

# REVIVAL OF MEMORY

*Redesign of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery*

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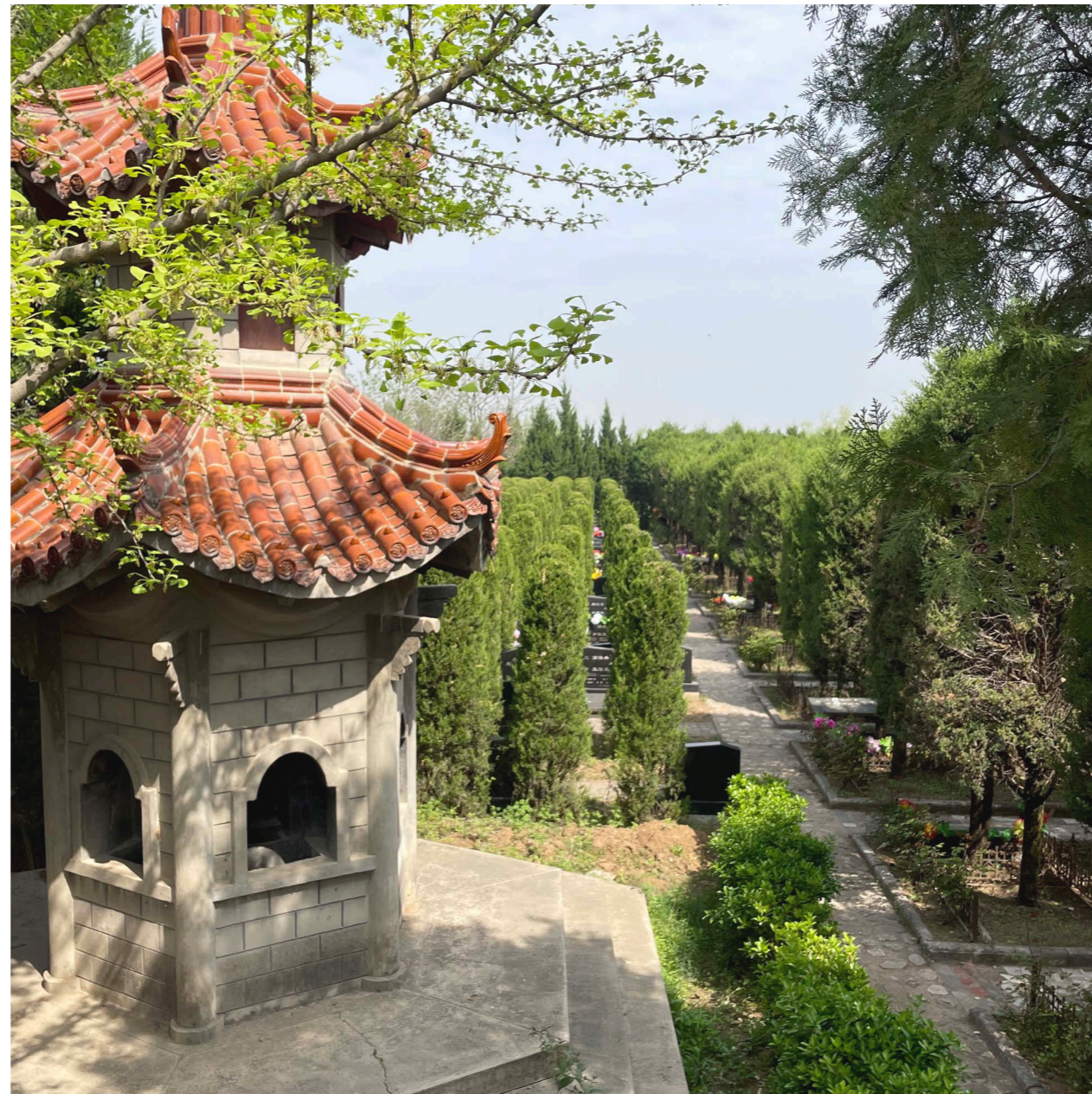
*Memento mori,  
memento vivere.*

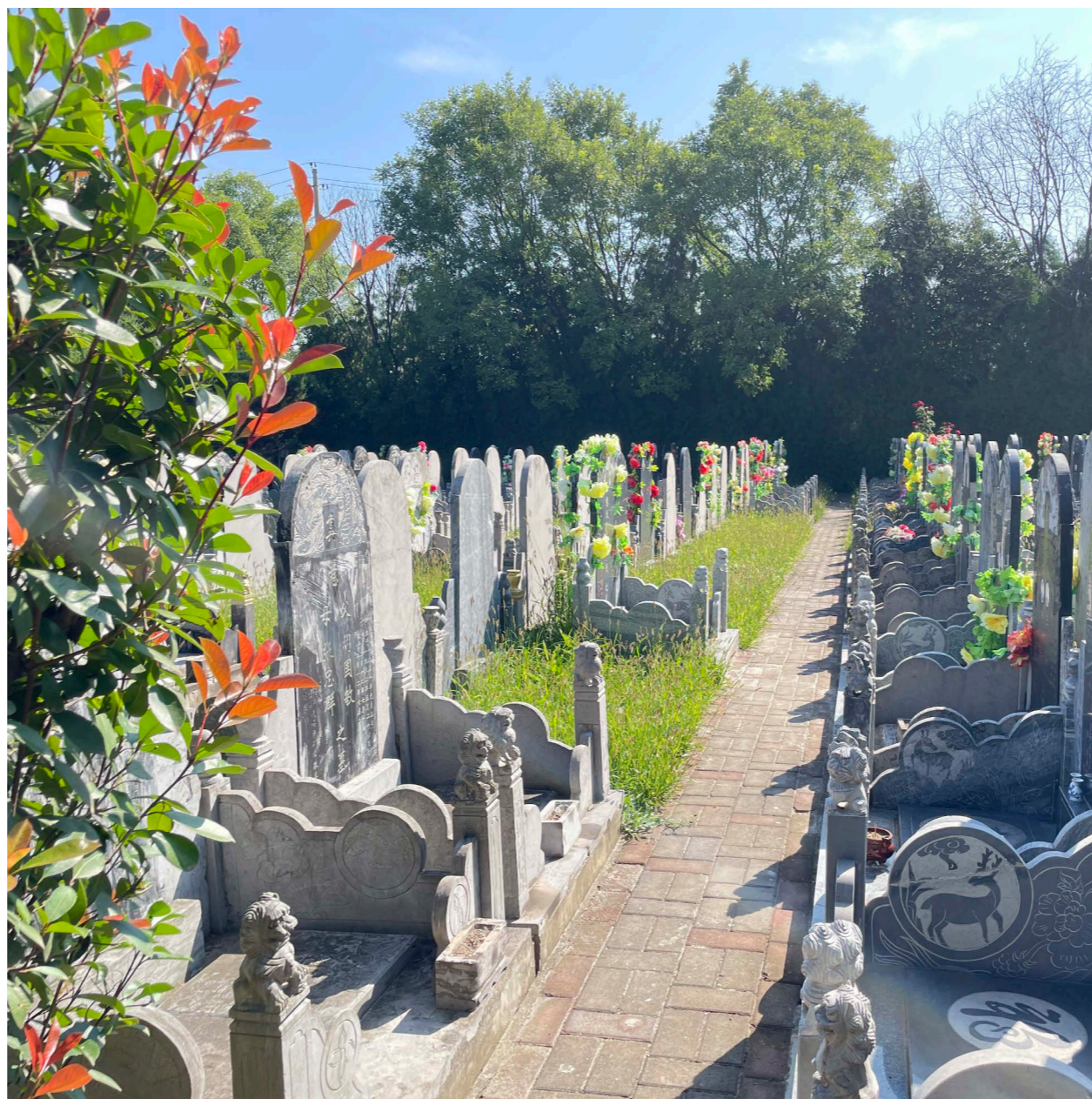
”





*Memorial pagoda,  
2024*





◀  
*Tomb area,*  
2024



*Area to be planned,  
2024*





◀  
*Different layers of plantation,*  
2024

REVIVAL OF MEMORY | *Redesign of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery*

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## Acknowledgement

## Acknowledgement

I am pleased to announce the completion of my graduation project!

This year cannot be described as one filled with passion. Often, I found myself plagued by self-doubt, constantly re-evaluating others' perceptions of me, and yet struggling to fully harness my independent thinking skills.

Having resided in the Netherlands for three years, my initial experiences were marked by joy and novelty, and a willingness to try new things. By the second year, which involved academic exchanges and internships, I began to strategically plan for the future. Now, at the end of my third year, my personality has evolved significantly, although in some ways it may seem unchanged. I remain steadfast and cautious, but I have developed a more rigorous capacity for planning and critical thinking.

I wish to express gratitude towards myself. After twenty-six years on this planet, I have yet to uncover the full extent of my potential. I continue to possess the courage to remain unsatisfied with myself and the desire to further my personal development. Whether these qualities were acquired during my time in the Netherlands or not, it is clear that they have emerged through this transformative period.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude towards my first mentor, Denise. At first, her precise comments frequently caused me discomfort. Over time, through a process of mutual adjustment, I came to recognize her patience and deep investment in my development. Remarkably, she retained a clear memory of certain ideas I had nearly forgotten and consistently reminded me to take timely

breaks, aiding in my mood regulation and stress relief. Our relationship matured to a point where we could engage in conversations as effortlessly as friends. I am grateful for the opportunity to have met her, as her guidance has been invaluable to my academic achievements and overall mental health.

I also have to express my profound gratitude to my second mentor, Machiel. He consistently provided lively encouragement and utilized his specialized knowledge in behavioral science to critically "observe" my design experiments. This intellectual interaction encouraged me to engage in constant reflection on my design process. He is endearing, frequently sharing intriguing events, news, or personal anecdotes. Importantly, he has shown considerable concern for both my physical and mental well-being. I am deeply moved and consider myself fortunate to have the benefit of his guidance and support.

I still need to extend my gratitude to Saskia, with whom I regretfully had only a few meetings—certainly, there could have been many more! Additionally, I am thankful for the support of my boyfriend Junzhe, my best friend Dingyu, my consistently supportive parents, and my cute three guinea pigs. Thank you all for bringing sunshine and warmth into my days here in the Netherlands, even amidst the continual overcast skies. Your understanding and acceptance have been invaluable, allowing me to maintain my sense of innocence and optimism.

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## Abstract

## Abstract

Life and death are important issues that everyone experiences in the lifetime. Life is usually a symbol of hope and happiness, while death is a of loss and separation, which is relatively heavy. As a place where most people store their sorrow and memories of death, public cemeteries carry a lot of thoughts and reflections about death.

In Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, cemeteries are considered to be places where people's souls live after death, requiring good feng shui conditions and appropriate area and shape to allow the dead to rest in peace.

This research investigated public cemetery as a monumental public space, it carries on a person's memory of one's experience and could be expanded to a family or a group's collective memory. Through the research for cemeterial history and rituals, as well as the result of questionnaire, the necessity of design is clear, which requires creating more different types of space in the future, balancing appropriate symbol, integrating with the surrounding natural scenery, in order to better meet the requirements of the new generations for memorial and remembrance.

The research focuses on my individual memory and family collective memory about Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, where my grandma and grandpa were buried. Guided by four design principles derived from analysis: diversified atmosphere, memorial symbolism, natural structure and publicness, together with ritual. Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery will be redesigned to vitalized various forms of memory about death and integrate public space into a vibrant and more powerful public cemetery.

At the same time, from the perspective of scale continuum, this research provides with a design principle for other public cemeteries in Xi'an that can be used for reference probably in the future, and reshapes a better atmosphere of Xi'an public cemeteries.

Keywords: public cemeteries, memory, remembrance

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## Content



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### Reference



# MEMORY

## Hometown

## Culture

...



他们那  
时候好快  
乐,青春一  
切美好都  
属于他们!  
:)

谢谢  
爷爷



和姐姐一  
起过生日,  
祝个位数年  
龄的自己生  
日快乐!  
Happy  
Birthday



时间过得  
好快  
我要如何  
才能不想  
你们  
🎵





## Introduction

- 1.1 Memory inside cemeteries*
- 1.2 Interviews with people*
- 1.3 Research plan*
- 1.4 Methodology*

◀  
*My grandparents has  
always been a strong  
companion for me,  
Family Album,  
2023*

## Introduction

### 1.1 Memory inside cemeteries

“

*...In the cemetery, my  
heart is a deep lake  
that stirs no ripples.*

”

◀  
*Rong, S. (2000).  
Memory of cemetery*

## Introduction

### 1.1 Memory inside cemeteries

“...Somewhere along the way, I noticed a small cemetery. Beside the busy road, a low iron fence surrounded this tranquil space, blocking the footsteps of pedestrians and isolating it from the world’s hustle and bustle.

In the morning, I crossed a intersection and walked in an unknown direction. It was March in the spring, and the sun was like a blushing face, red and shyly lovely. Spring ripples danced in the air, a cool breeze brushing my eyes and nose. The cemetery lay quietly. In the evening, as I returned home, the sunset painted the sky with its final touch of red, while the city’s monsoon winds and people hurrying home rushed past the cemetery.

One day, I decided to visit the cemetery. There was a gate through the iron fence leading to the residential area, clustered cypress trees whose names I did not know. Though called a cemetery, it was merely the eternal resting place of two souls, buried together, with two headstones standing like symbols of past and future generations, walking hand in hand through lifetime.

I sat on the stone steps of the cemetery with a book in my hand. Sometimes I read, but more often, I did nothing. Sunlight filtered through the trees on my left, illuminating my hair and the pages of my book. My shadow lay on the stone steps to my right, still and breathless. As the sun moved overhead, I dozed in its warmth. When the

sun shone through the trees on my right, my shadow shifted to the steps on my left, still and breathless. The day passed in this quiet rhythm. Occasionally, an unknown bird fluttered by, only to return to silence.

Increasingly, the busy and competitive life outside had made me bored, narrow-minded, and at times even filled with hatred. But the cemetery brought many things back to my heart: tolerance, cherish, and love.

In the cemetery, I often met an old man. One day, he told me a story, beginning with: “In my hometown, there is a river called forget river...” The name, “Forget River,” resonated within me, evoking a sense of timeless wisdom. As I silently repeated it, two white water birds flew by, embodying the vast emotions of life and the infinite consciousness of the universe flowing in the endless river.

I am grateful for the cemetery, for bringing me back to peace. Of course, gratitude seems superfluous for the cemetery and the souls resting beneath it. It exists here, on the roadside of this bustling city, offering a moment of inspiration to hurried passersby. Despite the varying sorrows and joys, despite the bustling life outside, it remains a place of quiet contemplation...”



# Introduction

## 1.2 Interviews with people



55 years old, male  
experiences more than one funeral

Public cemeteries could be like parks, meaningful, comfortable, and memorable, don't have to be confined by the form of memorial.



24 years old, female  
never experiences the funeral

I don't like the grave symbols of sacrifice in public cemeteries, such as bronze container. Public cemeteries can make people feel quiet, but different from the general public places for people to gather and relax; and to provide with some privacy to memorize.



30 years old, male  
experiences more than one funeral

I don't like Chinese public cemeteries, making people feel depressed and should be more energetic.



40 years old, female  
experiences more than one funeral

I hope to have more memorial forms, not just with tombs.

## Introduction

### 1.3 Research plan

In China, death is a solemn topic, somehow forbidden and avoidable. However, tombs always link people with their memories, therefore we can say that a public cemetery is a place full of collective memory.

In 1844, the British built the first public cemetery in Shanghai by the British, which was a strong strike towards Chinese burial traditions. Generally speaking, public cemeteries are still new for the Chinese people with a less than 200 years history. Large part of traditional Chinese are not affected deeply because of the strong local death culture, especially in Shaanxi, Xi'an.

Throughout history, the emperor's Lings have left many symbols. Some of them are still used currently in many public cemeteries, which are the only legal place to bury the dead. Those symbols strongly ruin the atmosphere inside public cemeteries. Meanwhile, new Chinese generations regard death quite differently, they ask for more types of spaces inside public cemeteries instead of only remembrance.

On a larger scale, the connections between each public cemetery in Xi'an are hardly observed. Under these circumstances, public cemeteries are important, either for each person or for the society. Public cemeteries need a revolution to balance all the needs. Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery, will be used as an experiment in this creation process.

So I come with the research question:

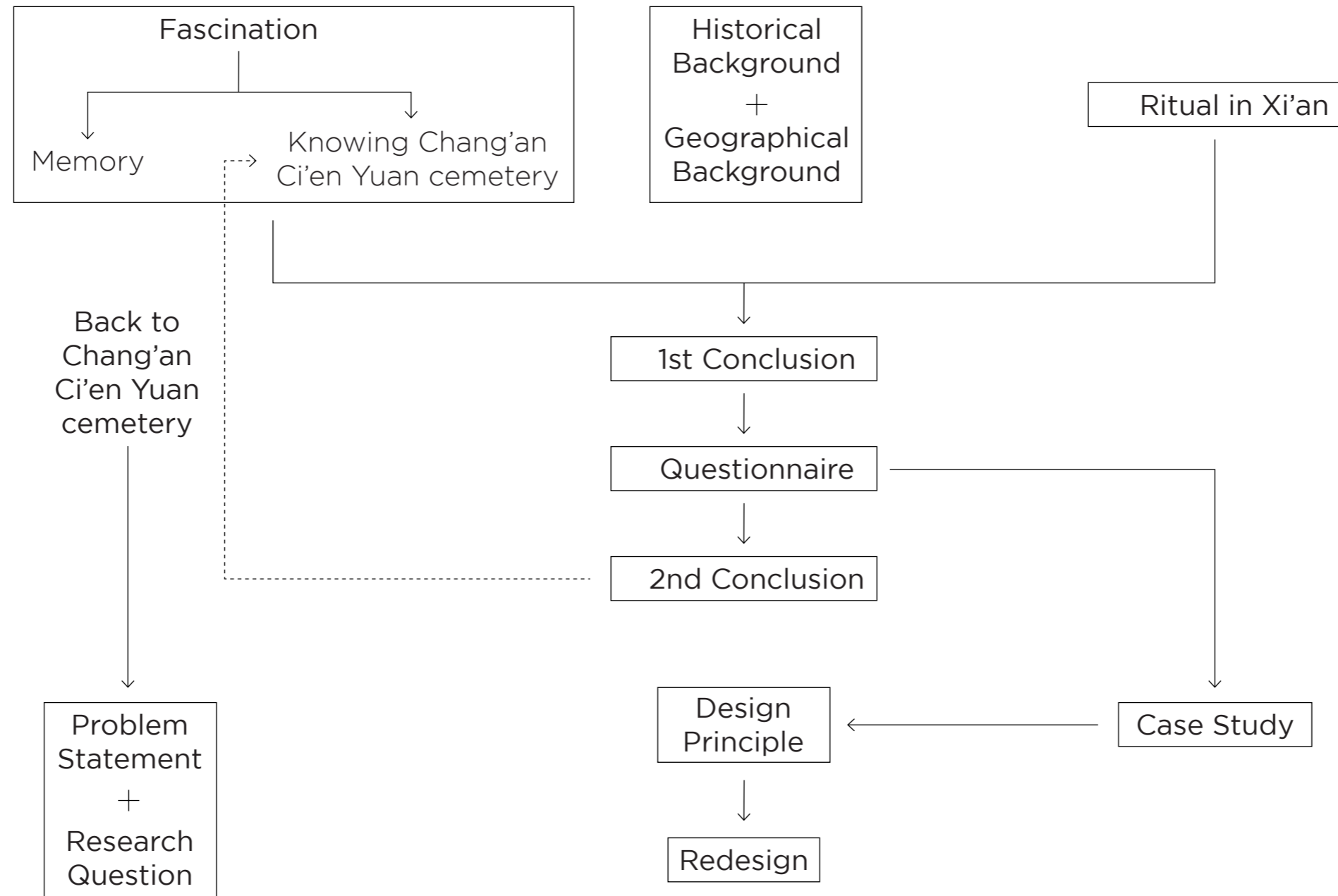
*How can public cemeteries be transformed to better vitalize collective and individual memory for the future generations? (Take Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery as an example)*

Together with some sub-questions:

1. What are the burial rituals and (memorial) symbolism of public cemeteries in Xi'an nowadays?
2. What is the role of public cemeteries in the urban context in Xi'an nowadays?
3. What are the future functions of public cemeteries in Xi'an?
4. What are the needed changes in public cemeteries in Xi'an to create a desired atmosphere and spatial composition that future generations would identify with?

# Introduction

## 1.4 Methodology





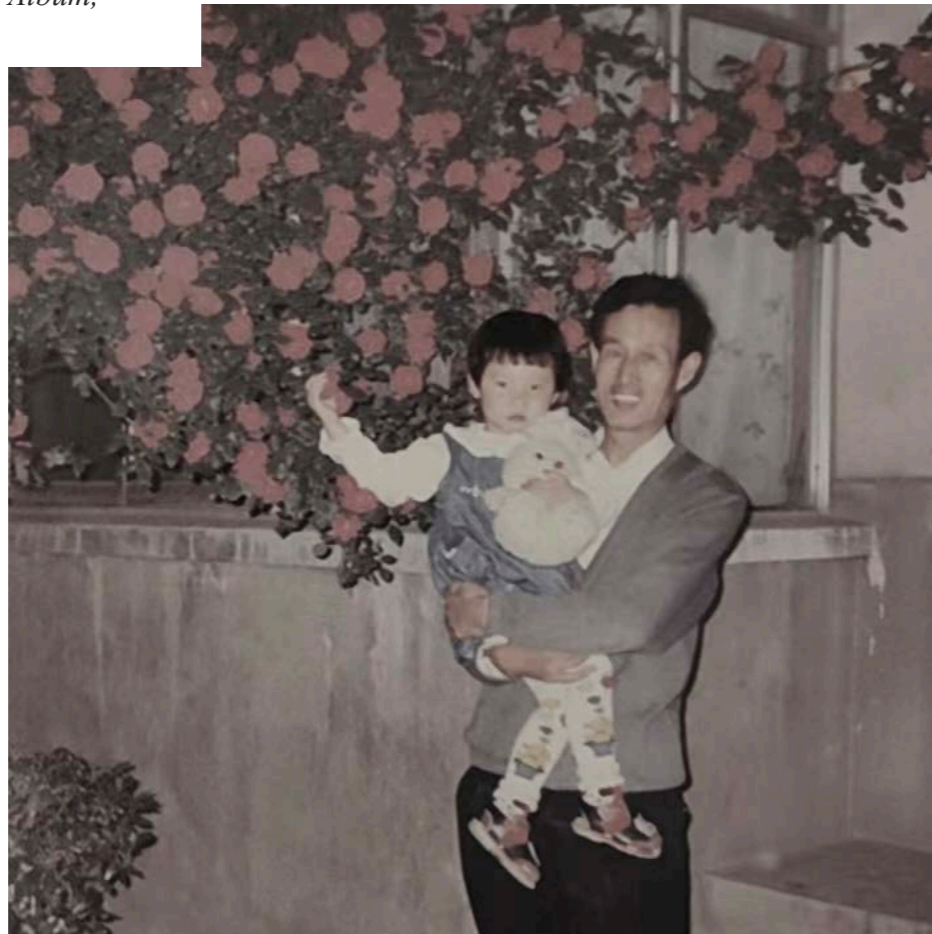


## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

- 2.1 Memory with Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery*
- 2.2 Profile of Xi'an*
- 2.3 Context of Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery*



*My grandfather and I,  
Family Album,  
2003*



*My grandmother and cousin,  
Family Album,  
2002*

## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

### 2.1 Memory with Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

When I was 9, my grandfather passed away because of serious illness, it was the first time that I knew and faced with death, as well as my entire family dealt with death. All I could remember was my cousin and I were sent to school as normal, until one day we went to his funeral. We small kids, were not permitted to be involved in all these arrangements since the elders believed it would bring bad luck to children.

