Diego Hills has become a symbol of harmony and unity within a certain segment of Indonesian society.

A far from complete list of names of the most prominent residents of the memorial park (accessible on San Diego Hills website), shows that they emanate from political, business, and artistic circles: such as Sophia Mungi Irawan (1956–2011), wife of Chandra R. Gunawan and the daughter-in-law of the owner of Panin Bank, Widjajono Partowidagdo (1951–2012), Deputy Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Indonesia (2011–2012), and Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih (1st February 1955 – 2 May 2012) an Indonesian physician, researcher, and author. She served as Minister of

43. *Yindunixiya shangbao* 印度尼西亞商報, August, 20th, 2015: “Woguo shouchuang yuanlin fengjingyuan Tiantang huayuan longzhong kaizhang 我國首創園林風景墓園天堂花園隆重開張.”

44. Mochtar Riady stated recently that he used to visit his parents’ tombs in Malang once a year; cf. Visi Pendiri: sales-sandiegohills.blogspot.com

45. See Jessica Mitford, *The American way of death* (first ed. 1963) and its updated revision: *The American way of death revisited*, 1998, an exposé of the abuses in funeral home industry.

Health from October 22, 2009 until April 30, 2012.⁴⁶ Others include William Soeryadjaya (December 22, 1922 – April 2, 2010) (Tjia Kian Liong 謝建隆), also known as Oom (Uncle) Willem, born in Majalengka (West Java), who was an Indonesian Chinese businessman and co-founder with his brothers of Astra International, Indonesia's largest conglomerate...⁴⁷

Memorial Parks and Legal Frameworks

The demand for plots for modern memorial parks has grown alongside that for other “pre need” products and services, and this trend is foreseen to continue. Memorial parks as well as cemeteries must conform to the land-use plan or zoning ordinance of the locality having jurisdiction over the project site, and must be located on the periphery of the town or in areas sparsely inhabited.

In Manila the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (from the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council) promulgated *Rules and Regulations for Memorial Parks/Cemeteries*,⁴⁸ which clearly state the requirements that should be thought of by owner/developer before applying for preliminary approval and operational clearance from the Department of Health prior to actual operation of the cemetery/memorial park.

In Malaysia and in Indonesia legislation regarding the development of memorial parks, cemeteries, columbaria and crematoriums remains to be clearly elaborated. For the time being, memorial park developers need the help of qualified legal counsels to find their way through the maze of legislation. This explains why Nirvana published online a document in draft form that is supposed to provide a “Regulatory Overview” of laws and regulations relating to the acquisition and use of land for Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.⁴⁹ We have borrowed extensively from this draft in order to provide here a summary of the Malaysian and Indonesian legislation relating to cemeteries and memorial parks.

Malaysia

The laws and regulations relating to the acquisition and use of land differ between the states in West Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Here we will only present the *National Land Code* (“NLC”) and the *National Land (Penang and Malacca Titles) Act* 1963, which apply to the cemeteries of Nilai Park and Seminyih. Under the NLC, a person obtains an indefeasible title to or interest

46. Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih was buried in the Heroes Plaza.

47. Several videos featuring the celebrities buried within its borders are online.

48. These *Rules and Regulations for Memorial Parks/Cemeteries* can be accessed online in PDF.

49. This Regulatory Overview can be accessed online: www.hkexnews.hk/.../ENALTD-20140924-15.PDF

in land after such person's proprietorship of or interest in land is registered on the document of title to the land. The NLC provides for several exceptions to indefeasibility, which include fraud or misrepresentation, or where registration of the title or interest was obtained by forgery or by means of an insufficient or void instrument, or when the title or interest is unlawfully acquired.

Under the NLC, land is alienated by a state authority either as freehold (in perpetuity) or as leasehold (for a term of a maximum of 99 years). For a leasehold, an application must be made to the state authority for the extension of the term upon expiry, and if approved, the extension is subject to the payment of a premium. If no application of extension is made the land reverts back to the state authority. A state authority also has the power to reserve land (whether alienated or un-alienated) for any public purpose through notification in the Gazette.

The category of land use, if any, is endorsed on the documents of title issued by the state authority for the land. Uncategorized land or land categorized for use as "buildings" may be used as cemeteries, funeral homes and columbaria under the NLC.

