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The Chinese Cemeteries in the Philippines: Immobile Spaces?

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

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The Chinese Cemeteries in the Philippines: Immobile Spaces?

The relation of the Overseas Chinese to death takes multiple forms. These migrants permanently settled abroad, were constrained (politically or economically) to locate and organize the burial places for their dead in their host country. For them, the cemetery is a constitutive element of their community's cultural landmarks, which in turn influence the way the living settle. The practices surrounding death show various syncretisms as seen in the features of the cemeteries, the characteristics of the tombs, etc. These are practices largely inherited from China but they have been modified; they have become hybrid in the host countries, away from mainland influence.

In everyone's imagination cemeteries represent stability, or furthermore, immobility. Yet the notion of "mobility" which incorporates both the capacity of people to move around and the phenomenon itself of moving, interacts with the evolution of cemeteries specifically in the case of the Chinese community. In the new economic context of the Philippines based on services activities, geographic mobility is particularly appreciated. Only the big cities tend to attract professionals involved in this field of activities, young professionals from the Chinese community are concerned: they left their home city to reach Manila, Cebu or Davao. This mobility brings new challenges for the maintenance of the graveyards located in the province.

The cemetery could also be examined in terms of mobility. The old Chinese burial grounds are progressively pushed away from the city-centers. Because of urban sprawl, these cemeteries find themselves situated in strategic areas

1. UMR 8586 (PRODIG), Paris.

much sought after in the heart of the city, although they were far away from the centre when they were created. The notion of space is critical as graves eat up surface areas, and in towns in full expansion and economic growth, the existence of such cemeteries are at stake given the real estate development. The mobility of the Chinese and the spatial evolution of the cemetery allow us to question burial practices in the recent context. In which way are these cemeteries elements of a territorial marking by Chinese populations, and what are the strategies deployed at the city level and at a regional level, to maintain these cemeteries?

This study is based mainly on field research done in several provincial cities where interviews could be conducted with organizations and structures concerned with Chinese cemeteries, particularly in cities located in Luzon: Dagupan, San Fernando-La Union, Naga and Legazpi.

Mobility, Urban Context and the Multiplication of Burial Spaces

General Features

The grave is one of the main physical references for remembering: it indicates the location of the deceased and it is the main container, the shell for the dead body. The first location of a tomb is symbolically important for the Chinese. Geomancy plays a great role in the preferred location of graves; these preferences often stir up conflicts between clans, as M. Freedman mentions in his writings.² However, in Overseas Chinese burial grounds some measures make it possible for a layout that allows everyone to be located under the best auspices, just as in the Chinese cemetery of Manila.³ The size of the plot and the embellishment of the site (the building of a mausoleum, the exuberance of the architecture...) are markers of social and material distinctions. In provinces, Chinese graveyards are generally formed, organized according to different plans, no similar organizations are found from one cemetery to another.

The need to find burial places is relatively recent. Before the 1950s, it was still very common for well-to-do families, including those living in the province, to bury their dead in China: it explains why Chinese cemeteries are relatively recent and date from after the Second World War, and also at the time of the beginnings of Maoism, as this implied a break in the diplomatic relations between the countries. The tombs of the grandparents of elderly people aged from 75 to 80 today are located therefore in the motherland.

2. See Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society (Fukien and Kwantung)*, London: The Athlone Press, New York: Humanities Press, 1966.

3. Catherine Guéguen, "Le rôle des morts dans la localisation et les actes sociaux des Chinois aux Philippines," *Les espaces de la mort et les morts dans l'espace*, Cahiers de l'ADES, Bordeaux III, 2010, pp. 117-130.

Those grandparents usually returned to the motherland once their children became independent individuals: they had kept ties with the mother country and their trips made it certain for them to have a place of burial. Once the Communist regime was instituted, it was no longer possible to shuttle easily between China and the Philippines, except through Hong Kong, hence the flow of people considerably decreased. Those elderly aged 75 to 80 today, have visited at least once the graves of their grandparents in China. As to their parents, they died and were buried in the province where they had settled. The children of immigrants who were born in the Philippines just like their own children, maintain very loose ties with the mother country.