My family proceeded with all Chinese traditions and held a funeral for my grandfather in the mourning hall. My grandmother cried so desperately for she knew that it was the last time to see his body, next time they would be separated into two different worlds and she could only hold his bone ash filled in an urn.

The other day we went to Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery to bury the urn. A double-tree tomb was purchased for my grandparents, by that time only my grandfather was buried. So that he could have a comfortable life in the other world with the same standard of living here, we bought many paper stuff, for instance, paper cars, houses, furniture, and paper coins, and burned them for my grandfather. In this whole process, we light incense in front of the tomb, through the slight brightness, it seemed he was waving his hand to farewell to us all.

It was the first time I went to Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery which was a new built one with fantastic scenery,

for Zhongnan Mountain could be captured in the background. Many pine and cypress were planted to shape the traditional atmosphere, with solemn music playing constantly.

After 7 years, my grandmother also passed away, this time my family behaved calmly and more organized. we omitted some unnecessary traditions and had her buried with my grandfather. Despite QingMing Festival [1], we also pay many visits, sometimes I draw a picture that I would like to share with my grandparents and then burn it, sometimes I tell them the good news, big changes in the family, sometimes bring some delicious food, but sometimes I just missed them and want to cry for a second.

Getting to know death earlier than most people in my age, I had a very close connection with my grandparents, every time I go to Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery, I never feel scared but peaceful. For I know that someone I deeply love "live" here. Up to now, I've visited Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery for almost 16 years, and gone through different emotions, and have seen all the changes that happened in Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery. It is more than a place to bury my grandparents. Besides, it accompanies me physically and mentally through my growth.

▼

[1] QingMing Festival: a Chinese traditional festival to memorize the dead, usually set in April 5th or 6th in Spring, which is a nice time period during one year. People visit their passed-away relatives with white bouquets, then go hiking or climbing mountains. Due to many public cemeteries are located in some places with good scenery.

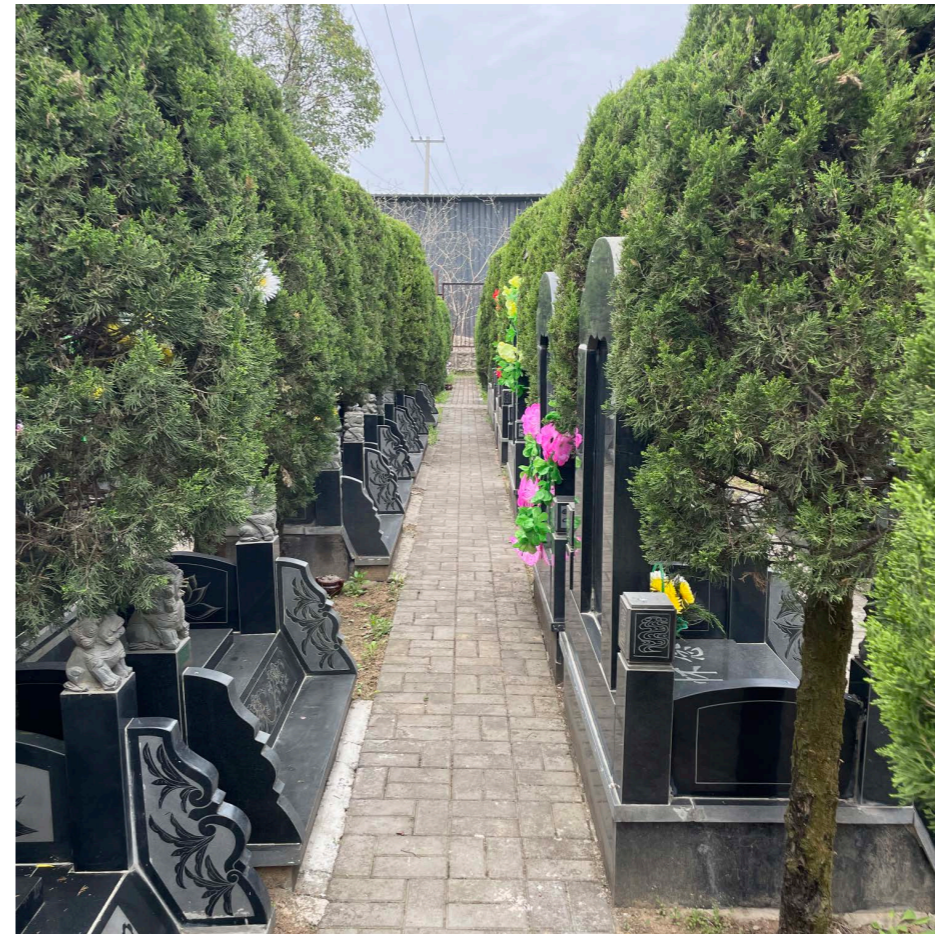
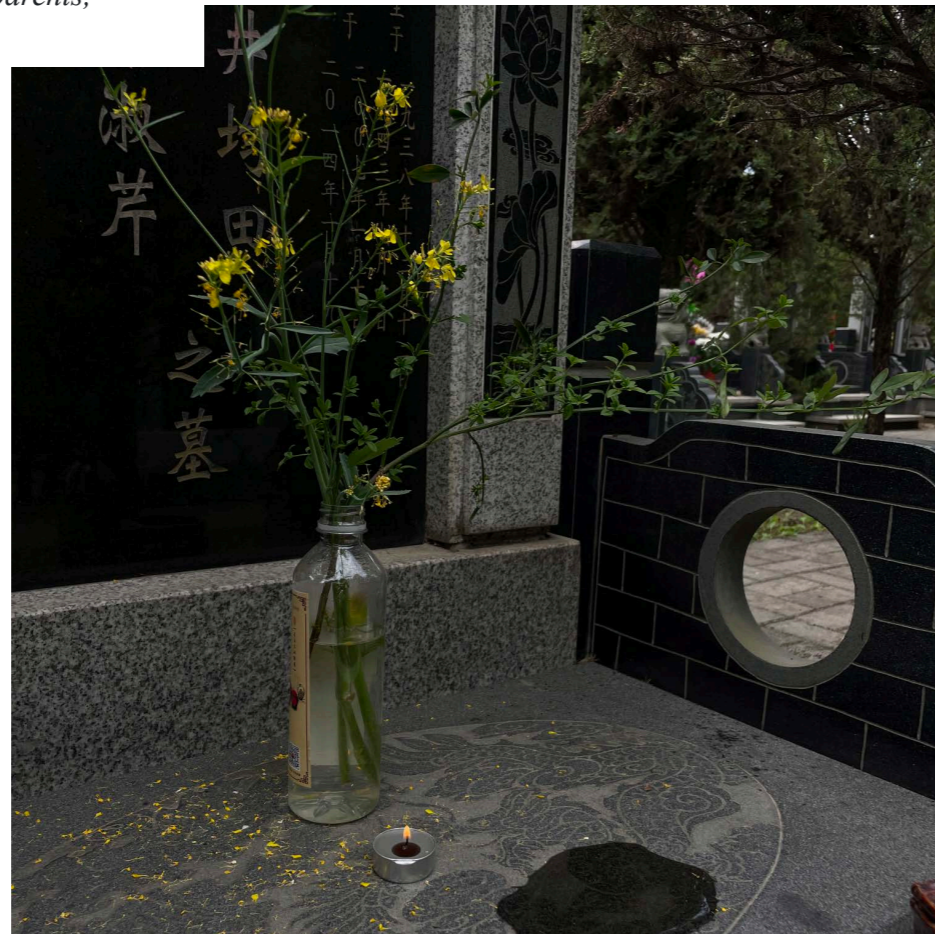
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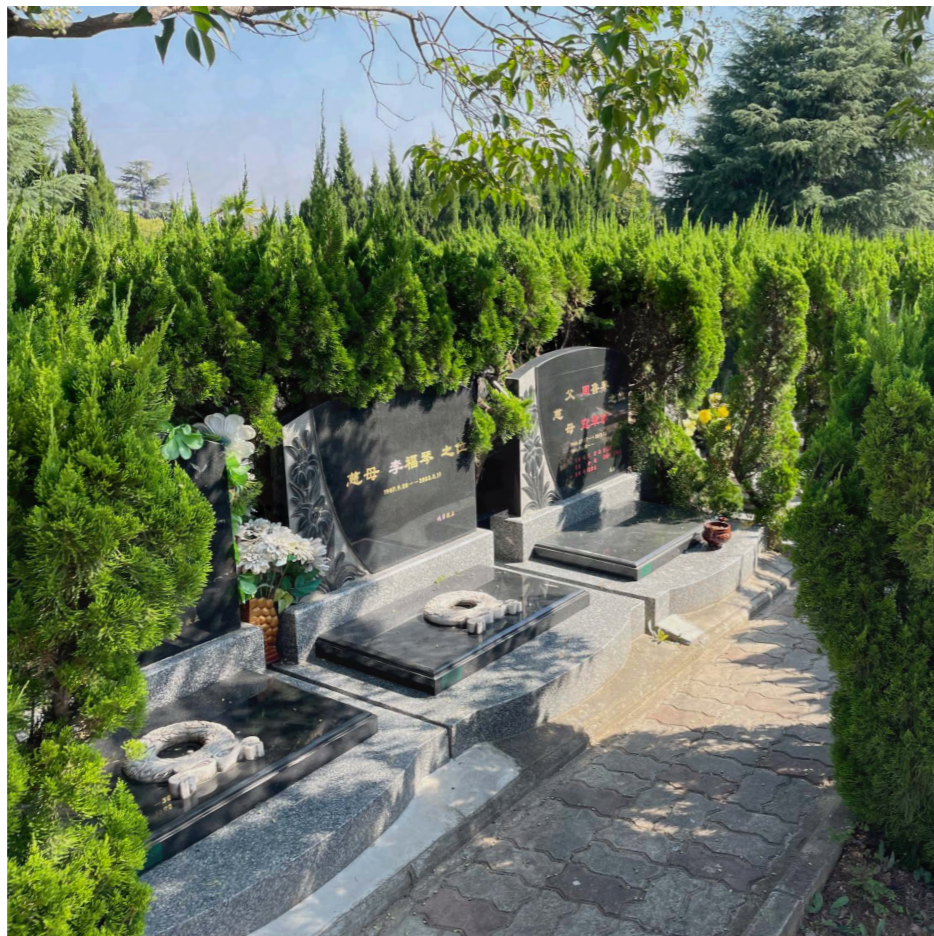
*QingMing Festival is an opportunity for future generations to trace their roots as well,*  
2023





*Tomb of my  
grandparents,  
2024*





◀  
*Inside scenery of Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery,  
2024*

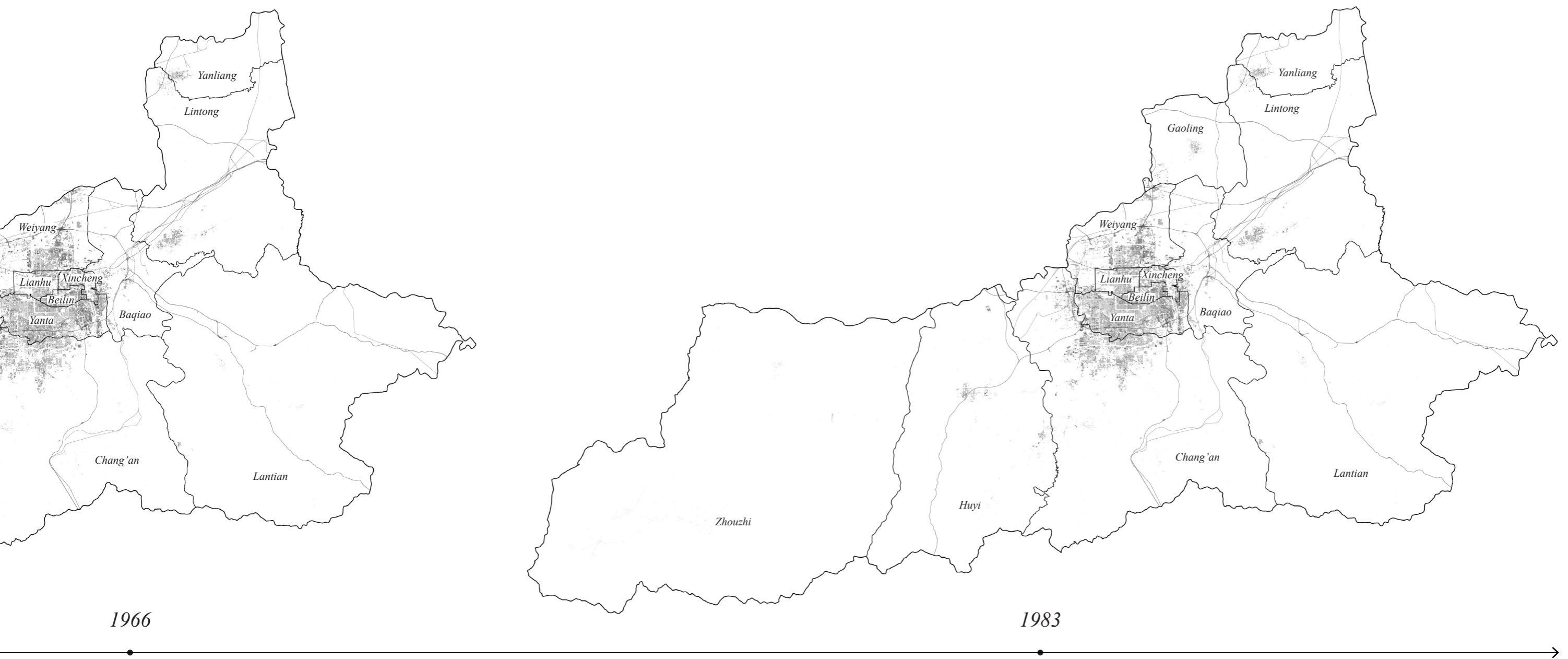
# Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

## 2.2 Profile of Xi'an



# Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

## 2.2 Profile of Xi'an

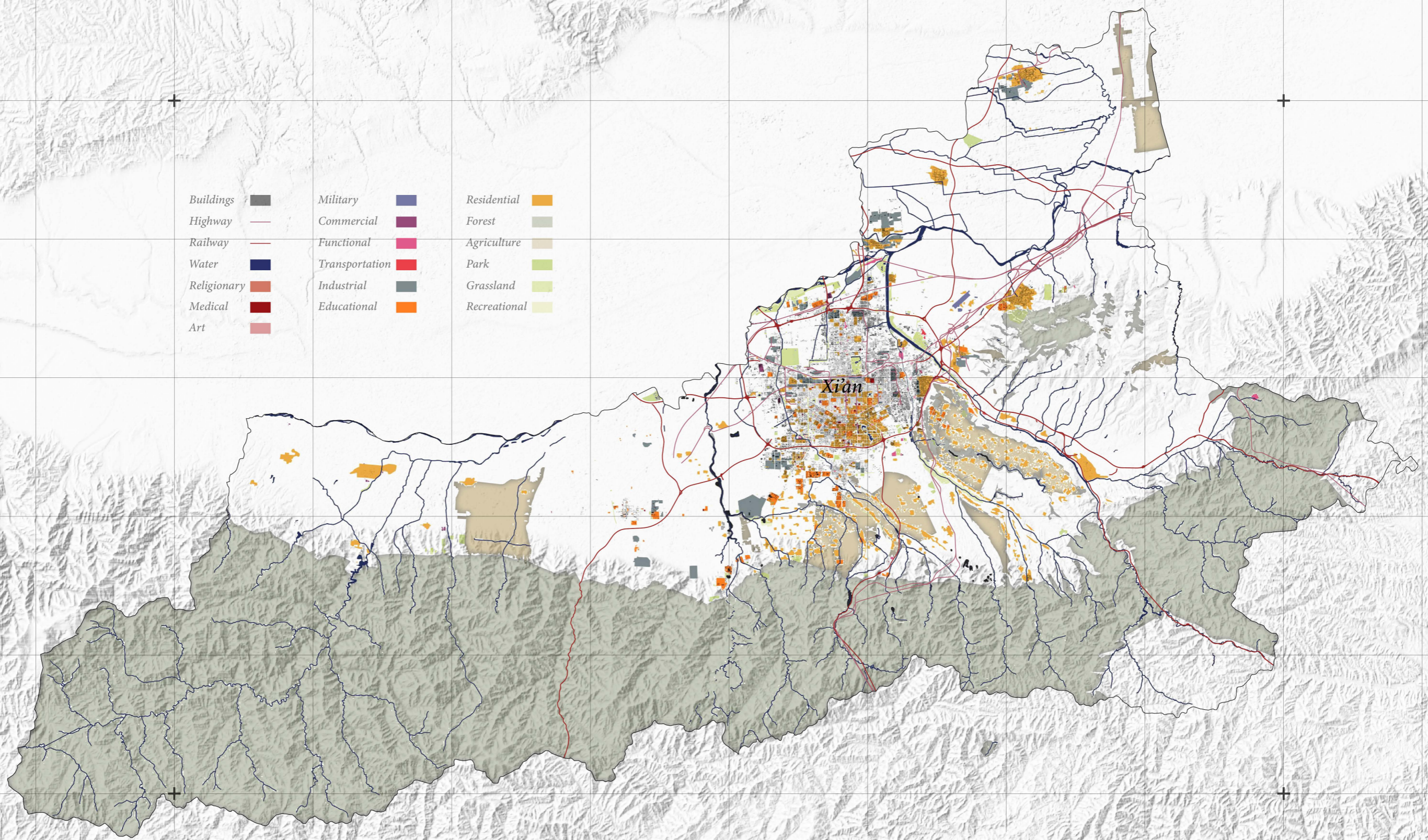




20km

20km

|           |   |                |   |              |   |
|-----------|---|----------------|---|--------------|---|
| Buildings | ■ | Military       | ■ | Residential  | ■ |
| Highway   | — | Commercial     | ■ | Forest       | ■ |
| Railway   | — | Functional     | ■ | Agriculture  | ■ |
| Water     | — | Transportation | ■ | Park         | ■ |
| Religious | ■ | Industrial     | ■ | Grassland    | ■ |
| Medical   | ■ | Educational    | ■ | Recreational | ■ |
| Art       | ■ |                |   |              |   |



## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

### 2.2 Profile of Xi'an

#### Context of Xi'an

Xi'an, historically known as Chang'an and Haojing, is the capital of Shaanxi Province, located in northwest China on Guanzhong Plain. It lies near Wei river to the north and Qinling Mountains to the south. As of 2024, Xi'an administers 11 districts and 2 counties, encompassing a total area of 10,108 square kilometers. By the end of 2024, Xi'an had a permanent resident population of 13,078,200, with an urbanization rate of 79.88%.

After Proclamation of PRC, Xi'an comprised 12 districts, including 8 urban and 4 suburban districts, with 19 towns. In 1954, the administrative divisions were restructured, merging the 12 districts and several newly incorporated towns into 9 districts: Xincheng, Beilin, Lianhu, Changle, Yanta, APang, Weiyang, Caotan, and Baqiao. In 1958, Chang'an, Lantian, Lintong, and Huyi counties were incorporated into Xi'an. In 1966, Yanliang town from Lintong county was designated as Yanliang district, and Xianyang (a county-level city) was also incorporated into Xi'an. In 1983, the state council approved the inclusion of Lantian, Lintong, Huxian, Zhouzhi, and Gaoling counties from the Weinan area into Xi'an.

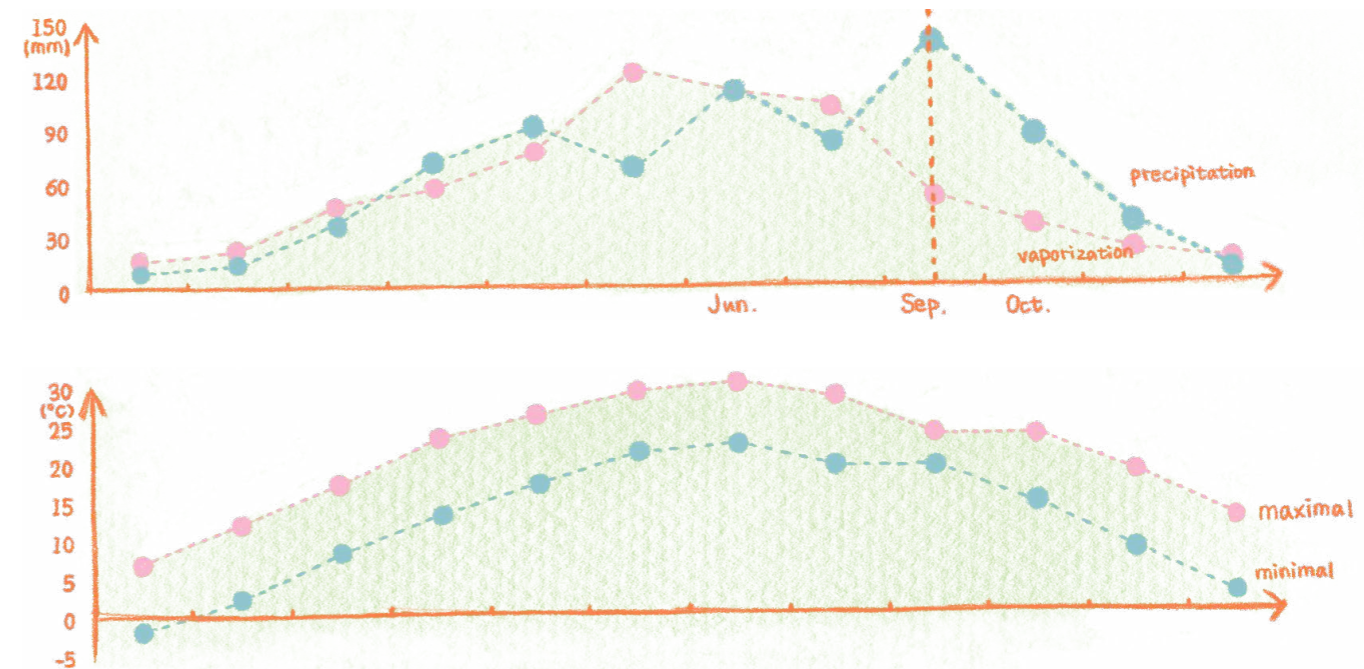
Xi'an boasts the highest altitude variation among Chinese cities, characterized by the distinct divide between the towering Qinling Mountains and the flat Wei river plain, which forms the primary landscape of the city. The main ridge of the Qinling mountains stands between 2,000 and

2,800 meters above sea level, with Taibai Mountain in the southwest reaching 3,867 meters, making it the highest peak in central mainland China. The Wei river plain ranges from 400 to 700 meters above sea level, with the city of Xi'an built upon it.