Moreover, the NLC provides that a registered proprietor of land may apply to the state authority for the alteration of any category of land use to which the land is for the time being subject, or for the rescission, or amendment of any express condition endorsed on or referred to in the document of title to the land, provided that the conditions further set out under the NLC are met. This last clause allows cemetery developers to alter the category of land purchased in order to develop cemeteries.

Indonesia

The following is a brief summary of Indonesian laws and regulations that are relevant to cemetery business operations. Land use and ownership is principally regulated under the *Indonesian Basic Agrarian Law* and its implementing regulations, which include *Government Regulation No 24 of 1997* ("GR 24/1997") and *Government Regulation No 40/1996* ("GR 40/1996") on the right to cultivate, the right to build, and the right to use/or collect products from the land (*Hak Pakai Title*) (i.e. "the right to use"). These regulations provide for various forms of land title and establish a registration system to protect proprietorship of land. According to *Government Regulation No 9 of 1987 on Provision and Utilization of Land for Cemeteries* ("GR 9/1987"), utilization of land for "cemetery business" in the form of a public cemetery, non-public cemetery, or specialized cemetery will be pursuant to *Hak Pakai Title*. Public cemeteries are cemeteries "that are intended for any communities regardless of their religion or nationality", whereas non-public cemeteries "are managed by social and religious private institutions that are in the form of legal entity and foundation." This clear-cut distinction makes

evident the fact that as regards cemeteries operated by Sino-Indonesians, San Diego Hills is legally a “public cemetery.”⁵⁰

Hak Pakai Title can be granted 1) over state land, 2) *Hak Milik* land,⁵¹ and 3) “right to manage land” (*Hak Pengelolaan Title*). *Hak Pakai Title* may be held by foreign citizens residing in Indonesia, or foreign corporate bodies with Indonesian representatives. *Hak Pakai Title* ceases to exist if, among other things, 1) its period of validity as stated in the relevant decree or agreement granting the *Hak Pakai Title* expires, 2) for *Hak Pakai Title* that is situated on land under another title, it is cancelled by the competent authority holding the *Hak Pengelolaan Title* (i.e. “right to manage land”) or the holder of the *Hak Milik Title*, or 3) it is revoked by the government and designated for use for public purposes.

The *Hak Pakai Title* over land for cemetery business is limited in the following manner: Under GR 40/1996, the *Hak Pakai Title* over land, or over state land, with *Hak Pengelolaan Title*, is granted for a maximum of 25 years, and may be extended for an additional term for a maximum of 20 years. Following expiration of this additional term, a renewal application may be made. Compared to West Malaysia where the leasehold lands are let for a term for a maximum of 99 years, in Indonesia *Hak Pakai Title* does not exceed 45 years.

Several pragmatic questions must be asked regarding the viability of these for-profit cemeteries and the rights of the burial lots in the long run. First, what happens if a cemetery owner for one reason or another loses ownership of the land? We have seen above that in Indonesia the legal framework is rather prohibitive, the *Hak Pakai Title* not exceeding 45 years. Second, what happens when the cemetery purchaser has obtained his title by forgery or by an insufficient or void instrument, or when the title or interest is otherwise unlawfully acquired? Third, the zoning requirements in each country may change, creating a lot of unexpected problems for the survival of the cemeteries themselves and the rights of the owners of burial lots and niches. Fourth, if a cemetery ultimately goes bankrupt or is otherwise closed down, the rest of the operations at the cemetery will be interrupted: maintenance of the grounds, the burial of individuals who prepaid for their burial plots, and other day-to-day-goings-on. These will be at a standstill, while the courts and banks work out what happens next to the business and land. In such cases is there protection for buyers of burial lots and niches in columbaria? Such questions have already surfaced. By scrutinizing the press and analysing court rulings, for example, it will be possible to trace how they develop.

⁵⁰. It seems that this legal definition also applies to Mount Carmel Memorial Park Cluster Madinah, a 100 hectare property that was developed in Ungaran (Central Java) and opened to the public in 2007 by the firm PT Pagoda Karya Abadi (founded in 2005 in Semarang).

⁵¹. *Hak Milik Title*, which is similar to freehold title, is available only to Indonesian individuals and certain religious and social organizations and government bodies in Indonesia. A right of ownership is not available to companies (whether Indonesian or foreign owned) or foreign individuals.

Management and Marketing Strategies

Apart from their site offices, the memorial parks analysed here have headquarters, in the centre of the cities, which are often coupled with funeral homes and sometimes a columbarium.