Several general trends should be noticed: first, cremation tends to be more and more popular in the Chinese community whatever the traditional practice of the burial (less costly and less maintenance). Another consideration is related to the organization of the cemetery that takes into consideration the design (inspired by the suburban American cemeteries) and easy access by car. These cemeteries are not especially built for the Chinese population but many families find there the auspicious conditions for burial of their dead. Those two elements are part of the spatial and social integration of the Chinese in the Philippines: the graves are spread over various sites and with the evolution of the burial practices, the materials of understanding the Chinese community may disappear.

Building another Cemetery to Cope with the Community's Demand

In the city of Dagupan (province of Pangasinan, Luzon), there are two Chinese cemeteries placed under a kind of management quite typical of communal burial spaces. (Map 1) In the older cemetery (Plate 1) the last burial took place in the spring of 2011. The “new” cemetery is the result of a five-year endeavor. Both burial grounds are under the care of a committee formed by members of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce. The old cemetery is located in Pérez Street near the old commercial center of Dagupan (at the heart of an area with warehouses and bus terminals), and the new one is in Amado Street situated in the city's suburbs. (Plate 2) On the very busy commercial Pérez Street, there is no sign, even on the grilled gate, that indicates the presence of a cemetery, and neither is there one at its back entrance which remains always open contrary to the front gate opened only on All Saints' Day.

The old cemetery (also called “the Pérez Street cemetery”) is in a general state of degradation: the tombs encroach on the alleys for lack of strict management, they are badly kept, particularly those at the far end of the burial ground; and some have been abandoned since the bones they contained have been transferred elsewhere. When we visited the cemetery in August 2011, it was partly under water and invaded by weed. Indeed, half of it gets

flooded during the rainy season. There is no map of the old cemetery, only one zone is distinct in the middle of it, where the tombs of children are located. An old Chinese man who lives in a shack at the entrance has the task of the maintenance of the cemetery.

Map 1 – The new Chinese cemetery, Fernandez Street in Dagupan. (C. Guéguen, Enquêtes de terrain, 2016)

The new cemetery was built at the city periphery; no specific sign identifies it except for the red entrance gate in the shape of a pagoda. The development work for this cemetery was awarded to an urban planner who planned the vehicular access roads and the location of the buildings (the administration office, the chapel, and the lavatories). The cemetery is divided into plots that have almost all been pre-sold as acquisitions anticipating deaths. Only a few families have already built mausoleums. Two areas of the cemetery are reserved for indigents: plots here are called “charity lots” and they can be acquired for the amount of 10,000 pesos, one part of which is paid by the family and the other part is taken care of by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. These plots are the smallest, their size can only accommodate one tomb. The value of the locations in the cemetery depends on the size of the plot; the bigger lots can cost up to 350,000 pesos. Families build the tomb first, then the mausoleum. There is no columbarium to keep the urns of ashes. The caretaker of the cemetery is a family who lives modestly in the building of the administration office

This new cemetery is surrounded by three other burial grounds: one that is Catholic, another for the independent Christians, and a private one called Eternal Garden. The latter accommodated many burials from Chinese families while the new Chinese cemetery had yet to open. The presence of the Eternal Garden Cemetery in the area was a deciding factor in choosing a location for the new Chinese cemetery. A gate was built to allow movement from one cemetery to the other on All Saints’ Day. Because the new cemetery was not yet completed and the old cemetery was saturated and deteriorated, burying their dead in the Eternal Garden Cemetery constituted a temporary solution for the Chinese. However, they would definitely not move out the remains of bones from one cemetery to the other. The Chinese in Dagupan have no choice now but to bury their dead in the new cemetery, for since the spring of 2011 it is prohibited to have a burial in the old Chinese cemetery. The last one was performed there in June 2011, in a family plot: a daughter’s tomb on top of that of her parents. This piling up of tombs is extremely rare in Chinese cemeteries, but very common in Philippine cemeteries where for lack of space the tombs are placed one on top of the other in a family plot. In the old Chinese cemetery, very few tombs are arranged that way, a proof of mortuary overpopulation in this cemetery. This practice in Dagupan is perceived as that of the poor families. The spaces in the old cemetery are no longer dynamic as in the Manila Chinese Cemetery. Actually many tombs and mausoleums are empty as the bones have been transferred to the new cemetery, leaving places that could be re-used. In the Manila Chinese Cemetery, families who no longer pay the dues for the lease and the upkeep are requested to move the bones of their dead so others can occupy the plot. It should be added that in Manila the Chinese Charitable Association has assigned two persons to

manage the cemetery and the use of the crematorium. Indeed, a cemetery is a space that is supervised and developed.