The plain area of Xi'an experiences a warm temperate semi-humid continental monsoon climate with four distinct seasons. Winters are cold with light winds, fog, and minimal rain or snow. Springs are warm, dry, windy, and variable. Summers are hot and rainy,

Figure  
Precipitation and vaporization  
in Xi'an

Figure  
Maximal and minimal temperature  
of Xi'an



## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

### 2.2 Profile of Xi'an



Figure  
Xi'an city wall



with significant droughts and frequent thunderstorms and gales. Autumns are cool with rapidly falling temperatures and pronounced seasonal changes. The average annual temperature ranges from 13.0°C to 13.7°C, with January temperatures averaging -1.2°C to 0.0°C and July temperatures averaging 26.3°C to 26.6°C. Annual precipitation varies from 522.4 to 719.5 mm, increasing from north to south, with July and September being the peak precipitation months.

Xi'an has a dense river network, with the Wei river, Jing river, and Shichuan rivers among the major transit rivers. Other rivers originate from the Qinling mountains or the southeastern Li mountain, flowing northward through the Wei river plain into the Wei river.

Soil distribution in Xi'an is distinctly regional. The northern Wei river plain is characterized by yellow-brown and brown soils, while the southern Qinling mountains feature the same soil types. This diverse soil composition creates favorable conditions for a wide variety of crops.

#### *Religions in Xi'an*

Religion in Xi'an has a long history. As early as 6,000 to 7,000 years ago (Banpo period), the ancestors of Xi'an had the concept of immortal souls. The capitals of Western Zhou Dynasty were Feng and Hao, the layout of those cities was with burials on the left and capitals on the right,

which shows at that time, great emphasis was placed on worshipping ancestors and gods. Western Han Dynasty established its capital in Chang'an and worshiped and respected Confucianism, which was elevated to a religion since then.

Buddhism was introduced to Xi'an during Western Han Dynasty (2 BC). During Western Jin and Wei Dynasty (220 AD - 316 AD), Buddhism developed rapidly, and Buddhist temples were widely built in Chang'an. Taoism was introduced to Xi'an in Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 215) and was revered as the "state religion" in Tang Dynasty (AD 618 - AD 907). Taoism therefore entered its heyday. During this period, Buddhism also entered a stage of prosperity in China. Chang'an was full of Buddhist temples. With the development of temples, Buddhist sects with Chinese Buddhist characteristics appeared in Chang'an one after another, and their reputation spread far and wide. Monks from various countries came to Chang'an to seek Dharma. During this period, around AD 651, Islam was also introduced to Chang'an. However, after the fall of Tang Dynasty, Chang'an lost its status as capital, and religion gradually declined.

During Ming and Qing Dynasties, many Western missionaries traveled across the ocean to the East to preach. At this time, Catholicism (1625 AD) and

# Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

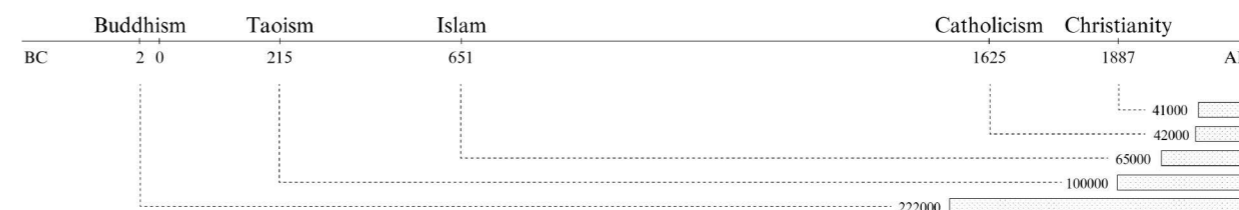
## 2.2 Profile of Xi'an

Christianity (1887 AD) were also introduced to Chang'an. At the same time, Buddhism and Islam also developed greatly. However, during the Anti-Japanese War, much of Buddhist and Taoist temples were seriously damaged.

After the founding of People's Republic of China, when the religions system was gradually awakening, "Cultural Revolution" which began in 1966 caused unprecedented disasters to various religions in Xi'an. After an important meeting in December in 1978, Municipal Committee and Municipal Government of Xi'an fully implemented the policy on freedom of religious belief, restored and opened religious activity venues, allowing the majority of religious believers to live a normal religious life and religious activities on the right track. Until now, Xi'an still has a large number of religious believers, including about 222,000 Buddhists, 100,000 Taoists, 65,000 Muslims, 42,000 Catholics and 41,000 Christians, accounting for 3.6% of the total population of Xi'an.



►  
 Figure Xiaoyan Pogoda, Remains of Buddhism  
 Figure Louguantai Temple, Remains of Taoism  
 Figure Huajue Temple, Remains of Islam  
 Figure Wuxing Street Christian Church, Remians of Christianity  
 Figure Information of Religions in Xi'an



## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

### 2.3 Context of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

Covering an area of approximately 7 ha, Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery is situated at the foot of Zhongnan Mountain, surrounded by several villages, including Wutai town to the north-east and Shibianyu village to the southwest. Zhongnan Mountain, the highest peak in the region, is a renowned Buddhist resort with numerous temples, attracting many visitors for both recreation and worship. Consequently, the surrounding roads are well-developed. Additionally, two river

▼  
Figure  
Model of Surroundings

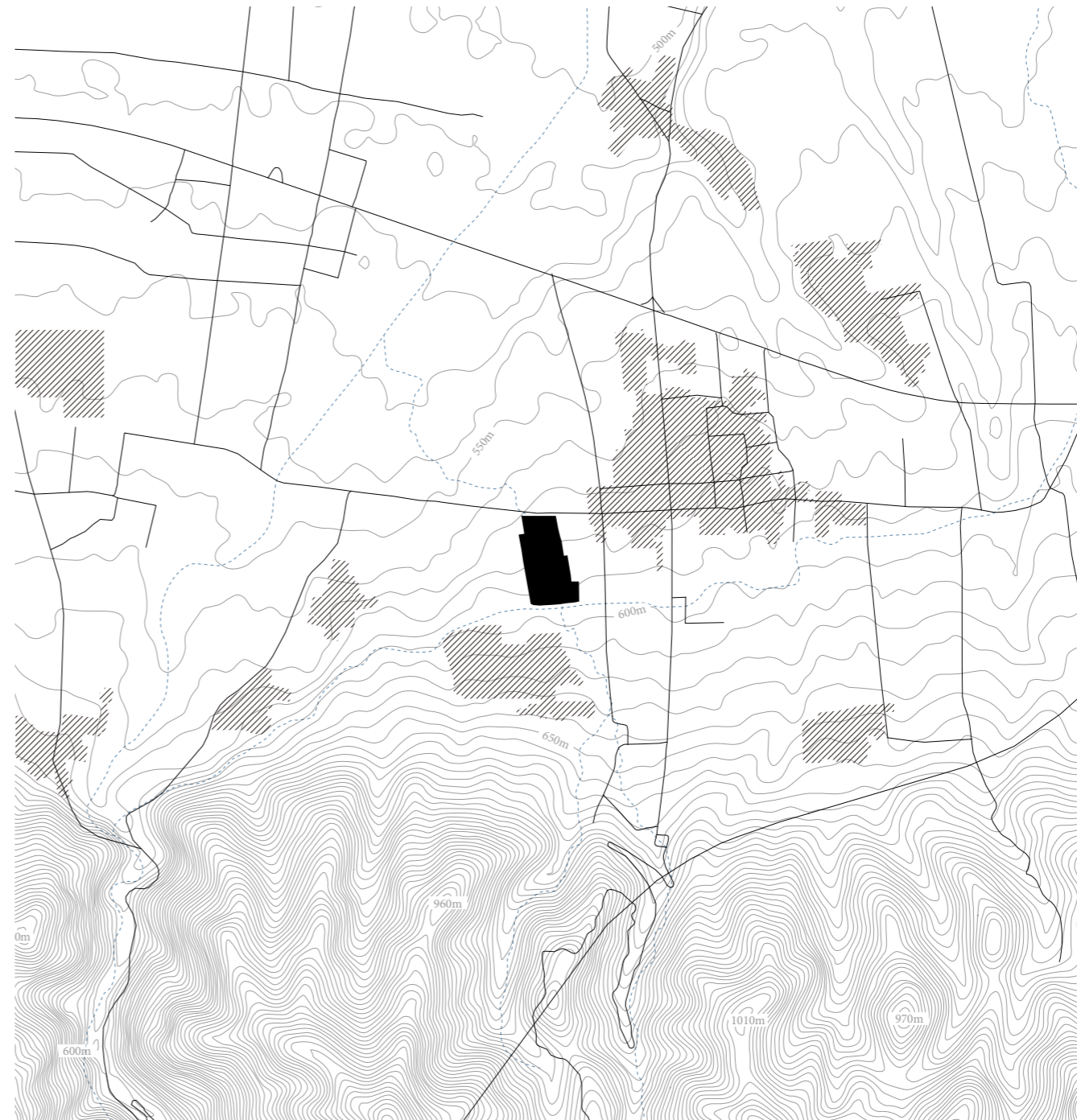
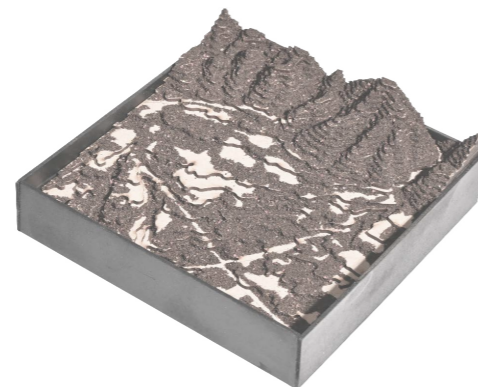
Figure  
Surroundings of Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery

▼  
Legend

- Contour line
- Road
- Water
- /// Village

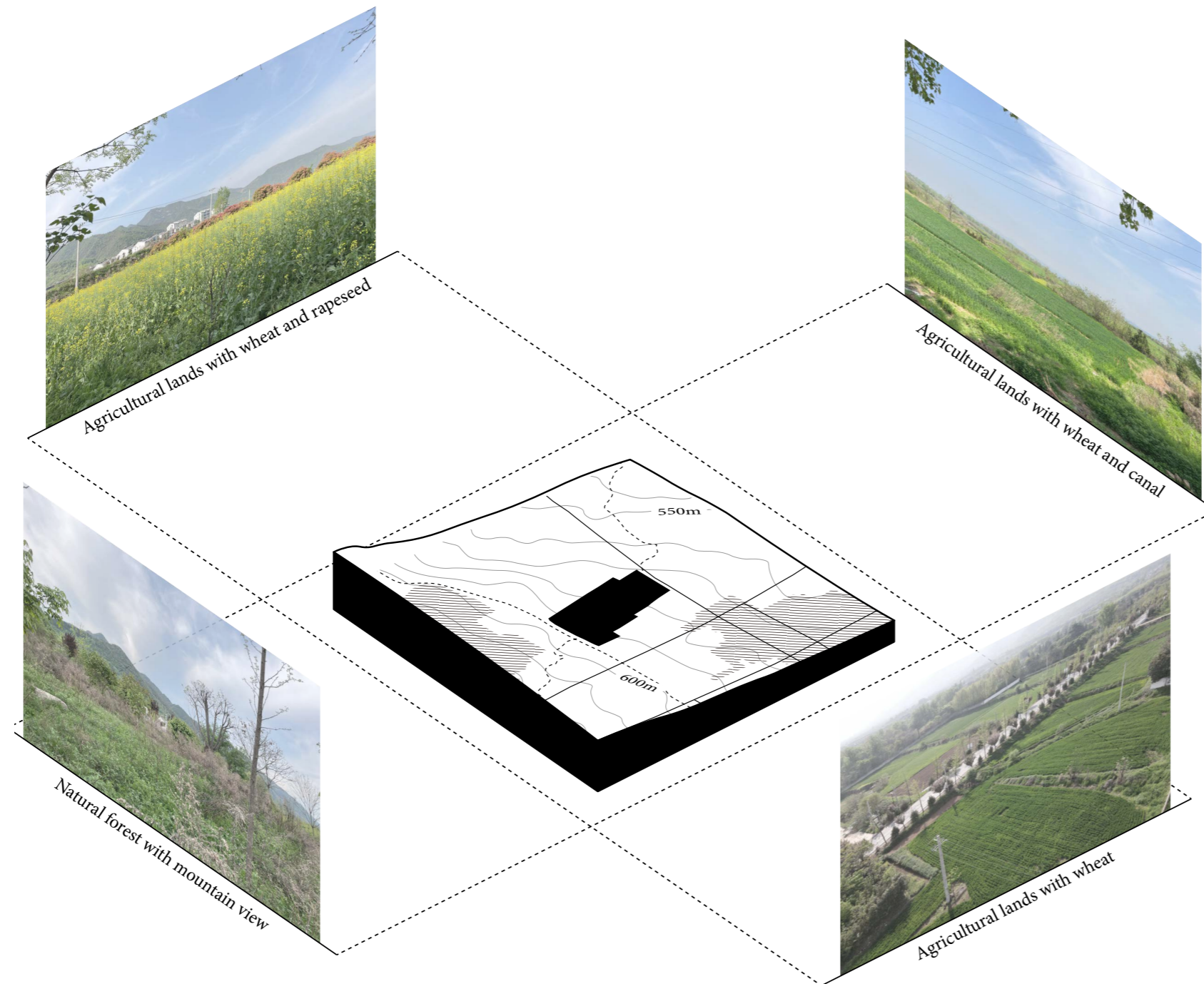


0 100 300 600m



## Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

### 2.3 Context of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery



canals run through Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, enhancing its serene landscape.

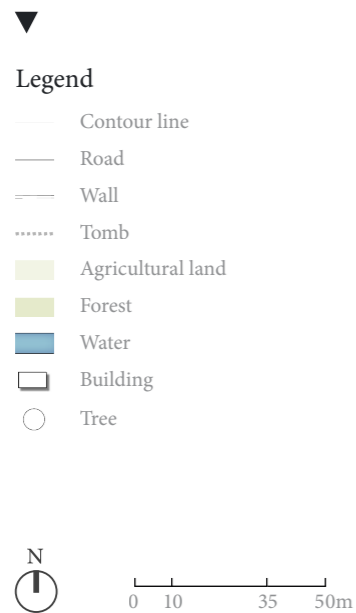
Zoom in to the site, Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery is situated on a sloping terrain with an altitude ranging from 570 to 600 meters. The surrounding environment of the cemetery is remarkably beautiful. To the west, there are fields of wheat and blooming rapeseed flowers in spring, with views extending to the Zhongnan Mountains and Shibianyu village. The north side features expansive wheat fields and a river canal flowing northward. The east is also dominated by large wheat fields, with mountain views and increasing natural forest cover as one approaches the mountains. To the south lies a wild forest offering a scenic vista facing the mountains.

# Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

## 2.3 Context of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

▼  
Figure  
Masterplan of current  
situation

Figure  
Sequences inside Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery



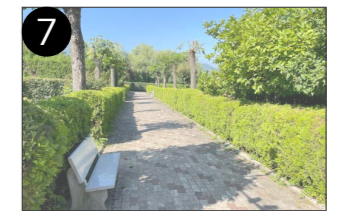
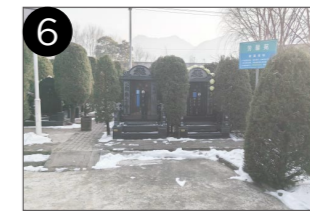
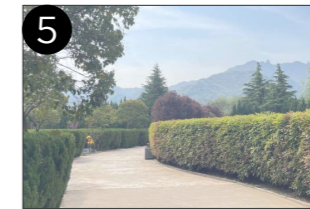
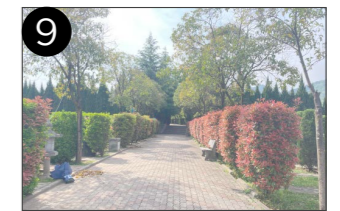
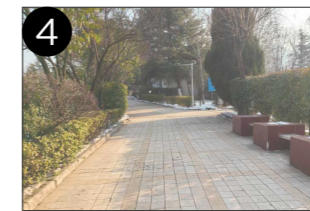
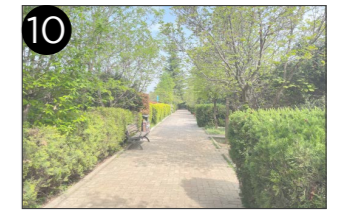
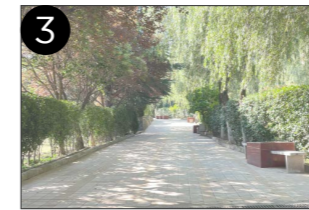
The main entrance to Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery is positioned on the northern side of the site. Visitors typically follow a circular tour route starting from this main entrance, guided by a well-defined path. This journey is only deviated from when visitors need to access burial areas situated away from the main path, leading them deeper into the site for further exploration.

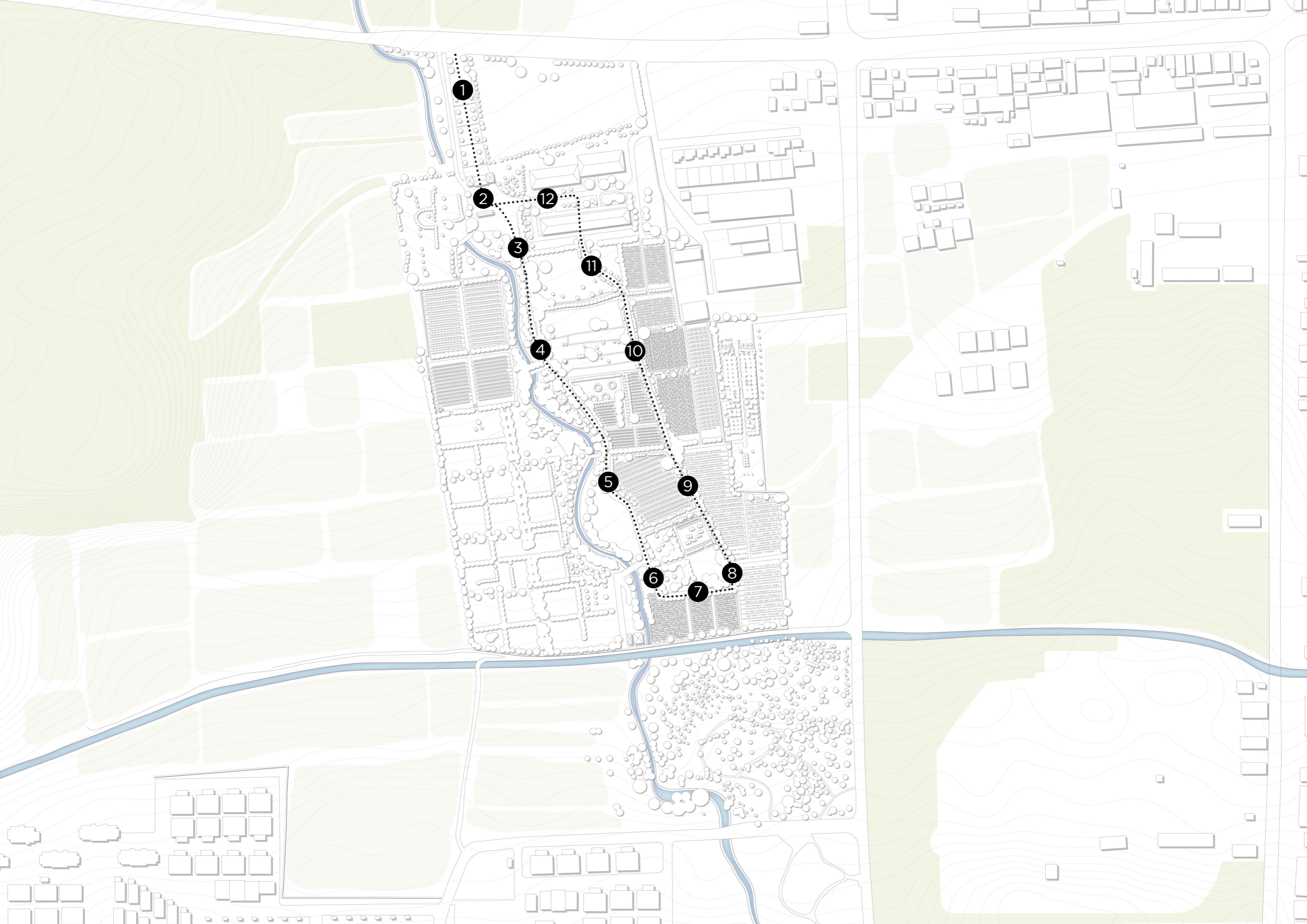
Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a long path lined with cypresses. This path leads to a traditional Chinese mural wall that connects the entrance square, enhancing the sense of mystery and anticipation as one progresses along the route.

The main road ushers visitors through a series of spaces framed by densely planted shrubs and trees on both sides, which occasionally open up to reveal views of the distant Zhongnan Mountain. The landscaping around burial

area is meticulously maintained, with shrubs pruned to ensure they remain out of direct view, preserving the privacy and reverence of the resting places.

Completing the circular route, visitors return to the entrance square, where they encounter a moon gate that provides access to two structures. These buildings are with wall burial rooms and the cemetery office on the first floor.





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## Memory & Symbol

- 3.1 Classification of memory*
- 3.2 Rituals representing social memory*
- 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province*
- 3.4 Symbols and symbolism*

◀  
The Sacred Path of  
Li Zhi's Mausole-  
um from Western  
Han Dynasty,  
2021

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.1 Classification of memory

“

*Memory is seen as a practice mediated by embodied acts through material forms.*

”

◀  
*Rodrigo, R. (2014).  
Spatializing memory: bodily performance and minimalist aesthetics in memorial space.*

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.1 Classification of memory

Memory, in its broadest sense, refers to the capacity of individuals and groups to store, recall, and reconstruct information and experiences. It plays a crucial role in shaping identity, understanding, and interaction within both personal and social contexts. Memory can be categorized into individual memory, collective memory, and social memory.

#### *Individual Memory*

Individual memory pertains to the personal capacity to remember. This type of memory is subjective and deeply personal, shaped by an individual's experiences, emotions, and cognition. It forms the basis of one's identity, learning, and ability to navigate the world. Individual memory includes episodic memory (memories of specific events), semantic memory (general knowledge about the world), and procedural memory (know-how memory).

