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From the "Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb" to a "Memorial Park for Women Laborers": Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Memory in Taiwan's Urban Renewal

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ABSTRACT

This essay looks at the recent renovation of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb, and examines the politics of the feminist movements and the politics of memory as they are expressed through different meanings of female ghosts, in southern Taiwan. People who were involved in the renovation process included the families of the deceased "twenty-five maidens," the Kaohsiung city government, and feminist groups in Kaohsiung and elsewhere in Taiwan – most notably the Kaohsiung Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights – all of whom had different considerations and therefore diverse expectations regarding the future and purpose of the tomb. In *Specters of Marx* (2006), Derrida uses the idea of "specters" and "haunting" as consequences of historical injustice and tragedy metaphorically but powerfully. These two elements come together in our essay as well. However, the "ghosts" in our accounts are more literally ghosts with whom some (if not all) of our ethnographic subjects interact. They appear, express their sorrow, and demonstrate their grievances. The reestablishment of peace and order essential to residents of both the living world and the afterlife thus hinges upon mutual understanding and close collaboration between them. Yet, as meanings are constantly contested, so is the nature of the deceased's requests. The different interpretations that the (living) socio-political forces give to the deceased's needs open up new terrains of contestation for the memory of the past and the rights and obligations at the present. Ghosts are agencies that inform changes in the social life of the living.

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從“二十五淑女墓”到“勞動女性紀念公園”：台灣都市更新下的性別、宗教和記憶政治

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摘 要

本文以最近幾年發生於南台灣高雄二十五淑女墓的地景更新為主題，探討該墓地的重建，如何透過各界對於「女鬼」不同意義的詮釋，展現出女性主義運動的意義與居民集體記憶的政治。與此地景更新過程有關的行動者包含了「二十五淑女」（二十五位因船難而未婚早逝的女性）與其家屬、高雄市政府，與以「高雄市女性權益促進會」為主的女性主義運動團體。以上三方人士對該墳墓未來地景如何更新與改變現狀的目的，透過相互之間的互動與對話的過程，展現了其不同的考量與期待。德希達（2006）在其「馬克斯的幽靈」一書中，用「幽靈」和「著魔」此兩個有力的隱喻來說明歷史的不義和悲劇，在我們的文章中也採用了此二概念。然而，在我們的文中所說的「鬼」的指稱，不僅只是隱喻，而是真實的、與我們田野中的報導人互動、表達其傷心、遺憾或怨恨，展現其主體性的鬼。由於對於社區居民來說，重建平靜與秩序對於生者與死者都是必要的，因此生/死兩者之間，便在交錯的關係下，透過民俗與「宗教儀式」的人鬼互動，產生了相互之間的理解，並且進一步密切地合作，而使得人/鬼的社會關係達到一個穩定的平衡。然而，也由於「女鬼」的意義隨著時間而不斷地變動，在歷史的不同階段中，透過生者的政治社會力量，與居民對該歷史事件的記憶，皆對「二十五淑女」做出各自不同的詮釋。

關鍵詞： 女性主義運動，民間宗教，記憶政治，都市更新

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INTRODUCTION

It all began with a ghost story.

Kaohsiung is the second-largest city in Taiwan. It is Taiwan's hub of both light and heavy industries and a world-class port. It is also the location of Taiwan's first few export-processing zones established in the 1960s and 1970s, even though its manufacturing-based city economy has been greatly affected by the economic recession and de-industrialization in Taiwan in recent years. Cijin (旗津) is a small island right outside the Kaohsiung harbor. These two places are connected by a tunnel for ground transportation, and a ferry service. Most taxi drivers in Kaohsiung have, at one time or another, driven passengers to Cijin. They had surely all heard the story about something unusual that allegedly happened to one of their fellow drivers. One late, frigid winter night, said driver was returning to Kaohsiung after dropping off a passenger in a local village in Cijin. While passing by the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb (二十五淑女墓), located near the tunnel mouth on the Cijin side, he noticed someone gesturing for him to stop. He wondered why anybody, especially a good-looking young woman, would wait for a cab in such a remote, deserted place at this time of night. After the passenger got into the cab, she explained to the curious driver that she was getting married early the next morning. She was afraid that she would not have enough time to get herself ready before the groom came to collect her, and had thus decided to go to Kaohsiung to have her hair done early. The driver followed her instructions, drove through the Kaohsiung-Cijin Tunnel, and stopped the cab at a dark alley near one of the export-processing zones in Kaohsiung. After paying the fare, the young woman asked the taxi driver to come back in an hour because she needed another ride home. Although it was getting very late, and the driver was exhausted from a day's work, he came back an hour later to pick up the young woman, who looked splendid after having her hair done. The driver took the same route back to Cijin. To keep himself awake, he started chatting with his passenger and learned that the young woman had lived a harsh life. She came from a poor family, so she quit school and became a factory worker in Kaohsiung's export processing zone at a very young age. Her income supported her family and helped to pay for her brothers'

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educations. Now, after many years of laboring, she finally found a fine man to marry. Her only wish was to lead a good life with her new husband.

The driver was getting increasingly tired and drowsy after a long day's work, and the conversation faltered. They were quiet for a while. After passing through the tunnel, and when the car was approaching the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb, where the young woman first got into the cab, the driver dutifully congratulated his passenger on her upcoming nuptials and asked where he should drop her off. However, there was only dead silence amid the late night's pitch dark. When he looked into his rearview mirror, he saw no one. He could not believe his own eyes, and began to fear that he had met a female ghost. In a cold sweat and without hesitation, he turned and drove home immediately. When he woke up the next morning, he was terrified to find the bills that he received from his mysterious passenger the night before were actually spirit money, the currency that the Taiwanese burned for the deceased to use in the afterlife.

Sometimes the story is told differently. As opposed to a taxi driver, it could be a motorcycle rider who picked up the girl. Sometimes the young woman in the back seat just vanished without leaving any trace. Or there would be no woman but the motorcycle would suddenly experience a flameout; or the motorcycle rider would out of the blue lose his balance without any sensible explanation. However, regardless of what vehicle the man used or where or how this encounter happened, or how the young woman disappeared, students of Taiwanese culture could easily recognize the motif and empathize with the unfortunate man for the predicament he faced.

The Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb was the name given to the collective burial site (with 25 individual graves side by side in three rows) of the female workers who drowned in 1973 in a ferry accident on their way to work at an export-processing zone in Kaohsiung. The fact that of the 70 plus passengers on board all 25 who died were unmarried young women, and the taboo in Taiwanese culture that shuns unmarried female ghosts, made the tomb a fearsome place. Young men encountering beautiful young women who turn out to be ghosts is a common theme in Chinese literature and folklore (classic and contemporary) and movies (Bosco 2007).

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Oftentimes these women are said to be waiting to find a husband, especially if they died unmarried. Although coming across a phantom is rarely a welcome event to the Taiwanese – and many people would actively try to avoid such an experience – there is apparently something exhilarating about meeting a beautiful female ghost. A survey conducted at a university near Cijin shows that the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb was a popular topic of banter among students (Tang and Cheng 2010). Male students would jokingly remind one another that they should have a female friend occupying the back seat before they ride their motorcycles through the tomb site, otherwise they might have an unexpected "love encounter" with one of the ladies.

Yet, it is precisely this mixture of emotions and responses (fear, avoidance, teasing, and excitement – mostly negative) provoked by the "maiden" status of these deceased young women that propelled feminists in Kaohsiung to voice their disapproval of the way these women were treated, both when they were alive and after they died, and to demand that the Kaohsiung city government help rectify the wrongs done to them. These feminists were particularly infuriated by the fact that the tomb, like many other places occupied by the remains of people dying of improper deaths (e.g., people who died too young, unmarried, or without children, or people who were executed or died violently, etc [Cohen 1977]), was treated by gamblers of illegal lotteries as somewhere they could get winning numbers (Weller 1994). In other places with similar backgrounds, when the gamblers lost their bets because of the "wrong" numbers presumably given by the spirits, they took their anger out on the spirits, in this case by destroying the photos of the women that were affixed to their individual headstones (c.f. Hu 1989). The fact that somebody was running a karaoke business in front of the tomb site during the day seemed to further fuel the indignity felt by the local feminist activists. For some years these feminists had wanted the Kaohsiung city government to change the name of the tomb. They also wanted the city government to renovate the tomb site. However, their calls were not answered until Kaohsiung was hard hit by Taiwan's recent de-industrialization. In order to reinvent the city's economy, the Kaohsiung mayor's office finally allocated money to clean up the gravesite and remake it into a tourist-friendly "Memorial Park for Women Laborers"（勞動女性紀念公園）.

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Against the aforementioned background, this essay looks at the recent renovation of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb, and examines the politics of the feminist movements and the politics of memory as they are expressed through different meanings of female ghosts, in southern Taiwan.[1] People who were involved in the renovation process included the families of the deceased "twenty-five maidens," the Kaohsiung city government, and feminist groups in Kaohsiung and elsewhere in Taiwan – most notably the Kaohsiung Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights（高雄市女性權益促進會, or KAPWR）– all of whom had different considerations and therefore diverse expectations regarding the future and purpose of the tomb. In *Specters of Marx* (2006), Derrida uses the idea of "specters" and "haunting" as consequences of historical injustice and tragedy metaphorically but powerfully. These two elements come together in our essay as well. However, the "ghosts" in our accounts are more literally ghosts with whom some (if not all) of our ethnographic subjects interact. They appear, express their sorrow, and demonstrate their grievances. The reestablishment of peace and order essential to residents of both the living world and the afterlife thus hinges upon mutual understanding and close collaboration between them. Yet, as meanings are constantly contested, so is the nature of the deceased's requests. The different interpretations that the (living) socio-political forces give to the deceased's needs open up new terrains of contestation for the memory of the past and the rights and obligations at the present. Ghosts are agencies that inform changes in the social life of the living.

THE FERRY BOAT INCIDENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

One of the Asian Tigers, Taiwan had been a manufacturing powerhouse in the world. The export-processing zones in Kaohsiung were the first of their kind in the world; they were established to attract foreign direct investment, which has proven crucial to Taiwan's post-World War II economic development. The manufacturing jobs created by the factories inside the export-processing zones and in Kaohsiung not only contributed to the success of Taiwan's export-oriented economy but also helped to bring employment opportunities to many families in the surrounding regions,

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especially those families with young daughters (cf. Hsiung 1996; Lee 2004, 2009). Indeed, the image of thousands of young women riding bicycles – and, later, motorcycles – out of the entrance gate of an export-processing zone is a part of the collective memory of the Taiwanese who lived through the heyday of Taiwan's export-oriented industrialization in the 1970s and 1980s (Arrigo 1980; Kung 1994).

Cijin used to be a peninsula attached to Kaohsiung. However, it was separated from Kaohsiung and became a tiny island of a few fishing villages as a result of the expansion of the Kaohsiung port in 1967. For many years thereafter, people had to rely on ferries (run by the Kaohsiung city government or private companies) to travel between Kaohsiung and Cijin, but that dependence on the ferry ended in the mid-1970s when the government finally built a tunnel connecting Cijin with the mainland of Taiwan (primarily as a result of the ferry boat incident discussed in this essay). Traditionally, many parts of Cijin were poor fishing villages, and the local families were only able to raise their family incomes when their daughters started manufacturing jobs in Kaohsiung's export-processing zones. Every morning, these young factory workers would meet up with other Cijin residents to take the ferry to work. On the morning of September 3, 1973, a small boat with a maximum capacity of 13 passengers (plus 2 sailors) was loaded up with more than 70 passengers, many of whom were export-processing zone workers rushing to work. This in and of itself was not unusual; the ferry owner had been doing this for quite some time even though it was illegal. Only on that fatal morning, the boat capsized: 46 passengers were saved and 25 were drowned. The 46 saved passengers, men and women, were all married, whereas the 25 drowned passengers were all unmarried young women (most of whom were export-processing-zone workers). Many people in Cijin as well as in Kaohsiung did not perceive this as a coincidence, but rather as a sign of supernatural significance. A widespread story supporting this ghostly interpretation of the fatal event tells of one of these 25 drowned young women, one who was first rescued and sent to the hospital for treatment. Just when everybody thought she was about to be saved, she suddenly turned to her mother waiting at her bedside and said hastily: "I am going to be late. My sisters, they are waiting for me. I have to go now." After that, she died right away, and became the last casualty of the ferry incident. To

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further support the otherworldly interpretation, one married woman was first rescued but then pronounced dead; yet, she miraculously came back to life later on.