In his monograph on the Chinese community in Dagupan City, Dannhaeuser writes about how their cemetery is managed by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce that has opened the right for burial only to its members.⁴ In this matter, the author speaks of discrimination against the Chinese born in continental China who are made members. Yet, because the old Chinese cemetery on Pérez Street is full, there has been a moratorium for a few years now on accepting new members of the association until a new burial space can be found. This search for a new space was not easy and concurrently, several Chinese families have acquired plots in Eternal Garden, a new private cemetery where wealthy Filipinos are buried. The Chamber of Commerce eventually bought a piece of land in a place called Santa Barbara, but the local residents protested. The land was then sold to the San Miguel Corporation. Another area near the seaside was found, but again the local population opposed the project. In the end, the association bought agricultural land adjoining the Eternal Garden cemetery. While burial in the old cemetery was free for its members, the association now demands payment in the new cemetery. The original plan was to transfer what remained of the old cemetery to the new one as the old cemetery was to be demolished to give way to a mall.

Mobility is thus made visible as it is related to the extension of the cemeteries' land area (the space is doubled). However, certain practices aimed at making room in a plot for the burial of another member of the same family, leave us thinking that the practice of double interment has not disappeared... This could be an excuse for not spending on another burial plot.

Integrating Chinese Graves into Another Cemetery

In San Fernando (province of La Union, Luzon) the Chinese cemetery is in fact within a public cemetery. Until the end of the 1940s, there was a Chinese cemetery located near what is today the city center of San Fernando. (Map 2) Urban sprawl, and more particularly the construction of a school, led to the disappearance of this cemetery. There is no trace of it today. Those Chinese families who wished to do so moved out the bones of their dead and transferred them to the new cemetery inside the public cemetery of Lingsat, a place situated outside the city proper of San Fernando. A committee bought the site of this new cemetery from the municipality in 1949 and sold plots to families. This site specifically reserved for Chinese tombs is located in the middle of the public cemetery: it is not enclosed, there is no barrier separating it from

4. Norbert Dannhaeuser, *Chinese traders in a Philippine town (Dagupan)*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2004, p. 232.

Map 2 – The Chinese corner and its extension in the Lingsat cemetery, San Fernando-La Union. (C. Guéguen, 2016)

the other tombs unlike in other cemeteries. There seems to be no pre-planned layout of the plots according to the sizes of tombs or mausoleums. Management of the cemetery and attribution of plots is the task of a committee. To date, this Chinese section is full, and so the committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce acquired land adjoining the public cemetery of Lingsat. To gain access to it from the latter, a wall had to be opened and some arrangements are still ongoing.

Because this project took a certain time, the Chinese families in need of burying their dead had to look for other burial plots in the new private cemeteries. Some families have for instance turned to the Fresh Lake y Cielo cemetery where they say that burying their family members is less costly than in the Chinese cemetery. The management of the Chinese cemeteries is different in each city. Here in the Chinese cemetery of Lingsat they do not offer “charity lots” to the poorer families, contrary to the one in Dagupan City. A single plot with a marker costs 10,000 pesos; two long tombs amount to 100,000 pesos, three tombs to 250,000 pesos, and four tombs to 400,000 pesos.

In choosing the site for the new cemetery in Lingsat next to the public cemetery, *fengshui* principles were followed. The general configuration of the cemetery is favorable, as the site faces the ocean. Some families call on *fengshui* masters for advice on the orientation of the tombs. Mr. So, who manages the cemetery, says that since 2009 there has been a resurgence in the demand for *fengshui* (Interview, August 2011). The Chinese section in the public cemetery of Lingsat, San Fernando, truly stands as an exception because it is not physically separated from the other tombs, as generally done elsewhere.