#### *Collective Memory*

Collective memory refers to the shared pool of memories, knowledge, and information of a group that is passed from one generation to another. It encompasses the shared experiences and narratives that contribute to the identity of a group, such as a nation, community, or social group. Collective memory is often maintained and transmitted through cultural means such as rituals, ceremonies, monuments, and texts. It helps to foster a sense of continuity, belonging, and shared identity among members of the group. (Michael, 2001)

#### *Social Memory*

Social memory is closely related to collective memory but focuses more on the processes through which societies remember and forget, and how past events are socially constructed and remembered in the present. It encompasses the mechanisms through which societies maintain and transmit collective memories, including the roles of institutions, rituals, symbols, and narratives in shaping collective understanding and remembrance of the past. Social memory studies often explore how power, ideology, and politics influence what is remembered and forgotten, highlighting the contested nature of memory in shaping historical narratives and collective identities. (Anna, Veronika, Olga & Alexandr, 2015)

In summary, while individual memory focuses on personal recollections and experiences, collective and social memories emphasize the shared aspects of memory that contribute to group identities and societal understandings of the past. These categories illuminate the complex interplay between personal experiences and the broader social and cultural contexts in which memories are formed, maintained, and transmitted.

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

#### *Social Memory*

Social memory is described as the collective memory of a society, encompassing the shared experiences, knowledge, traditions, and cultural practices that are transmitted across generations. It is a process through which communities remember their past, shape their identity, and maintain continuity over time through practices like rituals. These rituals play a crucial role in reinforcing social bonds and ensuring the persistence of cultural values and norms, thereby facilitating the transfer of social memory within the societal framework.

#### *Rituals*

Rituals are defined as structured and symbolic actions performed by individuals or groups to convey and reinforce shared beliefs, values, and identities within a community. They serve as a medium through which social memory is expressed and transmitted, providing a sense of continuity and belonging among members of a society. Through rituals, cultural knowledge and social norms are enacted and preserved, facilitating the transfer of these elements across generations and contributing to the maintenance of social cohesion and collective identity.

#### *Memory as Reconstruction*

Memory is not merely the reproduction of past experience but a process of reconstruction. This perspective under-

scores the dynamic nature of memory, suggesting that it is shaped by the current context, interpretations, and needs of the remembered. Consequently, social memories are not fixed artifacts but evolving narratives that can be reshaped over time, influenced by present circumstances, societal changes, and new information, which can lead to different understandings or representations of the past.

#### *Role of Rituals in Social Memory*

##### 1. Recording and transmission:

Rituals have a dual role in social memory. They not only record important events but also transmit essential social information.

##### 2. Creating Atmosphere:

Rituals create a specific atmosphere that aids in the memorization process, making it easier for individuals to remember and connect with the past.

##### 3. Reconstructing the Past:

Participation in a ritual allows individuals to reconstruct the past, fostering a deeper understanding of historical events and their significance.

##### 4. Inscription in Memory:

Rituals can help inscribe significant events into the collective memory of a social group.



Procedure of Funeral,  
Disappearing Chinese Funeral,  
Zhao Hei Visualization,  
2019

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

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*Ritual is a way of existence transferring from one generation and social stratum to another allowing to deliver the essential content of social memory in a constantly changing state.*

”

Utkina, A., et al. (2015).  
Ritual as a method of social  
memory content transfer.

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

In the ideology of ordinary Chinese people, “death” is like “returning”, which means people return to a world that is completely different from the state of life. After death, the body becomes a “corpse”, and the spirit evolves into two kinds of souls, “Hun” and “Po”. Po attaches to the “corpse” and returns to the earth, while Hun returns to heaven or hell. Therefore, when a person dies, he becomes a “ghost”, and “ghost” somehow means “return” with the same pronunciation in Chinese. According to <ZhouLi>, “all living things would die, and after death they return to the earth.” Another book <Characteristics of Rituals> believes that after death, “Hun returns to the sky, and the body returns to the earth.” Chinese funeral culture therefore attaches great importance to the burial of “corpse” and the various arrangements for “Hun”.

There are usually small holes drilled into urns and coffins. This is related to the ancestors’ belief that death is the separation of soul and body. These “holes” are used to allow the Hun of the deceased to freely enter and exit, so as to be reborn as soon as possible. Due to the role of this concept of the soul, Chinese funeral customs often include many operations of “summoning Hun” and “sending Hun”. After a person dies, if arrangements are made, a “soul/Hun leading banner” should be erected in front of the door to guide the Hun of the deceased back “home”.

After the deceased is buried, there are very complicated rituals, which also run through the concept of death be-

ing the separation of spirit and body. For example, people like to light incense during remembrance, and incense is called “soul/Hun returning incense.” A lot of incense is burned in Chinese Taoist and Buddhist temples, and people can vaguely see gods among the fragrance and thick smoke. “Incense” has become an object of communication between the human world and the other world.

Chinese are industrious and frugal. People don’t have many luxuries during their lifetime, but they have one hope after death: to die well and decently, which means to have a nice place after death to feel at ease and sleep in peace. From this pursuit, a series of funeral customs were derived. For example, we should avoid the elderly who are normally die in hospital beds. Instead, when they are dying, they should first bathe and change burial clothes, and then move them to their beds in the main room of their houses, where they can spend their last moments surrounded by relatives and friends.

As for burial, most people follow the custom of soil burial. The orientation of the coffin and tomb generally point to the west, so that the Hun of the deceased can return to its original place - the west. Moreover, when a person dies, it is like the sun setting in the West in Chinese culture. The direction of the grave facing west implies that people return to nature. This

Figure  
Soul/hun returning incense



Figure  
Soul/hun leading banner



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

arrangement is also for the deceased to “sleep properly.”

There is another very prominent feature, that is, on the one hand, people hope that the deceased can live a prosperous life in the other world as good as or even better than before, on the other hand, they also require that the deceased can bless people who are alive after turning into gods or ghosts in the other world. When the Chinese bury people, they must be accompanied by burial objects. These items include antiseptics and daily necessities. In addition, the rich also bury various antiques, calligraphy and paintings, gold and silver treasures, etc. Feudal emperors even buried concubines and other servants. These behaviors were driven by one concept: let the deceased live the same high standard of life as before.

On the way to the cemetery, a large amount of paper coins are scattered, commonly known as “safe money”, to make the deceased’s journey to the other world smoother. From now on, every time during *Mourning Day* or other special remembrance ceremonies, people will burn a large amount of paper coins and offer good food. This is considered to make the deceased rich and happy by sending money to him.

Chinese people have long believed in and adopted the art of *Feng Shui*, which is closely related to people’s hope that the dead can bless the living with peace and wealth. People first paid attention to the choice of graves, often

mainly considering the topography, such as choosing high ground to prevent moisture and to be water-proof; choosing a place with broad terrain and beautiful mountains with clear waters, where relatives are buried, which can give the living a good feeling when visiting, etc. Later, the choice of graves was increasingly linked to the wealth and status of the living, as well as good and bad fortunes.

#### *Three stages of funeral*

The funeral of the deceased’s state can be roughly divided into three stages according to traditional Chinese death culture:

The first - the departure stage. During this period, relatives of the deceased must be guarded by the bed and get him/her dressed in burial clothes. Some white flower banners will be hung to announce nearby residents, paper coins and white flowers filled with the room. All the living creatures like cats and dogs need to be tied to not disturb the dead. Death itself is not infectious, but the dead flesh will bring germs. The dead belong to Yin, and living people belong to Yang, Yin should avoid being impacted by Yang to the greatest extent, otherwise there will be the danger of becoming a zombie. In this stage before entering the coffin, the soul and body of the deceased are not completely separated, they hover on the edge of life



Procedure of Bury,  
Disappearing Chinese Funeral,  
Zhao Hei Visualization,  
2019

# Memory & Symbol

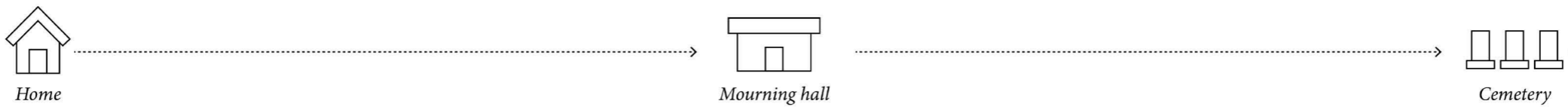
## 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

Time period

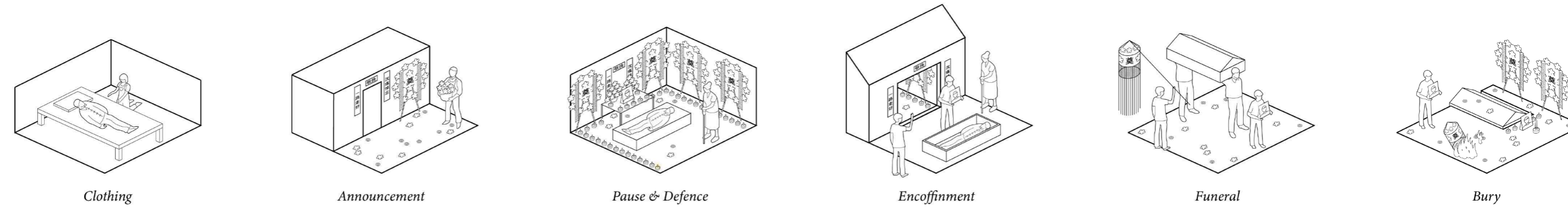
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Place



Space

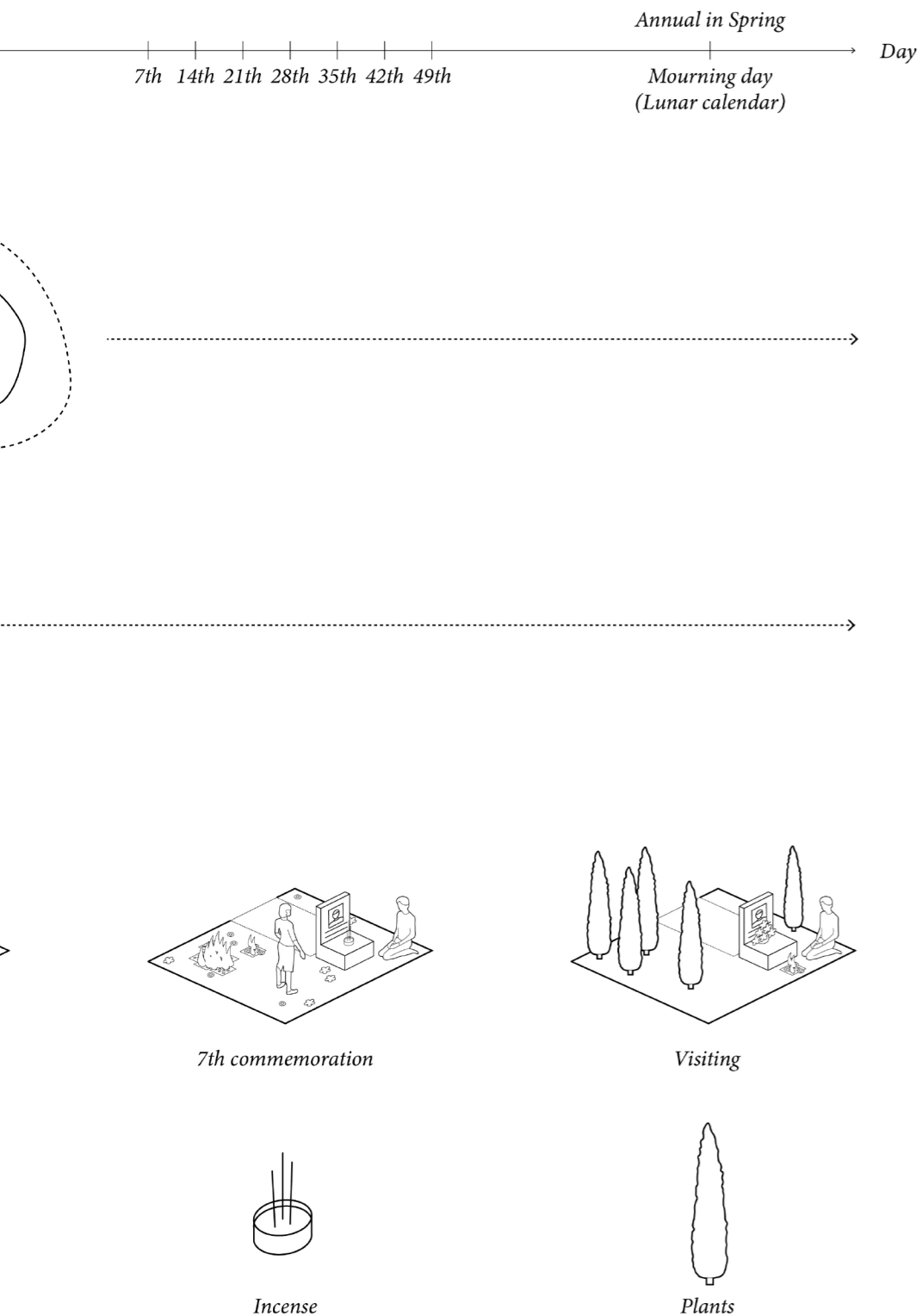


Symbol



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory



and death, and they are still in the ambiguous threshold marge.

The second - the separation of soul and flesh. Before formal burial, the coffin of the deceased is often placed in the mourning hall temporarily, which is called pause and defence. People place the photo of the dead in the middle and put flower banquets and light candles around the dead. In this period, generally, people choose a cemetery with the best “feng shui” and wait for the best burial time. Moreover, the whole social relationship centered on the deceased will come together through the funeral, when not only the whole family and its extending relationships will be reorganized and consolidated. When the body is placed in the coffin, which is called encoffinment, the soul of the deceased has been on his/her way through the yellow spring (according to Chinese legends) heading to the other side of the world. Then the coffin will be transported to the selected cemetery by a group of relatives, lifting soul-leading banners to guide the soul of the dead to follow them. Nowadays, dead bodies are always brought to crematoriums for burning to ash directly

Figure  
Traditional procedure of burial rituals  
in Xi'an

Figure  
Paper coins, also called as safe money



# Memory & Symbol

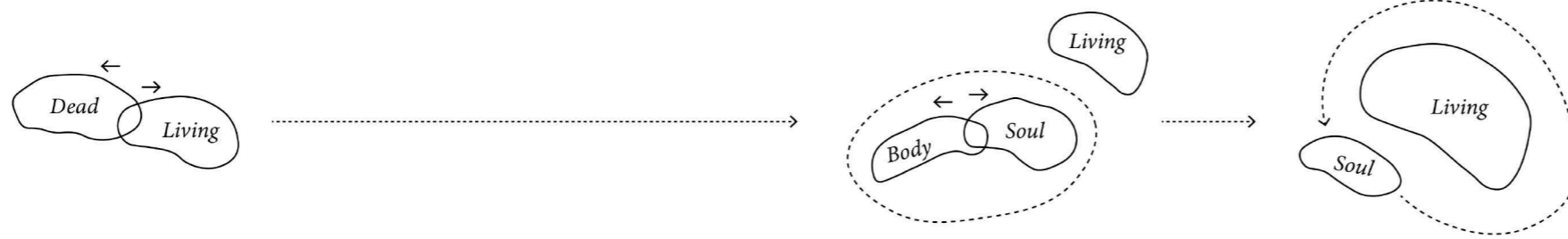
## 3.2 Rituals representing social memory

Time period

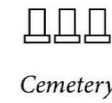
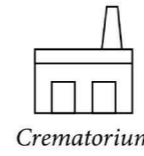
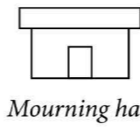
2nd

7th 14th 21th 28th 35th 42th 49th

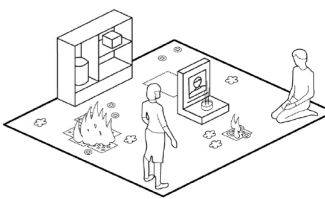
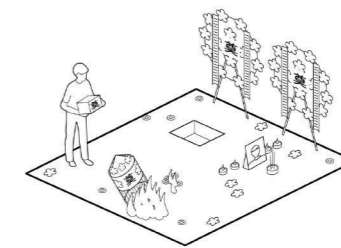
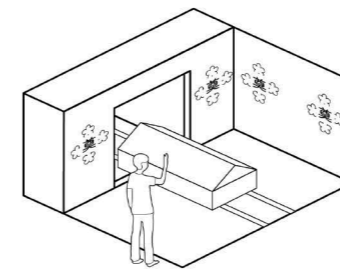
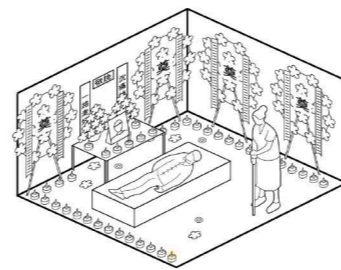
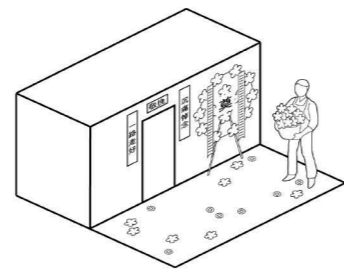
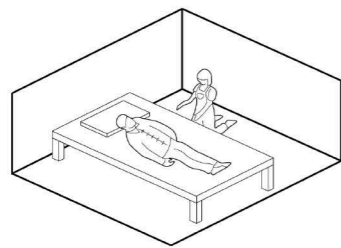
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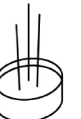
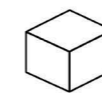
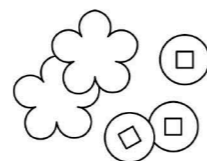
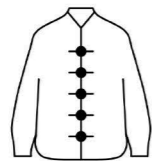
Place



Space

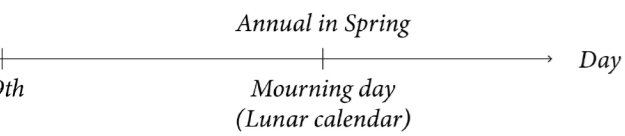


Symbol



## Memory & Symbol

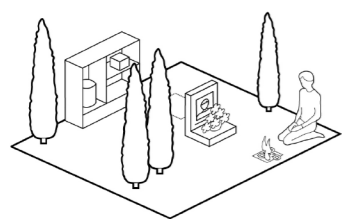
### 3.2 Rituals representing social memory



after leaving the mourning hall. The defence time is shorter. The family could carry a small urn to the cemetery without too many people involved, which made the funeral more private.

The third, the dead become ancestors. The family bury the coffin or urn in the cemetery under a bought tomb. Most Chinese prefer the Confucian explanation: formally buried dead people become members of their ancestors, and as long as the descendants regularly offer sacrifices and memorize them, they can bring happiness to the family. Those who do not receive a proper sacrifice and remembrance become “ghosts,” who are extremely dangerous because of hunger and thirst and are a source of disaster and disease. The remembrance always included a burning, making fire quite important in Chinese burial culture. After the funeral, the 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, 35th, 42nd and 49th, every 7 days, the family comes to the cemetery to burn and memorize the dead. After the 49th day, they could visit whenever they want, which always includes Mourning Day.

Figure  
Procedure of burial rituals in Xi'an  
nowadays



Visiting



Plants

In short, between the time of death and the burial of the body, the relationship between the body and the soul goes through three stages: semi-separation, the beginning of separation, permanent calm, and as the degree of separation between the two becomes more and more confirmed, the danger to the deceased decreases. The only way to ensure that the dead will not face danger is to ensure that the rituals are complete and effective, and to ensure that the dead go to the “right place” at the right time, which is the internal reason why people spend a lot of time, energy, and money to hold funerals.

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province



Figure  
Naked burial in a cave



Chinese cemeterial art originated very early and has gone through a very long historical evolution. Burial is practiced in most areas of China, mainly due to the worship of most ethnic groups of ancestors for the earth that nurtures everything, which makes people believe that human beings should eventually return to the earth, and their final destination is to “be buried in earth peacefully”.

#### *The origin of the mausoleum environment*

In ancient times, humans lived in caves just like wild beasts. Burial of this period was basically “naked burial.” It was not until the middle Yangshao period of the Neolithic Age that the use of coffins appeared.

#### *The clues from pre-Qin period of the mausoleum environment*

In Yin Dynasty (1300 BC - 1046 BC), people “have graves but no pile of soil”. During Spring & Autumn and Warring period (770 BC - 221 BC), independent mausoleums centered on each generation of monarchs appeared. Out of the worship of nature and the ideal of communication between heaven and man, after the middle period of Warring period (475 BC - 221 BC), some states called the burial of their emperors “Ling”, and “burials were built resemble mountains” to indicate that the burial owner belonged to the highest level of the feudal hierarchy. Large and medium-sized burials had had tall square cone-shaped

soil mounds, which can reach a maximum of more than ten meters.