It was quickly reported by some witnesses after the fatal incident that the overturned vessel might have been leaking before it left the pier in Cijin; and it was soon found that the captain of the overturned ferry did not have a license to drive a boat. There was also no lifesaving equipment on board the ferry. Given the fact that the boat – and the owner of the ferry company – passed a safety inspection not long before the incident, the Port of Kaohsiung, the central government agency supervising the Kaohsiung-Cijin ferry service, failed in its job of protecting ferry passengers. There appeared to be a serious breach in public safety. Later, it was discovered that some of the deceased women were under the age of 16, younger than allowed by Taiwan's labor regulations. These young girls obviously faked their identifications while applying for jobs at the export-processing zone, and the companies where they were hired probably turned a blind eye to the falsehood in their applications. Using a false identification was not unusual at a time when children from many Taiwanese farming – or, in this case, fishing – families with precarious incomes sought stable employment in the booming manufacturing sector (Lee 2004); it was also not unusual at the time for labor-short factories to hire underaged workers, although it was illegal. However, as a result of this labor violation, the families of the underaged drowned workers did not receive the pensions to which deceased employees' families are entitled.

In spite of – or because of – these many aberrations exposed in the aftermath of the ferry incident, the Kaohsiung city government intervened and helped to settle the pension and compensation issue. The city government also helped to find a plot of land big enough to accommodate the graves of all these 25 women after their families decided to have them buried in one location. Originally, the bereaved families were going to bury their daughters separately. However, after the earnest endeavor of Chuang Chin-chun (莊進春), the father of one of the fallen women, the families all agreed that these women should be buried together, with their individual graves side by side, in one place. Mr. Chuang had recommended to then-Mayor Wang Yu-yun (王

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玉雲）the vessel that caused the fatal incident should be kept near the pier where it sank, as a commemoration of the tragedy. However, Mayor Wang rejected this idea. The mayor reasoned with Mr. Chuang that the families of the deceased would be deeply affected and forced constantly to remember the tragedy if a monumental relic was erected in public at the pier. Mr. Chuang accepted the mayor's reasoning, and sought to have a collective burial for the women as an alternative. Eventually, the 25 individual graves were lined up side by side in three rows. They were arranged according to the date of birth of the deceased. That is, the grave of the oldest of the women lay in the middle of the top row, followed by those of the next two oldest to her sides, and so on. The grave of the youngest thus sat at the edge of the first row. Parents of the deceased also began to address these women as "sisters" and refer to the collectivity as a "sisterhood."

Later, in 1988, because the land of the tomb site was acquired by the government for the expansion of the Kaohsiung port, the tomb, along with other graves from Chong-chou（中洲）, where the bereaved families lived, was relocated to a new seashore site. This time the Kaohsiung city government also erected a memorial gateway (inscribed with "The Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb") for the new site. Compared to the original burial ground, which was at a fairly remote corner of Cijin Island that not many outside visitors would usually go, this new location is right beside a main road of Cijin. It sits facing the Taiwan Strait, enjoying a scenic view of the water and the coastline. The public land across the road from the tomb has been renovated and made into a part of the "Step-on-the-Wind" Boulevard at the Cijin Tourist Port Area（旗津觀光港區踩風大道）since the relocation of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb.

GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

From the perspective of the Kaohsiung city government at the time, the ferry incident had come to a relatively satisfactory conclusion when the legal and political responsibilities of the ferry owner, the ferry captain, and other concerned parties were settled, when the bereaved families were financially compensated, and when the

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collective burial of the 25 deceased was established. For the families grieving for their lost daughters, however, there was still unfinished business. Specifically, where and how to place the spirits of those who died unmarried presented a great challenge to these families.

Marriage has until recently been nearly universal to both men and women in Chinese societies including Taiwan (Jones 2005; Thornton and Lin 1994). Marriage as a social institution is particularly significant for women, for it serves as both a symbol of and a gateway to their ultimate (though subordinate) position in the Chinese kinship system (Wolf 1960, 1972). Unmarried females are viewed as temporary members of their natal families. Normatively, it is through marriage that women are accepted into their husbands' families and permanently integrated into a lineal line (Hsu 1971; Wolf and Huang 1980), although there are variations of – as well as exceptions to – this practice (Chang 2000; Lee 2008; Shih 2007, 2009; Wolf 1978). It is also through marriage that a woman earns a rightful place in her husband's ancestral hall in the afterlife (Ahern 1971; Harrell 1986), even though ancestral authority – and, by extension, ancestor worship – might be declining as a result of social change in contemporary Taiwan (Yang, Thornton, and Fricke 2000).[2] Correspondingly, if a woman dies a violent death before marriage, she can become a ghost if she is not properly prayed for (Harrell 1986: 113). Spirit marriage – where a female ghost marries a living man – has been a strategy adopted by such a woman's family to insure that she is cared for in her eternal life (Harrell 1986: 113). Marriage also provides the opportunity for men and women to perpetuate the family line through childbearing, the failure of which is considered a serious breach of filial piety in Taiwanese culture even today. Economically, marriage also grants, especially to women, some financial support and social security as men continue to be seen as and act as primary breadwinners in contemporary Taiwanese households. Together, these concerns – religious/spiritual and economic / material – have made many generations of Taiwanese parents anxious to find their sons and daughters a suitable spouse; it is a priority for them as parents.

Most of the families of the 25 deceased young women, however, were presented

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something other than a spirit marriage to care for their daughters. A few years after the ferry accident, after the collective burial was completed, some members of the grieving families began to report paranormal incidents. When we asked about the nature of these incidents in our interview with Mr. Kuo, the father of one of the deceased women, in 2009, he was slightly embarrassed and hesitant for a few seconds, but then said:

> I heard this from my wife […]. [It all started with] that mother down the block. She went to consult a tang-ki in our village [about her daughter]. The tang-ki told her not to worry about her daughter, because she was now learning to become an "enlightened being" on the side of Kuan Yin [the Goddess of Mercy]. The tang-ki also suggested to the mother that she could have a "god statue" [金身] made for her daughter and place the god statue at home.

