after death
a multidimensional peace of mind
Death is still, quite often, a taboo in Hong Kong, where most death architecture and landscape are unpleasant and frightening spaces commonly situated at urban fringes.

The existing funerary facilities are highly functional and not emotive, that the bereaved and the mourners have no space for reflection, relief, catharsis or even a chat.

This project is the first burial ground applying a “cemetery-park” concept in an urban area of Hong Kong, providing emotive spaces for the relief of mourners and encouraging locals to use daily for leisure.
1. THE PROJECT
   - context
   - problematics

2. DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL
   - site selection
   - design strategies

3. THE DESIGN & PROCESS
   - mood paintings & journeys
   - master layout plan
   - sections
   - models
   - plant selection
   - perspectives in comics

4. PROJECT VISION
   - prototype
   - evolution
1 TRADITION | TABOO
2 FEAR OF DEATH
3 DENSE | LIFELESS | SCARCITY OF SPACE
4 REMOTENESS OF FUNERARY FACILITIES
5 POPULATION SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION
The word “death” or “dead” in Chinese originates from Oracle bone script which is a form of pictographic writing.

It shows a person mourning beside the remains of the dead. These spatial images describe a situation that carries emotions.

Death was, and is, part of life, not the opposite. But people nowadays just avoid this inevitable topic...
THE FEAR OF DEATH

... comes from the creation myth of tortures on different levels of the hell that correspond to various sins.
EXISTING FUNERARY FACILITIES in Hong Kong

dense | breathless
dark | scary
lifeless | unpleasant
despite all those numbers, people still have to wait for 2-3 years to get an urn placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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<td>Taoism</td>
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<td>Protestant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
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<td>Hinduism</td>
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Note: figure of 2014 by Government of HK

Religious Affiliation in Hong Kong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urn Burial Spaces</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217,411</td>
<td>urn burial spaces (38,052 spaces vacant as at June 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>38,052</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Columbaria Spaces</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214,332</td>
<td>niches (9,115 vacant niches as at June 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>9,115</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coffin Burial Spaces</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23,728</td>
<td>coffin burial spaces (8,178 spaces vacant as at June 2015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>8,178</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crematoria</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 crematoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>cases of cremation in coming 20 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gardens of Remembrance</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 designated waters for sea scattering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>gardens of remembrance for scattering of cremated ashes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *public, **private
HONG KONG

- hilly islands
- 1106 sq km
- long coastline
- longest working hour
- longest life expectancy
- population of 7.3 million
- one country two systems
- 8th largest trading entity
- 4th most densely populated
- famous deep natural harbour
- 2nd largest number of high-rises
- most competitive & freest economy
Traditionally the living and the dead do not reside in the same neighbourhood. Funerary facilities are uninviting and mostly located at urban fringes. Mourners usually pay 3-4 visits per year.
DEATH AND DEPRESSION

Every 11 minutes, one person dies in Hong Kong.

An unofficial estimate from psychologists and doctors revealed a sad figure - 20% of the bereaved still suffer from depression 1.5 years after the death of their loved ones.
DESIGN CONCEPT
The Cemetery-Park Concept in an Urban Area

visit 3-4 times a year
Ching Ming Festival 清明
Chung Yeung Festival 重陽
Birthday 生忌
Death day 死忌

passing by occasionally

fuse into [everyday] leisure activity
DESIGN PROPOSAL

A Cemetery-Park in an Urban area along the beloved Harbourfront

The very first cemetery-park in Hong Kong serves both as a natural burial place and a leisure park bringing in various users who in turn bring liveliness to this atypical burial place.

Limited to natural burial of cremated ashes, posing much less demand on space and promoting green burials

Openness emphasized to combat fear while intimate spaces for companionship or escape are not compromised
SITE SELECTION

Hong Kong | a Bridge between East and West

selection criteria

urban area | no more avoidance
proximity to residents | liveliness from daily use
harbourfront and landmarks | driver for visitors
KAI TAK

rare supply of land in urban area
ex-airport | plan to house a population of 134,000
KAI TAK QUICK FACTS

Kai Tak development area
over 320 hectares
proposed mixed use of
community housing
business
tourism
infrastructure

South Apron area
“a smooth transition between the Runway attractions and the surrounding Kowloon Bay and Kwun Tong business areas, and help catalyze the regeneration of the areas”

“A continuous landscape promenade ... as key green connectors linking up individual open spaces, residential areas and surrounding areas”

Kai Tak Approach Channel and Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter
water sports and recreational activities
Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (1997) and subsequent judgment of the Court of Final Appeal (2004) stating:

"the presumption against reclamation in the harbour can only be rebutted by establishing an overriding public need for reclamation."