#### *The formation in Qin & Han Dynasties of the mausoleum environment*

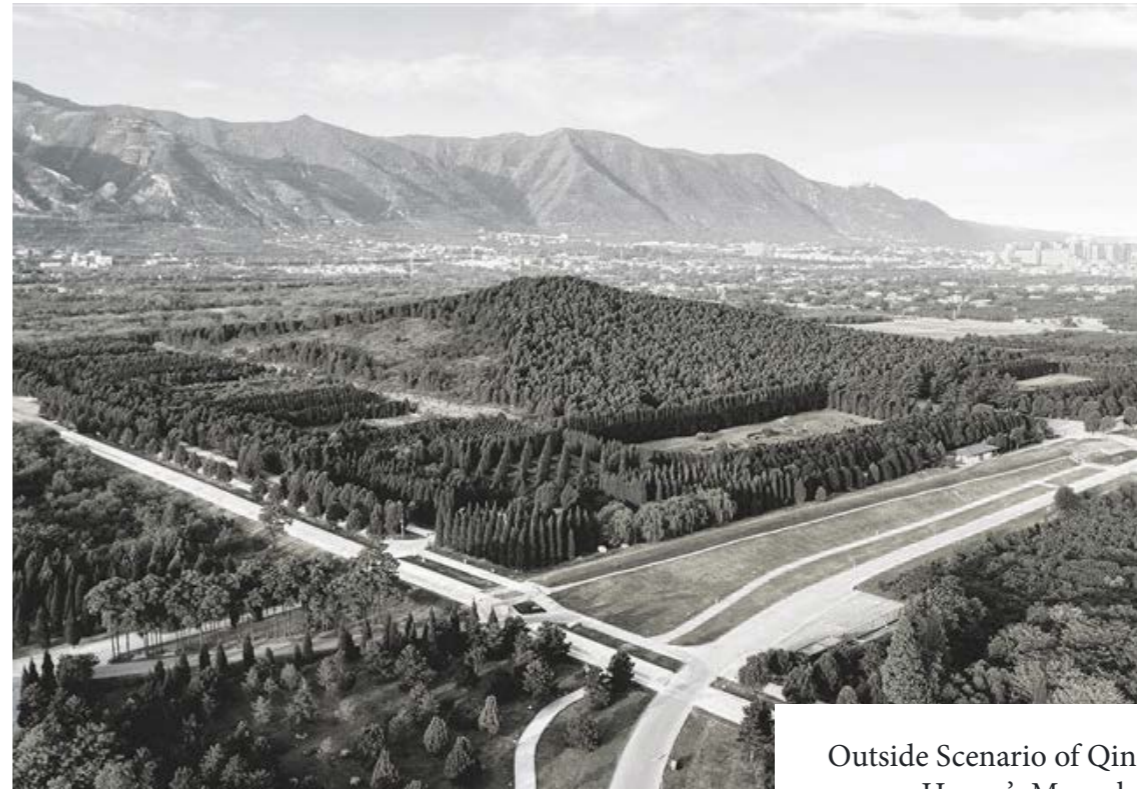
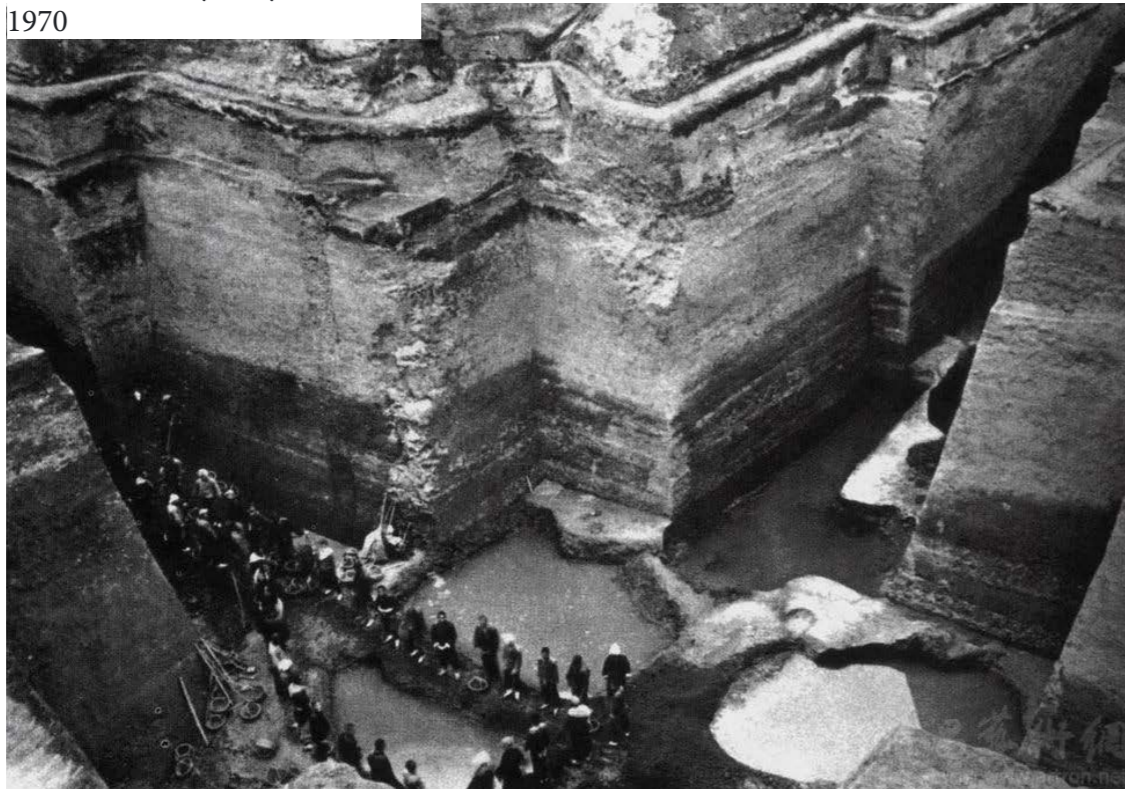
The Mausoleum of Qin Shihuang pioneered the mausoleum system for all Chinese emperors and marked the privileges of the supreme ruler. It is located in Lintong County, Shaanxi Province, leaning against the northern foot of the mountain and facing the east. There are double inner and outer rectangular walls built around the cemetery. There are three terracotta warriors and horses pits buried for Qin Shihuang.

The Sacred Path is an important part of the imperial mausoleums and high-level burial of Han Dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD). It refers to the road on the ground connected to the four inner passages to the burial. The Sacred Path is usually 100 meters wide and no one is allowed to encroach on the Sacred Path.

The sequence of the burial system that emerged in the middle of Western Han Dynasty (202 BC - 8 AD) is that there is a pair of half gates (Que) at the front of the burial mound on the ground. From there, statues of animals and people on both sides of the Sacred



Burials underground from  
Yinxu of Yin Dynasty,  
1970



Outside Scenarior of QinShi-  
Huang's Mausoleum,  
"Archaeology Story": The  
unsolved mysteries of Qin Shi  
Huang's Mausoleum,  
2021



The Sacred Path of Li  
Zhi's Mausoleum from  
Western Han Dynasty,  
2021



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province

Path are placed, then the temple, and finally the burial mound. Some large cemeteries have a mound as the center and walls built around.

Statues are important elements of the ancient Chinese mausoleum environment and an important part of the Sacred Path. Since Qin Dynasty, there have been stone unicorns, stone elephants, and stone horses in front of the emperor's burial; stone sheep, stone tigers, stone people, and stone pillars have been placed in front of the tombs of ministers.

#### *The development in Wei & Jin Dynasty of mausoleum environment*

Western Jin and Wei Dynasty(220 AD - 316 AD) paid attention to simple mausoleums. Burials were built on mountains, with no signs and no trees above, only gardens and the Sacred Path. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Buddhism became popular among rulers, and Buddhist temples were arranged in cemeteries.

#### *Mausoleums built based on mountainous topography*

In Wei and Jin Dynasties, the awareness of natural aesthetics awakened, and literary and painting creations based on the natural beauty of landscapes began to emerge. The aesthetic trend of "charming landscapes with their shapes"

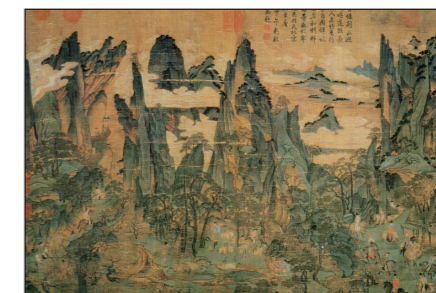
and "mountains and rivers are nourishing" represented people's artistic acumen and unique insights into the beauty of nature during this period. Mausoleums are built according to the mountain topography. A long pit is opened on the mountain to build burial chamber. There are usually mounds on the ground. Besides, sequences are paid strong attention to and set up pools on the Sacred Path to enrich the axis.

#### *The full flourish in Tang & Song Dynasty of the mausoleum environment*

With the vigorous development of landscape painting, poetry and water color art in Tang and Song Dynasties(581 AD - 1279 AD), the planning of mausoleums began to focus on integrating landscape topography and pattern, "getting the beauty of landscape", with emotions gradually intensified. For example, Qian Ling of Tang Dynasty combined the beauty of the female body with landscape topography.

Zhao Ling of Tang Dynasty pioneered the practice of basing mountains as mausoleums in Tang Dynasty. The main peak of Jiujun Mountain in Liquan County, Shaanxi Province was used as the mausoleum mountain, and a cave was carved in the mountain to build a mysterious palace. After Zhao Ling, all mausoleums in Tang Dynasty basically followed this system. The

▼  
Figure  
Painting illustrating natural aesthetics in late Tang Dynasty, 755



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province



Figure  
Chang Ling from Qing Dynasty



overall layout of Tang mausoleum is facing south, with high terrain in the north and low in the south. A square wall is built around the mausoleum mountain, with towers at four corners, a door on each side, and a pair of stone beasts and towers outside the gate. There are Sacred Path on the south and north side, with the south being the most important.

#### *The great prosperity in Ming & Qing Dynasty of mausoleum environment*

Mausoleums of Ming and Qing Dynasties relied on mountains to take advantage of the scenery, used the Sacred Path to organize and connect the spaces, and used the progressive architectural sequence to form a deep axis that ran throughout, forming a graceful and grand magnanimity. In the axis, from the north to south, there lay a gate, tower, pavilion, statues, bridge and palace, behind all of these lay the burial mound, which was round or elliptical.

The principle of mausoleums in Ming and Qing Dynasties was to “obey the regulations of ceremony and rituals, meanwhile coordinate with the grandeur of mountains and rivers”. The landscape pattern guided the mausoleum planning, which in turn drove the overall landscape and volume of mountains and rivers to commemorate the past emperor.

#### *The intersection in the Republic of China of the mausoleum environment*

After the fall of Qing Dynasty, a period of great turmoil and transformation began in the Republic of China. The construction of mausoleums for emperors was terminated. Mausoleums shifted from specifically imperial cemeteries to general mausoleums. A large number of soldiers memorial cemeteries were built during this period. The planning of the mausoleum has further developed in terms of design ideas, functions, construction technology and material application, reflecting the new outlook of advancing with the times after the feudal dynasties. In addition, places for gathering have been added, such as the space in front of the music fountain in Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, pavilions next to waterfalls, long flower corridors for resting, etc.

Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum is located at the foot of Nanjing's Purple Mountain. It faces north and south and is built on the mountain. The design combines the topography and continues the traditional cemetery layout. The archway, Sacred Path, gate, steles, pavilions and coffin chamber form a correct axis, matching the grand momentum of the nature. In addition, a series of memorial buildings such as small pavilions, a memorial hall, big bronze statues, music fountain and a library surround Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum.



Mountain of Zhao Ling,  
2020

▼  
Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum  
lying on the mountain,  
2021



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province

The expression of Yanda Deng Cemetery is more modern. The overall space is full of affinity. The entrance to Yanda's tomb is a circular flower bed then an open green lawn, with a cross-shaped cement corridor in the middle dividing the lawn symmetrically. Evergreen trees such as juniper and cypress are planted on both sides of the corridor. There are flower corridors with ste-concrete structures on the east and west sides of the grassland. The flower corridors extend zigzagly to the front of his tomb. Wisterias are planted on both sides of the flower corridor, and a pavilion for visitors to rest. Deng Yanda's tomb is made of granite, and a very delicate garland is placed on the altar to express people's grief and remembrance of the pioneer.

The evolution of Chinese mausoleum environment is a process of engraving people's intentions into nature, integrating social beauty into natural beauty to obtain artistic beauty. The spatial sequence is combined with mountains and water everywhere, complementing each other and making it vivid. Influenced by the development of capitalism in China and Western culture, mausoleums of China have evolved their own style, which is not only modern and unique but also with Chinese traditional characteristics.



▼  
Figure  
Music stage inside Sun  
Yat-sen Mausoleum

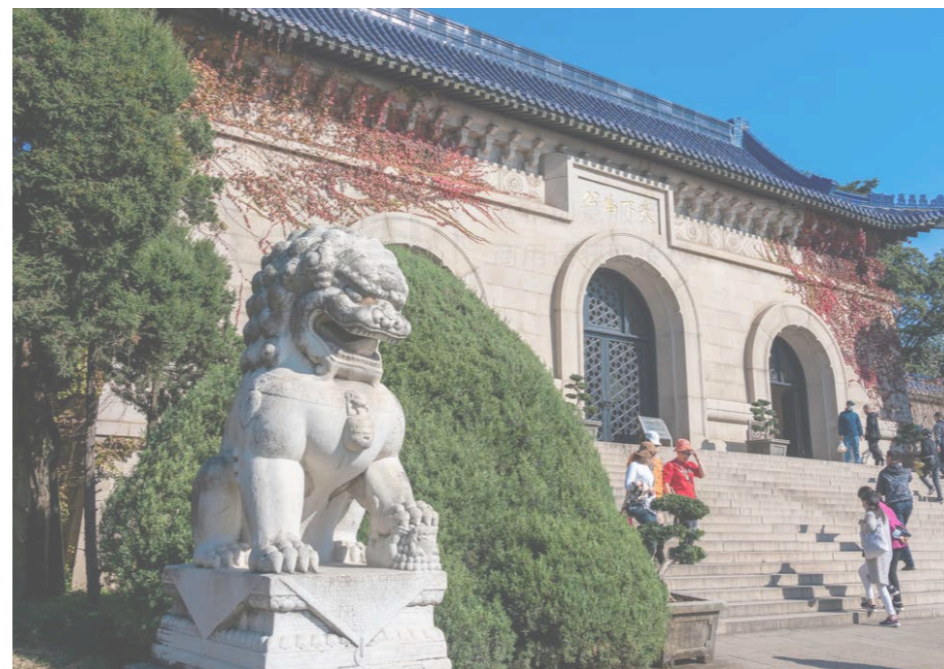
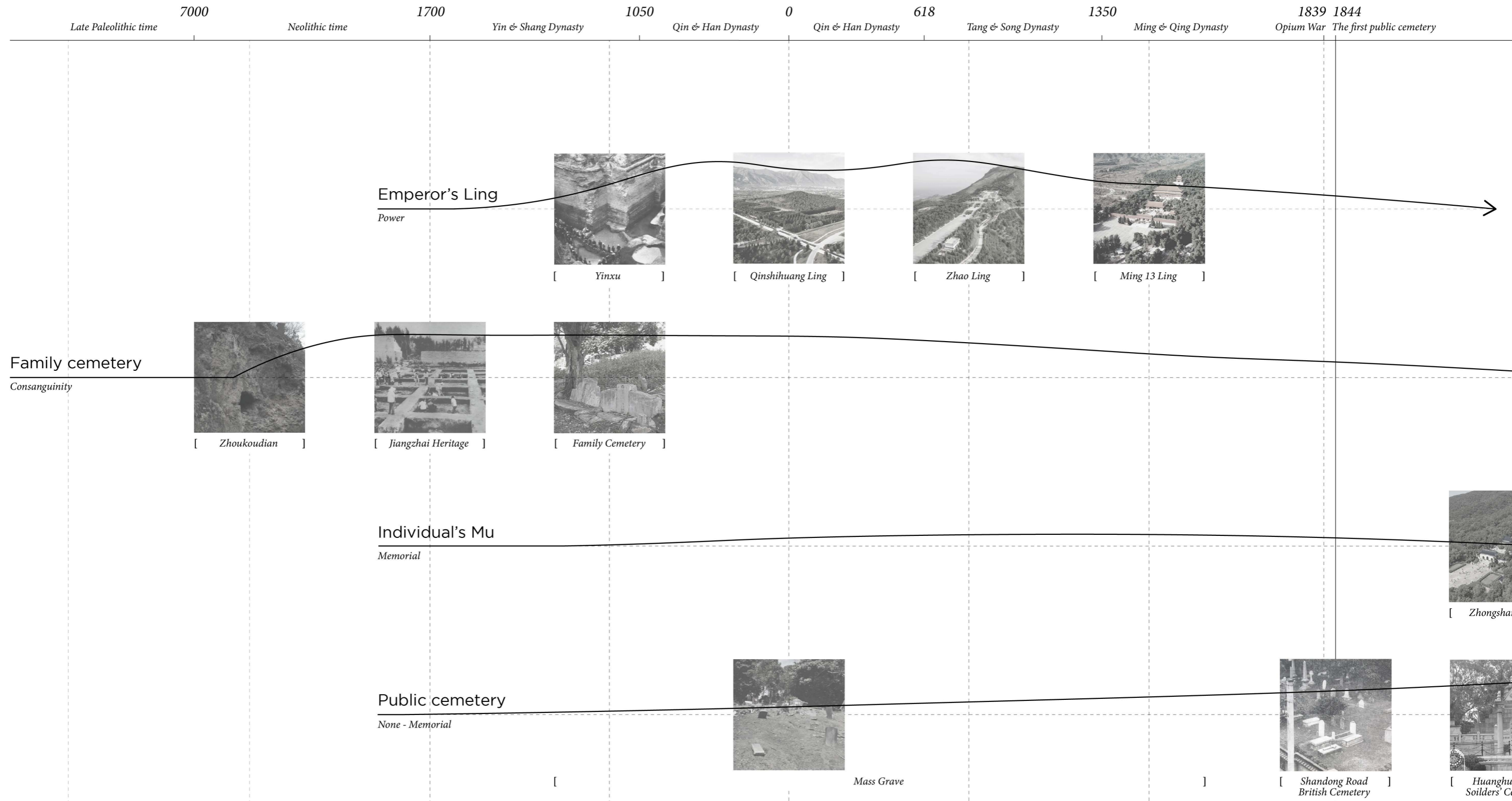


Figure  
Entrance of Sun Yat-sen  
Mausoleum

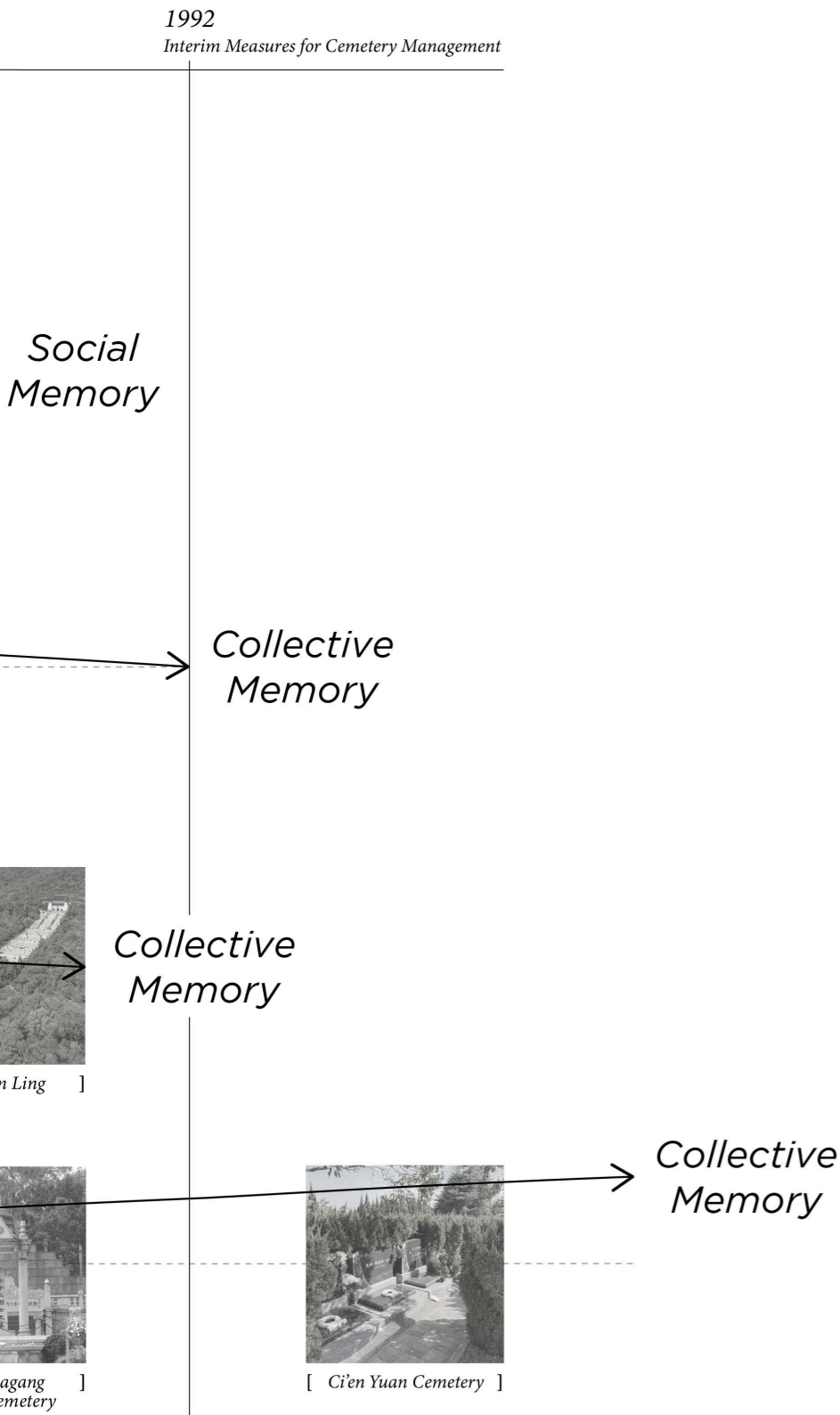
# Memory & Symbol

## 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.3 History of cemeteries in Shaanxi province



To sum up, cemeteries in Shaanxi Province can be divided into four types, emperor's Ling, family cemetery, individual's Mu and public cemetery.

The earliest came to being was the family cemetery, since in ancient China, people lived with big families, usually a family had its own family cemetery, and everyone would be buried together after death. It was usually located near the living area and held the collective memory. Later on, big families were gradually divided into a hierarchical system and evolved into a feudal monarchy. Usually the emperor represented the highest power and had the highest rank and specifications in the form of mausoleums and could easily evoke the national social memory.

Meanwhile, there existed individual Mu, which spanned a wide range from high-ranking officials to ordinary people. Some were very luxurious, and some were very simple, but there was one thing in common, everyone more or less imitated Ling, because Ling represented the highest level. Both types of cemeteries store collective memory of all social relationships of these persons during their lifetime.

Public cemeteries existed for a long time, it used to be named as Mass graves. It was a large area located in the suburbs placed or buried unknown bodies. However, the real public cemetery did not officially appear in China until after the Opium War, and the first public cemetery was built by the British near Shandong Road in Shanghai in 1844. At this time, when feudal society gradually fell apart, everyone's pursuit of freedom and equality was rising. Public cemeteries began to spread in China until they became the only legal graveyard. Public cemeteries have certain commercial properties, also carrying collective memories.

▼  
Figure  
4 types of cemeteries in  
Shaanxi province

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.4 Symbols and symbolism

“

*Symbols represent something like a sort of pass: something in and through which we recognize something already known to us.*

”

◀  
*Barrie, P. (2010).  
The Sacred in-between. The  
mediating role of architecture.*

## Memory & Symbol

### 3.4 Symbols and symbolism

#### *Symbol*

A symbol is a mark, sign, or object that stands for or represents something else. Symbols are used to convey ideas and concepts in various forms. In a cultural context, a symbol carries particular meanings recognized by people within that culture. These symbols convey values, beliefs, and ideas that are integral to the cultural identity and social fabric.

#### *Symbolism*

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Symbolism is a literary and artistic device that allows for the expression of deeper, more complex ideas and emotions. It involves the use of symbols to imbue objects, characters, figures, and colors with meaning beyond their physical appearance.

Symbols are the building blocks of symbolism. While a symbol on its own can convey a straightforward meaning, symbolism as a technique involves the intentional and layered use of multiple symbols to weave a richer tapestry of meaning within a work. For instance, a single tomb might symbolize the death of one person, but also a story lies behind him which can explore the complex nature of death, including its pain, growth, and change.