The idea behind the tang-ki's suggestion was that, as the daughter has become a courtier of Kuan Yin, she is no longer an unmarried daughter spirit who should not enter the ancestral shrine, but a soon-to-be (if not already a) deity who could be revered by faithful believers even if they were her previous family. Essentially, this suggestion offered the mother a culturally sanctioned solution to provide a permanent – and respectable -- residing place for her daughter who died unmarried.

Shortly thereafter, many different families told similar stories, and, before long, 22 out of the 25 deceased young women, including Mr. Kuo's daughter, received their "god statues." When we enquired in 2009 why the remaining three women did not get a god statue, we were told that they did not come back to ask for it; their families did not receive any notice from them. Many of these 22 god statues were welcomed into their fathers' houses, placed in the family altar, and worshipped – as someone with a pious status but not a deceased family member (or ancestress) – along with these women's patrilineal ancestors and other deities in the altar. Moreover, the oldest among these women was said to have been granted the title of "Yi-miao Buddha" (一妙菩薩) by the Jade Emperor of the Heavenly Court. She was said to have chosen her elder sister to be her spiritual medium, who, on the command of the Jade Emperor,

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was stationed at Miao-feng Temple（妙鳳宮）, waiting for her sanctified younger sister to appear to salvage and bless all the sensual beings coming for help. Some of the families chose to have their daughters' god statues cared for at Miao-feng Temple. There are still a few other families leaving their daughters' god statues at Pao-an Chin-shan Temple（保安金山寺）– or San-ma Miao（三媽廟）-- a public temple in Cijin that worships Kuan Yin.

The transcendence of these deceased women from being maiden ghosts unable to be incorporated into their patrilineal ancestral shrines to becoming pious beings who could be welcomed to join the pantheon worshipped at the altars of their fathers' houses provided their families (especially their parents) with a culturally accepted and reputable solution to care for their daughters in the afterlife (Lee 2008). However, the variations of where and how these women's god statues are placed also exemplify the ambivalence that many parents of the deceased felt – and continue to feel – about their daughters' said elevated religious position, even though they respectfully had their god statues made. Taiwanese popular religion has always been "flexible and individualistic in the sense that there is no one authority, church, or theocratic state [that] establishes dogma and determines belief" (Harrell 1974: 203-204). Therefore, hypothetically, every spirit or any spirit can become a god or attain some godly or god-like standing. Yet, practically, whether a spirit can convince other people about its godly status is closely related to its spiritual power or efficacy, that is, whether the spirit can answer requests or grant favors (Harrell 1974: 204). Having a god statue erected for a spirit is a major undertaking. Before the erection of the statue, the regarded spirit should have performed miracles to benefit people; and, after the statue is bestowed, the relationship between the spirit – or the deity – and the people who made the statue is stabilized and the bonds of mutual obligations between them are established (Lin 2008: 475). Private (god) statues may be set up in domestic altars, resonating with the exceptionally flexible nature of Taiwanese popular religion, whether the gods can attract worshippers beyond the private households, and extend their power and develop themselves into deities of a neighborhood, a village or even a bigger locality, depends on their ability to perform marvels (Lin 2008: 462; also see Feuchtwang 1993).

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Efficacy was evidently an issue in the minds of the families when their deceased daughters requested to have their god statues made, although some were more articulate about it than others. For example, Mr. Kuo mentioned above was not swayed at once that this was an appropriate thing to do in his daughter's case. He explained that it was his wife who wanted to make her daughter a god statue:

> [My wife] came home and told me about the story; and then she went to seek advice from the same tang-ki. The tang-ki told her our daughter has also become a courtier of Kuan Yi. After that, [my wife] asked me, begged me, and cried quite a few times in order for me to agree to make our daughter a god status.

Mr. Kuo did not give in right away. Later, he was bothered by constant headaches for which his doctor could not find a cause. People told him it was a sign from his daughter who was asking him to make a god statue for her, but Mr. Kuo still did not think there was anything that supported his daughter's request. Only when he was cured from a cold after drinking a glass of water obtained from the Ladies' Tomb, did he agree that his daughter had shown efficacy that warranted a god statue. He was further convinced when the mother of another deceased woman told him that a couple (of husband and wife) had been seen paying respect to the tomb on the first and the fifteenth day of every lunar month, because the twenty-five maiden ladies saved the husband's life from a shipwreck by directing him to the nearest shore. Similarly, Mr. Chuang, the father who worked hard on the collective burial site had commented on the act of some parents as inappropriate -- if not to the extent of transgression -- of leaving their daughters' god statues at Po-an Chin-san Temple on the assumption that these young women had now become a part of the entourage of the Goddess of Mercy. He did not think that the deceased had proven themselves as holy enough to be worshipped by the general public at a village public temple. Mr. Chuang also had his daughter's god statue made. He had her daughter's god statue placed at home, yet not at the family shrine with the Chuang ancestors and other deities but at a separate altar on another floor of the house. "It doesn't make sense for parents to worship their children who died before them," Mr. Chuang explained.

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FEMINIST FRAMING OF THE DISCOURSE

Just as the unwed status of these deceased young women caused the biggest worry for their parents, it was also the popular cultural and religious assumptions associated with their maiden identity that were at the center of the feminists' critique. On April 2, 2004, right before Ching-ming Day, the traditional tomb-sweeping day in Chinese societies, the KAPWR called a press conference, in which members rallied for the reconstruction of the tomb and equated the reconstruction with gender equality and with Kaohsiung's status as a progressive city (because of its advocacy for gender equality). Two days later, on Ching-ming Day, then-KAPWR Secretary Wen-hui Tang (one of the authors of the current essay) published an op-ed article entitled "Women Who Cannot Go Home"（回不了家的女人）in *Zhongguoshibao* (中國時報 [*China Times*]) (Tang 2006), in which she commented on the custom that Taiwanese married women could only commemorate the ancestors of their husbands but not those of their natal families. The article also highlighted the predicament of Taiwanese women like those young women buried at the Ladies' Tomb who not only did not have an easy life while alive but also did not have anyone to venerate them after their deaths just because they died unmarried (Tang 2005).