The permanence and maintenance of one or two cemeteries can be part of the preoccupations of the local Chinese communities as we see in Dagupan. In some places, the non-existence of a Chinese cemetery allows us to question the relations between the community and the space dedicated to the dead.

Informal Regroupings of Chinese Tombs in Other Cemeteries

In Naga, it is commonly said that the population in the cemetery is ‘halo-halo’, that the Chinese graves are found among the other graves. What the persons interviewed referred to as “Chinese cemeteries” in the city are the different cemeteries where their ancestors are buried, regardless of the kind of burial ground. (Map 3) The Chinese graves are scattered among the following five cemeteries in Naga City: the Concepcion Pequeña Public Cemetery, the Peñafrancia Catholic Cemetery, the Santo Niño Memorial Park (1974), the Loyola Memorial Park and the Eternal Gardens (2011). These last two cemeteries are on the Balatas site, located at the periphery of the city where there were vacant spaces. It should be noted that these two cemeteries are facing each other.

Map 3 – Location of the different cemeteries in Naga, Bicol. (C. Guéguen, 2016)

First Regrouping in the Pequeña Public Cemetery and the Loyola Memorial Park

The Concepcion Pequeña Public Cemetery is one of the oldest cemeteries of the city where the Chinese are buried, just like the one in Peñafrancia. In the family plots particularly, some regrouping can be observed. Behind this cemetery is the Loyola Memorial Park, a private cemetery with a regulated and planned layout. Two kinds of plots can be seen there: 1) those at the border of the cemetery where mausoleums are built; 2) those with the usual rectangular raised tombs or with tombstones on the ground. Raising tombs avoids digging the ground. The Loyola Memorial Park is not completely developed, which does not mean that plots have not been sold. Some mausoleums are built but are vacant. There is one case of overcrowding a plot where inside a mausoleum (of parents) a typical rectangular tomb has been built.

Between the public and private cemeteries, some housing lots seem to have been bought and mausoleums built on them. This could be a case of mortuary spaces encroaching on space for the living. The sides of the small street separating the two cemeteries are occupied differently: on one side is working-class housing, and on the other side is a series of Chinese mausoleums with some lots partially filled with construction materials or used for parking bicycles or as playing grounds (basketball court). On the road leading to the private cemetery, the tombs situated at the border of the public cemetery are sometimes occupied by neighboring residents who use the space (of the tomb or the mausoleum) for daily activities: as a small eatery, as an annex to their house, as a space for their dog... (Plates 3-5)

Except for the main alleys that allow access to the graves, there is no actual layout for the public cemetery. The mausoleums stand out like landmarks as they occupy the wider properties (hence the more expensive ones), and mainly Chinese families own them. This is actually the case in both cemeteries. Several interviewees described the Loyola Memorial Park as a “Chinese cemetery”: it is significantly adjacent to the public cemetery and this proximity is what has determined its creation. Indeed, the company of undertakers was prompted to set up near the public cemetery because of the need for more burial plots and because families were looking for the convenience of making visits within close proximity. Another reason why the Loyola Memorial Park is likened to a Chinese cemetery is perhaps because it is not as easy to draw its boundaries: it may be surrounded by a wall but entrance to it is not controlled, though a family is in charge of the place and stays there. The boundaries between these two cemeteries are not easy to determine as well: I have mentioned earlier that only a single row of houses are fronting the Chinese mausoleums and generally the Concepcion Pequeña Public Cemetery. It could be said that in the people’s mind, these tombs form a whole, given that the percentage of Chinese graves in a small perimeter is very high, so that the number of dead exceeds the number of living. The blurring of the boundaries is due to physical interactions: the living take over the places for the dead in a more or less permanent way, namely the very many Chinese tombs on the eastern side of the cemetery, as these offer elements such as benches, walls, roofs which the neighboring residents can easily make their own (study of micro-geography).

There are a few facts that can be put forward to explain why, in the case of Naga City, there has been no action taken to establish a graveyard only for the Chinese residents:

- In the 1950s and 1960s there was a problem in organizing the acquisition of land, though at that time the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was strongly encouraging the creation of Chinese cemeteries all throughout the archipelago. Some cemeteries were created much earlier, during the Spanish colonial period; others were later expanded, as in Cebu.