Both symbol and symbolism are connected closely with

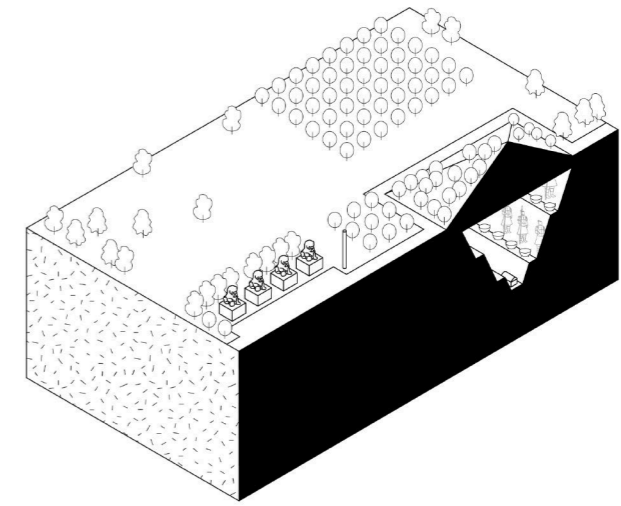
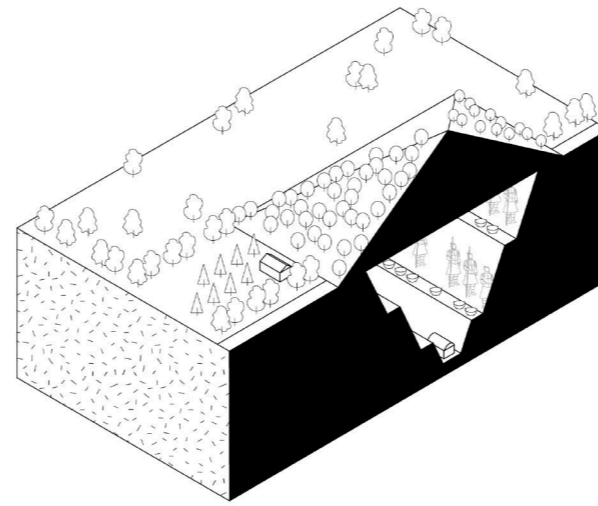
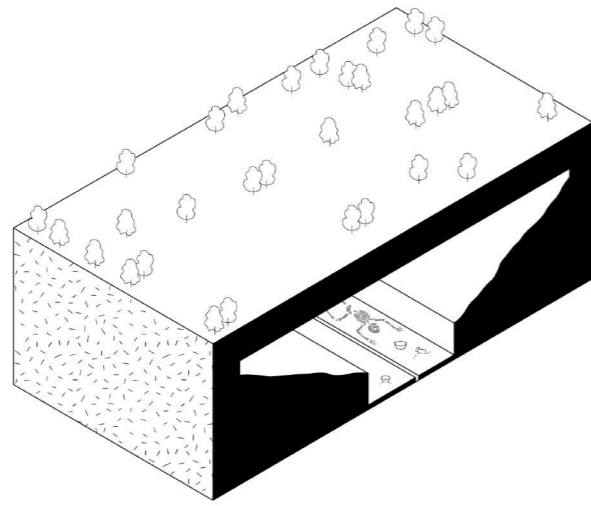
rituals as well.

#### *Memory & Symbol*

Memory and symbolism are interconnected in several profound ways. Symbols often serve as triggers for memories, encapsulating complex experiences and emotions into tangible forms that can be recalled and shared.

# Memory & Symbol

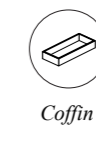
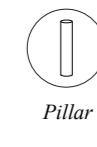
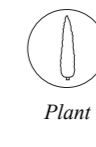
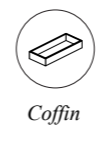
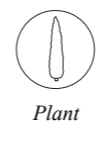
## 3.4 Symbols and symbolism



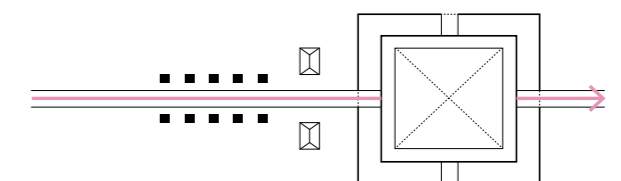
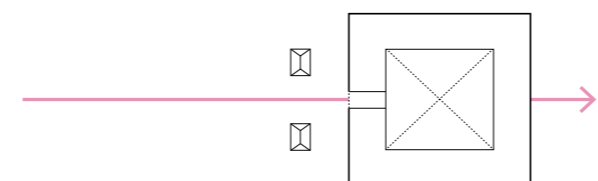
Elevation



Symbol

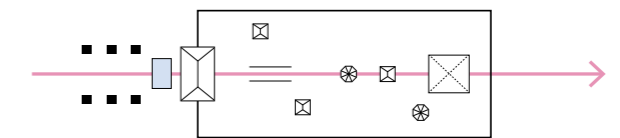
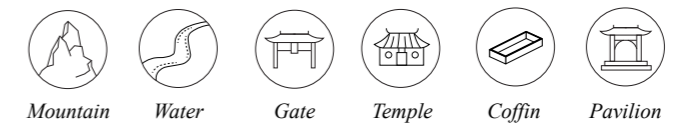
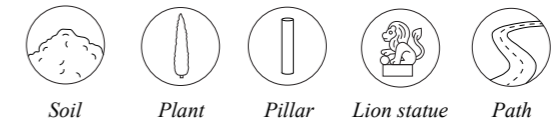
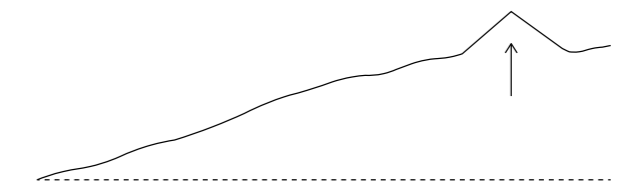
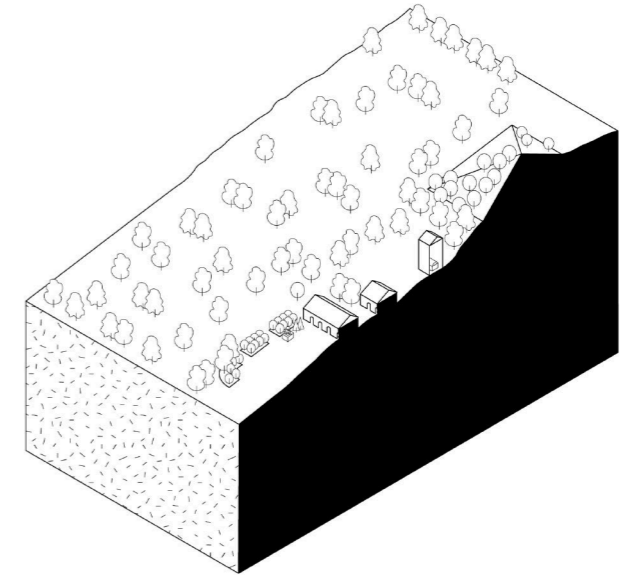
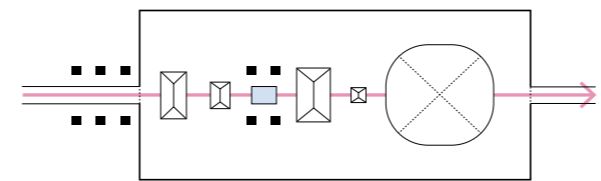
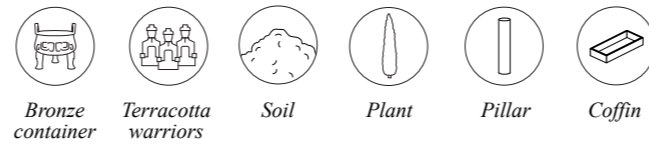
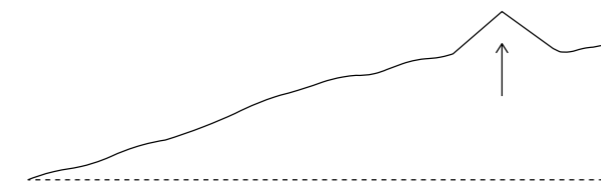
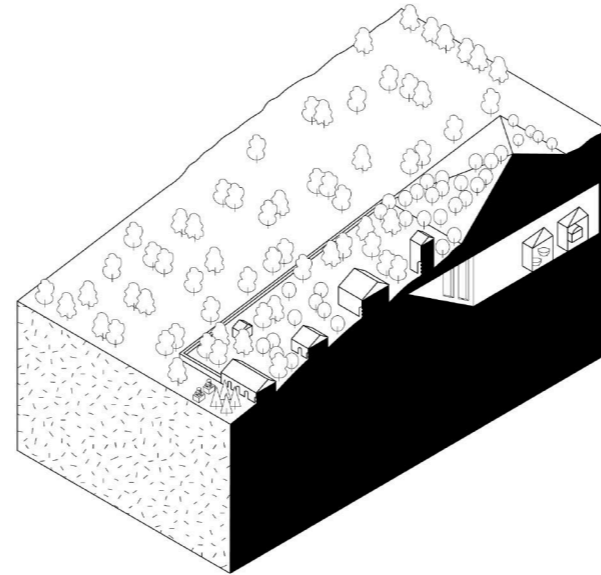
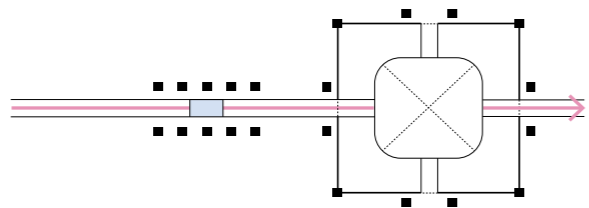
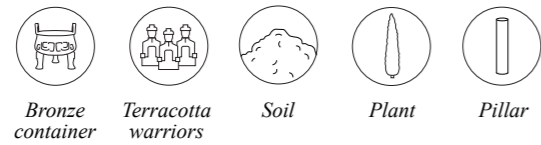
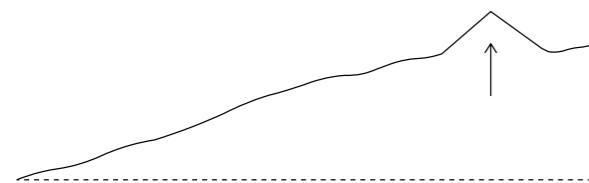
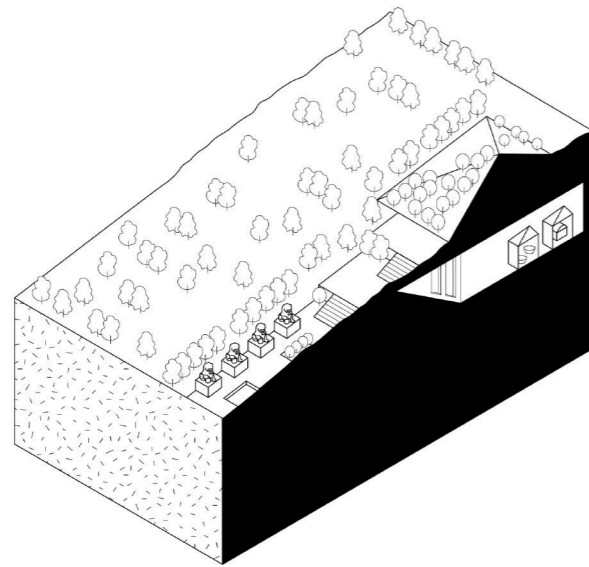


Axis & Choreography



# Memory & Symbol

## 3.4 Symbols and symbolism



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.4 Symbols and symbolism

According to the history of cemeteries in Shaanxi province, I analyze the evolution of emperor Ling, the most representative type. The analysis mainly focuses on four aspects: elevation, symbol, axis and choreography.

At first, the dead is buried underground, together with some of his/her bronze containers or some property, etc. At this stage, no signs of burial can be seen above the ground.

After a period of time, the dead is buried in a coffin, and the underground part become more complex, with multiple levels, evolved to bury the different types of buried objects. The coffin is usually buried in the bottom level. Above the ground, the burial looks like a pyramid-shaped mound, and such a high mound represents supreme power and a sense of overlooking. Plants representing longevity such as cypress are planted on the mound. In this process, the axis of the burial has appeared.

In the third stage, the choreography of the ground became more complex, from the ordinary pyramid-shaped mound, joined with the Sacred Path, often using stone lions on both sides to protect the owner, pillars and more orderly planting also marks the Sacred Path solemn and inviolable.

In the fourth stage, people begin to pursue living around mountains and water like gods do. The biggest change to

burial is that mounds began to be built on mountains, which also strengthen the supreme power. The mound is no longer a pure square, but with more rounded corners, and is surrounded by walls and towers, sometimes even guarded, to protect the owner. Square pools are also added to the Sacred Path to reflect the sky and increase divinity.

In the fifth stage, the burial is surrounded by walls, from a single mound into a cemetery. From the Sacred Path, you'll go through a formal gate, a pool, some temples, and so on, they are arranged on the Sacred Path, forming an axis, enriching the choreography of burial.










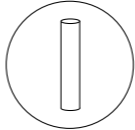
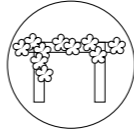

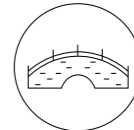

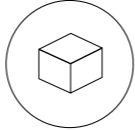
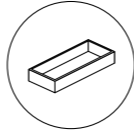



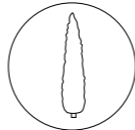





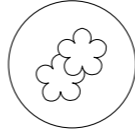
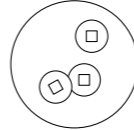
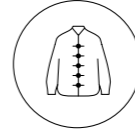
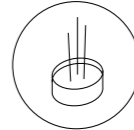
The last stage, the buildings within the cemetery are arranged more casual, adding a relaxed atmosphere. Coffins are moved from the ground to the surface, and no burial objects are buried with the owner, gradually transforming into a modern mode of burial.

On the right, I have summarized the symbols used in history and rituals. They are divided into five categories, namely statue symbol, construction symbol, body-related symbol, symbol of surrounding and symbol of ritual.

The statue contains a horse statue, buddha statue,

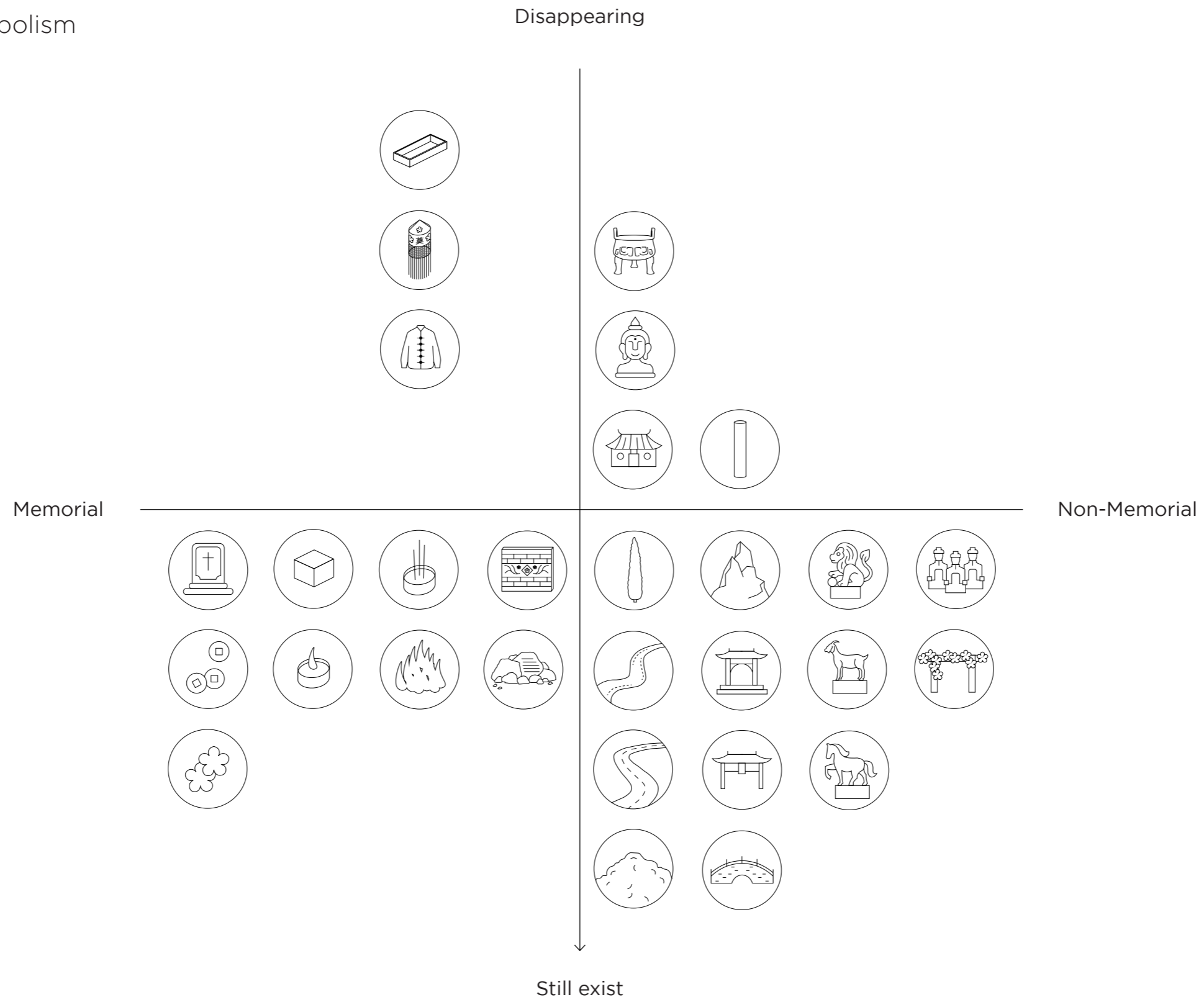
# Memory & Symbol

## 3.4 Symbols and symbolism

|              |   |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|--------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Statue       | <br><i>Horse statue</i>          | <br><i>Buddha statue</i>  | <br><i>Warrior statue</i> | <br><i>Lion statue</i>    | <br><i>Animal statue</i>  | <br><i>Bronze container</i> |   |
| Construction | <br><i>Mural wall</i>            | <br><i>Gate</i>           | <br><i>Temple</i>         | <br><i>Pillar</i>         | <br><i>Flower gallery</i> | <br><i>Pavilion</i>         | <br><i>Bridge</i>    |
| Body         | <br><i>Tomb</i>                 | <br><i>Cremation urn</i> | <br><i>Coffin</i>        |  |  |  |   |
| Surrounding  | <br><i>Mountain</i>            | <br><i>Stone</i>        | <br><i>Soil</i>         | <br><i>Plant</i>        | <br><i>Path</i>         | <br><i>Water</i>          |   |
| Ritual       | <br><i>Soul leading banner</i> | <br><i>Fire</i>         | <br><i>Candle</i>       | <br><i>White flower</i> | <br><i>Paper coin</i>   | <br><i>Burial clothes</i> | <br><i>Incense</i> |

# Memory & Symbol

## 3.4 Symbols and symbolism



## Memory & Symbol

### 3.4 Symbols and symbolism

warrior statue, lion statue, animal statue and a bronze container. These symbols are always quite hard and have a strong power to shape the total atmosphere, for instance, adding solemnity.

The construction contains a mural wall, gate, temple, pillar, flower gallery, pavilion, and bridge. These symbols provide with an atmosphere for people to rest or relax but also enhance some formality, like the gate or pillars.

The body contains the direct containers with the dead, which are tomb, cremation urn and coffin. These three symbols are always quite strong with the heavy feeling connected with death.

Surroundings contain mountains, stone, soil, plant, path and water, are a very natural and background-vibe symbol, usually staying in a place with these symbols could make people feel comfortable and relieved.

The last one is ritual, there are soul leading banner, fire, candle, white flower, paper coins, burial clothes and incense in this category. All of the symbol are quite memorial to the individual or his/her family member.

However, as time goes by, some symbols have gradually been eliminated from Shaanxi death culture. In the left figure, the coffin disappears most rapidly, because the use of cremation urns is enhanced throughout China to re-

duce individual burial area and save more land for more burials. With the disappearance of the coffin, some symbols closely associated with coffin, such as soul leading banner and burial objects like bronze containers, gradually disappear along with it.

Buddha and temple both have certain attributes of religious symbols, but as Buddhism and Taoism in Shaanxi, are slowly disappearing. Burial clothes and pillars also show signs of disappearing.

The category also presents a classification of memorial symbols and non-memorial symbols. The category of statue symbols, construction symbols, and surrounding symbols show something in common which belongs to non-memorial symbols. On the contrary, body-related symbols and ritual-related symbols more belong with memorial symbols.





## People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

- 4.1 Part1: Memory*
- 4.2 Part2: Memorial atmosphere*
- 4.3 Part3: Role of future cemeteries*
- 4.4 Conclusion*

## People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

### 4.1 Part1: Memory

To explore the integration of the new form of public cemeteries with China's ancient burial culture, I designed a questionnaire to investigate the views of today's new generations on public cemeteries. A total of 148 people were surveyed this time, most of them are students, and the distribution of other occupations is also relatively average, and the age group is mainly concentrated in the 15-30 years old.

The questionnaire is divided into 3 parts: memory of cemeteries, atmosphere and symbolism of cemeteries, and role and function of cemeteries.

The first part is memory of cemeteries, there're 4 questions:

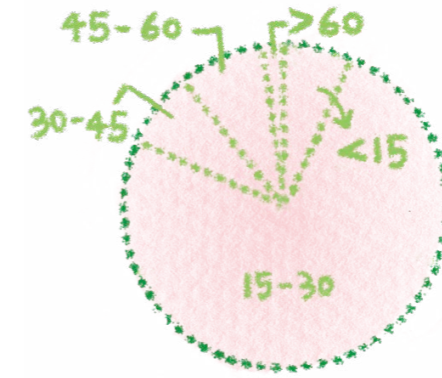
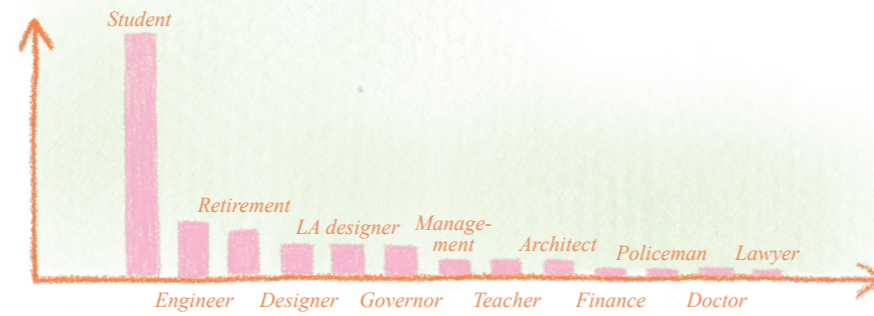
1. Have you ever visited public cemeteries?
2. If yes, how often you visit public cemeteries?
3. To what extent are memory and remembrance connected with cemeteries according to you?
4. Are cemeteries necessary to memorize loved ones who passed away?

