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# The [Ghost] Object: Haunting and Urban Renewal in a "Very Traditional Town"*

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## ABSTRACT

In this essay I trace the circulation of ghost objects—hanging ropes, implements of accidental death, pieces of clothing, and paper money—showing how ghosts became entangled with urban redevelopment on Taiwan. During the last two decades, planners transformed Taiwanese cities as they repurposed unproductive urban spaces to make way for leafy parks, fine public buildings, and other markers of Taiwan's "cultural" status. In Lukang, a large 18th-19th century cemetery was redeveloped as land for the new town hall, a hotel project, and a pubic park. When accidents and acute health problems beset contractors and administrators, rumors suggested that both the ghost objects and the new public spaces were out of place. Material practices of working with remains such as bones created the possibility of ethical relationships with the dead, which urban renewal disrupted. Yet, stances on this disruption do not follow a simple account of state projects and popular resistance. Rather, both desires for and anxieties concerning public amenities are entangled by the elided presences that act through haunting.

**Keywords:** Ghosts, Material Culture, Stance, Urban Renewal

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# 「撿金」遺物：作祟與都市重建規劃的研究

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## 摘 要

本文從「鬼物」（即繩子，遺骨，棺木殘片，等涉及於往生者的物質）的移動與處理方式來探討鬼與都市更新計畫的纏結。從民國 70 年代末期以來，台灣在都市發展與社區營造等政策的影響下，本來沒有產值的空間，被重新規劃為公共設施用地。如此引發了規劃的空間以及相關的空間再現，與原有的空間實踐產生了矛盾的關係。本文以鹿港為例，說明民國 78 年至 88 年中，鹿港因興建新鎮公所、運動場、兒童公園、彰化縣勞工育樂中心（立德會所 BOT 案）、生態公園等公共設施用地，將鹿港 18 世紀以來的公墓——崙仔頂塚——遷葬。筆者在文中先探討「撿金」等處理往生者的遺物的方式，如何建立人與往生者的倫理關係，並描述崙仔頂塚在鹿港居民社會空間的地位。接下來，筆者說明這些原有的倫理關係和在地空間實踐，如何被都市規劃打亂。然而，本文論述在這過程中，鬼所呈現的樣貌，並不完全是在地與政府的對抗，而是欲望和憂慮並存的標記。

**關鍵文字：**鬼，物質文化，姿態，都市更新規劃

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## HAUNTING, DESIRE, AND VIBRANT MATTER

Years after the decline in popularity of infamous "little god" temples, such as Taipei County's 18 Lords, Taiwan remains a good place to examine haunting. Rumors of haunting provide much material for the mass media, and spirits are known to intervene in real estate, financial, and government decisions and transactions. This essay explores how we might understand haunting as a contemporary phenomenon. I examine the materiality of haunting within spatial practices of urban renewal, community development, and tourism in Lukang（鹿港）, a town on Taiwan's West Coast known for its extensive ritual network and many historical sites.[1] Borrowing from W.J.T. Mitchell's (2004) suggestion that we ask not what pictures *mean* but what they *want*, this essay attempts to register competing desires that emerge when we attend to practices and talk surrounding human remains, coffin earth, hanging ropes, and other objects associated with haunting. Like Mitchell, I pose this question *what do ghosts want* to engage with the materiality of haunting and, in turn, its implications. The task, I think, is to refrain from "reading" haunting as a "byproduct of social reality" (Mitchell 2004: 47), instead seeing it as something that constitutes the lived world for people in Lukang.[2] With that caution in mind, I suggest that we borrow from recent work in Actor Network Theory (ANT) to develop a method in which we suspend symbolic reduction of ghosts to meaning (whether social categories of "strangers" or attributions of resistance) and instead engage in a thorough account of their composition and entanglements, a kind of description that I have elsewhere called a *complication* (Hatfield 2010).

To follow this complication, my essay experiments with a type of elision: in keeping with usage around Lukang, I avoid reference to *dirty things* (ghosts) and choose local indirections for them throughout the article. My title, "The [Ghost] Object," also uses brackets to play on the way that pragmatic engagement with *the good brothers* usually brackets them out. In keeping with the theme of this volume, I begin with a ghost story.



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## LEAVING SOMETHING UNSAID

I first encountered the denizens of Lukang's Lunahteng（崙仔頂）Cemetery in fragments. That autumn in 1994 as the bulldozers dredged earth or sat idle in the overgrown acres near A-Sian's house, his parents told us to walk behind and around the neighborhood, avoiding a more direct route downtown, particularly at night. We took the detour.

"It's always best to be careful," A-Sian apologized.

He added one of his frequent refrains, "besides, you know Lukang's complicated customs," reminding me of the even more stringent requirements surrounding processions to send off *guests*. Knowing that this type of procession, unlike those surrounding the birthdays of various neighborhood deities or pilgrimages to the town's famous Mazu Temple, was never performed for the benefit of tourists, I understood his comments in this context to mean that his parents advised us in earnest, even if we might find this particular custom "complicated" (*hokchap* 複雜) in a sense not infrequently used in Lukang, meaning annoying or onerous.

This was not the first time the cemetery entered conversation. A few months before, two friends joked with a professional photographer with whom I often worked.

"A-Tiong can talk with anyone. So many people know him, he can be the next mayor!"

A-Tiong cursed as he sprung up, as if by reflex. He was angry, but why? A-Tiong would only say, "the mayor, he…" wiggling his index finger at the second joint in a gesture that refers to death without actually saying the inauspicious word.

Confused by the interaction at A-Tiong's photo studio, I asked A-Tiong why the mayor's…(now it was my turn to wiggle my index finger) would cause such a reaction.

"It wasn't just that he…," said A-Tiong

> It's that something *happened*. You know the new town hall? Well, the town government built it on top of a "nightclub." At night, there were



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> *all sorts of things* that would come out of that place. That's where *they* would play. The mayor decided to build the new town hall there. And while he was building the new town hall, he and a few other people—someone who worked for the contractor, a secretary in the town office—had *bad things* happen to them. People say that the mayor was either taken away in revenge or "arrested" because *something* filed a complaint against him in the shadowy realm

Later, I asked other people around town about the mayor. Although a skeptical current of opinion pointed out that the mayor was hardly in perfect health, the coincidence encouraged rumor (as well as rhetorical employment of statements like "you will be the next mayor"). Moreover, the site of the town hall seemed particularly infelicitous. An image carver in one of the town's many Buddhist supply stores told me that the section of the cemetery where the town hall was built was not a normal cemetery but the location of a mass grave for young men who had perished in a violent confrontation, a story I heard from others in town. The confrontation may have happened at the beginning of the Japanese colonial period. Perhaps it was an early feud among settlers of different regional origin, common when the west coast of Taiwan was an unruly frontier area. Others claimed that the remains were of plague victims or even of indigenous people who had been massacred. The identity of those in the mass grave mattered little. What mattered was that once the construction of the town hall began, they lacked a means to escape or to be placated. Thus, their misfortune, contagious (and, like energy, always conserved in some fashion) could travel through the town government and the town in general. The material relationships that held their trauma in place were disrupted.

## FROM SOCIAL FACT TO FACTISH

Subjects we avoided yet employed in rhetorical sparring, the good brothers (*ho hiaNti* 好兄弟) were especially familiar through the 1990s as landscapers and construction workers transformed the town's old burial grounds into a park and recreation complex. Nearly twenty years later, *something* in the park still enters



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conversation as an index of uncanny transformations of public space in this self-consciously traditional Taiwanese town. In terms of the pragmatics of haunting talk, it is notable that material traces of past trauma manifest their agency (and hence a type of presence) in haunting even as talk about haunting keeps the *agent* under ellipses.

This combination of material cause and conversational erasure redoubles the indexical quality of haunting, yet a persistent anthropological habit hampers our efforts at understanding. The interpretive imperative of our discipline compels us, I think, to pump meaning into *subjects* whom we admit only as symbols.