For example, in Malaysia, Nilai Memorial Park Center is situated at No.1, Jalan Kuari, Taman Bukit Mewah, Cheras area, Kuala Lumpur, while Nirvana Center is strategically located in the “Golden Triangle” of the capital. Nirvana Center or Wisma Nirvana is a large multi-storied-building which includes a showroom for coffins (mostly imported from Western countries) and other death care products (including imitations of Qing dynasty mortuary costumes and jewelry), a flower shop, a VIP Memorial Hall, various types of funeral parlours (which close every day at 10 pm), a Buddhist columbarium, and a coffee shop. Nilai Memorial Park Head Office has a similar structure, but on a smaller scale.

In Indonesia Heaven and Lestari Memorial Parks have their headquarters in Jalan Mangga Dua, Chinatown, Jakarta, while those of San Diego Hills are at Sudirman Tower Condominium, Jalan Garnison Dalam in the modern area of Karet Semanggi.

These bereavement care suppliers try their best to provide their agents with continuous professional training and even organise special seminars, to which they invite foreign scholars and experts in the study of “life and death.”⁵² Since 2015 Nirvana Asia also publishes a bilingual journal (Chinese and English) called *Fugui xin shijie* 富貴新視界 / *Nirvana New Vision* for internal circulation only. The top management and all the personnel are committed to comply with the requirements of ISO, the International Organisation of Standardisation. For instance, Nilai Memorial Park was certified in accordance with ISO 9001: 2000 Quality Management Systems in 2005.

Their marketing strategies are similar, although more or less developed. Burial plots may be sold at the headquarters sales offices, at those on the burial sites, which both provide “one stop service,” or through funeral homes as intermediaries. Contacts with sales management can also be established, through their websites which claim that sales office hot lines operate twenty-four hours a day. Sales are divided into those “at need” and those “pre need.” The first concern the families of the deceased; while the second address the interested parties themselves who want to make purchases in advance to make sure that they will have “a home for their afterlife,” or because they do not want to be a “financial burden” for their children. The “pre need” sales can be made with credit. If the credit runs for one year it is without interest, if it is for two years, the credit is of 15% or so. In Indonesia, Graha Sentosa

52. In 2015 Nirvana signed an agreement with the Department of Life and Death Studies Shengsi xuexi 生死學系 of Nanhua daxue 南華大學, Jiayi 嘉義, Taiwan.

Memorial Park, which works with Bank Artha Graha, even offers credit for three years.⁵³ In Malaysia and Indonesia these “pre need sales” attract many customers.

For both “at need” and “pre need” sales managers offer a wide range of burial plots from simple lots of 1m x 2, 6m which, at San Diego Hills for instance, cost about 800 US dollars, to couple and family lots of different sizes, which vary in price according to their location (the highest being the most expensive). The latter are divided into “Family Lots,” “Super Family Lots,” “Royal Family Lots,” and even “Imperial or Luxury Lots” in Nirvana Seminyih, the prices of which vary accordingly. The purchase of a burial plot includes permanent maintenance. In Malaysia Nirvana Asia also offers economy columbarium places to reduce the financial burden of families with limited budgets.

In order to better attract customers, sales managers rely on online videos. One of their aims is to show these new burial sites as public gardens offering an “agreeable atmosphere,” *suasana nyaman*, in order to change the general perception that the Chinese have of cemeteries as being unpleasant places full of “negative energy” or *shaqi* 煞氣 which eliminates good fortune. Their serene scenic landscaping, and captivating background music “give the visitors the impression that they blend with in nature” (*ren yu di ronghe zai yiti* 人與地融合在一體). For those who are already “members” of these burial grounds and have a special entry code online, advertisements are posted for various collective activities organised on the spot, which range from religious celebrations (in Malaysia for Buddhists especially)⁵⁴ to breakfast and durian parties.⁵⁵ The magic of terminology is everywhere (no matter whether in English, Chinese or Indonesian): funeral parlours are now “funeral homes,” the deceased “the loved ones” or “the dearly departed,” graves are “eternal homes,” coffins “caskets” ...

Top sales managers always find new devices to attract customer’s attention, and to keep closer to them. Last year, for instance, Nirvana opened a new section called “Imperial Zone” for advance booking. In order to “attract” “pre need” customers, a “soft launching” was organised on 8 November 2015 while a “cash rebate of RM 5000” was made for those who purchase “a double plot.” We have no information about the results of this new promotion.