Kai Tak Planning Review (2004):

"commissioned with the objective to formulating a new development scheme for Kai Tak with zero reclamation."
GREEN
accessible green in Kai Tak serving each residential area

WATER
extensive water system with steady water supply and floodless drainage infrastructure

TRANSPORT
well connected inter- and intra- district by highways and public transport systems

LAND USE
various land use including government, institution, community, commercial, industrial (under revitalization), residential and public open spaces
SITE ANALYSIS

accessible green in Kai Tak

walking distance from residential (in diameter)
SITE ANALYSIS

water structure

depth in every 5m
SITE ANALYSIS

transportation network
SITE ANALYSIS

land use | landmarks | attractions

Government | Institution | Community
proposed sports complex
ZCB zero carbon building
Open Space
proposed Metro Park
Kwun Tong Promenade
Commercial
Kai Tak Cruise Terminal
Kowloon Bay International Trade & Exhibition Centre
Telford shopping centre
apm (shopping centre)
Megabox (shopping centre)
SITE ANALYSIS

disconnected waterfront promenade to transform a weakness to an opportunity

landmarks in neighbouring districts

disconnections
site within a network of landmarks

connection | strategic location
- Victoria Harbour
- typhoon shelter
- adjoining hospitals
- mid-rise new developments
- bridge
- distant coastline
- cruise terminal
- industrial and office hub
- mid- and high-rise buildings
- mountain
SITE | SURROUNDINGS

approx. 80,000 sqm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Size (m²)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vestre Cemetery</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>540,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodland Cemetery</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>1,186,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kai Tak Project</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>approx. 80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isola di San Michele</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>168,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gamle Aker Kirkegård</td>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>28,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igualada Cemetery</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>44,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vår Frelsers graven</td>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>84,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igualada Cemetery</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>44,560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OBSERVATIONS

1. Noise from highways in the north of the site
2. A few existing trees
3. Asphalt road
4. Not as windy as the gaps between high-rise buildings
5. Some people jogging, have to find their way back to the promenade, as the existing buildings block the way
6. Nearby: new buildings under construction
7. Some existing buildings/structures to be removed
8. Heavy-loaded trucks will leave together with the existing industrial buildings
NATURAL BURIAL
JOURNEYS
OPENNESS
SITE CHARACTER

SCARCITY OF SPACE
LIFELESS
FEAR OF DEATH
DISCONNECTION
DESIGN STRATEGIES

interment | scarcity of space

- coffin burial
- urns in niches
- lawn burial
- tree burial
- permanent burial
- sea burial
- exhume after 6 years
- urn grave
- ossuary
- natural burial

- cremation

- reusable space

- 5-9%
- 91-95%
- 91%
DESIGN STRATEGIES
journeys | pathways

first time visitor
the bereaved

revisiting mourners

local residents

tourist
one-time visitor
DESIGN STRATEGIES

openness | privacy

room  permeable fence  semi-enclosed  open

reflect / escape  burial place  companion / gather  relief / leisure
DESIGN STRATEGIES

link disconnections | maximize site characteristics

- link disconnections
- accessibility
- lines of sight | best view points
- path of sun and wind
DESIGN began with mood paintings of the journeys of the BEREAVED's first visit to the cemetery-park and the everyday journey of the LOCALS and their paths cross...
emotion journey of the bereaved's first visit
- tree burial

- loss
- chaotic
- noisy
- directional
- reduce
- confusion
- mark a passing
- symbol of
- hope
- peaceful
- embrace
- sadness
- solace | private
- honour the
- death
- soothing
- landscape
- dialogue
- interactions
- escape
- remember | reflection
- reconnect
- strength
- regain focus
- directional
- reduce
- confusion
- mark a passing
- symbol of
- hope
- peaceful
- embrace
- sadness
- solace | private
- honour the
decision
- soothing
- landscape
- dialogue
- interactions
- escape
- remember | reflection
- reconnect
- strength
- regain focus

DESIGN PROCESS
mood paintings
CONCEPTUAL SECTION

- ENTRANCE PORTAL
- FRANGIPANI POND
- TRANQUIL PATH LEADING TO BURIAL FOREST
- LAWN
- OBSERVATION TOWER
- PROMENADE

- loss
- chaotic
- noisy
- directional
- reduce confusion
- mark a passing
- symbol of hope
- peaceful
- embrace sadness
- solace / private
- honour the death
- soothing landscape
- dialogue
- interactions
- escape
- remember / reflection