For example, Jordan's (1972) treatment of spirit weddings attempted to create a theory of ghosts, then not widely studied in anthropological or comparative religious studies of Taiwan or China. In his work, Jordan attended to haunting as a symptom of rupture in the kinship system, demonstrating how material practices of redress provided young women who died before marriage with husbands and, hence, a position within a normative kinship structure. Jordan's description of the assemblage of smiling beauty photograph, doll clothing, and spirit tablet that effected this transformation (Jordan 1972: 147-150) suggests the possibility that we view haunting in more than symbolic terms. Rather than interpreting *the lonely maiden* (*ko niuN* 孤娘) who haunts her natal family (or even an entire neighborhood) as a token of the social category of "stranger," Jordan describes her intrusion as an event that makes family disasters, some in the present (such as sickness or failed business ventures) and one in the past (a young woman's death), comprehensible. The correspondence between these events is indexical rather than metaphorical; or, to use language from anthropological descriptions of magic, *contagious* rather than sympathetic.

Additionally, Jordan carefully describes the material construction of the spirit bride. For the spirit wedding, a doll is constructed from wood and newspaper and clothed in three layers of clothing including white undergarments, a red wedding dress, and a white lace dress, making her both a proper bride and a "proper corpse" (Jordan 1972: 149). To make the bride's face, a cutout from a smiling calendar girl is pasted onto the doll. Finally, the girl's spirit tablet is inserted into the doll's back. Following this construction, the marriage follows the typical order of wedding



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ceremonies. However, as Jordan points out, the bride's cut and pasted smile imposes an index of the uncanny character of the proceedings. No matter how perfectly the spirit wedding may provide the girl with a place in the normative kinship structure, a trace of misfortune remains. This trace suggests that the *lonely maiden* might be contained ritually but still indicates something outside of normative kinship: a *lack* that requires continued attention or redress.

However, Jordan's desire in *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors* (the point of his "theory of ghosts") is to explain the difference between conceptual and behavioral models of the spirit world. In other words, he saw his task as supplementing a theological description of spirits with another, which focuses on "the use human beings actually make of gods and ghosts as elements in a system of explanation and interaction" (Jordan 1972: 171). In general this attempt to relate these two models mitigated against a thorough understanding of the materiality of popular ritual practices in Taiwan. In turn, questions of meaning and metaphor have dominated most subsequent work. Thus, in his influential work on categories of religious practice in Taiwan, Wolf (1978) suggested a set of metaphorical correspondences that allowed a reduction of *the good brothers* to bandits, strangers, and other outsiders, a tack that most American anthropologists have followed, even when making much subtler arguments about spacetime (DeBernardi 1992), political economy (Weller 1994), or the role of alienation in social reproduction (Sangren 2000). This valuable body of work has illuminated the significance of *the good brothers*, particularly their connection to notions of wealth and social dislocation. It has also shown, like Jordan's (1972) description of the spirit bride's uncanny smile, the relationship between popular religious practices, alienation, and internal forms of resistance that ultimately reproduce social order (Sangren 2000).

Although these discussions of popular religious practices and categories have been productive, I wish to return to Wolf's initial observation about popular religious practice, but suspending the leap to assign meaning, because this observation demonstrates the way that the material practices of popular religion produce social space and pose questions of agency. As Wolf reports (1978: 131), incense burned in



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back of the house, at the stove, and at the altar table constituted a set of social spaces of a potentially threatening outside, domestic production and nurture, and family continuity. Following this example of ritual and place making, what if we were to suspend our impulse to assign meaning to the *good brothers* and describe more carefully the material engagements and conversational elision in which people relate to them?

In the story of the mayor, I have shown that haunting embodies and provokes a complicated stance. Haunting brings together both a present, uncanny agency, known from traces of some past trauma, and a form of elision or erasure. Faced with studies that would interpret haunting as symbolic, I want to argue that this *elided presence* performs another sort of work. While haunting might point to alterity, resistance, or other meanings, these meanings are in a sense secondary, built upon prior processes: first, real or imagined engagement with material traces, such as human remains, coffin earth, hanging ropes, and clothing; and, second, communicative practices, such as elision. Through these engagements, the *elided presence* orients people through the stances that it provokes.

In this regard, haunting can tell us much about agency and, in turn, contribute to a comparative anthropology of ethics, by which I mean the study of culturally specific *ethical formations*: configurations of knowledge, objects, and practices through which people maintain a critical and formative relationship to themselves (Foucault 1990, 1997). In such formations, places, bodies, and a variety of material objects all can serve as substances and models of good relationships to the self and to others. It's my contention that haunting demonstrates important qualities, if often in a negative sense, of a Taiwanese ethical formation. To get at this possible contribution of haunting to anthropological knowledge, we need to retrain anthropological habits of attention and look more carefully at the made (or fabricated) quality of (ghost) objects.

This turn of attention is one of method. Rather than asking questions of meaning to the agents (including the *good brothers*) we encounter, we ask *how are they fabricated* and *how do they compel us to act*. In this regard, we view *the good*



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*brothers* not as symbols to be decoded, but what Bruno Latour (1999: 274) has called "factishes:" things that because well-fabricated and autonomous, incline those who engage with them to right actions. Although anthropologists in studies of science and technology are well acquainted with the work of Bruno Latour and other actor network theorists (ANT), this work might be less familiar to scholars working on other topics and require some elaboration. Below, I offer a description of the method followed by a concrete example.

Because ANT dealt closely with technology, it began with a consideration of the language of "subjects" and "objects," which ANT scholars saw as barriers to understanding the efficacy of non-humans, including technologies, animals, materials, and places (Callon 1982, 1986; Latour 1993; Latour and Woolgar 1986). ANT developed in part out of this attempt to understand the way that efficacy and agency are produced through assemblages or networks of human and non-human "actants," a term introduced to describe those forming part of network. A guiding principle of ANT follows from this term: that one should view the relationships of human and non-human actants as symmetrical until they have been made otherwise (Latour 1993, 1996). Unlike sovereign subjects who act upon objects, actants are limited in their agency unless they form networks with other actants. Moreover, each actant is itself a network of other actants. Agency is thus composed, distributed, and emergent. It is the product of a disposition (Jullien 1996). In other words, agency to ANT depends upon the mediation and translation of one's own intentions by and through other actants (Latour 1996, 2000; Law 2002; see also Oppenheim 2008, Hatfield 2010).

More concretely, Latour (1999: 186-187) gives the example of a speed bump. While we all know that drivers will slow down and thus obey speed restrictions nearby a school or playground when they approach the speed bump, how do we describe agency in this situation? Let's say that the speed bump is in Taipei City. Someone who wishes to avoid admitting the agency of non-human actants (here a mound of earth and concrete) might attribute agency not to the speed bump but to President Chen or members of his mayoral administration, who were the *principals* behind placing the speed bump nearby the school. Yet such an attribution of agency



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should strike us in 2012 as ridiculous, because President Chen is currently in jail! Clearly, Chen could not be an agent in any conventional sense. In fact, it makes more sense to follow a description provided by drivers who say, "the speed bump made me slow down." In other words, the speed bump is the agent, in the sense that it acts for (we could follow linguistic anthropology's breakdown of speech production and say the speed bump *animates* the project of) President Chen, who when mayor of Taipei proposed that the drivers slow down yet lacked the ability to stand nearby the school at all hours of the day. To use Latour's language, humans who wanted drivers to slow down have *delegated* their agency to the speed bump (Latour 1999: 187) which acts in their place. The speed bump has translated the principals' want (meaning both desire and lack; cf. Mitchell 2004) and also diverts or translates the desires of drivers, who now slow down. From this perspective, we can describe neither the human principals, nor the construction workers, nor the fully made speed bump as the only or primary agents in this situation. Moreover, we recognize that in this case the well made speed bump continues to cause people to act rightly even in the absence of the principals and, in some cases, could act against the intentions of subsequent actants who might wish to move the school and increase the speed limit.[3] The speed bump is, in other words, a factish. Rather than trying to disentangle the contribution of non-humans and humans in its composition and continued agency, as would someone who might accuse our drivers' attribution of agency to the speed bump as fetishization, ANT suggests that we describe just how non-humans and humans are entangled and to what ends: just how was the speed bump constructed, how does its agency surprise or exceed the intentions of planners, how it is spatialized, what stances does it provoke. I suggest that this turn of attention offers a method for us better to understand haunting as a contemporary phenomenon.[4]