53. See online “Bisnis Taman Pemakaman Sangat Menggoda” posted by an anonymous author: <http://bisnismlmterbaruonline.com/2013/03/bisnis-taman-pemakaman-sangat-menggoda/>

54. Nirvana monthly “Filial Duty and Gratitude Dharma Assemblies” or *Fugui shanzhuang xiaoqin baoen fahui* 富貴山莊孝親報恩法會, are said to attract a crowd of over 200 devotees each session.

55. Cali Zimmerman, “Cemeteries: A Grave Business. Is there Money in a Memorial?” (Published on Friday Oct. 31, 2008, *NuWire Investor*) mentioned an “urban environment cemetery” in the USA that provided community activities such as an Easter egg hunt for and a reindeer petting zoo during the winter holiday; see <http://www.nuwireinvestor.com/articles/cemeteries-a-grave-business-52206.aspx>

Conclusion

This overview shows that since the 1960s non-profit cemeteries run by Chinese secular associations, religious institutions, and municipalities have gradually retreated in favor of memorial parks managed for-profit by real estate businesses and other entrepreneurs.⁵⁶ Certainly the first outcry from Chinese communities in Indonesia and Malaysia was: “Save our cemeteries.” In Indonesia the protesters were not heard,⁵⁷ but their counterparts in Malaysia have sometimes succeeded in converting their old cemeteries into “heritage parks” – especially in cities like Melaka and Kuala Lumpur – in order to prevent them from destruction by greedy real estate developers. However, since these cemeteries were almost full, these protests did not prevent promoters, namely Xiaoen jituan and Nirvana, from embarking on the establishment of new cemeteries on the outskirts of the capital and Melaka. For this purpose, they had to travel abroad to study how such memorial parks were conceived and managed and how they might be suitable for their respective countries. Datuk Choo Ching Hwa was the only one whose primary aim was not to make a profitable business, but to create a cemetery that would embody prescriptions of filial piety towards parents and more generally some elements of Chinese culture related to the requirements of their contemporary society, in turn deeply influenced by foreign cultures.

As a result, these new cemeteries, well maintained and boasting a pleasant atmosphere that is more or less Chinese, progressively attract families, even among those whose deceased are buried in the old cemeteries, and who not long ago were struggling against their destruction. After hesitating more or less, some of them finally decide to discreetly transfer the remains of their ancestors to these memorial parks.⁵⁸ Thus they contribute to the destruction of the traces of their own history, which previously they wanted to preserve. Such an attitude adequately demonstrates that this imported concept of a cemetery has deeply shaken the perceptions that local Chinese of Insular Southeast Asia had about death and burial, and that they are prepared to accept the mutation.⁵⁹

56. However, the *yizhong* 義塚 (or *yishan* 義山 as they are called in Malaysia), understood as a burial place intended for all the Chinese of the community and run by local private associations, have more chance of survival in small cities and villages.

57. The destruction of Chinese cemeteries in Surabaya started in the 1950s and in Jakarta in the 1970s, see Sarkawi B. Husain, “Chinese Cemeteries as a Symbol of Sacred Space. Control, Conflict, and Negotiating in Surabaya, Indonesia,” in Freek Colombijn and Joost Coté (eds.), *Cars, Conduits, Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920-1960*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 323-340; and in this issue: “Ancient Chinese Cemeteries as Vanishing Landmarks of the Past (17th-20th centuries).”

58. The formalities are completed by the memorial park. For a list of prices, see “Update 06 Mei 2013. Biaya pemindahan kerangka dari TPU ke San Diego Hills (all in),” accessed on 15/01/2016: <http://sales-sandiegohills.com/biaya-pemindahan-kerangka-dari-tpu-ke-san-diego-hills/>

59. Muslim Indonesians have followed this trend. In 2012 PT Nusantara Prima Sukses Sejati (NPSS), which is under the umbrella of Yayasan Pesantren Islam Al-Azhar, launched Al-Azhar

These changes that can involve moral distress and even financial sacrifices, also allow local Chinese to worship their ancestors appropriately. Since there are no legal size limitations for the tombs, some families wanting to demonstrate their achievements, do not hesitate to construct large and even ostentatious mausoleums by which they express their gratitude to their forebears, as did Datuk Sri Kong Hon Kong.