The timing of submitting this article for publication was carefully chosen. It came right when many people in Taiwan were returning home, reuniting with their families, and getting ready to observe likely the most important duty required of offspring in Taiwanese culture. Therefore, the article came as a keen reminder of a fundamental inequality between men and women in Taiwanese society. The article also resonated with a primary concern of the Taiwanese feminist community at the time. In 2003, the Awakening Foundation in Taipei（婦女新知基金會）held a "From Maiden Temples to the Gender Politics of Ancestor Worship"（從孤娘廟談祭祀性別文化）press conference on April 5, Ching-ming Day, criticizing the fact that only married women could enter an ancestral hall – and thus acquire a life of eternity – leaving all other kinds of women (e.g., unmarried, divorced, or lesbian) forever uncared for. Ultimately, the press conference concluded that this cultural practice had the oppressive effect of endorsing (heterosexual) marriage as the single most

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important accomplishment in a woman's life and excluding other alternatives for one's life trajectory. Since this first press conference, the Awakening Foundation has continued to call press conferences on the issue of women and ancestor worship around Ching-ming, the latest one having taken place on April 3, 2009 (*Dajiyuan xinwenwang* [大紀元新聞網, *Epoch Times*] 2009; also see Funuxinzhi jijinhui buluoge [Awakening Foundation Blog] 2010). Another example of a feminist effort along these lines was the publication of *Going Back to My Mother's House on New Year's Day: Culture, Customs, and Gender Equity Education* (大年初一回娘家：習俗文化與性別教育) (TGEEA 2005), a collected volume of essays written by affiliates of the Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association (台灣性別平等教育協會 [TGEEA]), of which Wen-hui Tang is an active member. Since then, the TGEEA has been working hard to raise the general public's awareness about the gender bias embedded in Taiwanese culture and customs (TGEEA 2010).

As a way to combat the cultural bias against deceased unmarried women, the KAPWR activists emphasized the role of these 25 women as manufacturing workers who helped to build Taiwan's economic miracle, and the fact that they died on their way to work, therefore making their deaths job-related casualties. The feminists held that a focus on these women's work roles, as opposed to their unmarried status, would also aid in advancing the public's recognition that Taiwanese women have made great contributions to the economic growth of the country. To remove the stigma connected to the tomb and the tomb site, the KAPWR urged the Kaohsiung city government in its 2004 press conference to make an effort to change the urban image of Cijin, and to reform and rebuild an urban culture with gender equality. In order to accomplish these goals, in tandem with the ongoing involvement in gender equity education of many of its core members, the KAPWR recommended that: 1) the Kaohsiung City Bureau of Cultural Affairs commission experts to conduct research on the history of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb, with the goal of recognizing the sacrifice and contribution these women made to Taiwan's economic development; 2) the Kaohsiung City Education Bureau invite scholars to write up the ferry incident and the context around it as teaching materials for local studies and school education for gender equity. More broadly, this would also provide Kaohsiung City residents

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with an opportunity to understand the gender and social implications of the urban landscape of their own city; and 3) the government (central and / or municipal) help publicize these women's economic contributions and the issue of gender (in) equality intertwined with their stories, so that the women could gain the respect they deserved to have while alive and the reverence their spirits should command at the present time.

In the following years, the KAPWR continued to push for the Kaohsiung city government to reconstruct the tomb and its surrounding environment as well as to rectify its name. On Ching-ming 2005, the KAPWR held a memorial service at the tomb attended by KAPWR members and their families. Another press conference was held on Ching-ming 2007. Individual KAPWR members, many of whom were college professors, also wrote academic articles, newspaper essays, and commentaries on the topic, and many of these professors incorporated the tomb into their own classroom discussions (Tang and Cheng 2010). These efforts eventually paid off. The Kaohsiung city government commissioned film director Ke Wan-ching (柯妧青) to make a documentary about the lives of the 25 women and the tragic ferry incident that took their lives. Director Ke did more than that. More than two years in the making, her film "The Lost Youth: Women and Industrial Work in Taiwan" (她們的故事：生產線上的容顏) finally premiered on October 18, 2008, at the Kaohsiung Film Archive. The documentary is not just about the 25 women but also portrays the labor history of women at Kaohsiung's export-processing zones, starting from the 1970s when Taiwan's economy began to take off. The film takes the audience through the days when young girls fresh out of elementary school joined the factory workforce and labored for the livelihood of their families and the collective fortune of Taiwanese society, thus giving the life stories of the 25 women some much-needed context. After watching the film at the premier, Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊), herself a single woman in her late fifties at the time, commented that "the story of Taiwanese female workers is the history of Taiwan. [Our] society should give [all women workers] the long-awaited recognition that they deserve." "The Lost Youth" was later shown on many occasions, to the general public and on college campuses as well as at subsequent Kaohsiung film festivals.

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In addition, in early 2006, the National Cultural Association (Guojiawenhuazonghui [國家文化總會]) – a semi-official, non-profit organization advocating the promotion of culture, broadly defined – published *The Marks of Women's Clogs: Cultural Landmarks of Women in Taiwan* (女人屐痕：台灣女性文化地標), a book about cultural landmarks – both tangible and intangible – important to women or women's causes in different parts of Taiwan. The Cijin Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb was chosen as the one and only landmark in the city of Kaohsiung. This seemed to indicate that the name-rectification effort of feminists in Kaohsiung was no longer merely a local issue but had now elevated to the national limelight.

THE INTERVENTION OF THE STATE

In response to the KAPWR press conference and KAPWR Secretary Wen-hui Tang's op-ed piece – and aside from commissioning the making of a documentary – then-Mayor of Kaohsiung Frank Hsieh promised to pursue the improvement of both the site of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb and the tomb itself, and he assured citizens that he would kick off the name-rectification effort for the tomb shortly thereafter. Yet, the physical appearance of the tomb site and tomb remained unchanged. Instead, as a political tactic to evaluate the degree of support for the tomb issue among Kaohsiung's feminist circle as well as the general public, Mayor Hsieh and his staff commissioned Awakening Kaohsiung (高雄市婦女新知協會) to conduct a study on the attitudes of the families of the deceased on the renovation of the tomb.