As I have mentioned above, haunting suggests the surprising action of a factish. The worked quality of material traces of the dead allows the living and the dead to engage with each other as ethical subjects; thus, it is to these traces and work with them to which I will turn. In the case that I present here, disparate practices and constructions, such as urban renewal, government buildings, a hotel, a park, and labor migration disrupted this mode of engagement, entangling the practices of planning,



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tourism, and leisure with haunting. This entanglement, in turn, formed dispositions through which people in Lukang inhabit their town. Rather than a rejection of previous anthropological work on categories of popular ritual in Taiwan, this essay describes a *complication*. It shows that contemporary haunting is an ethical condition of being complicit, or entangled with, projects that at first seem opposed to one's own position (Hatfield 2010). Meaning might be part of this complication, but it is not the primary part; and, as it turns out, the autonomous quality of haunting might actually offer the matter upon which divergent meanings can rest (Keane 1997). Describing this complication, in which the *good brothers* featured prominently, is the task of this essay.[5]

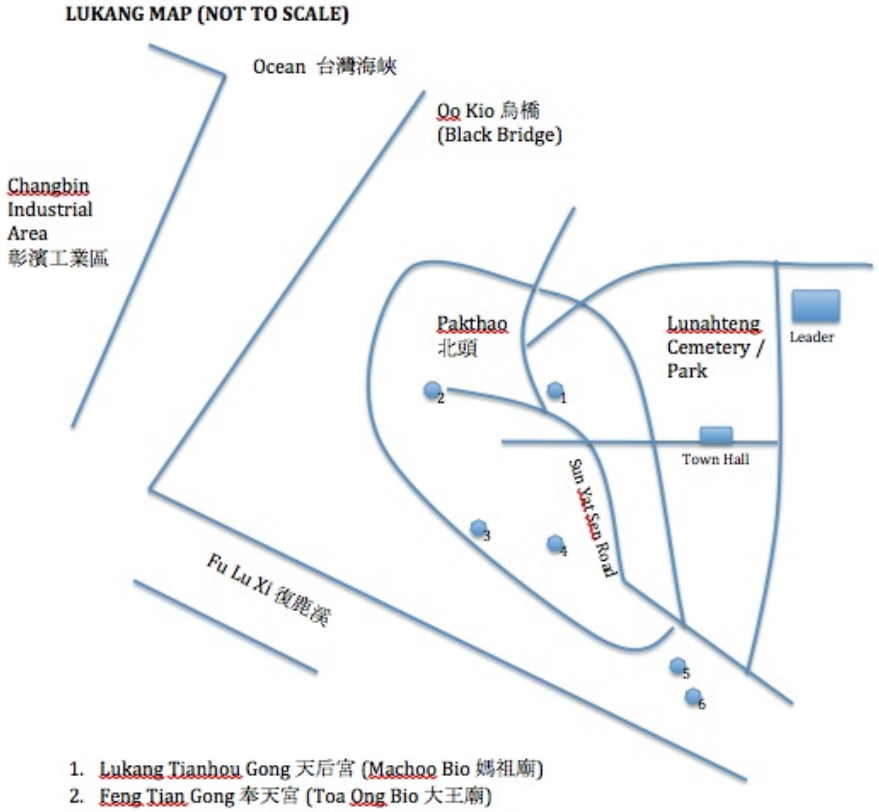
To elaborate, we can return to the example of the mayor's demise. In the story of the mayor and the *good brothers*, we see that haunting results from a lack of care for and attention to the remains of past residents or previous trauma. Talk about haunting or work with remains thus expresses a stance on processes of remembering and forgetting. These stances--plural, because attitudes concerning historical reconstruction and urban planning in Lukang are far from unanimous--have both a material and spatial dimension. They are literally grounded in work with remains and the disposition of these remains in particular places. In other words, these stances are materialized in spatial practices, which I define following Lefebvre (1991), as those practices of engaging with and in places, through which people reproduce places and their corresponding evaluative geographies (Lefebvre 1991: 33; see also Augé 1999; Weiss 1996; Weiss 2011: 443). Obviously, spatial practices include the work of the town government to remove the cemetery, work that followed and extended the spatial practices of community development in post-martial law Taiwan. But spatial practices also have an affective dimension. In other words, attention to the "production of space" in Lefebvre's model "combines attention to the restructuring of everyday life […] with considerations of the felt qualities of lived, bodily experience" (Weiss 2011: 441).

In other words, attention to spatial practices will allow us to understand the connection between governmental rationality and uncanny shivers, the complication



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of bureaucratic forms and on the street rumors. Yet in addition to this attention to place as sensed or the affective qualities of place, I would like to add a slightly different concern with stance, meaning an attitude or disposition toward ongoing spatial practice. Rumors surrounding the mayor's demise circulated around *what* was removed from, or remained in, Lunahteng. In that sense haunting embodies a particular stance on urban reconstruction in town. I suggest that *haunting*, as an embodiment of a stance, is so effective because it seems not to issue from people in town (who might otherwise appreciate the amenities of new town hall, park, and athletic fields) but from the agency of the material traces themselves. In so doing, the *elided presence* traces an ambivalent path between desires for green spaces, cultural facilities, and efficient government and forms of guilt, nostalgia, and ambivalence.




1. Lukang Tianhou Gong 天后宮 (Machoo Bio 媽祖廟)
2. Feng Tian Gong 奉天宮 (Toa Ong Bio 大王廟)
3. Weiling Miao 威靈廟 (Tai Chiongia Bio 大將爺廟)
4. Longshan Si (Liongsan Si 龍山寺)
5. Dizang Wangye Miao (Techang Ong Bio 地藏王爺廟)
6. Hu An Gong 護安宮 (Ngo Chhiansui Bio 吳千歲廟)



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Figure 1 Map of Lukang Town

## PROMOTING LIFE QUALITY

The town hall project was part of a larger program of urban reclamation, in which the town government removed Lunahteng Cemetery, replacing it with a new town hall, municipal park, hotel, and recreation complex. Funding for the park came initially from the Taiwan Provincial Government, which proposed the construction of a workers' recreation and education center (Changhua County Government 1996; Lukang Town 1989, 1995a, 1995b). Through the 1990s, documents urged the removal of the cemetery. Thus in 1989, a town document (Lukang Town 1989) signed by the mayor, Wang Fu-Ju, relied on newly promulgated county legislation to forbid new burials in Lunahteng Cemetery and demand removal of graves that "obstructed either public health improvements, renewal projects, urban development, or public interest" (Changhua County Government 1989). The town government gave those related to the graves a month to register for a removal subsidy and instructed them to remove graves within three months. In retrospect, this plan seems overly optimistic; current administrators in the town government relate that response to demands for grave registration and removal was sluggish. According to these administrators, we should laud Mayor Wang's vision and daring. In an interview in 2009, an administrator in the current mayor's office pointed out the contrast between today's Lukang, in which the park is a large green space at the center of town, and Lukang in 1989, where the cemetery created a barrier to development. This contrast, he said, shows that Mayor Wang could see possibilities for the town's improvement and greater prosperity.[6] The administrator credits Mayor Wang with one of the most important planning decisions in Lukang since the Japanese construction of Lukang Street (now Sun Yat-Sen Road 中山路) in the late 1920s.