DESIGN PROCESS
journey | conceptual section | mood and materials
DESIGN PROCESS

the 3 journeys | mood paintings | conceptual sketches

journey
FIRST TIME VISITOR

journey2
FIRST TIME VISITOR

journey3
LOCALS
loss
chaotic
noisy
directional
visible
reduce
confusion
mark a passing
set off
long journey
simple rituals
embrace sadness
solace | private
settling
accomplish
reconnect
regain focus
grounded
strength
clearness
remember
reflection
soothing
encouraging

DESIGN PROCESS
mood paintings
emotion journey of the bereaved’s first visit
- sea burial
chaotic
noisy

gorgeous harbourfront
enjoy sea breeze
embrace the nature

lush greenery
relaxing landscape
trees and shades
lawns and activities

adorable
flowers
strength
encouraging

DESIGN PROCESS
mood paintings
emotion journey of the locals
VICKY KONG CHIN WAI
1982 - 20XX
landscape architect, carpenter, surveyor, journalist, partner of HKF, my beloved aunt. She died in a bicycle accident.

DESIGN PROCESS
MASTER LAYOUT PLAN

Entrance Plaza
[Tree Burial]

Entrance Plaza
[Sea Burial]

Tree-shade
Parking

Frangipani
Pond

Bridge of
Remembrance

Shops [Florist]
Cafes, Offices
Back of House
Incinerators
for sacrifice/
incense

Forest & Lawn

Promenade
Seating

Flower Offering

Meditating
Hillock

Pier
[Sea Burial]

Gardens

Connecting
Bridge
[to Kai Tak
runway]

Promenade
Entrance
Plaza
PIER PROMENADE CAFE BRIDGE OF REMEMBRANCE TREE BURIAL FOREST AND LAWN

ENTRANCE PLAZA PORTAL

FRANGIPANI POND PROMENADE PIERTREE BURIAL FOREST AND LAWN

loss chaotic noisy symbol of hope peaceful soothing landscape dialogue interactions

escape remember | reflection embrace sadness solace | private honour the death directional reduce confusion mark a passing

sweet gum (maple) fragrant litseaailanthus terminalia Buddhist pine

Corniculate Cayratia skullcap papery daphnesymplocos sumuntia Hong Kong Camilla

Hong Kong Pavetta Chinese Silvergrass

Hong Kong burmennia white cogongrass

Balsam

SECTION A-A
Night View along Main Axis
SCALE 1:400

SECTION B-B
Leisure Walk
SCALE 1:400

SECTION C-C
Pier and the Sea
SCALE 1:400

SECTIONS
Section B-B Leisure Walk
MODELS
PLANT SELECTION

Native Hong Kong plants selected for different areas in the park

TREE
- burial
- shade
- wind-resistant

SHRUBS
- lively
- colourful
- strength

COASTAL PLANT
- harbourfront
- fluffy
- strong

tree: 
- buddha's lamp
- Chinese Silvergrass
- Hong Kong Camilla
- Cornelate Cayratia
- white cogongrass
- hong kong balsam

shrub: 
- Chinese Skullcap
- fragrant litsea
- papaya leaf
- Hong Kong veronica
- hong kong balsam

coastal plant: 
- Chinese silvergrass
- white cogongrass
- hong kong balsam
Brother said that we wait at the tree burial entrance... so here it is...

After some decades, my grandchildren will still know about how life was in the good old days from these projections.

What a nice promenade walk!

What a busy city... so much noise and chaos...

Some of the epitaphs are beautiful stories of the departed...

Goodbye Dad...

Yes. Nice to return to nature.

Yes. There's quite a fresh breeze today.

Um, shall we sit down over there for a while?

Yea... It's always rainy in Ching Ming Festival... Spring shower in the grave sweeping festival...

I don't know... Maybe it's good to lie down here... together with other people.

Yes, because the ashes are deep in the soil. Nothing can be dug out. This makes the park 24-7 too.

Let's get some flowers for Dad. He may like this chrysanthemum...

Goodbye Dad!

You'll be missed...

So this is where father's ashes will stay.

What a nice view on the hillock!

It's a cemetery over there! Let's walk another route.

Let's walk along the promenade. Which way do you want to go, ground or up on the bridge?

Oh what a sudden rain!

Good to have a shelter here.

What do you prefer, sit under tree shade or lie down, or keep walking?

I couldn't imagine we can bring our dog to a "cemetery".