The KAPWR and Awakening Kaohsiung are the two major feminist organizations in Kaohsiung critical of the patriarchal nature of, and the consequential gender inequality in, Taiwanese society.[3] Many of the core members of the KAPWR and Awakening Kaohsiung are friends and colleagues in their personal lives and in other aspects of their professional lives; they assist one another and collaborate on many projects. They also share common ideological ground and ideas of movement strategies, and they work closely with their counterparts in nationwide feminist organizations. Awakening Kaohsiung was given only a few months by the Kaohsiung city government to complete the study. Within this short period of time, they

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managed to visit most of the families of the 25 deceased young women. Researchers from Awakening Kaohsiung talked to – or, at least, had a brief chat to – one or two (and on a few occasions more) members of each of these families about how they would like to see the tomb site changed, and then compiled a final report at the end of the study (Wang 2006). Although Awakening Kaohsiung's contact with the families of the deceased was nominal, the report does suggest that the families interviewed seemed to, by and large, welcome the recurring attention given to the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb. The report, however, also indicates that these families might have a different idea about the tomb from that expressed by the KAPWR. For example, family members who answered the question about the karaoke business (disapproved of by the KAPWR) did not seem to mind its presence. Some of them seemed to even welcome it because the owner of the karaoke business helped to maintain the individual gravestones; he offered fresh flowers and paid tribute to those buried there before he opened for business nearly every day. He also helped to keep an eye on the environment, at least during the daytime, when the business was in operation. The family members also indicated that the karaoke business and its customers helped to make the place more animated and full of life.

The inconclusiveness of the Awakening Kaohsiung report seemed to convey to Mayor Hsieh and his chief staff members that the tomb renovation was not an urgent issue. At the time of the KAPWR-held memorial service on Ching-ming 2005, the tomb and its surrounding environment had not been changed. Only in early 2006, under a new mayor, Yeh Chu-lan (葉菊蘭), did one begin to see some signs of action on the part of the city government. At a municipal press conference, then-Deputy Mayor Cheng Wen-lung (鄭文隆) revealed Kaohsiung's "Cijin: An Island for Tourism" (旗津觀光大島) project, which was a part of the city's larger plan to develop urban tourism. Deputy Mayor Cheng explained:

> Among the different districts of Kaohsiung, Cijin probably has the best conditions to develop tourism […]. In addition to infrastructure improvement such as building five-star hotels and shopping districts, the city government will also spend at least a year on community-building.

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> By doing so we are hoping to help local residents in Cijin to raise their consciousness about their own community and see themselves as world citizens of an island of international tourism […]. We have also allocated 170 million [Taiwanese] dollars to the "Cijin" plan, including the 25 million [Taiwanese] dollars for the "Memorial Park Dedicated to Workers Dying of Job-Related Accidents" (工殤紀念公園), [on the current site of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb] (*Minshenbao* [民生報, *Min-shen Daily News*] 2006).

All of these projects were to be completed by October 2006, according to the Kaohsiung city government's proposal. To ensure the overall success of the "Cijin" plan, transforming the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb and changing the public image of the tomb site were essential in order for the place not to look or feel like a graveyard, even though it might continue to house the remains of the 25 drowned women in reality.

The announcement of the "Cijin" plan did not win much admiration from KAPWR members, who pointed out that the Kaohsiung city government still addressed these 25 women as "young girls" in its public announcements, in spite of its self-declared effort to change the image of the tomb site. Also, the fact that the new park would be a park devoted to all laborers, not specifically to female workers, seemed to indicate the city's offhand approach to gender issues. There appeared to be an enduring gap between the way the KAPWR understood "gender equality" and "de-stigmatization of these women's names" and the way the Kaohsiung city government understood those terms.

THE DEAD IN THE POLITICS OF THE LIVING

It was a long process of discussion, debate, agreement and disagreement before anything further happened. In the end, four mayors later, the city government finally decided in 2008 that the park should be re-named the "Memorial Park for [All] Women Laborers," a decision endorsed by the KAPWR. During the course, the Cijin District Office, the frontline local government unit in charge of executing the tomb's

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renovation, also worked hard to communicate with the deceased's families about how to redesign the space. Initially, many of the deceased's families simply could not understand – and therefore were not forgiving of – why the government wanted to dig up their daughters once again. "They [are finally allowed to] rest in peace! And [individual members of] the family are all well and healthy," one parent lamented while making references to the 1988 tomb relocation due to the expansion of the Kaohsiung Port. Mr. Lin Shun-fa, the Cijin District Office clerk who served as the liaison to the deceased's families had to come up with a list of talking points in order to persuade these families what the city government intended to do was beneficial to them, including: 1) As it had been more than thirty years since the ferry incident, and the parents of the deceased were aging or had already passed away, whether the younger generations in the families (e.g., younger siblings and siblings-in-law, nephews, and nieces) would continue to worship and care for their deceased maiden sisters or aunts remained to be seen; 2) The tomb site was susceptible to sabotage – and had been damaged – by gamblers in illegal lotteries or loiterers and, as a result, the tranquility of the deceased was constantly disturbed; the place needed better maintenance; 3) The great contributions of the deceased to the development of Taiwanese economy were conveniently forgotten because of the emphasis on the negative image attached to their maiden status and the supernatural accounts derived from the negative image; 4) The deceased had transcended themselves to be enlightened individuals and elevated their standing in the heavenly order; they were no longer ordinary supernatural beings and thus should be worshipped in a way that reflected their new celestial position; and 5) The tomb would look out of place as soon as the "Memorial Park for Women Laborers" was finished; it was thus in need of a facelift.