Removal of the Lunahteng Cemetery followed on the heels of historical reconstruction in two of the town's districts and accompanied promotion of the town as an important cultural site.[7] These developments in Lukang were not isolated events but participated in an entire movement within national and provincial administrations



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in the late in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During the Lee Teng-Hui administrations prior to the first democratic elections for president (1987-1996), those in the newly legal opposition often complained that cultural facilities were concentrated in the national capital, Taipei, to the detriment of small towns and regional cities in the south of the island. Cultural commissioners within the administration echoed their complaints. Quality of life discourses produced both within and outside the government had argued since the early 1980s that Taiwanese towns lacked green space, a cultural atmosphere, and even music—ironic for an island with spectacular and lavish religious practices and centers, not to mention musical garbage trucks. The writer Long Ying-Tai, then in the opposition, famously complained in 1985 about government plans to build a massive sculpture of Confucius in Taipei, placing such attempts to improve urban life in the same category as slogans covering pubic buildings and schools. Calling these attempts vain and ultimately destructive, she argued, "give us a verdant patch of grass, give us clean air, give us a quiet residential district; give our children clean toilets, an expansive park, a children's library" (Long Ying-Tai 1985). Her arguments about public space in Taiwanese cities, although perceived as highly critical of the government, particularly upon the publication of her essays in the 1986 book *Wildfire* (野火集), actually amplified discourses of multiculturalism and quality of life which emerged, in the mid 1980s, as dominant discourses. For example, the National Government proclaimed 1984 "Green Taiwan Year" and, in fact, began in this year to promote policies for clean air, noise abatement, local cultural centers, and even better music in city buses. A retrospective piece on community building projects by the Lee Teng-Hui era cultural commissioner, Chen Chi-Nan (2008: 6-7), places these discourses within a policy context, arguing that cultural policy in Taiwan from the early 1980s grew from intensive investment in high culture and concert halls to a concern with local cultural amenities and an equitable distribution of cultural resources. In this respect, plans in 1989 for redevelopment of the Lunahteng Cemetery connected to state programs to promote a better cultural life then beginning to develop legal frameworks. As mentioned above, the Changhua County statute that gave the township eminent domain in the case of cemeteries obstructing development of roads or cultural facilities passed the



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legislature just as plans for park construction were being drawn up.

In concert with these programs to create better forms of cultural life, documents in the Lukang Town archives demonstrate attention to a set of procedures for managing cemetery removal. Town and county governments applied for grants, opened bids and issued contracts, estimated the number of remains, and calculated the cost per individual set of remains both claimed and unclaimed. The park and its environs appear in these documents from the late 1980s through the 1990s as "Lukang Tract #2," as if to establish that the cemetery impedes the town's development. In interviews with town administrators who had worked on the project, similarly, the need for a municipal park seems completely natural. Officials in the town's facilities management office never mentioned haunting. Referring indirectly to "rumors" surrounding redevelopment, they directed me toward documents that demonstrated that the redevelopment of Tract #2 had been both legal and transparent. This indirection derives from both the delicacy of talking about mayor Wang's demise or other possible manifestations of spiritual retribution--the current mayor is Wang's daughter--and sensitivity to previous redevelopment projects associated with historical preservation. Yet, more importantly, their discussion of park construction presented a definition of good government.

If construction of the park realized a particular notion of the state as facilitating local cultural development, the spatialization of this notion in cemetery removal would run aground on the material of local memory. Interestingly, however, both haunting and governmental rationality had, by nature of the case, to engage with the same object: bones. One indication of this engagement comes from the archival materials concerning park construction still available in the town office. Like most township and county offices on Taiwan, which destroy documents after five years have elapsed, officials in Lukang consigned detailed planning documents for the park to the incinerator long ago. The documents that remain refer primarily to the practicalities of removing tens of thousands of remains.

After the 1989 prohibition of new burial in Tract #2, several years of negotiations surrounding removal of remains found there ensued. A 1990



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memorandum (Lukang Town Government 1990) reminded townspeople that the town had begun to provide subsidies for grave removal, asking those responsible for graves in Tract #2 to apply with identification, seal, and a form provided at the town office. In 1992, the town office suggested that the Tomb Sweeping Festival (Qingming 清明節) would be ideal for identifying and removing graves (Lukang Town Government 1992a).

More difficult were the tens of thousands of human remains estimated to reside in mass graves such as those at the site of the town hall, a planned playground, and the Provincial Workers' Recreation and Education Center: those rumored to be responsible for troubles in the new town hall. Identification, removal, and reburial would take nearly ten years. The town hall was completed in 1994, nearly a year after the death of the mayor. Final removal of the bones and a dedication ceremony at a newly constructed columbarium for unclaimed remains would not be completed until late 1998. In the intervening period, the national government introduced new legal frameworks for private business to participate in the construction of public amenities; and in 1991 the Provincial Workers' Recreation and Education Center was leased in a Build Operate Transfer (BOT) agreement to the Leader Group to run a hotel and conference center at the site. Cleaning *things underground* thus became a contractual problem between town and county governments and developers hoping to profit on the privatization of recreation facilities in an increasingly neoliberal Taiwan.

## MAKING ANCESTORS

Initially, families who maintained graves at the site resisted removal out of inertia as well as concerns that the stipends for exhumation and reburial were insufficient. The town issued repeated warnings in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, and 1995 that remains not exhumed by families would be treated as unclaimed remains and removed to a mass columbarium in which three sets of bones would share single urns, stacked one on top the other in a multi-storey structure. During the early to mid 1990s, I accompanied a master osteomantic specialist (*khioh-kim sai* 撿金師) as he removed, cleaned, and supplemented remains fortunate enough to have families to claim them.



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Bones bleached in the sun and repaired to avert misfortune, teeth removed and discarded to keep the ancestors from biting their descendents, these remains would maintain proper relationships among the living and the dead, ensuring a flow of good fortune from ancestors to their families and averting disharmony. From the vantage of *kioh-kim* we can explore the material construction of these relationships (the "factish" quality of ancestors) and explain how the spatial practices of urban renewal disrupted them, provoking stances that I connected above with haunting.

*Kioh-kim* is both a diagnostic and routine practice, one of the many ways of determining potential causes of misfortune, certainly, but also the means materially to transform remains into a desired form of personhood, a benevolent ancestor.[8] In Lukang, ritual exhumation and examination of physical remains generally follows 9 to 12 years after the initial burial. Families may also resort to ritual exhumation in cases of disharmony or misfortune, because the condition of the bones will index problems in family relationships. Following an osteomantic consultation at the gravesite and in their studio, master exhumers work to correct qualities of the remains that could harm the family, solving these problems.



Figure 2 Making an Ancestor: Khai MiN (photograph by author)

In broad terms, these practices create the ancestor as a generic figure. After



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supplementing bones where necessary and wrapping them, an osteomantic specialist wraps the skull in layers of white cotton and paints a stylized face—identical for all ancestors—across this foundation. Thus the exhumer "opens the face" of the deceased (*khai miN* 開面), much as face painting is said to "open the face" of possessed dancers in processions. *Khai miN* gives the deceased identity as ancestors and opens a means for them to act. Once placed in an urn and reburied, the ancestor can become the focus of graveside observances.

A look at ritual exhumation shows the process of constructing ancestors and gives us a sense of how to understand haunting more generally. When we ask the question, "what do the deceased want" in relationship to the remains carefully supplemented and reconstructed by osteomantic specialists, we meet with ambivalent answers. On the one hand, the deceased want to enthrall their descendents. Bodies that have not fully decomposed, remaining in a state of mummification, for example, carry away the good fortune of descendents; skulls with teeth remaining in them are said to "swallow sons and bite grandsons" (*kam chu ka sun* 含子咬孫; puns with 含齒咬孫). Bones that are incomplete or misaligned can lead to quarrels, financial losses, or physical disability, sometimes for particular descendents but often for an entire group of descendents, who share substance with the ancestors. Huang Chung-Mo, one of the three practicing ostemantic specialists in Lukang, relates that a family with many leg problems asked him to remove the bones of an ancestor; he discovered that one of the kneecaps of this ancestor was missing, perhaps causing the problems. Thus we could add that the departed want, meaning lack, completeness and the ability to circulate and act appropriately. Ritual exhumations address this lack, supplementing, rearticulating, and providing a place for the deceased, making them into ancestors.

