

# PLACES OF SHARED HISTORIES: SPATIAL PATTERNS OF PLACENAME TYPES ON TAIWAN'S TOMBSTONES<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*In this anthropological study, we exemplify the application of GIS in the field of social sciences. Our data are digital, geo-referenced documentations of gravesites in Taiwan and in other culturally related areas. We examine the distributions of three placename types on HOLO tombstones, i.e., JIGUAN, TANGHAO, and local placenames, in different regions and through different times. We then contextualize these distributions into the socio-political history of the areas in question and, accordingly, provide explanations of the observable shifts in the different uses of placename types on Taiwanese tombstones.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Documenting Taiwan's Gravesites

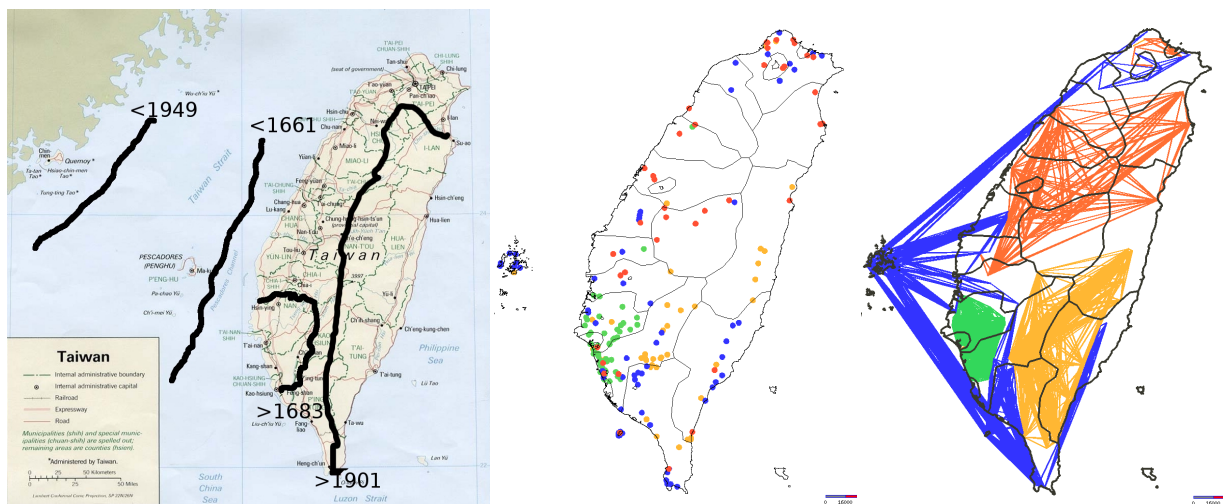
Since the early days of anthropology, tomb study has been central to the field, as it highlights cultural, religious and political aspects of people's life, c.f. WATSON (1988); FREMGENI (1989). Through the digital revolution, which made GPS, GIS, digital photography and cheap memory available, the study of gravesites is changing fundamentally. Large-scale documentation of gravesites has become feasible and is undertaken in Taiwan in the *ThakBong project*, which aims at documenting Taiwan's gravesites through 100,000 geo-referenced photos as a basis for the description of 30,000 tombs, c.f. STREITER *et al.* (2010). The description of the gravesites, formalised in XML, c.f. STREITER *et al.* (2007), comprises a wide range of visible and invisible features of tombs. The visible features include inscriptions, symbols, figurative work, offerings, etc. The invisible features, like properties of the deceased, such as age, ethnicity or gender, are usually inferred from the visible features such as inscriptions. From all these, we build statistical models which estimate the most likely value for an invisible feature in the presence of a visible one. Also included in such models are external data sources such as the demographic database (FRIED & CHEN, 1967) that links family names in different regions to ethnicities.

### 1.2 From Place to Time

To trace back the origin of burial traditions in Taiwan and potentially explain them, we rely on geo-references of tombstones and the temporal indications on them. Where well-known historical developments match the emergence of patterns of gravesites in a certain region, we can stipulate a causal relation. Additional material would then be required to make this causal

relation plausible in terms of how probably high-level historical developments influence the construction of tombs at a micro level.