To appease the deceased young women and their living family members, Mr. Lin also threw wooden divinatory blocks（擲筊）to ask for the deceased's permissions every step along the way. The families would not agree to make any decisions or changes unless they got a positive answer from their (deceased) daughters. In our interview with him, Mr. Lin actually mentioned that the young women did not always answer positively to the different requests of the city

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government or their own families. Many a time it took many tries before the spirits responded; and when they finally responded, they did not always consent to the requests made to them. There were also times when the women simply did not respond. “In the end, I had to consult with religious specialists and learn to phrase my plea in a harder-to-refuse way.” Mr. Lin explained, “Once after I pretty much exhausted every possible means I could think of [to plead the spirit,] I told her I was only a minor employee who took orders from some big boss [read: the mayor] and begged her to understand my predicaments. As soon as I said that, she granted us a positive response. [These women] certainly understand the difficulties of being someone’s subordinate!” Looking back, Mr. Lin could now speak lightheartedly about the testing moments he had with these supernatural beings. However, from the standpoint of Taiwanese popular religion – which was the conceptual framework of the majority of the deceased’s families – not getting a response or a positive answer from a spirit is an indication that the spirit is either unwilling to commit itself to – or displeased about – the question / request bestowed on it. In other words, the twenty-five deceased women did not appear to be too keen about the idea of having their resting place disturbed, or of remodeling their resting place into a park.

The list that Mr. Lin came up with was significant. His list of talking points had to touch the hearts of these families (Points 1, 2 and 4) while address the government’s policy in a way that could be understood by these families (Points 3 and 5). This is not to say, however, that the city government (and, by extension, the KAPWR) always shared the same concerns of the families of the deceased young women or that the disagreements between these two sides could always be bridged. For example, initially, the families of the deceased wanted the tomb to be renovated into something like the Eighteen Lords Temple（十八王公廟）at the northern tip of Taiwan. The Eighteen Lords Temple was originally “a simple roadside shrine for unidentified bones – the sort that sits unattended and almost unnoticed all over the countryside” (Weller 1994: 141), but has grown into one of Taiwan’s major temples and has enjoyed unprecedented popularity since the 1980s. From the perspective of these families, the Eighteen Lords Temple resembled the Twenty-five Ladies’ Tome in the nature of its ghostly spirits who also suffer from the lack of a proper place on

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an ancestral altar (cf. Weller 1995). Its success in attracting a large number of worshippers, believers, or visitors and, accordingly, enjoying exuberant incense burning seemed to present the best kind of prospect for the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb for these families. The majority of the families also insisted that the name "The Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb" – or, at least "Twenty-five Ladies" or "Twenty-five" – should be kept. They also wanted the presence of a tomb or an architectural structure of worship where they could place the urns and / or hold memorial services (Wang 2006: 11-13). They also expressed their wish to keep the memorial gate. The parents were concerned that no one else in the family would be making regular offerings to their daughter-gods after they passed away. Essentially, the families of the deceased were envisioning a refurbished tomb / temple / memorial hall with a redecorated memorial gate, surrounded by the new, friendly "Memorial Park for Women Laborers" with flowers and plants. A memorial gate was important; it was to serve as the gateway to the shrine of the 25 enlightened ladies.

However, it had always been the position of the Kaohsiung mayor's office – this time under Mayor Chen Chu – that there should be no trace of the tomb left after the renovation. Henceforth, there was not going to be anything remotely resembling a shrine or temple, and the existing memorial gate had to go. In the end, the government prevailed. The individual graves of these young women were removed, and trees and meadows were planted. At the center of the park is a sculpture of a Buddhist lotus on a pedestal – the original design proposed by the city government called for the shape of a vessel, but that design was rejected by the families, who wanted something symbolizing the afterlife status of their daughters. Below the lotus sculpture is a chamber where the urns of the women's remains collected after the removal of their individual graves are kept. The parents of the departed had expressed their wish that there be a door that could be opened from the outside, so that they could go in from time to time to take care of the urns. However, Mayor Chen was against the idea. She reasoned that anybody – not just the parents – could go in if there were a door; as such, the final resting place of these women could very likely be transgressed again, just like the vandalism caused by the losing gamblers on the photos on the women's previous headstones. Consequently, the chamber was sealed

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for good.

On September 3, 2008, 35 years after the fatal ferry incident, the Memorial Park for Women Laborers was inaugurated. Mayor Chen's words, "[Let's] Remember our sisters who labored [and] Wish for a city of happiness" (懷念勞動姊妹，祈願幸福城市), were inscribed on the pedestal of the Buddhist lotus sculpture. The inscription also explains the purpose of the park:

> Resting in peace here are twenty-five women who gave their lives in the labor front […]. In 1973, they died while on their way to work. The Kaohsiung city government helped to bury the deceased together at the time, and named the collective entombment "The Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb," as an important documentation of the contemporary life of Cijin and a witness to the sacrifices the working-class people made for Taiwan's economic development. However, the term "Lady" carried stereotypical gender ideologies that ignored both the economic contributions of women workers and the urgency of safety issues in the workplace […]. On the recommendation of the Kaohsiung Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights and other groups, the current Kaohsiung city government decided to rectify the site as the "Memorial Park for Women Laborers" to commemorate the twenty-five martyrs who died on their jobs […]. We hope that we can work together to build a country for working people and a city of happiness, so that the sacrifice made by the deceased women will not be in vain.

CONCLUSION: A THRICE TOLD STORY

This essay looks at the recent renovation of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, and examines the politics of feminist movements and the politics of memory as expressed through the different meanings of female ghosts. People involved in the renovation process included the families of the deceased "twenty-five maidens," the Kaohsiung city government, and feminist groups – most notably the KAPWR – all of whom had different considerations and therefore diverse

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expectations regarding the future and purpose of the tomb. Feminist activists at the KAPWR played a critical role in bringing the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb into the public eye and framing the story behind it in gender and labor terms. Although it took a long while and many mayors, the Kaohsiung city government eventually responded to the KAPWR's call, renovated the tomb site and its surrounding environment, and agreed to instate a Buddhist lotus sculpture that carries some religious symbolism relating to the afterlife yet does not look as conspicuous as a crypt. The inscription engraved on the lotus sculpture reflects much of the KAPWR's appeal that society should recognize these women as production workers who made great contributions to Taiwan's economy and who lost their lives for their jobs. Implied – though less evident – in this latest inscription is also the message that these women were filial daughters who died from sacrificing for the happiness of their families, but not that they were fearsome maiden ghosts coming back to seek resolutions for their unfulfilled lives. This all seems to suggest the triumph of the feminist endeavors. However, in retrospect, one wonders why the tomb had to be transformed into a sanitized park in order to make right the gender inequality and social injustice inflicted on these young women. Were there any compelling reasons of why the continuing existence of the tomb – or an unequivocal look of the tomb – would hinder the cause of gender equality or the recognition of these women as hard workers crucial to the post-WWII development of Taiwan?