- Up to a recent time, the need for a cemetery was not felt. Some attribute this to the long-time presence of the Chinese in Naga.

- In the Concepcion Pequeña Public Cemetery, the oldest graves apparently still remain but quite a lot of tombs have been removed and replaced by others, more so when no one is there to care for the tombs. It is quite certain that one part of the Chinese graves has disappeared. One should also take into consideration that the dead are materialized in different forms: if the tomb disappears, the tablet survives it and allows the continuous presence of the dead among the living.

In the Chinese community of Naga City, managing the dead is a strictly family matter. A person is free to choose where he/she would like to be buried.

Visible Informal Regroupings in the Santo Niño Memorial Park

As in all cemeteries at the city periphery, the plots are divided by size; nothing indicates the ethnic characterization of a zone. The Chinese tombs occupy in majority the medium size and large plots. (Map 4)

What we describe as medium-sized are the rectangular and raised Chinese tombs, topped by a metallic frame that can be covered by a tarpaulin. This installation can accommodate the close family and friends who would join the funerals or commemorative ceremonies for the dead. The tomb can also be surrounded by a low fence and a gate, to protect it from the exterior, even though this concrete separation is just symbolical. In the zone where the mausoleums are, a tomb is really a reproduction of a house. At the entrance of

Map 4 – Organization of the Santo Niño Memorial Park. (C. Guéguen, adapted from Santo Nino Memorial Park Office, 2014)

many mausoleums is a vestibule, a space that welcomes the living before they enter the actual space for the dead. This is like the vestibule that traditionally exists in Chinese houses. This arrangement inside the mausoleum can easily be identified in the general layout of this kind of tombs. The space for the dead can be compared to his domestic space and the spatial codes of Chinese houses are in a way reproduced here. Also, the paths and access roads inside the cemetery resemble streets. The cemeteries are like cities for the dead. (Plate 6)

In the Santo Niño Memorial Park, most of the large plots are taken by Chinese families and there are many more medium-size plots situated near the zone of the “big plots.” The Chinese tombs are far from being scattered all over this private cemetery. We can almost speak of a Chinese district created spontaneously by the fact that these expensive large plots were bought by the wealthiest families of Naga. The proximity of the medium-sized Chinese tombs just in the neighboring zone is part of the families’ wanting to bring their members closer. Gatherings and visits to the dead happen in a restricted perimeter inside a wide cemetery.

Transferring of Remains to Create a Chinese Cemetery?

Eternal Gardens (on Balatas Road) was created in 2011. Here too, Chinese families are the main occupants of the bigger plots, those allotted to mausoleums. Today, these mausoleums receive the bodies of the dead but also the remains, the bones, that have been transferred from one cemetery to another, and particularly from the cemetery located just across the Santo Niño Memorial Park. The families take charge of the exhumation of the remains, whether those are bones or ashes. Eternal Gardens does not have a columbarium either, but a space that serves as a crypt, at the foot of a monument in honor of Our Lady of Peñafrancia, the patron of Naga/Nueva Caceres. The administration office of the cemetery says that eighty percent of the plots for mausoleums were pre-sold to Chinese families. However some mausoleums are built on plots for simple tombs, and one can be found in the space of the crypt.

A plan to create a Chinese cemetery next to Eternal Gardens under the supervision of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is under discussion. Negotiations are open with Eternal Gardens on the matter of managing the cemetery (the project is to be completed three years from now). The number one reason for the creation of a Chinese only cemetery is to regroup in one place, the bones or ashes of Chinese families’ deceased members buried in the different cemeteries of the city. These cemeteries, judging by visits made to them, are sometimes far from being well maintained. This situation in Naga is interesting in more than one way. There was no Chinese cemetery in the city or a plan to establish one, until very recently. The dead were buried in scattered locations, in wider cemeteries located at the city’s periphery or on

the contrary in plots not very easily accessible (in the Concepcion Pequeña Public Cemetery, one has to step on other graves in order to get to some tombs, as the secondary alleys of the cemetery no longer exist and are themselves spaces for graves). This is very different from today's situation in many cities in the Philippines where, after Chinese cemeteries were established, the predominant trend now is to bury the dead in dispersed locations, in bigger private memorial parks. Hence the community's management of the dead is abandoned: such management is taken over by the big private memorial parks' administrations that provide all the necessary amenities for the deceased and their families in terms of the burial arrangements and the comfort of the families. For instance, pagodas or spaces laid out according to *fengshui* have become elements of marketing to attract wealthy Chinese families who are looking for burial places presenting traditional features.