Sometimes however, regional patterns may emerge, for which no apparent corresponding historical development is known. In such a case, we would infer the existence of a historical development as well as its properties, something which requires more material in order to form a plausible hypothesis. For this reason, we extend our collection of data to regions that share parts of their history with Taiwan, hoping to find differences or similarities in burial practices that correspond to differences or similarities in historical developments. Therefore, our documentation covers in addition to Taiwan, understood here as an island, the islands of Penghu<sup>2</sup> and Kinmen/Quemoy<sup>3</sup>, Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and places where Overseas Chinese settled in Hawaii, the US Mainland and Europe.



(a) Places of shared histories: 1661-83 Penghu and Tainan, 1683-1901 Penghu and west Taiwan, after 1901-45 all Taiwan, after 1949 with Jinmen. (b) Generalizing placename types for each sampled graveyard using the most frequent type. (c) Generalizing across graveyards, connecting graveyards of one type without crossing different type lines.

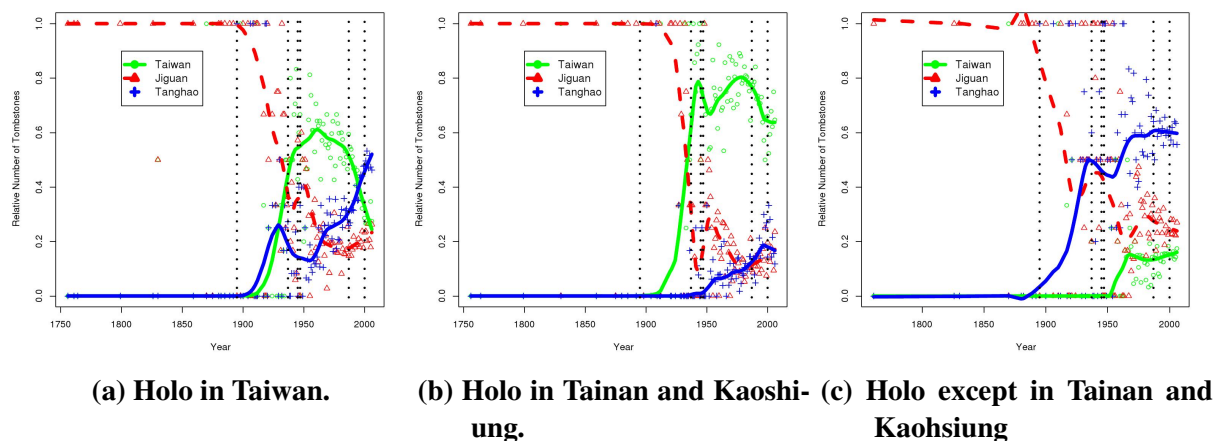
**Figure 1: Places of shared histories and placename types on tombstones.** After the generalization across graveyards, correlations between administration and placename types emerge. Green/Tainan: Taiwanese placename; blue/Penghu and coastal areas: Tang-hao; red/middle and north Taiwan): Jiguan; orange/southern mountain range: no placename.

Despite their common political present, the islands of Kinmen/Quemoy, Penghu and Taiwan show marked differences. Chinese settlers had moved to Kinmen/Quemoy and Penghu earlier than to Taiwan. From the establishment of the Koxinga Kingdom in 1661 onwards, Penghu and Taiwan were administered by the same powers. The population of Penghu and that of Taiwan, however, are quite different. While Penghu is a relatively homogeneous Holo settlement, Taiwan was and is the home of many different Han and Austronesian groups, which have mixed and influenced one another. Kinmen/Quemoy, on the other hand, shared for a long time its history with Amoy and large parts of Fujian<sup>4</sup>. Only since the retreat of *Kuomintang*<sup>5</sup> (KMT) in 1949 have Taiwan and Kinmen/Quemoy been subject to the same authorities. Also note that Taiwan and Penghu, but not Kinmen/Quemoy, had been ruled by Japan. Thus, influences of Japanese administration on burial practices should show up in Taiwan and Penghu only.