The results are as follows: more than half of people have gone to public cemeteries, and the frequency is not too high, as shown in the figure on the right, the orange dotted line represents the average, which is between less than once a year or never go at all. It can be concluded that most people's understanding, and cognition of public cemeteries is very limited and insufficient.

In the next set of questions, people participating in the questionnaire of more than half still think that memory and remembrance are connected to cemeteries. And most people think cemeteries are necessary to remember the dead.

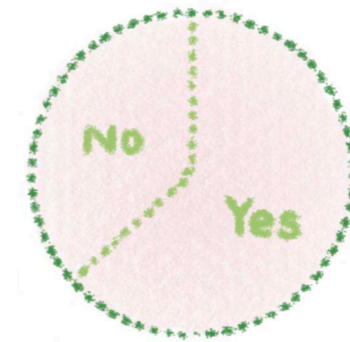
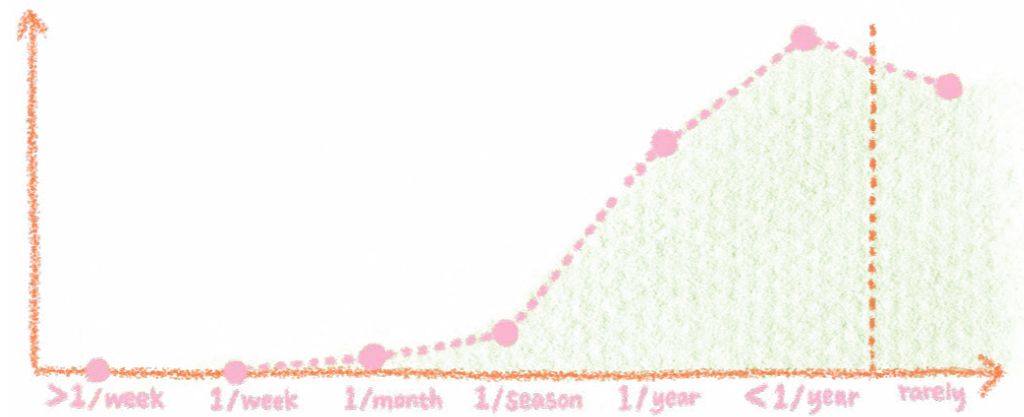
Among 148 people...

► What's your job?



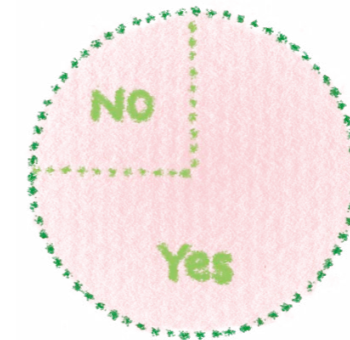
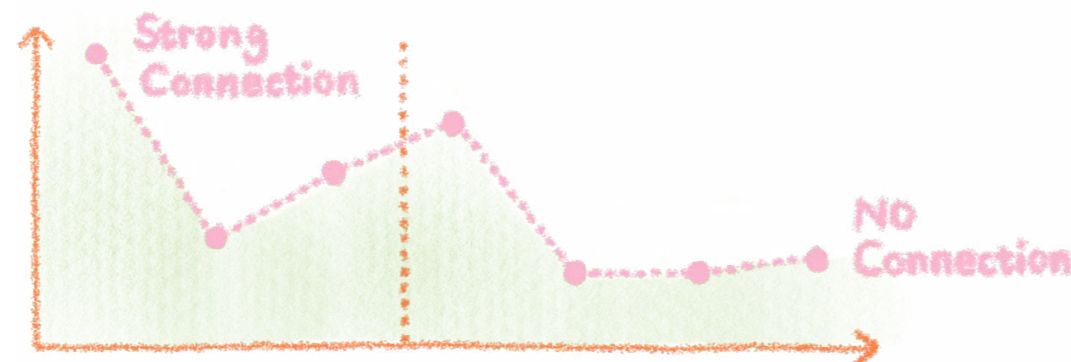
◀ What's your age?

► How often you visited public cemeteries?



◀ Have you ever visited public cemeteries?

► To what extent are memory and remembrance connected with cemeteries?



◀ Are cemeteries necessary to memorize loved ones that passed away?

## People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

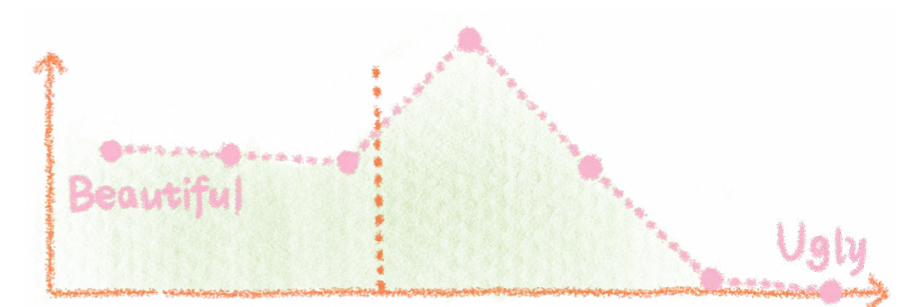
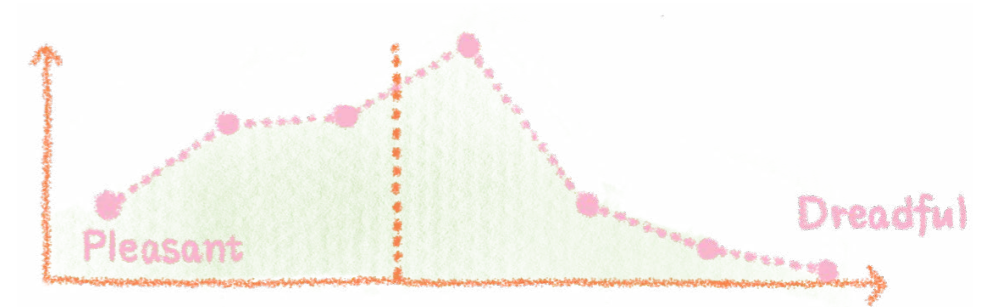
### 4.2 Part2: Memorial atmosphere

The second part is atmosphere and symbolism of cemeteries, there're 6 questions:

1. What's the general impression of cemeteries?  
What's the environmental expression of cemeteries?
2. To what extent do you like the cemetery/cemeteries?
3. What symbols/elements do you like inside the cemetery/cemeteries?
4. What symbols/elements do you dislike inside the cemetery/cemeteries?
5. What symbols/elements do you think are the most significant inside the cemetery/cemeteries?
6. What symbols/elements do you want to add/delete?

More than half of the people feel the overall impression of the cemetery and the environment is good, and the average was above neutral. According to the research above, symbols appearing inside cemeteries and rituals are used to investigate people for their feelings. The favorites are candles, plants, mountains and water, a bridge, a tomb, white flowers... Most of these elements focus on the memorial and natural elements involved in the experience. People do not like all types of sculptures, very intuitive feeling of death such as coffins and urns, as well as the fire in the rituals. Elements that people find most meaningful are similar to their favorites. Still, people prefer to add more sunshine, water, lawns and buildings...

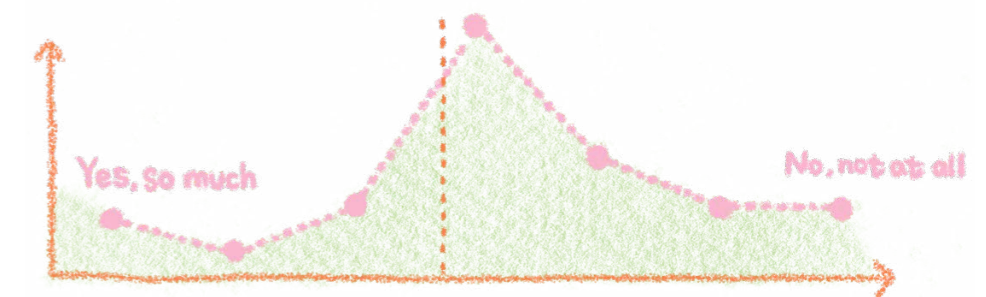
*What's the general impression of cemeteries?*



*What's the environmental impression of cemeteries?*



*To what extent do you like the cemetery/cemeteries?*



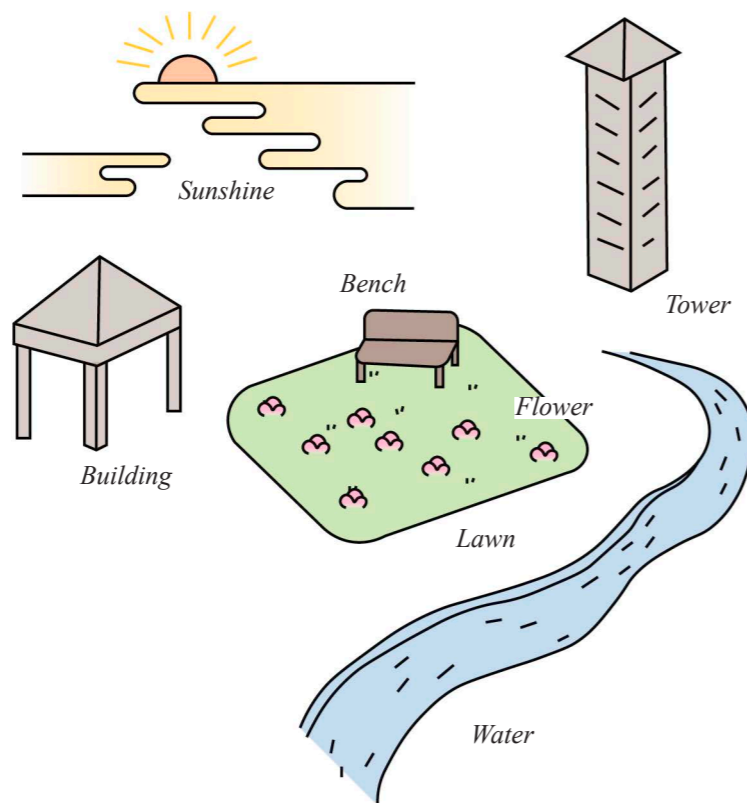


What symbols/elements you like inside the cemetery/cemeteries?

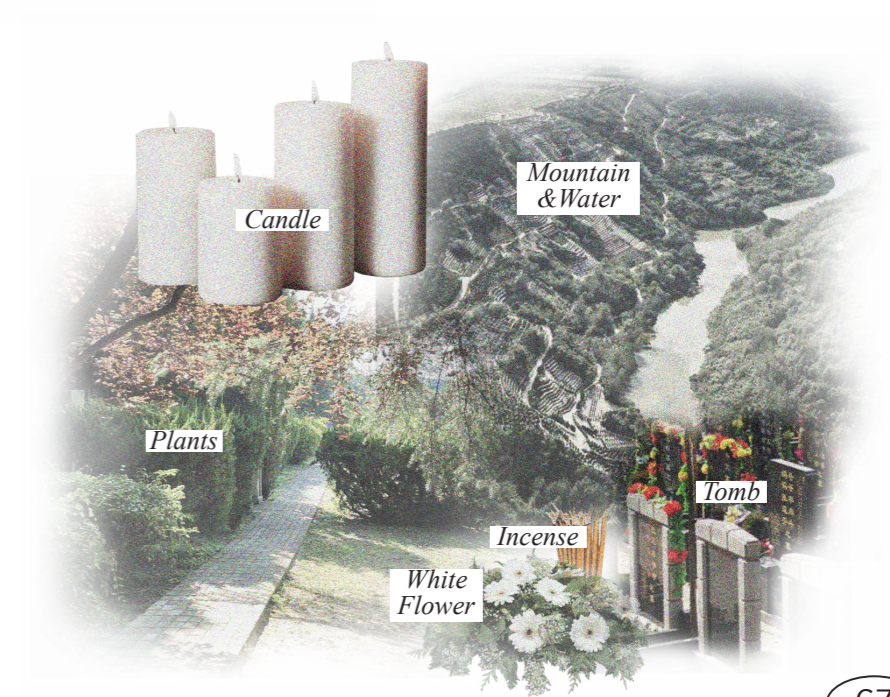


What symbols/elements you dislike inside the cemetery/cemeteries?

What symbols/elements do you think are the most significant inside the cemetery/cemeteries?



What symbols/elements you want to add/delete?



## People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

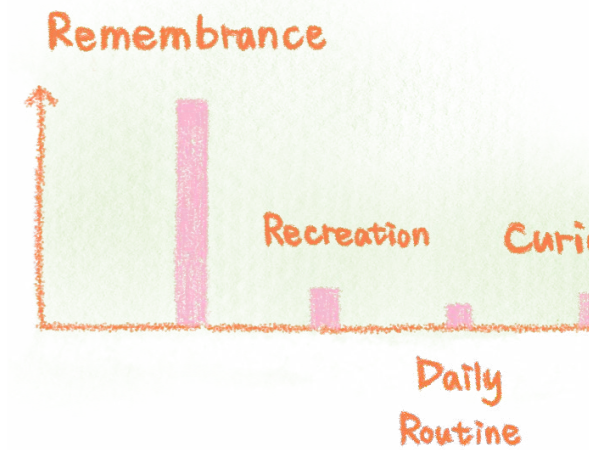
### 4.3 Part3: Role of future cemeteries

The third part is atmosphere and role and function of cemeteries, there're 6 questions:

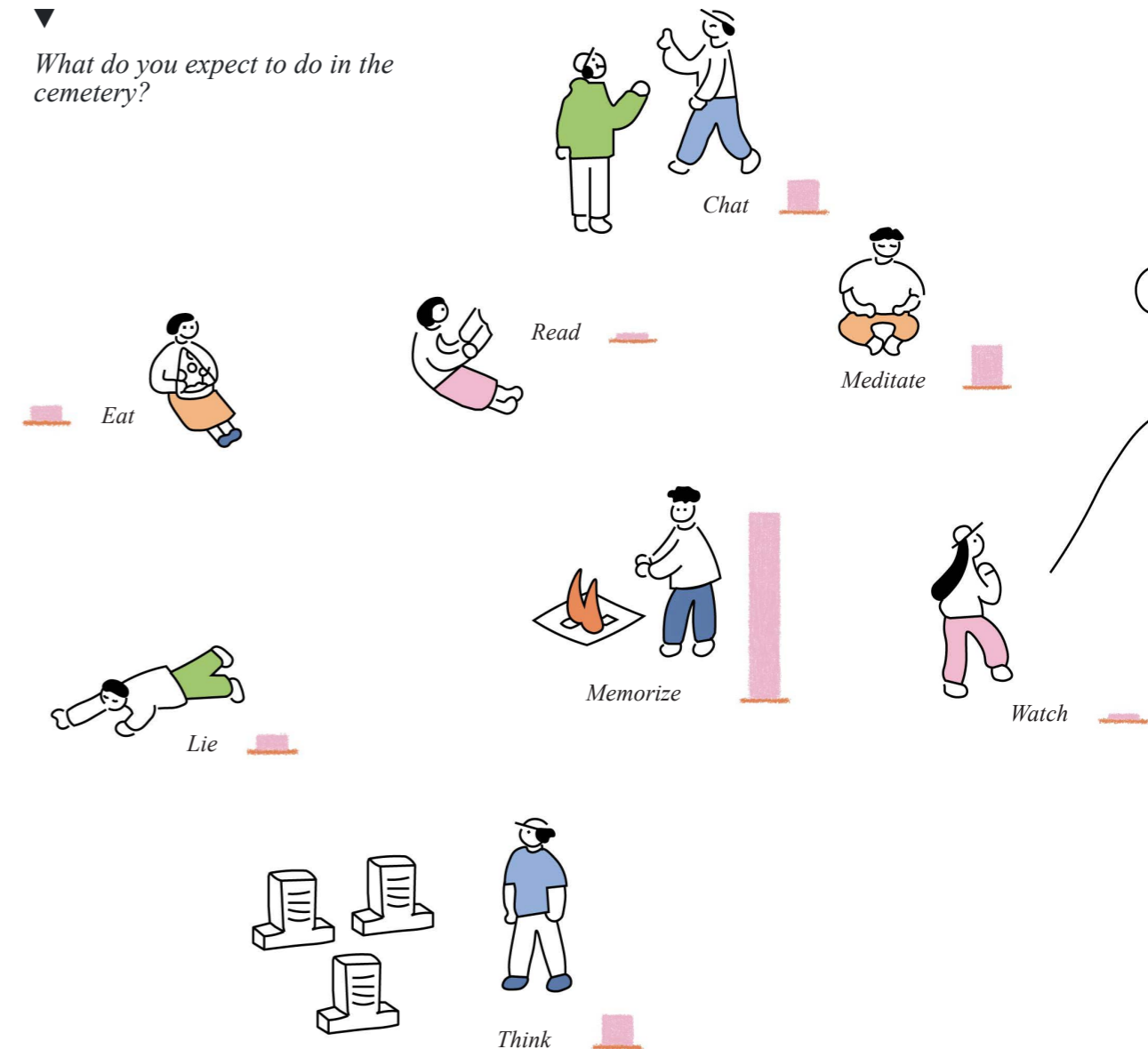
1. What do you usually do in the cemetery?
2. What do you expect to do in the cemetery?
3. To what extent in your opinion could a cemetery become a public space?
4. To what kind of public space?
5. Would you visit cemeteries more often if they have other activities or functions?
6. What kind of space do you think a cemetery would have?

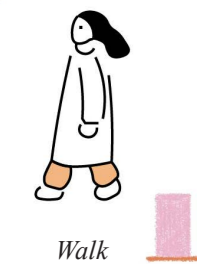
In cemeteries, people often memorize their past ones, and occasionally for recreation or other activities. Some people expect to take a walk, meditate, think and chat in cemeteries, etc. These functions gradually push the single function of cemeteries to be more public and open. More than half of the people think that a cemetery can, to a certain extent, be transformed into a public space, and they wish it to be like a park, or nature preserve (most of the Chinese cemeteries are set up in the suburbs with beautiful sceneries), the types of public space garden, etc. But at the same time, people's attitudes are still very conservative, even if cemeteries have these spatial and functional properties in the future, they still maintain a neutral opinion of them.

►  
*What do you usually do in the cemetery?*

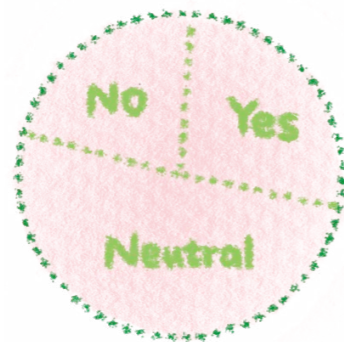


▼  
*What do you expect to do in the cemetery?*

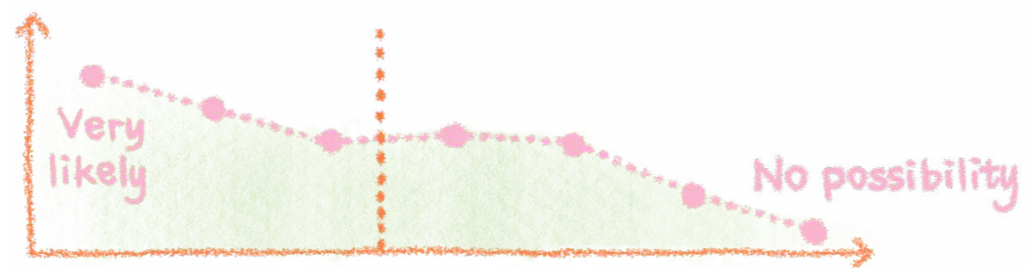




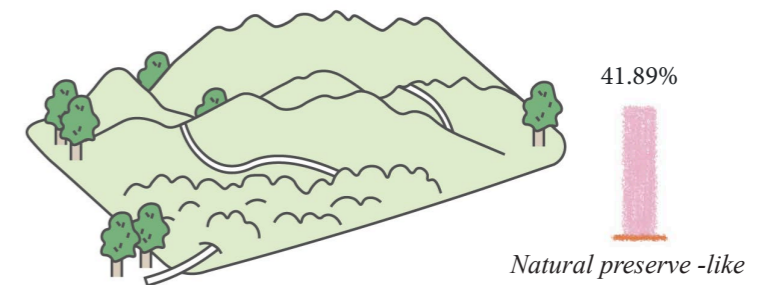
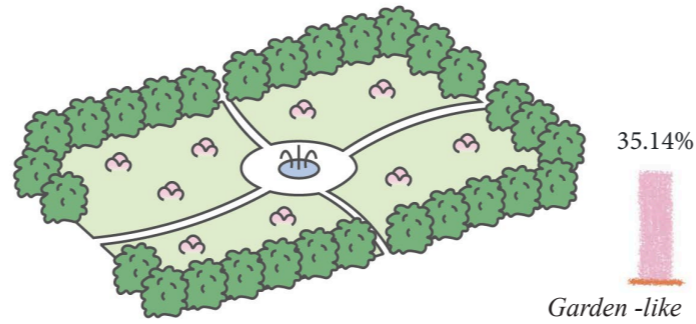
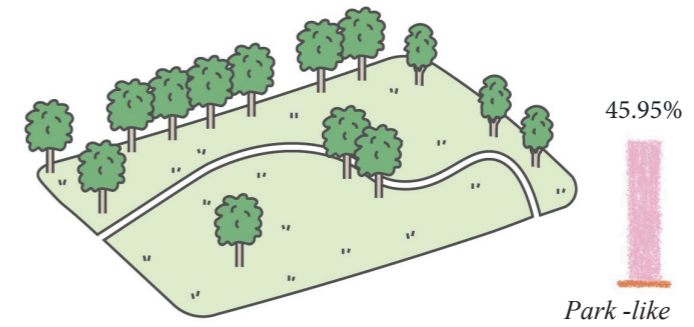
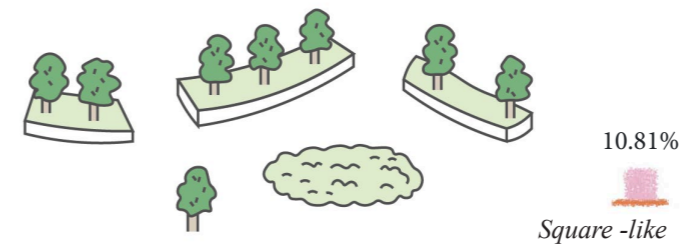
▼  
 Would you visit cemeteries more often if they have other activities or functions?



▼  
 To what extent in your opinion could cemeteries become public spaces?