It is often because of the will of a few important people, who feel the need for the community to have its own burial ground, that a cemetery is built. Some unprecedented negotiations take place regarding these burial spaces.

In Naga, *fengshui* is called upon after a burial plot is acquired, to determine an auspicious date, the sunrise and sunset, the light, etc. Families can apparently avail themselves of the services of a *Fengshui* Master who lives in the city.

Questioning the location of the Chinese graves at the scale of Naga city would require various elements of understanding including the variety of actors involved in this process. Elsewhere, regional to national strategies take shape to link Chinese families to their dead.

From a Regional Strategy for the Dead to a National Program

Sharing Resources between two Adjacent Municipalities

The oldest Chinese cemetery found in Daraga (an adjacent municipality situated 7.5 kilometers south of Legazpi City) is located on a slope at the edge of the city and is surrounded today by medium-sized houses. The "new Chinese cemetery" was opened in 2002; it is situated on the Bugtong site, a flat area facing the Mount Mayon and near a river. The land was acquired in 1998 from a businessman who went bankrupt and who owned several agricultural plots (400,000 pesos for 3.5 hectares). One has to be a member of an association to be allowed to bury a family member in this cemetery: a one thousand peso fee entitles one to the possibility of acquiring a plot measuring three meters by five meters for an amount of 25,000 pesos, where one can build a mausoleum or another kind of tomb. The one criterion to meet in terms of architectural regulations is the height of the tomb because the cemetery is situated behind the airport. The association plays its traditional role of support: it reserves at the back of the cemetery seven plots for the poor (only urns containing the ashes can be placed here; the cost of cremation is 4,500 pesos).

Formerly, the Chinese could also be interred in the public cemetery of Bagnot/Pawa, but it is full today. Now, the Chinese can choose between the new Chinese cemetery and other memorial establishments such as the Pristine Memorial Gardens that offers quality care services, or the Bicol Memorial Park (these two are in Legazpi City).

It is also possible to transfer bone remains in the case of reuniting a couple, particularly when one of the spouses died prematurely; at the death of the other spouse the configuration of the burial plots has changed, resulting in the couple being separated. In numerous cases what happens is that one spouse is buried in Daraga and the other in the new Chinese cemetery. The families would or would not bring together their dead, more often in the cemetery of Bugtong which is more spacious and easier to get to. The families would then consult for an appropriate date according to the lunar calendar to transfer the remains. The tombstones, etched with inscriptions in Chinese, are made in Manila.

The Chinese cemetery of Legazpi received little damage in 2006 from two major events that struck the city: a typhoon and the eruption of the Mount Mayon. The flow of mud only touched on the cemetery's wall which was just slightly damaged, but on the other side of the road, the factory that used to stand there was destroyed. The lands on both sides of the road belong to the Legazpi Charitable Association. The cemetery's plotting is strictly structured and translates a certain hierarchy in the local Chinese community: it is not the size of the burial plot that determines a family's standing in the community but the plot's location in the cemetery. The first two rows of plots are reserved for the members of the association: these plots face the Mount Mayon and the river, which make them the most favorable sites according to the rules of *Fengshui*. The other families acquire the other plots. The cemetery is not much used; only fifty-two plots are developed. No distinction is made between people of Cantonese or Hokkien origin. On the other hand, the cemetery of Daraga (created in the 1950s) is still in use despite its congestion. The family plots are crowded; some graves are destroyed to give way to others. Actually there are not yet many transfers of remains; a few tombs are opened and left bare. (Plate 7)