### 1.3 Placenames on Tombstones

To illustrate the detection and analysis of spatio-temporal patterns on tombstones, we will focus on one feature, i.e. placename. Chinese tombstones, in general, show at their top a symmetric 'focus' field which highlights the main affiliation or the main source of a social identity. This can be a family name, a placename, a generation numbering, a military unit, an ethnicity or a reference to a governmental era.

More common on tombstones of Chinese settlers outside of China than on tombstones in Chinese Mainland is the *jiguan*<sup>6</sup>, a concrete placename in China that mostly likely refers to the place of living of times before migration. This placename is traded from one generation to another, even if the following generations have never known the place. The *jiguan*, in the focus field of tombstones, was almost the only form used in Taiwan until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; less common was a reference to the Qing Dynasty. Later, when other forms of placenames emerged, the *jiguan* remained dominant until 1935. This pattern is illustrated in Fig. 2, which shows the majoritarian ethnic group in Taiwan, the *Holo* people, who originated from Fujian and speak *Holo-oe*. For clarity in comparison, we exclude from our analysis other ethnic groups.



**Figure 2: Placename in *Holo* communities, percentage of placename types per year.**

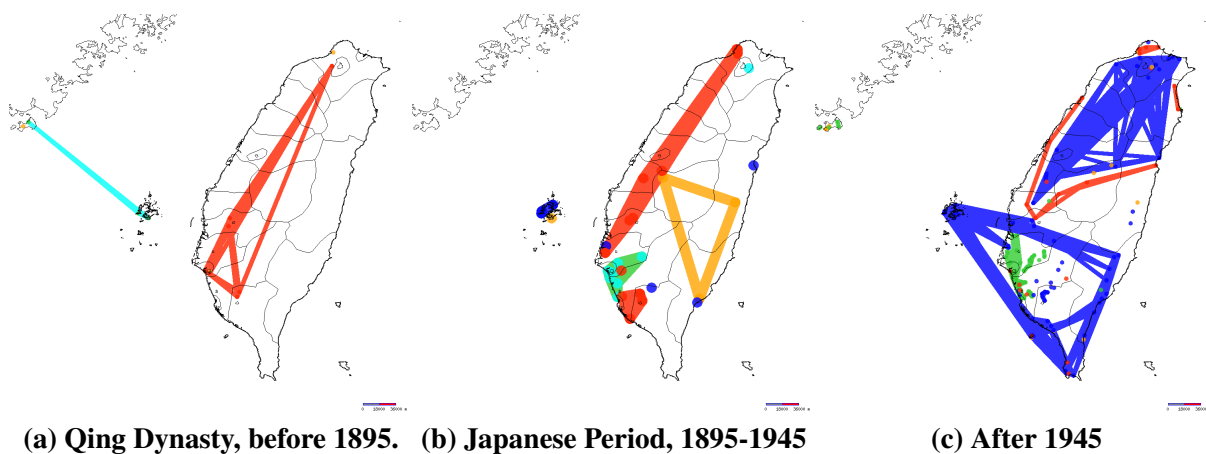
Towards the end of the Japanese occupation, the popularity of the *jiguan* decreased when two other placename types emerged. In the southern area of Tainan<sup>7</sup> and Kaohsiung<sup>8</sup>, people rapidly and systematically shifted to a local placename, i.e., the place of birth, living and death in Taiwan, with references to villages or city districts more common than to larger administrative units. This change took place in only 20 years at the end of which about 80% of the tombs had this local placename. In all other parts of Taiwan where *Holo* people lived, people shifted to *tanghao*<sup>9</sup>, a place in Northern China from which the family is believed to have originated about 1500 years ago. This change however started with the Japanese occupation and reached a maximum of 40% during that period. The different timelines of *tanghao* and local placename offer a first clue for their interpretations: The long and slow increase of the *tanghao* indicates a bottom-up movement which get more important with each generation. The quick rise of the local placename, however, took place within one generation. It thus must be seen in relation to top-down forces, as probably only top-down forces have the power to bring about rapid changes in century-old traditions.