For those who feel that they are denied equality of rights in their own countries, the new cemeteries have also become the places where they project their dreams and aspirations, some in rather opulent settings recalling bygone China, or in a cosmopolitan framework. Some others, like the owners of the Xiaoen yuan, deliberately set out to make their park a place of history. There the visitors are reminded both of their Chinese cultural roots, and of their contribution to the making of Malaysia. The Riadys, by creating a special section devoted to “Indonesian heroes,” seek to demonstrate that they have their own vision of *pahlawan nasional*. In other words, these new cemeteries are not only a place of memory where the living commemorate their ancestors but also a place where the former may express political views.

Since the founding of this first wave of new cemeteries, a significant number of memorial parks have appeared not only in the Malay Peninsula and in Java, but also in Sabah, and Sarawak. They would deserve a further study in order to reveal how the concept of memorial park has evolved in Malaysia as compared to Indonesia.

Memorial Garden at Krawang Timur KM 62. The concept of this new Muslim cemetery garden closely follows that of its Chinese counterparts. See its official site online and the video that features it.



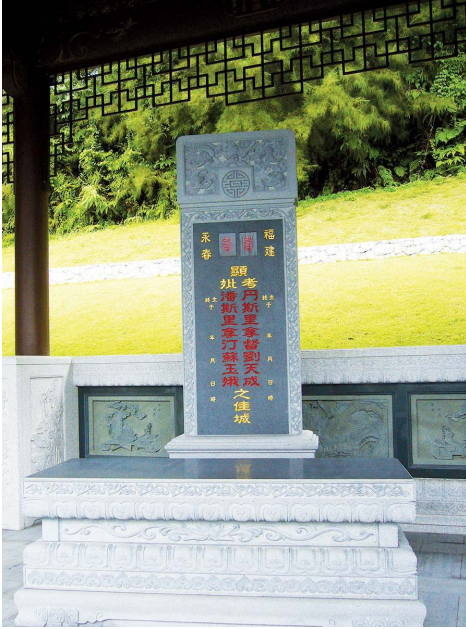
Plate 1 – Water village, Xiaoen yuan / Nilai Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 2 - Gravestone of a couple in modern style, Xiaoen yuan. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 3 – Stele engraved with Zhu Xi's "Family Precepts", Xiaoen yuan / Nilai Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plates 4 a-b – Tomb not yet occupied of Tan Sri Datuk Liu Tiancheng and his wife, Xiaoen yuan. (Photo: C. Salmon)





Plate 5 – Columbarium shaped as a huge dragon, Nirvana Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 6 – Plot of land under development, Nirvana Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 7 – Tombstone of the actress Li Ming and of her late husband (1927-2005), Art Cemetery, Nirvana Memorial Garden. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 8 – Tombstone of the famous artist Bai Guang (1921-1999), Nirvana Memorial Garden. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plates 9 a-b – Special section for *shengji* or “foundations of destiny”, Nirvana Memorial Garden. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 10 – Entrance to the Chinese Writing Stele Forest, Nirvana Memorial Garden. (Photo: C. Salmon)

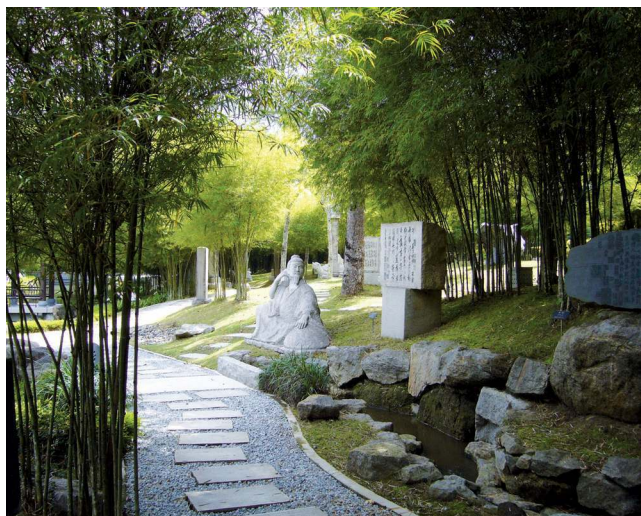


Plate 11 – An alley of the Writing Stele Forest. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 12 – Main entrance to Taman Makam Quiling / Heaven Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)



Plate 13 – A Fujian-style tomb in Heaven Memorial Park. (Photo: C. Salmon)