Reuniting families causes the mobility of populations within the archipelago bringing about a number of territorial re-compositions especially in Metro Manila where many Filipino-Chinese families are brought together again. Because of the distance to the province where they live, the elderly (parents who have remained in the province and who visit their children who are settled elsewhere) tend to want to be buried in a metropolitan-capital city near their close family. The older ones, whose children have settled in Manila or Cebu, spend part of their time in their city of origin and the other part in the metropolitan cities of the country. Those who had to be buried in the Philippines when it was possible to return to China were too poor to take that step. As they were Catholic converts, they were interred in the Catholic

cemeteries. But the simplicity of their tombs, the passing of time, and the lack of space often led to the disappearance of these tombs. The period of the Second World War could also have contributed to the destruction of those tombs, as well as the looting of cemeteries to recover construction materials for the building of roads or houses.

The management of the Chinese cemeteries in Legazpi and Daraga reflects that of a community network functioning at the regional level. It can be likened to a pooling of resources, a sharing of services and community properties in the matter of burials. Indeed, the cemetery is open to anyone who is a member of an association. Perhaps this is because the community is small and tightly knit. Thus for example, members of the Long Se association (the Lee family) can be buried in Daraga or Legazpi.

Despite its coastal location, Legazpi is not much of a sea-oriented city. Only one pier has been built recently. Hence the city has maintained relations with Luzon exclusively through the continent. Other port cities nearby were more active like Tabaco which early on only carried out liaisons with Manila and overseas for the export of agricultural products (abaca). Bacacay was another port used by some small Chinese communities, but it was eventually taken over by Tabaco as it did not have a deep water port. The first Chinese settlements in the region were in Bacacay.

From the Extension of the Cemetery to Repatriation of Remains to Manila

The Chinese cemetery of Tabaco is situated at the western entrance of the city, where there are many other cemeteries, along the road going to Legazpi. It is easily recognizable as the entrance is typically in the shape of a Chinese pagoda and bears the inscription "Chinese cemetery." It is surrounded by a wall shared with the adjoining Catholic cemetery. The Chinese cemetery of Tabaco was created in 1896 following a demand by the Chinese living in the city, and under the aegis of the Bishop of the province of Albay. (Plates 8-9)

The layout of the cemetery is notable: three layers can be distinguished which seem to define the different stages of development of the cemetery. From the road and entrance door of the cemetery, these succeeding layers are strips of land measuring approximately 40 meters each delineated by a threshold or even doors bearing different kinds of symbols. In the first layer are mausoleums built in the 1950s, forming a homogenous group from the viewpoint of structure and size of the family plots. Then a second layer follows, comprising a group of tombs looking quite heterogeneous due to the form of the tombs and of the allocated plots. The oldest tombs are found here, they are simple casings of convex shape lying on the ground, with inscriptions that have often faded away. Many tombs were most certainly demolished to make room. The bones could have been placed in a crypt where the niches are covered by clay slabs bearing inscriptions in Chinese. The crypt is topped by a cross. To reach this part of

the cemetery, one goes through a porch where the commemorative plaque on the creation of the cemetery (etched in Spanish) is found. This part is enclosed with a wall. The front of the porch shows a modern development of the pagoda form, but seen from the back what is visible is the original architecture of the porch which is a simple awning with a cross on top. Being the oldest section of the cemetery, it was hence located considerably far from the road and it has since been reached by the first extension of the cemetery. After crossing this "old section," the visitor gains access to the newest section of the cemetery (the one farthest from the road today) where the plots are wider and the pathways are indicated. The back of the cemetery remains vacant. The cemetery could still extend on its southern side, with a path leading to it.

The local Chinese community describes itself as close knit, which explains why the cemetery is well preserved, and moreover, that some old tombs are maintained. Fund raising within the community, and particularly the profits from product imports as well as the export of abaca and coconut, are the sources that enable the community to care for the places specific to them, namely the cemetery. The commercial successes that originated in this small port city of Tabaco are what made certain businesses thrive in the entire region of Bicol, as for example the business of the Tan family who comes from Tabaco, and who launched their first supermarket there, the Liberty Commercial Center. This mall is now present in all the cities of the region. Despite the small size of the city and of its Chinese community, one Chinese school still exists in Tabaco (the Pei Ching School that counted 600 students in the 1960s but is now down to 200, 10% of which are Chinese, and with one volunteer teacher from China). The Chamber of Commerce is in charge of the cemetery. It is said that transfers of bone remains to cemeteries in Manila are done, as families have by now regrouped there. The only burials admitted are of members of the community and of their descendants. Before, members could be buried there gratis, but it no longer is the case. The community takes care too of two small Taoist temples (located on private grounds) dedicated to the native regions of its members: Jinjiang 晉江 and Shishi 石獅, Fujian province. The Chinese community in Tabaco slowly grew by batches, often prior to a more or less long stay in Manila.