## 2 Analysis

Using the geo-temporal database and GIS, and through careful statistic examinations that do not generalise over different ethnicities or inaccessible areas, we first attempt to arrive at a representation that best describes the distributions of placename types. Tracing then back the historical developments in the statistically significant areas, where patterns of change emerge, we try to answer a number of questions that should clarify why the shift(s) of placename use occurred. Primordial is the question whether this shift can be linked to the Japanese influence. Thus, is the shift observable in Penghu and Taiwan but not in Jinmen, Hong Kong or Hawaii?

As Fig. 3 a), shows, the *jiguan* was the most common pattern on Taiwan, while Penghu and Kinmen/Quemoy shared a preference for the dynasty marker 清皇 (qíng huáng) over a placename. The reason why Penghu and Kinmen/Quemoy are grouped together and differ from Taiwan may be related to the social composition of the islands. While Taiwan was inhabited by pioneering settlers that referred on their tombstones through mainly the geographic origins to their family history, Penghu was the geo-strategic nexus in the Taiwan Strait between the mainland empire and its frontier and as a consequence, the inhabitants of the archipelago focused on a general political affiliation. The distinction is thus mainly that of a personal versus a political orientation expressed through the tombstone.

With the Japanese occupation, a cluster of tombstones with Taiwanese placenames arose in the Tainan region and a noticeable cluster of *tanghao* developed on Penghu, c.f Fig. 3 b). On Kinmen/Quemoy, no *tanghao* appeared, neither during nor after the Japanese occupation. These allegations are supported by our data from Hong Kong and Hawaii, which confirm the usage of *tanghao* on respectively only 0.9% (n=113) and 0.0% (n=2107) of the tombstones.



**Figure 3: Placenames on tombstones of Taiwan's Holo communities. Green (Tainan area): Taiwanese placename; blue (Penghu, coastal areas, South Taiwan): Tanghao; red (Middle Taiwan): Jiguan; light blue (Jinmen, Penghu): Dynasty**

As Fig. 3 b) indicates, although Penghu does not seem to be the place where the first *tanghao* appeared on tombstones, it nevertheless seemed to be the cradle of this practice, we think, as a consequence of the renegotiation of the political focus towards a new entity. Fig. 4 b shows how the practice developed in Middle Taiwan and from there swapped over to the South and the North. Fig. 4 c) not only contrasts Kinmen/Quemoy and Penghu, but also shows to what degree this practice dominates on the archipelago.

As Fig. 4 a) shows, Tainan was the place where the local placename emerged and spread to the contiguous South-Western coastal areas from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until now. The reasons why this practice has sprung up here might relate to the fact that Tainan was the main entrance for settlers from the beginning of the Chinese migration to Taiwan. Tainan also was the main urban, cultural and administrative centre of Taiwan until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fig. 2 shows that this new funeral practice can be understood as a counter-reaction of the Tainanese pride to intensification of Japanese and KMT assimilation policies.

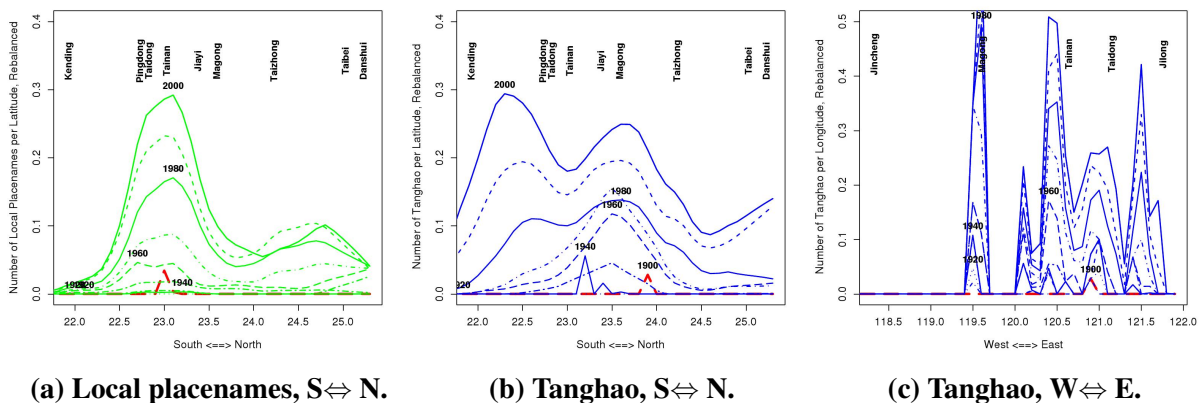


Figure 4: Tracing the origin and development of placename types through time and space.