How do you find this park? I told you it doesn't look like a cemetery. See?

Yes, it's just like a park. Any park. No scary dark corners, unlike traditional columbariums...

Hey why do we make a turn here?

Yeah :) No need to jog between industrial buildings.

Hey do you know that is both a cemetery and a park?

No no... it looks purely like a park. Don't panic.

Nevermind. Let's sit down for a cup of tea or coffee.

Yes... a typical example of multi-purpose use in this tiny city!

Really?!

Not scary?

um... ok, let's have a look.

Oh...

We are late. The water taxi has left!

Finally we have a continuous promenade!

Did you bring packed lunch today? Fancy a "picnic"? In the cemetery-park? Haha. Why not?

Yes, it will have flowers soon, in summer. I remember it has a symbolic meaning of HOPE...

Yes, it's deciduous. Like a cycle... Like life...

What a beautiful Frangipani! Hope... that's poetic. Does it lose leaves in winter?

JOURNEYS OVERVIEW

tree burial
sea burial
local intersections
... get prepared to leave the concrete jungle

Brother said that we wait at the tree burial entrance... so here it is...

What a busy city... so much noise and chaos...
JOURNEY OF THE BEREAVED'S FIRST VISIT

TREE BURIAL

entrance gateway | frangipani pond

Frangipani 鳳凰花
*Plumeria rubra*

symbolic meaning of hope
seasonal | flowering | deciduous

a metaphor of life

Yes, it will have flowers soon, in summer. I remember it has a symbolic meaning of hope...

Yes, it's deciduous. Like a cycle... Like life...

What a beautiful frangipani!

Hope... that's poetic. Does it lose leaves in winter?

Brother said that we wait at the tree burial entrance... so here it is...

Let's get some flowers for Dad. He may like this chrysanthemum...
Yes.

Nice to return to nature.

So this is where father’s ashes will stay.

Nice to return to nature.
TREE BURIAL
Cremated ashes are sent to the roots of the trees through pre-cast tubes embedded around the designated trees. Cover plates of the tubes are marked with index numbers.

Goodbye Dad...
I don't know...
Maybe it's good to lie down here... together with other people.

Yes, because the ashes are deep in the soil. Nothing can be dug out. This makes the park 24-7 too.

What do you prefer, sit under tree shade or lie down, or keep walking?

I don't know... Maybe it's good to lie down here... together with other people.

I couldn't imagine we can bring our dog to a “cemetery”.

Yes, because the ashes are deep in the soil. Nothing can be dug out. This makes the park 24-7 too.

What do you prefer, sit under tree shade or lie down, or keep walking?

I don't know... Maybe it's good to lie down here... together with other people.

How do you find this park? I told you it doesn't look like a cemetery. See?

Yes, we can bring our dog to a “cemetery”...

But, I don't know... Maybe it's good to lie down here... together with other people.

Yes, it's just like a park. Any park. No scary dark corners, unlike traditional columbariums...

How do you find this park? I told you it doesn't look like a cemetery. See?
JOURNEY OF THE BEREAVED'S FIRST VISIT
SEA BURIAL

Bridge of Remembrance

Projection of epitaph as if puzzle pieces demonstrating social and cultural anthropology
SEA BURIAL
Ferries take mourners to the outskirts of Hong Kong, where the cremated ashes are scattered at designated seas.

Goodbye Dad!
You’ll be missed...

depart for sea burial at designated waters
It’s a cemetery over there! Let’s walk another route.

Hey why do we make a turn here?

Did you bring packed lunch today? Fancy a “picnic”?

In the cemetery-park? Haha. Why not?

Really?? Not scary? um.. ok, let’s have a look.

No no... it looks purely like a park. Don’t panic.

Hey do you know that is both a cemetery and a park?

No no... it looks purely like a park.

Don’t panic.

Finally we have a continuous promenade!

Yeah :) No need to jog between industrial buildings.

Hey do you know that is both a cemetery and a park?

Yes... a typical example of multi-purpose use in this tiny city!

Did you bring packed lunch today? Fancy a “picnic”?

Nevermind. Let’s sit down for a cup of tea or coffee.

Oh... We are late. The water taxi has left!

Oh... We are late.
Um, shall we sit down over there for a while?

Let’s walk along the promenade. Which way do you want to go, ground or up on the bridge?