The practice of exhumation and secondary burial, in effect, channels the agency of the deceased so that they are neither abject, like the unworshipped and forgotten, nor completely in control. Relationships of hosts and guests, ancestors and descendants, thus can hold. The process of constructing the ancestor as a generic figure with limited agency becomes clear when we examine practices of marking, wrapping, and placing bones.



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After osteomantic specialists have bleached the bones in the sun, a member of the family will come visit to dot at least one of the bones with vermillion ink. This practice, according to osteomantic specialists in Lukang, alludes to the mythology of Meng Jiangnü（孟姜女）and her meeting with the Earth God (also the Earth Grandfather, 土地公). As related to me in Lukang, Meng Jiangnü set out to deliver winter clothes to her husband, who had been conscripted for corvée labor on the Great Wall. Unfortunately, her husband had already died, and she could never hope to find her husband's remains among the tens of thousands whose bones were interred in the mortar of the Great Wall. As she wondered what to do, a grandfatherly man told her to drip her blood upon the bones: those that would absorb her blood belonged to her husband. Thus she found her husband's remains and began to recompose them. In fact, her blood caused the bones to begin to have new flesh. However, the Earth Grandmother（土地媽), displeased that her husband had allowed Meng Jiangnü to bring Meng's husband back into the land of the living, tricked Meng Jiangnü to carry the skeleton in a bag upon her back, stopping the process of reanimation. This myth suggests that the act of recognition, marking the bones with blood, keeps the bones of the deceased from total abjection among the masses of bones in the Great Wall, but also that recognition creates distance between the living and those passed on (the distance that the Earth Grandfather should protect).

Ahern (1973) and Feuchtwang (2010) have both reported versions of the Meng Jiangnü myth in the context of secondary burial. Ahern (1973: 204) notes that the myth provides a charter for secondary burial, which will allow the ancestor to "live again." Building upon Ahern's work, Feuchtwang argues that in keeping with the myth, secondary burial individuates the recognized ancestor in contrast with the masses of the anonymous, unrecognized dead. Thus, a process of individuation "saves the dead for memory" (2010: 131-132). Nonetheless, as practiced by osteomantic specialists, dotting the bones with vermillion recognizes the remains not as an individual with a set of features we might associate with a living person but as an ancestor figure within a relatively generic structure of obligation. Moreover, the myth suggests that the ritual supplements for a possible lack of recognition. For the deceased, this lack is experienced as the lack of a body more than the condition of



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anonymity among the thousands of unclaimed bones. In this respect, the mythology of Meng Jiangnü reinforces a second allusion bone specialists consider as they work on bones, an allusion to the mythology of Nezha or the Third Prince（三太子）.

Ostemantic specialists in Lukang belong to two schools, those that rearticulate the skeleton with bamboo rods and red string and those that wrap bones in “golden paper” that resembles the paper money burned for spirits. According to Huang Chung-Mo, who belongs to the wrapping school, the practice of wrapping the bones alludes to the Third Prince’s creation of a “Lotus Blossom Body”（蓮花身）out of the substance of incense. This allusion may seem odd in this context because, as related in the myth, the Third Prince returned his bones to his father and his flesh to his mother, cancelling his filial obligations. Thus, it might suggest an end to the obligations that the secondary burial would initiate. However, this myth suggests the material work of fabricating kinship.[9] It also adds to the sense of danger surrounding recognition and its lack. Literal ties of bone and flesh may connect ancestors and descendents; but these ties often lack substance and, just as Nezha’s mother conspires with him to create a new body out of incense, the deceased’s lack can only be supplemented through the ritual work of the living. The allusion reinforces the desire for a body, with some possibly antisocial implications. For Nezha, the Lotus Blossom Body supplements his lack of a body after the monstrous, anti-filial act of disembodiment. Creation of an ancestor through osteomantic practices likewise both supplements for and makes visible the breach or lack. In this regard, the bones are a fetish object, and not just for the living: they index an obsessive desire of the deceased that impinges upon descendents.[10]

Finally, osteomantic specialists place the bones into the urns to complete the work of fabricating ancestors. The urn serves as a house for the deceased, complete with a central rafter and a door. The urn is also a womb: placement of the ancestor in the urn situates the ancestor as a fetus awaiting a new birth. These practices produce ancestors as generic figures whose agency inclines toward the fortune of descendents. However, it fabricates them as possibly dangerous. Misrecognized or unremembered, not carefully constructed within the urn and reburied, they could easily join the



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throng of abject and vengeful dead. Whether the deceased belongs to one category or another seems not to depend upon structures of kinship or of thought, but a particular material assemblage through which people attend to and supplement what spirits lack. In Lukang, and I suspect elsewhere, these assemblages have a spatial dimension, one that connects to the fate of the Lunahteng Cemetery and its place in the overall ritual structure of Lukang Town.



Figure 3 Making an Ancestor: Marked and Articulated Bones (photograph by author)



Figure 4 The Lunahteng Entun (image courtesy Lukang Town Government Historical Materials Center)

## MAKING SPACES

The practice of secondary burial demonstrates an almost obsessive attention to



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the material construction of ancestors; nevertheless, many of these ancestors are eventually forgotten. Tract #2 contained at least seven layers of burials, going well beneath the three-meter regulation for exhumation. Not all families, moreover, removed their dead. So for the several thousand bodies claimed by families, there were tens of thousands—the estimate of the town government exceeded 80,000—remains left unclaimed in Tract #2. These remains would join the ranks of the dispossessed, becoming a figure of alienation and ambivalence for those families who knew or suspected that their ancestors were among that throng.

As for haunting, an image carver and a restaurant owner in Lukang both told me that no one feared the ancestors whose cleaned bones, safely folded in fetal position in porcelain urns, sat in low mounds beside Lunahteng. They wouldn't trouble anyone, because they would know that their next-door neighbors were the ancestors of anyone who passed by. Why would they start trouble with their neighbors? Besides, they were comfortable in their place. People were terrified of the *entun* (煙敦), however. A trio of tall pyramids, one for male bones, one for female bones, and the last for bones of indeterminate gender, the entun housed remains that had likely been displaced more than once. The image carver, Mr Si, would tell me that the entun was useful--it would be terrible were those bones just scattered about; at least in the entun they received some care--but dangerous. He remembers that as a child, he would sometimes avoid the path that threaded between the entun and a small temple to a "shadowy" (陰) deity whose position in the pantheon (or pandemonium) no one could tell. On dark nights, he would take a lengthy detour along the main street instead. Nonetheless, he said, relatively few hauntings happened around Lunahteng when he was a child. Rather, the place where people might encounter *something dirty* (*lasap e muNkia* 垃圾兮物件) was toward the mudflats nearby the ocean. That was, after all, where the Ongia of our neighborhood, Pakthao, sent off *guests.*

To understand the image carver's discussion of the localization of haunting, it is useful to recall that conventionally the town of Lukang is divided into 36 neighborhoods (*kakthao* 角頭) grouped in larger districts of twelve, designated as Upper, Middle, and Lower Lukang (*teng, tiong, e kakthao* 頂，中，下角頭). Each



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neighborhood has its own neighborhood temple; and each of these districts, in turn, has its own district temple governing them. These district temples, such as Feng Tian Gong, a temple to Soo Ongia in Pakthao（北頭奉天宮蘇大王爺）, were responsible for nighttime inspections (*am hong* 暗訪) to police their territories. Some of these processions were routine, annual events; others responded to crises in the neighborhood, such as suicides or drownings. The neighborhoods were also connected to cycles of competitive feasting through the seventh lunar month, in which each neighborhood hosted its own ceremonies of universal salvation (*photo* 普渡) for the unremembered dead. The town wide temples Dizang Wangye Miao, Tianhou Gong, and Weiling Miao（地藏王爺廟，天后宮，威靈廟）provided structure to the month, releasing, feeding, and gathering back the spirits, respectively. Dates of settling the encampments of each neighborhood temple's spirit soldiers (*tin iaN* 鎮營) called for coordination across neighborhoods and, sometimes, districts. Together these temples and their associated ritual practices created a system in which the neighborhoods of Lukang were opposed to, but yet connected to, the mudflats and beyond it, the ocean, traditionally in this former harbor town a source of wealth but also a dangerous place.