### 3 Discussion

Both the *tanghao* marked on tombstones and the local, i.e. Taiwanese, placename marked on the tombstone, seem to be local inventions. We could neither observe a *tanghao* on tombs in China or overseas<sup>10</sup>, nor a local placename in an overseas graveyard. In addition, from 1910 to 1987, both placename types moved in direct opposition to the *jiguan*, a reference to the Chinese Mainland. We interpret this uniqueness of both practices as an expression of *Bentuhua*, i.e., Taiwanese localisation, although the connotations of the two practices are somewhat different.

The local placename represents the here and now, while the *tanghao* represents, when understood as a placename, a remote place in a remote past. Interestingly, the geographic origin as formalised through the *tanghao* can rarely be attested. Most Taiwanese who put a *tanghao* on their family tombstone do not have any concrete evidence of the origin except through the *tanghao* itself, in the form of an inscription over the door to the ancestral hall, on the ancestral tablet, or on a family shrine. For many Taiwanese, the geographic meaning of the *tanghao* is thus not crucial or even unknown. As shown in our previous research, c.f. STREITER *et al.* (2008), the *tanghao* is strongly associated with the notions of family or ancestry in a way that makes it different from family names. Families sharing the same family name might receive a different *tanghao* through the *tanghao*'s sub-branching system. Therefore, the *tanghao* is a symbol that binds living generations and their ancestors in a more restrictive and concrete way than the family name does. Its function as a location-indicator is less apparent than local placenames (and the *jiguan* for that matter).

Among the various hypotheses that might account for the rise of the *tanghao* on tombstones, we intend in our future research to follow the hypothesis, according to which the *tang-*

*hao* that developed with family identities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was used as a defence against the intrusion of a dominant culture. Especially the adoption of Japanese family names by Taiwanese and the consecutive threat of losing the connection with the ancestors made Taiwanese use the notion of *tanghao* as a base for their new Japanese family name, c.f. (FRIED & CHEN, 1967, pg. vi). According to these authors, this *tanghao*, which they call *denghao*<sup>11</sup> was used during the Japanese time on lanterns, including funeral lanterns. It is not difficult to imagine that from there the *tanghao* swapped over to tombstones. Through the analysis of the geographic distributions of *tanghao* on houses, lanterns, funeral lanterns and tombstones in places of shared histories, we will try to shed some light on the last question concerning the meaning of placename types on Taiwan's tombstones.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>This research is supported by the Taiwan e-Learning and Digital Archives Program (TELDAP) under the grant number 99-2631-H-390-002.

<sup>2</sup>澎湖, HP: Péng hú, POJ: Phe<sup>2</sup>-o

<sup>3</sup>金門, HP: Jīn mén, POJ: Kim-m̄ng

<sup>4</sup>福建, HP: Fú jiàn, POJ: Hok-kian

<sup>5</sup>國民黨/中國國民黨, Guómíndǎng/Zhōngguó Guómíndǎng, Kok-bîn-tóng/Tiong-kok Kok-bîn-tóng

<sup>6</sup>籍貫, jíguǎn, chèk-kòan

<sup>7</sup>台南, HP: Tái nán, POJ: Tâi-lâm

<sup>8</sup>高雄, HP: Gāo xióng, POJ: Ko-hiông

<sup>9</sup>堂號, táng hào, tâng-hō

<sup>10</sup>The only exception seems to be the reference to 台山 (HP: Táishān) in Hawaii, which however is used similar to a *jiguan* with post-address-like specification through subregions and village names.

<sup>11</sup>燈號, dēng hào, teng-hō

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