Oh what a sudden rain! Good to have a shelter here.
JOURNEY OF LOCALS

walk under shades
view point over the harbour
picnic on the lawn
teat at the cafe by the pier
PROJECT VISION

<table>
<thead>
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<th>life</th>
<th>death</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>east</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimate</td>
<td>park of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resting</td>
<td>openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forest</td>
<td>locals</td>
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<tr>
<td>mourners</td>
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<td>burials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of an era</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FIRST CEMETERY-PARK IN HONG KONG

Public acceptance to grow gradually, yet to improve as they generally try to avoid interactions with mourners especially in the burial forest and pier. Mourners use certain spaces for chats and relief.

PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE

The public will not avoid any corner of the cemetery-park. Revisiting mourners enjoy, enter and exit through different options of routes, they see the growth of the forest, the life of certain specific trees.

GRAVESTONES FULLY OCCUPIED

Number of burials reduced as the epitach spaces get full, so is the number of mourners. The cemetery-park is more heavily used by locals.

BURIAL FUNCTION DIMINISHING

The departed who wish to remain anonymous are still buried here but the cases are few. Friends and relatives of the buried also die therefore less mourners visit the park.

NOBODAY DIES AS TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

Artificial organs, sophisticated transplants technology make people live forever. Burial becomes a history. Epitach becomes the history book recording the life and memories of an era.

MIF Life expectancy [Male|Female]
B Burial
M Mourners
L Locals
E Education

PROJECT VISION

Evolution of the cemetery-park
This prototype of the cemetery-park concept in Hong Kong not only serves its primary goals of fighting fear against death and providing emotive spaces for catharsis, but also solves the severe deficiency for burial space in Hong Kong.

The government announced in 2010 that the 18 administrative districts in the territory would collectively share the responsibility of developing district-based columbarium facilities and subsequently proposed 24 potential sites. However, slow and bureaucratic implementation, local community resistance and tedious technical assessments do not favour the increase of the supply to meet the urgent needs.

The extension of the cemetery-park concept to other urban areas in Hong Kong will ease the high demand in the era of scarcity of land, and more importantly, create an intangible synergy to gradually change the conservative taboo against death and open a new chapter of life and death education for the betterment of Hong Kongers.
generally after death...

funery - used at or relating to funerals = ceremonies for burying or burning the dead
funeral - suitable for a funeral (if music / dressed in 1 black)
intermem - the act of burying a dead body

general places...

crematorium - a building where dead people's bodies are burned, usually as part of a funeral ceremony.
columbarium - a building or room with special spaces for holding urns containing the ashes of dead people.
coffin - a long box in which the body of a dead person is buried or burned.
urn - a container, especially a large, round one on a stem, that is used for decorative purposes in a garden, or one that has a lid and is used for holding a person's ashes. (1) the powder that is left after a dead body has been burned.

about religion...
denominational - connected with a particular religious denomination (not-d).secular - not having any connection with religion.
monastery - a building in which monks live and worship.
nunnery / convent - a building in which nuns (= members of a female religious order) live.
temple - a building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions.

about traditions and rituals...
tribute - something that you say, write, or give that shows your respect and admiration for someone, especially on a formal occasion.
obliteration - the act of killing an animal or person and offering them to a god or gods, or the animal, etc. that is offered.

about people and tools...
departed - a person who has died, or people who have died.
decomposed - having a close relative or friend who has recently died.
palbearers - a person who helps to carry a coffin at a funeral or who walks at the side of the people carrying it.
hearse - a vehicle used to carry a body in a coffin to a funeral.
embalming - to use chemicals to prevent a dead body from decaying.

GLOSSARY

This circle of definitions or explanations drove me to search for the origin of the Chinese word “dead”. The discovery of emotional elements and spatial implications in the pictogram was fascinating. This leads to the further search for links between words and eras, traditions and cultures. And the search will go on beyond this project...

dead - not now living
die - to stop living or existing, either suddenly or slowly.
life - (to continue) to be alive or have life.
live - the period between birth and death, or the experience or state of being alive.
major literature review


Human Ip, 2016. In Search of Flowers 2 - A Collection of Hong Kong Native Plants. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing. (official translation of book title is not found.)

Leila Chan, Mei Chi So and Yung Yung Chow, 2013. Die in Hong Kong - Seeing the Coffin. Joint Publishing HK. (official translation of book title is not found. Book title comes from a Chinese saying “One never shed a tear until one sees the coffin”)

Leila Chan, Mei Chi So and Yung Yung Chow, 2013. Die in Hong Kong - Shedding Tears. Joint Publishing HK. (official translation of book title is not found. Book title comes from a Chinese saying “One never shed a tear until one sees the coffin”)