In addition to the routine nighttime inspections, *sending off guests* (also called "giving steamed dumplings" *sang bahchiang* 送肉粽, in reference to hanging) establishes the spaces of neighborhoods and outsides in the experience of Lukang people. It also forms a stance toward these spaces. For example, on one September afternoon, A-Sian's parents and others in his neighborhood warned me on another occasion surrounding the days when a ritual sent off a *guest* to avoid an alley that I regularly traveled. About a week before, a woman living in the alley had committed suicide. Ritual specialists (*sai kong* 司公) from the nearby neighborhood temple and a larger temple responsible for the district gathered from her house a hanging rope, a plastic bag, and a piece of clothing, then began a procession out of the neighborhood. Two different *Ongia*（王爺）from two other temples joined the procession, which carried the items to the spot known as the "Black Bridge" (*oo kio* 烏橋) on tidal mudflats at the town limits, where they sent off the *guest*. Ash from paper money, as well as faded and torn black pennants flapping on bamboo poles stuck into the mud



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remained from annual processions that carried away similar *guests* or transferred paper money and goods to them. In this case, the *guest* was a sticky one. The woman's passing was the second *event* that month in Lunahteng. The first happened in the town's maritime association office. As several people around the neighborhood pointed out, neither office employees nor the deceased's family had sent the first *guest* off. *Something* of him remained in the neighborhood and circulated, contagiously, to the alley where the woman lived, causing the misfortune to proliferate. Ritual specialists thus redoubled their efforts to remove any *dirty things* from Lunahteng.

Most people whom I asked about the ritual avoided discussion of the topic. They also discouraged my desire to observe, arguing that there was nothing good to see. Those in the procession joined reluctantly; and when I served as a palanquin bearer in my neighborhood, Pahkthao, my own demonstration of reluctance convinced my neighbors that I had finally developed the appropriate stance toward the ritual. The claim that "there was nothing good to see" made sense. The procession to the Black Bridge (*Oo Kio* 烏橋) and back did not present a noisy-hot (*naojiat* 熱鬧) spectacle of performance troupes, shimmering mobile stages, and competitive martial artists as did most other processions in Lukang. Sonically, the procession followed a single drumbeat and cymbal in a simple, repetitive pattern. After sending off the guest, the procession returned to town in silence and darkness, the palanquin bearers nearly running. The leader of our palanquin bearing team reminded me, as did other bearers, never to turn around. Most importantly, they said, do not respond to anything calling your name. *She (it?)* would otherwise come back with you.

The send off teaches us a few things. First, human remains, hanging ropes, and other material traces make present in its entirety an otherwise formless trauma or misfortune. Second, these objects embody a subject that acts contagiously through them, for good or for ill. Third, work upon these objects establishes spatial relationships between the town and an outside, the boundary of which is the tidal mudflats crossed daily by oystermen today and in the past beside the harbor channel leading to the open ocean. Perhaps more importantly, these spatial practices of



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working on material traces and disposing them, sending them off or assembling them in their proper place, create personal dispositions through which people inhabit Lukang, their stance on being Lukang people: the way that they live in neighborhoods in this particular town different from others in its "complicated" customs.[11]

To return to the cemetery redeveloped as park, if the space of Lukang was partially constituted in the opposition between neighborhoods and the ocean, the Lunahteng cemetery occupied a peculiar place. The image carver's remarks suggest that kinship between the living and their ancestors, not to mention living next door to each other in the cemetery, kept the deceased in relatively harmonious relationships with the living. The cemetery formed an intermediary space, unlike the ordered security of the town's 36 neighborhoods grouped in Upper, Middle, and Lower divisions, but also distinct from the chaos of the ocean and Black Bridge. Ritual practices thus situated the cemetery and the bones found there as first, mediating between competitive neighborhoods; and second, mediating between the set of neighborhoods and a dangerous outside.

In spatial practices establishing neighborhoods, Lunahteng thus occupied a place of tension, but people did not seem to consider the cemetery particularly dangerous until its removal through the early to mid 1990s. The hauntings of Tract #2 derive from the displacement of the remains from the site. More specifically, haunting issues from a set of material objects still remaining in the ground. Contracts with companies responsible for clean up and construction stipulated that care be taken to remove all human remains regardless of depth, adding that those responsible for removal clear at least three meters of soil (Lukang Town Government n.d. a, 1995b, 1996). However, bone removal relied on bulldozers and other earth moving equipment, and even the most optimistic doubt that contractors removed all of the remains. Many people around town whom I asked about park construction reminded me that I had seen the cemetery first-hand and knew that of the tens of thousands of bones in the cemetery, many sat beneath the three meter level. Rather than remove these bones, these skeptics contend, contractors filled with dirt above them.[12]



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The real horror, for those concerned with the cemetery removal, was that park construction affected even well fabricated ancestors. Some families who maintained graves in the cemetery did not claim their graves because they feared that stipends would not fully cover expenses for exhumation and reburial. In other cases they might have suspected that some bones in the cemetery were their family ancestors but, through family disputes or lack of verification, had no means efficiently to claim the bones. These originally well-tended remains thus joined the set of tens of thousands of bones either crushed beneath the new cultural, athletic, and administrative facilities in Tract #2 or left without a burial place for several years as the town government sought funding and space for a columbarium.

The problem of unclaimed (or "unhosted" *wuzhu xianren* 無主先人) predecessors occupied meetings between the Changhua County Government and the town government during the mid-1990s, suggesting the scope of the problem. Although budgeted at more than 95 million New Taiwan Dollars (NT), the cemetery removal project soon went over budget, as the sheer number of remains far exceeded original estimates. Lukang Town applied to the county for additional funding, fearing that if the funds were not forthcoming, thousands of bones would remain exposed indefinitely. Ruan Gang-Meng, then the Changhua County magistrate approved the project, adding in his recommendation to the town (Changhua County 1996) to "proceed according to the plans of your town office to settle this affair with dispatch, to express your reverence to our ancestors and prevent their remains from exposure to the sun."

Additional communication between the town and the county government specified the types of objects still remaining in the ground, including gravestones and urns as well as bones, and how best to proceed with their removal. Remains in the vicinity of the Leader Hotel had become possible grounds for contract disputes with the Leader Group, who could not begin normal operations until the area around the hotel had been set in order. The county budgeted an additional one million NT for repairing unclaimed remains, adding funds for charcoal, cloth, urns, and other supplies. More funds were allocated for a ceremony to placate the "unhosted



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predecessors." In total, more than 113 million NT was required to house these remains, which numbered around 90,000. After removal in 1997, the remains waited nearly another year before the columbarium was finished. In 1999, the mayor added an inscription, which served to commemorate both the former residents of the Lunahteng Cemetery and the process of removal (Lukang Town 1999).

Throughout, these documents from 1989 through 2000 show careful attention to procedure and precedent. Partially, this tone results from the government documents' intertextuality: most refer to a provincial statues or administrative decisions of the Ministry of the Interior, Labor Commission, or Cultural Affairs Commission. Only in the late 1990s does the problem of unclaimed remains provoke respectful references to otherwise forgotten predecessors. The contractual obligations of the town government with the Leader Group and the desire to bring an urban development project that had gone tens of millions of New Taiwan Dollars over budget to completion explain the need to manage and normalize the status of the bones. In this sense, town government's work to foster a better form of life in Lukang (exercise, health, and greenspace) ironically depended upon its power to regulate the affairs of the dead. However, one popular opinion in Lukang holds that the mayor's demise in 1993, certainly related to *something* in the foundations of the town hall then under construction, influenced subsequent administrative decisions. It's only then that otherwise modernist administrators began to see the remains as manifesting a set of problems other than public resistance or indifference to urban redevelopment projects.