Before the 1950s there were few interments. For those who were born in China and who had the means, a burial in China was still preferred. Today, the parents of the present Chinese living in Tabaco, are the only ones interred in China. However, it all depends on how anchored the Chinese are in the Philippines and on the degree of relations they entertain with mother country.

Conclusion

As the urban context evolves, the old Chinese cemeteries are situated today in areas that are prized by real estate investors. Indirectly, the extension of the urban space and the mobility of populations is the reason for recomposed

cemeteries to be moved to second-generation cemeteries (like in San Fernando-La Union or Dagupan). The demand in burial spaces is such that it has to be accommodated by other cemeteries. Consequently, this situation can result in a split of mobility for the practice of the rituals for the dead, especially on All Saints' Day. The dispersion of graves in different memorial places may cause families to regroup their dead in certain cemeteries (that are not necessarily Chinese) so it is easier for them to manage (in this case, the bones are regrouped in one tomb). Human mobility and the impossibility for some families to maintain the tombs, cause the transfer of remains to other cities, sometimes from one province to another.

Until recently the cemeteries were managed by the community but now the question is what to do with these old Chinese cemeteries inserted in the urban fabric, of difficult access, often badly maintained, considered by the city's residents as infamous places, and where burials are no longer held? To date, there seems to be no project underway regarding the preservation of these memorial places. In provincial towns, what matters to the Chinese Chambers of Commerce who manage these cemeteries is organizing a dignified meeting of the dead and the living on All Saints' Day. There are many rumors speculating that real estate development projects will replace these burial spaces. In the Philippines, the Chinese cemeteries are still much present and are maintained by the community. The general organization of the present Chinese cemeteries and the configuration of the tombs reflect mainly Christian practices. Yet, the urban families aspire to new configurations of space for their cemeteries. In this matter, the American influence can be seen in the organization of the memorial parks away in the peripheries of the city. There are many of these cemeteries, and competition is tough.

The mortuary practices are still mainly interments, and in the Philippines as of today, they are not subjected to administrative restrictions. The evolution of these practices can also be observed in the cemeteries by the addition of a columbarium adjoining the crematorium. Interments have always been part of the Chinese community's mortuary practices and cremation has been gradually increasing due to the cost of an interment and the maintenance of a tomb. Hence, taking a census of the tombs of the Chinese community would not just be about counting their number in the Chinese cemeteries, but in almost all the cemeteries in the country. The concrete references to the sacred and to the dead of the Chinese community in the Philippines are increasing, keeping to traditional forms which have sometimes been reshaped.

Therefore, beyond the strategies that reflect how a community is anchored in a city or a region, one must take into consideration the individual strategies of the families who are the primary actors in the mobility and transformation of mortuary territories.

Plate 1 – The old Chinese cemetery, Perez street, Dagupan. (Photo: C. Guéguen, 2011)

Plate 2 – The new Chinese cemetery in Dagupan. (Photo: C. Guéguen, 2011)

Plate 3 – Single Chinese grave in the old Conception cemetery.
(Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 4 – Excavated tombs in the Conception cemetery: signs of mobility. (Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 5 – Extension of the Chinese mausoleums near the Conception cemetery, facing the neighborhood.
(Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 6 – Chinese mausoleum as a “Chinese compound” in the Santo Niño Memorial Park.
(Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 7 – The Legazpi Chinese cemetery. (Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 8 – The entrance of the Tabaco Chinese cemetery. (Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)

Plate 9 – The founding plate of the Tabaco Chinese cemetery, 1896.
(Photo: C. Guéguen, 2014)