For the parents who lost their daughters in the ferry accident more than 30 years ago, there was probably never any doubt that their girls were filial daughters and hard workers. When interviewed by Awakening Kaohsiung (Wang 2006), quite a few parents had tears in their eyes while telling their interviewers how considerate their daughters were that they understood the hardship borne by their parents in order to support a big family. They told their interviewers that these girls selflessly shared their parents' burdens, took care of their younger siblings, and always put their own desires secondary to the needs of the family. Some of them also mentioned that their deceased daughters were seen dressing in white coming back to visit and making sure everything was alright with their families. Mr. Chuang Chin-chun, who helped to make the deceased women's collective burial a reality, became charged in our

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interview as he recalled the moment at the funeral of these young women when, according to Taiwanese custom, parents were called upon to whip the coffins of their unfilial children who died before their aging parents: “That was just pure nonsense! How could anybody bear to think these girls were unfilial? They were humble, wonderful daughters.” At the funeral, Mr. Chuang tried to stop the parents – and indeed succeeded in many cases – from whipping their daughters’ coffins. Yet, Mr. Chuang also had a definite opinion about the spiritual tablet placement of women who died unmarried: “It has been like this since the beginning of history that no parents worship their dead children; [and unmarried] daughters’ tablets shouldn’t come back home.”

The dilemma that the parents of the deceased faced, between their lasting worries for the eternal well-being of their daughters who should have been married and led fulfilled lives of their own but instead died a violent untimely death, on the one hand, and the normative value that dictates against incorporating the spirit of a female descendant into her patrilineal ancestral shrine, on the other – both of which, paradoxically, were derived from the same cultural logic – propelled them to seek (or accept) help beyond their individual households. To them, their daughters were of course hard-working, wonderful girls – they did not need to be reminded of that – and a public acknowledgement of their daughters was certainly welcome; but this was not the point. Ultimately, they were looking for some assurance that the welfare of their daughters’ spirits would be continuously and regularly cared for. This became clear to us when Mr. Lin, the Cijin district office liaison to the families of the deceased who later helped us to get in touch with these families for our research, came to us one day with an urgent look. He wanted us (whom he took as having some special ties with the Kaohsiung city government) to reaffirm for the parents the city government’s promise to hold a spring memorial ceremony (on Ching-ming Day) and a fall commemoration service (on the day of their daughters’ deaths) in front of the Buddhist lotus sculpture every year. The city government made the pledge in order to placate the families before the tomb renovation. While we felt we could not speak for the city government, we promised that we would at least hold a service ourselves with our students the coming spring. However, it was apparent from the expression

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on Mr. Lin's face that our promise failed to give him and the families the conviction they were seeking. It was the government's firm commitment that they wanted to hear.

Last but not least, the timing of the tomb renovation begs for closer examination. While we credit the KAPWR's persistent efforts to press the government for change, the change came at a time when the development of tourism in Cijin became a part of the Kaohsiung city government's plans to revive the city's economy. Given the strategic location of the Twenty-five Ladies' Tomb, it became understandable why, from the perspective of the Kaohsiung city government, removing the phantom image of the place and rebuilding it with a new, sanitized look was necessary. Tourists do not normally come to a cemetery for leisure; it is not a common cultural practice in Taiwan. The city government's portrait of the deceased as noble workers dying on their jobs, as it is engraved on the lotus sculpture at the refurbished park, though often taken as an attempt to give these women's life stories a larger context and more public meaning, could be in fact another attempt of the Kaohsiung city government to develop urban tourism. After all, what could be a better symbol than the image of 25 young women dying tragically on their way to work to characterize the romance and pathos of Kaohsiung's past as a blue-collar, working-class city? The gender implications of the tomb story are thus subsumed by the Kaohsiung city government's economically-minded urban revitalization effort.

NOTES

1. A previous version of this essay was presented as a part of the "Contemporary Haunting: Circulation of Knowledge and Memories between the Dead, the Living, the Family and the State in the East Asian Context" panel at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, November, 2010. We thank Laurel Kendall who served as the discussant for the panel. We also thank Lin Shun-fa, Lin Wei-ping, Wang Hsiu-yun, Ye Hua-ying, Chen Meihua, Chang Hsun, Keith Markus, and the two anonymous reviewers of the Journal of Archaeology and Anthropology for their comments and suggestions. In addition, Anru Lee was a visiting associate professor (Fall 2009) at the Graduate Institute of Sociology, National Sun Yat-sen University, in Kaohsiung, while

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conducting research from which the current article was produced. She is grateful for the hospitality, support, and intellectually inspiring discussions with the faculty and students of the Sociology Program.

2. On International Women's Day, 2010, the Council of Labor Affairs announced its revised answers to some of the questions in its Mortician License Exam test bank, in order to make the exam reflect more gender equality (China Times 2010). For example, in the previous test bank, the answer to the true-false question "The tablet of a woman who died unmarried can only be placed in a temple" was "true", but in the revised test bank it is "false". The old answer to the question "How should the names of the deceased's relatives be arranged on the obituary?" was "Males should always come before females". The revised, correct answer is "It should be based on birth order but not gender". Although this revision effort is welcomed by advocates of gender equality, whether or how it will affect death rituals or funeral services in a practical sense remains to be seen.

3. This does not mean, however, that the KAPWR and Awakening Kaohsiung are the only two associations in Kaohsiung dedicating to women's issues. There are many other women's groups in the city, whose main mission is less to challenge the patriarchal social structure but to provide social services to women, such as providing counseling, organizing self-growth groups or study groups, and offering assorted adult-education classes.

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