The Lunahteng Cemetery redevelopment project does not suggest a simple account of popular resistance to state projects of urban redevelopment, however. The reason is that haunting entangles differently situated spatial practices, making available ambivalent stances on the park in urban planning and the former cemetery in local custom. Procedures of planning and construction speak of governmental rationality in pursuit of "cultural" goals in relationship to a cultural lag or lack among the populace. In contrast, practices of manipulating and circulating physical remains and similar objects constituted places, such as Lukang's 36 neighborhoods, and created an overarching set of responsibilities that outlined ethical relationships with



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the *yinjian*（陰間）or "shadowy realm." On the whole, this contrast is not particularly surprising. Park construction disrupted the engagements with bones and other objects through which the living and the dead could engage each other as ethical subjects and, in turn, led to haunting. However, haunting does more than oppose a "popular" stance against an "official" one. This opposition may, in fact, be misleading: most townspeople engage with and contribute to the quality of life and cultural discourses that led to park construction. For this reason haunting captures an ambivalence about parks, tourism, and other elements of contemporary life in Lukang.

## ALTERITY AND AMBIVALENCE

Where once overgrown tombs resembling small hills sat on the edge of town, tennis and basketball courts now beckon. Because of ongoing residential and commercial development, the park now appears as a central park and not a peripheral one. It separates the historic district of town from a newer residential district in which much of the town's population now lives. Along with tourism, it functions as an icon of Lukang Town as "The Town of Smiles" or "Taiwan's Hometown." The ball courts and grassy pathways are attractive enough; however, it is never simply a park. It's not even a park plus a sign of participation in a modern, active, cultural life. *Something else* always lurks there.

According to many in town, park construction might have caused *the good brothers* to punish the mayor. It might explain why the water in Leader Hotel's swimming pool has *something dirty*. These indices work together to haunt everyday life in Lukang. Perhaps they show how contemporary Lukang has become *unheimlich* while it becomes home-like, the Home of Taiwanese Tradition.

Hardly anyone dared to visit the park after dark until the Jiji Earthquake in late September 1999. Living nearby Lunahteng at the time, I was surprised to find that many townspeople took up temporary residence there, pitching tents in the park after the quake. Perhaps collapsing houses were more terrifying than *the good brothers*. Twelve years after the park became a refuge for those frightened from their homes by



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the quake, youths land free throws or practice skateboarding, Filipina nurses push their aged charges around on wheelchairs, and middle aged men and women play doubles. Many who would never advise visiting the park at night are among those one might find there on the hard courts, returning serves under electric lights. Quite a few of them camped in the park after the 1999 earthquake, but they would not be very likely to admit that. If asked, they would tell you that the park is, after all, *dirty*, in other words, haunted.

The large park is a rarity in small and medium sized Taiwanese towns and does serve as an amenity that attracts those who seek out, like many in the Taiwanese middle class today, LOHAS (lifestyles of health and sustainability). Now that Leader Hotel has a BOT contract to manage the workers' education and recreation center, the park works within the overall tourism infrastructure in town, providing a much needed hotel and exhibition space.[13] Nonetheless, my friends in town were relieved when I told them that I would not be checking a visiting American friend into Leader. The American would want to swim, and what would I do if *something* brushed against him?

Again, the best way to describe talk about the park is ambivalence and not rejection. Lukang has a history of involvement in a variety of environmentalist movements, most notably, successful protests against a Dupont plant in the Changbin Industrial Area (Hsiao 1996, Reardon-Anderson 1992); and Lukang residents avidly participate in annual cultural festivals. In fact, the anti-Dupont protests actually featured in the folklife festival, which was then, and continues to be, a state-sponsored event. That those who engage positively with discourses of life quality define themselves as members of the opposition is precisely the point. Rather than a theory of resistance, we need a better theory of complicity, of ambivalence.

This ambivalence seems to relate to stance. In my discussion of work with the material traces of the dead, I noted that this work, whether that of sending off a *guest* or the practices of secondary burial, produced appropriate stances or personal dispositions. As we have seen, these appropriate stances include recognition (marking the bones), elision (the bending index finger gesture or euphemisms such as *good*



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*brothers*, *guests*, or *dirty things*), avoidance (taking a detour or not going near a send off), and sometimes rhetorical disclosure ("you will be the next mayor"). Yet, these stances do not preclude competing ones. One may maintain a stance of annoyance with the appropriate stance, as I suspect A-Sian expressed in his comment, "Well, you know Lukang's complicated customs." Others might adopt stances of frustration with other's adherence, pride in a mayor who acted against these strictures (but who, again, might have been done in because he flaunted them), ethnographic or tourist fascination, or an entrepreneurial stance. Most people who reside in Lukang shift among these stances or adopt a few of them simultaneously. The complicity of these various stances reproduces Lukang as a place with "complicated customs," adding to 18th century architecture and pubic amenities like the park to give the town its market value in the tourist economy. Haunting, in its autonomy from any of these possible stances, provides the occasion for the performance of these stances in relationship to Lukang Town through time. What does haunting *want*? To interpellate the haunted.

Conversation about the park leads directly to discussion of disturbing signs of alienation. Different age and gender cohorts, too, situate the park differently. Among those in their 30s to their 50s, talk about the park relates most closely to historical reconstruction. Meanwhile, a younger cohort of unmarried men in their late teens through their early 30s places the park in the context of an ongoing demographic transformation of the island.

For middle-aged people, discussion of the park spills into talk of the heavy-handed methods employed by those engaged in historical preservation during the 1980s. Their discussion of haunting, particularly the resignation and ambivalence surrounding remains that might have been those of their ancestors, resonates with a refrain heard around town about the failures of historical preservation: "even though we feel terrible seeing our ancestral property collapse, we let that happen rather than lose control of it," they might say, pointing out a town grid with streets literally cutting 18th century houses through the middle. Many of those in this cohort profit from the tourist trade that historical preservation has generated; however, they tend to view the spatial transformation of the town as an erasure of local memory.



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The same cohort included the park and its *good brothers* with another haunting of unwelcome outsiders, "cultural people" (*wenhua ren* 文化人) who from 1998 to 2002 made public art installations in the courtyard of an ancient mansion. One of the installations showed the beloved goddess Mazu wearing a blindfold, jumping off a diving board into a sea of cash. In a conversation about the installation, a woman who worked in a locally owned café and souvenir shop, said to her sister

> If they wanted their art to have any real influence, they should have entered into life in town, then understood the everyday life and symbolism of those who live here. All they did was employ their own idea of Mazu within their own symbolic system. I guess that they thought that they were "enlightening" us by smashing superstition, but all that they "smashed" was the product of their own imagination and not our local consciousness.

In this conversation about public art and projects like the park, those who remembered the process of historical reconstruction linked the unmanageable traces of the cemetery with the erasure of indices of Lukang's past, such as the granite paving stones that used to be a feature of the town's winding alleys (Hatfield 1997, 2010). They also tended to reduce the park to another example of government projects that do not consider Lukang's "everyday life and symbolism." Nonetheless, many of this cohort do visit the park and see it as an improvement: "you cannot have a cemetery in the middle of the town," many members of this cohort told me.

For a cohort of unmarried men in their 20s to early 30s, the park indexes what many working class Taiwanese men perceive as their exclusion from labor and marriage markets. Two men, one the apprentice and the other the son of a local artisan, occasionally play basketball in the park. They have told me that the majority of visitors to the park are Thai and Indonesian guest laborers. Although the park is officially the Lukang Peace Park, they said that it should be named the United Nations Park. When I express my confusion, one says, "It's like the UN there, because nearly everyone is a foreign laborer!"

The master craftsman, an artisan in his late 40s who employs them, chimed in,



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"Yes, there are ghosts in the park: 'sex-ghosts' (*se gui* 色鬼 i.e., perverts) and 'wine-ghosts' (*jiu gui* 酒鬼 drunks)."

Later I asked other young men about the park and whether the visitors were primarily guest laborers. In general, they claimed that guest workers were more numerous, particularly at night. Guest workers weren't the only denizens of the park, however. Another part of the park was notorious as a trysting site, another for prostitution. One of the men I asked said that those who frequented the park at night included Vietnamese brides, married to men who could not afford or attract Taiwanese women.

To place these remarks in perspective, it is useful to remember that both guest workers and "foreign brides" (*waiji xinniang* 外籍新娘), including Vietnamese and Chinese women, have become a constant presence in Lukang over the past 15 years. For men in Lukang from artisanal, fishing, or agricultural families, marriage prospects are often bleak, particularly if they have only a middle school diploma. In this regard, Lukang is not atypical. In some rural districts of Taiwan, Vietnamese wives now outnumber local ones.

Vietnamese spouses are favored among possible foreign brides because of perceived cultural and ethnic similarities and the reputation Vietnamese women have for diligence and filial piety. However, around Lukang, Vietnamese cafés are also rumored to be places of prostitution. Many young men consider Vietnamese women sexually insatiable and claim that the women are prone either to engage in prostitution to make more money to send to their families in Vietnam or to be able eventually to abandon their Taiwanese spouses. There are many counterexamples to these claims around town and elsewhere; however, young men who hold such stereotypes of Vietnamese women perceive these counterexamples as exceptions rather than evidence disproving their statements. They even add that in some cases, middle-aged men reputed to profit from their wives' sexuality encouraged the women in prostitution, neglecting their need to provide an heir to maintain the family, all for the sake of an easy life. The Vietnamese bride is thus an icon of the virtuous daughter-in-law, diligent, thrifty, and dutiful to elders, a type of woman now



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unavailable to working class families in Lukang. But she is also a figure of risk, a manifestation of an uncontrollable sexuality that threatens male reproductive power and family integrity. The claim that Vietnamese women frequented the park at night thus suggests that young Lukang men's engagement with the park foregrounds an experience of thwarted if not curtailed (re) productive agency.

Given these examples in which the cemetery / park indexes experiences of social transformations and thwarted agency, we might ask what haunting might suggest in terms of an overarching moral order. My claim that *the good brothers* want to interpellate the haunted does beg that question. We could begin to answer that question by looking at the material traces of previous trauma, evident in tattered pennants or ashes near the Black Bridge, Jordan's (1972) example of the spirit bride's smile, or practices of supplementing human remains. All indicate the need for continual maintenance, a need also evident in popular religious practices of recurrent pilgrimages and their exchanges of incense.

Ambivalence about the park may also provide some answers. The moral order envisioned in practices surrounding *the good brothers* is one in which relationships among the town's neighborhoods and between the town and its various others are regulated. Ambivalence results from the sense that securing some values of contemporary life in Lukang, such as those enshrined in green spaces, leisure, and physical exercise has disrupted this regulated set of relationships. These observations do not give this moral order positive content, however. Our inability to describe this content from the vantage of haunting seems to suggest that rather than offering an imagination of a moral order that could exceed ambivalence, *the good brothers* establish an outside or limit, which makes work to secure that moral order more pressing. As Wei-ping Lin has shown in her work on ghost mothers who want a son-in-law (Lin in this volume) this horizon or limit is all the more fascinating because it can ground normative, even conventional, ethical stances even as it marks the place of unethical bargains. Further research on the material practices surrounding haunting will, I hope, add to anthropological understandings of the composition of this moral order.



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Because conversations about the park lead to discussions of outsiders, whether unwelcome culture people or uncontrollable foreign brides, I might be tempted to view the relationship among bones, hauntings, public artists, and guest workers as type-token relationships. It would be a small step from there to read *the good brothers* as a projection of the social category "stranger." But because the park and its denizens establish the reality of a moral order from its horizons, I'd like to argue that something else is at stake. That is, the possibility of interpreting public artists or guest workers as figures that resemble *good brothers*, that is, symbolically to reduce *the good brothers* to another example of alienation, depends upon the kinds of engagements that people in Lukang have with traces of the Lunahteng cemetery, both materially and conversationally. These engagements situate haunting as a feature of a landscape that is familiar and ambivalent. Taking my cue from the kinds of work on physical remains (or other material traces) necessary to maintain ethical relationships with the departed, I would argue that haunting indexes a failure in processes meant to incorporate alterity. In other words, haunting is a complicated stance that asserts what practices of popular ritual, government accountability, tourist development, and labor migration lack, particularly in their entanglements. But, such an understanding of haunting as a stance on spatial practices would mean that we are complicit with *something* that emerges from our ongoing engagement with (ghost) objects, even as we wish to keep "ghosts" in ellipses (as I have throughout this essay, including the title). If haunting provides a language for talking about contemporary life on Taiwan, it's likely to be found in this ambivalent participation in what those who employ this language try to elide and externalize, the better to keep it circulating.

## NOTES

1. In this essay, I employ the Hanyu Pinyin system for Mandarin language terms other than proper nouns, which I give in their common spelling in Taiwan. For Taiwanese Hoklo terms, I use the Kaolo Romanization system.
2. Of course, as Mitchell notes in the case of pictures, ghosts might surprise us with their



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wants or even their want of want. Replace pictures with ghosts in the following sentences: "What pictures want, then, is not to be interpreted, decoded, worshipped, smashed, exposed or demystified by their beholders, or to enthrall their beholders. [….] What pictures want in the last instance, then, is simply to be asked what they want, with the understanding that the answer may well be, nothing at all" (Mitchell 2004: 48).

3. We might also consider the shifting intentions of the drivers, for whom the speed bump acts to shift from "slow down to protect the children" (a moral question) to "slow down to protect my car's suspension" (another problem altogether. See Latour 1999: 186).
4. Oppenheim (2007) provides a compelling argument for the extension of ANT methodology to domains beyond science and technology studies.
5. Remember Geertz's (1973) oft noted rejoinder that scientific progress derives most often from complication rather than reductive simplicities. For a more current account of the need to work with "messy realities" in the social sciences, see Law (2004).
6. The current mayor is Mayor Wang's daughter; hence, questions about Mayor Wang's demise were off limits in interviews.
7. For an account of historical reconstruction in Lukang Town, see Hatfield 2010.
8. Here, it's useful to remember that classic definition of a person as an "ensemble of relations." My argument is that work with the remains realizes this ensemble of relations materially.
8. We might ask whether it provides an interesting twist to David Schneider's description of kinship as "substance" and / or "code."
9. There is an interesting resonance between this finding and those of Sangren (2010) concerning the Nezha myth. Unfortunately, for reasons of scope, I can only point out this resonance here and not work it out in detail.
10. This relationship between material traces, spatial practices, and stance suggests a distinction similar to that between "reductive" and "economic" forms of signification as described in the work of Miguel Tamen (2001).
11. Master exhumer Huang Chung-Mou reminded me that he only removed claimed urns and remains; he was not responsible for those remains--even if in urns--that were not



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claimed, and did not want to talk about what might or might not have happened to them. The bulldozers came in after he was done his work.

12. Oddly, however, the government did not renew the BOT contract with Leader in 2012. Now the hotel and the surrounding facilities have joined the ranks of abandoned buildings. Mosquito hall or haunted house (蚊子館或鬼屋)? Possibly a bit of both, depending on one's stance.

13. We might borrow from Foucault's notion of "biopower" and call this popular engagement with state-sponsored discourses of life quality and culture a manifestation of the post-martial law state's "culture power." From the perspective of culture power, the state works, as in park construction, to create greater cultural vitality among citizens, but not through negative applications of power such as censorship or standardizing, official approaches such as the cultural policy of the martial law period state. Instead, cultural vitality in a place such as Lukang comes about mostly through local cultural and commercial investment

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