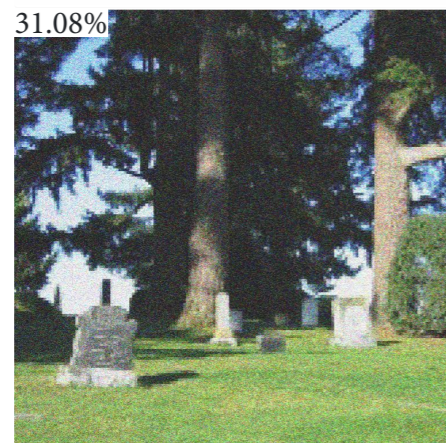
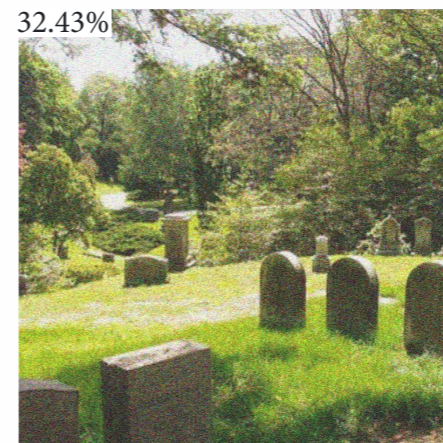
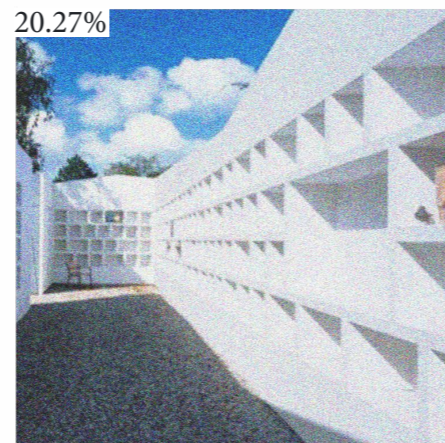
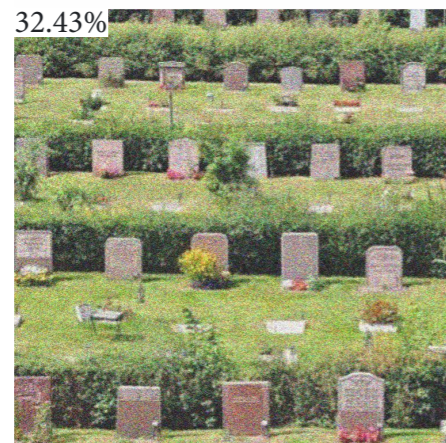


◀  
 If cemeteries could become public spaces, then to what kind?



# People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

## 4.3 Part3: Role of future cemeteries



◀  
*What kind of spaces do you think cemetery would have?*

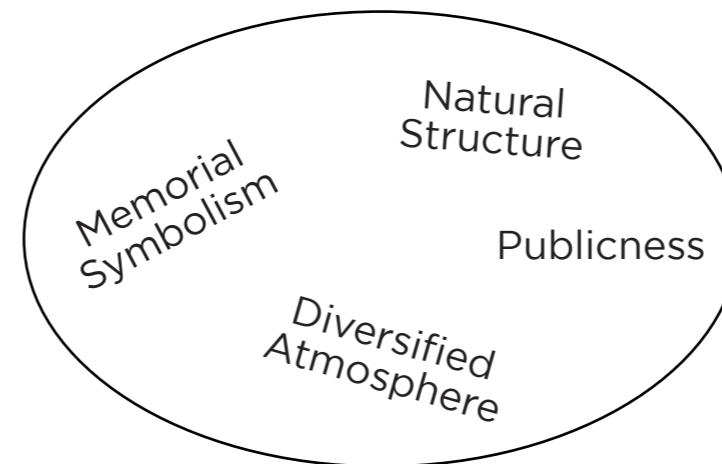
## People's opinions on Chinese cemeteries

### 4.4 Conclusion

The last question, on the right nine pictures show different types of cemeterial scenes. Surprisingly, people do not like the large and dense tombs or gravestones, but are most satisfied and enjoy the cozy benches under a big tree which actually has nothing to do with cemeteries. They also show low interest in the urn display wall and the calm water feature. This gives me a sign that people like cemeteries can create some different atmosphere, full of natural and relaxed feeling, perhaps the heavy atmosphere does not need to be over-strengthened.

In conclusion, for the new generations, people still need public cemeteries to memorize, but the current atmosphere need to be improved. Moreover, they tend to like natural and memorial symbols in relation with rituals, but don't like most of those statues. As for types of spaces, people would like some public, peaceful private and other more functional spaces inside public cemeteries and do something else besides memorizing.

Their needs can be summed up in four words: Natural structure, memorial symbolism, publicness and diversified atmosphere. With these 4 perspectives, cemeteries may be able to come back into public in a whole new way, which is also the meaning for conducting this questionnaire.







## Case study on public cemeteries

- 5.1 Case A: Mariebjerg cemetery*
- 5.2 Case B: Fushou cemetery*
- 5.3 Case C: Woodland cemetery*
- 5.4 Case D: Brion cemetery*
- 5.5 Conclusion*

## Case study on public cemeteries

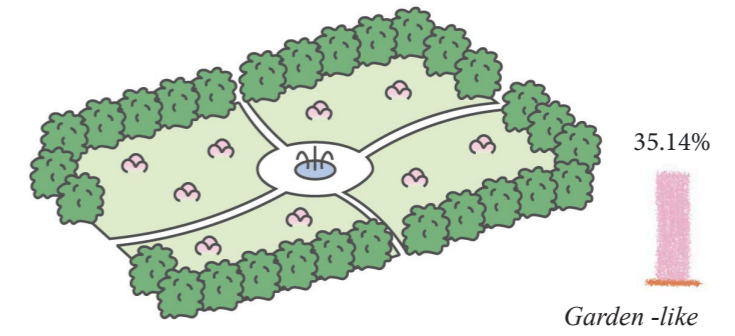
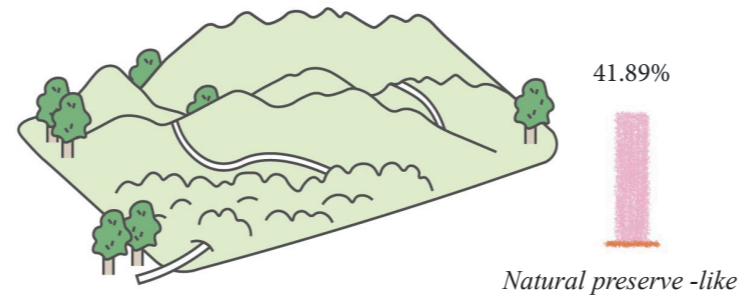
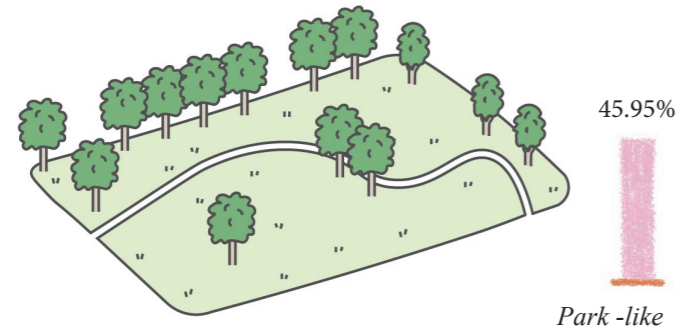
In the questionnaire, participants expressed a desire to transform public cemeteries into parks, natural preserves, and gardens. Of these, 45.95% preferred parks, which are traditional urban spaces with expansive green areas, tall trees, and simple paths that help people relax. Mariebjerg cemetery and Fushou cemetery are noted for their park-like atmospheres.

41.89% chose natural preserves, the second most popular option. These often resemble the layouts of individual and family cemeteries, historically chosen for their picturesque locations. This aligns with the common image of cemeteries in Xi'an, which are often far from urban areas and suitable for hiking. Woodland Cemetery, although not located in nature, shares similar features.

Lastly, 35.14% preferred gardens, which are smaller, more private, and focus on intricate designs and materials to create a refined space. The Brion Cemetery was selected for analysis due to its garden-like qualities.

From the case studies, some inspirations on how to incorporate natural structure, memorial symbolism, publicness and diversified atmosphere into the redesign of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery.

# Case study on public cemeteries



Maribjerg cemetery  
(Copenhagen, Denmark)



Woodland cemetery  
(Stockholm, Sweden)



Brion cemetery  
(San Vito, Italy)



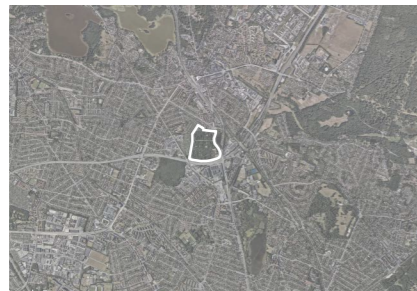
Fushou cemetery  
(Shanghai, China)

## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.1 Case A: Mariebjerg cemetery

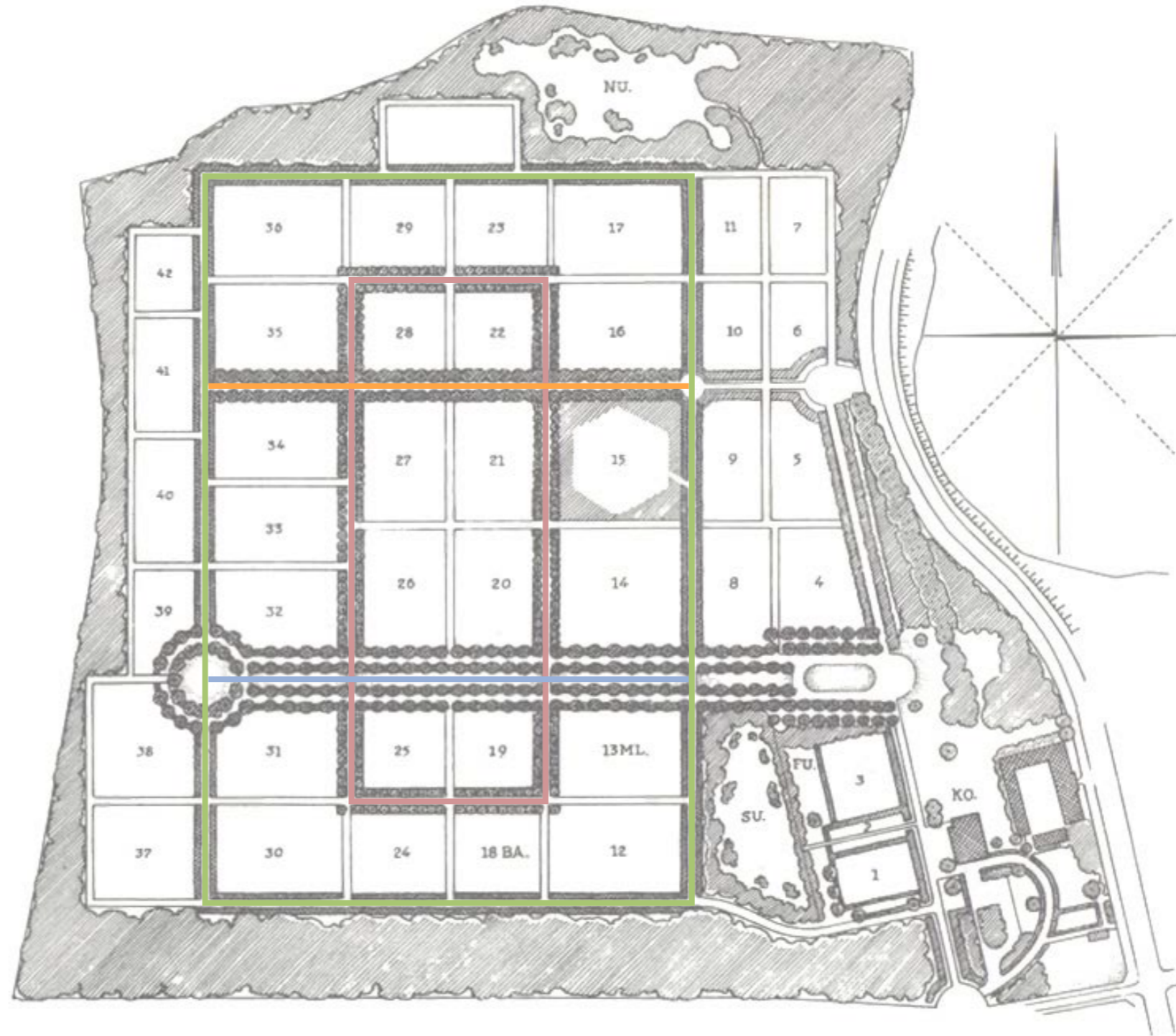
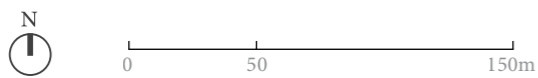
▼  
Figure  
Map of Mariebjerg cemetery

Figure  
Map of Mariebjerg cemetery  
in the area scale



▼  
Legend

- Scots pine
- Elm (*Ulmus monumentalis*)
- Elm (*Ulmus vegeta*)
- Willow



## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.1 Case A: Mariebjerg cemetery

In November 1922, the Gentofte municipality cemetery committee discussed expanding cemetery areas due to an annual population increase of 3%, predicting a future shortage of burial land. Dronningemarken, a flat terrain near Gentofte town, was chosen for the central cemetery. Municipal gardener G.N. Brandt was tasked with planning Mariebjerg Cemetery.

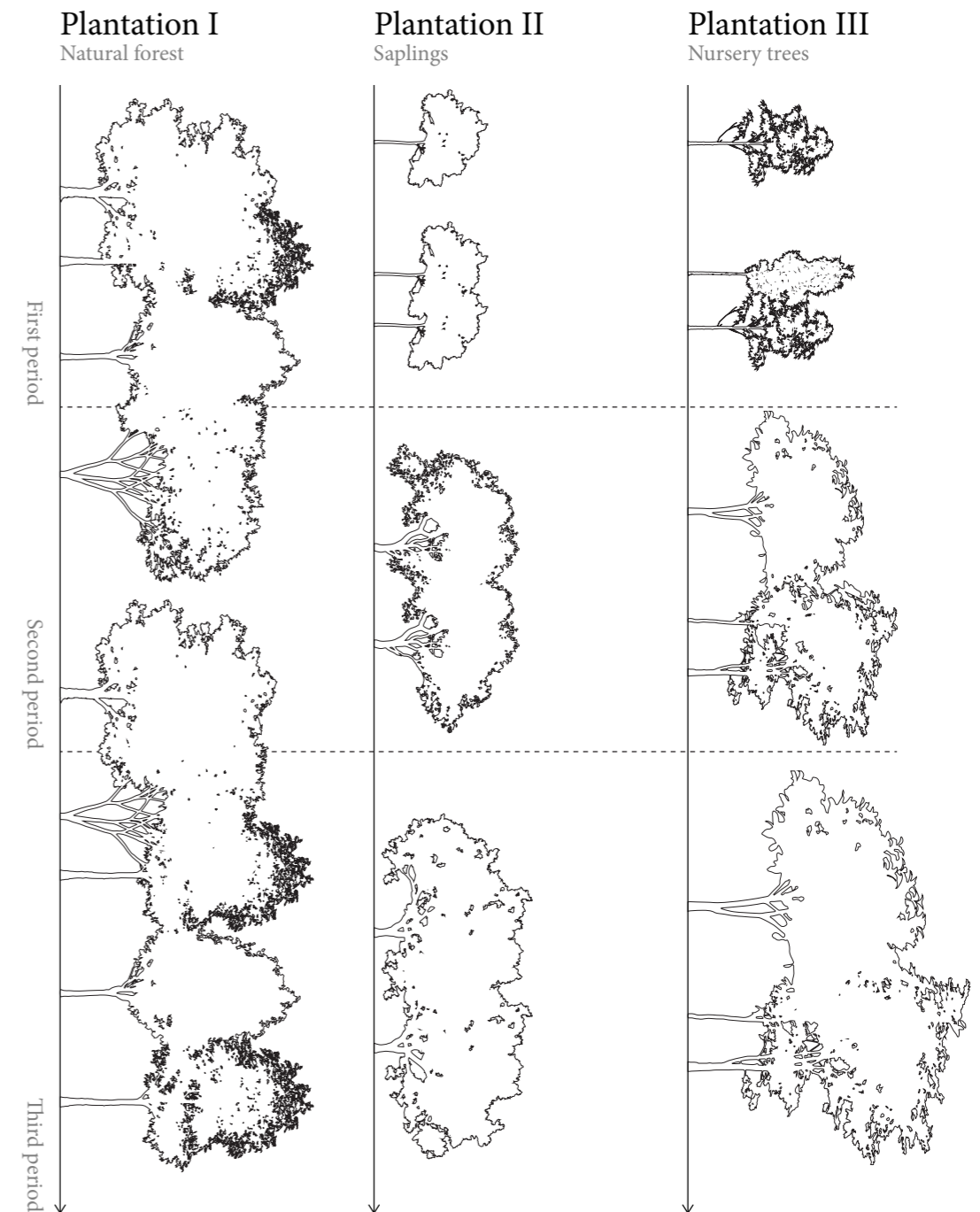
In spring 1926, Brandt presented a master plan for the 25-hectare cemetery. The simple design featured two large rectangular avenues intersected by two transverse avenues, forming a geometric layout. Brandt emphasized plant use, having tested ideas at Ordrup cemetery, and included thorough soil surveys.

Brandt's plan involved surrounding the cemetery with forest massifs and planting specific trees: elm (*Ulmus monumentalis*) for the outer rectangle, Scots pine (*Pinus silvestris*) for the inner, and elm (*Ulmus vegeta*) and white willow (*Salix alba*) for the cross avenues. This design ensured easy orientation, convenient transportation, and intimate

sections within the cemetery. The layout allowed for successive use, operational savings, and minimized earthworks.

The plan has some obvious advantages for such a large cemetery project. The large plaza systems serve for easy orientation and convenient transportation to the different parts of the cemetery. The division of the large rectangles into smaller ones, separated by internal access and transportation routes, means that intimate sections and cemeteries are created. Avoid a hopeless jumble of monuments and plant collections by giving each section its own distinctive character. The internal road network avoids long transportation routes and provides undisturbed peace and quiet in each section. The system can be used successively, thereby achieving operational savings in the cemetery's first many years.

Initial plans included a chapel and crematorium, which were finalized later. Brandt aimed for the cemetery to function as a cohesive whole upon inauguration, establishing it as a forest. The



## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.1 Case A: Mariebjerg cemetery

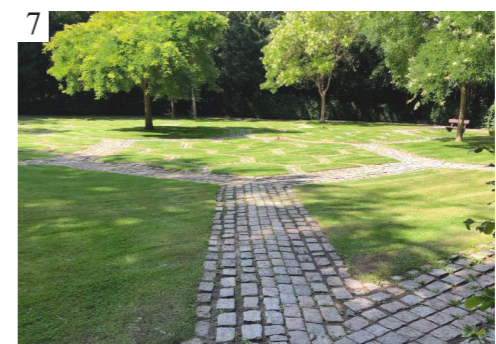
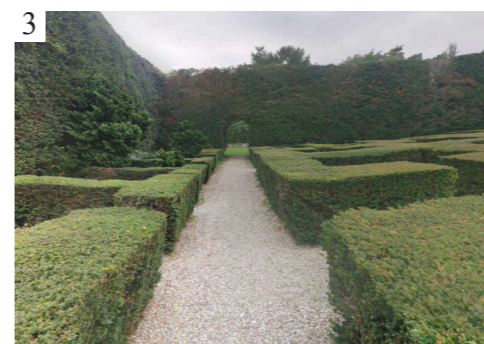
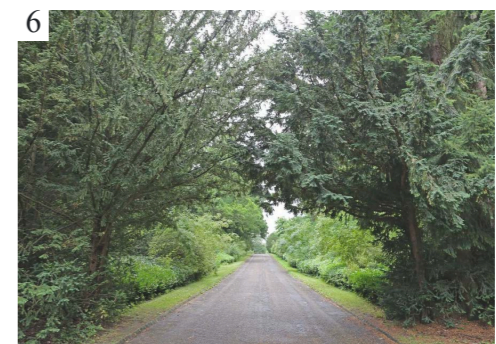
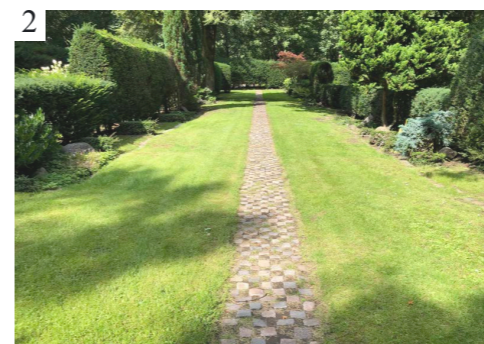
▼  
Figure  
Map of Mariebjerg cemetery



establishment followed a work program from 1926-1933, dividing plantations into three areas.

The forest plantations are divided into the outer forest massif, plantation I, which can be briefly characterized as an uncultivated “natural forest” that should serve to give the churchyard the scrubby forest edge of the inner, cultivated cultural forest, plantation II and III.

Plantation I, which was planted purely forested,



## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.1 Case A: Mariebjerg cemetery

with varying plant composition in rows, was kept clean in the first years, but as the plantings ended, the care ceased. In the early 60's, cutting and clearing of the scrubby vegetation in the southern edge zone began as a result of an extensive change to the cemetery's main access road. The inner forest plantation, plantation II and III, was planted and cultivated for the first few years as plantation I. In contrast to plantation I, the planting here consisted of actual trees, saplings and nurse trees, with the aim of continuously thinning out the nurse trees so that the planting could appear complete when the individual section was to be used for the construction of burial sites. The most important tree was oak, while the nurse trees consisted of fast-growing trees such as birch, poplar, ash and larch. Over the years, the nurse trees were thinned out. Of these, oaks in particular have been preserved, and several of the sections now have the character of oak groves.

In some parts of the original plantation II and III, complete clearance has been carried out and a renewed, in some cases experimental, planting has been carried out, for example the planting of bamboo forest.

The pine roads, which forms the outer triangle, were planted in 1932 after terrain regulation as a planting of very small scots pine in a bed of equally small mountain pine. The idea was that the mountain pines would serve as a nurse plantation for the scots pines and give the impression of an impenetrable forest edge against the inner forest

plantation. The willow road that connects the two stretches to the north is, like the elm roads, laid out as a road with an excavated road box, which has since been planted with grass.

This planting strategy aims to transform the cemetery into a forest-like park. According to Kaplan's preference matrix, people's spatial preferences can be divided into four types, with high involvement types being complex and mystery. The rich, dense forest in Mariebjerg Cemetery embodies this mystery, particularly through its layered plantings of grass, shrubs, and trees. Specific pruning requirements for the shrubs further enhance this sense of mystery, contributing to the cemetery's tranquility and sanctity.

After nearly 100 years, Mariebjerg Cemetery remains well-maintained and highly popular with local residents, who frequently run, walk their dogs, cycle, and stroll through its serene environment.

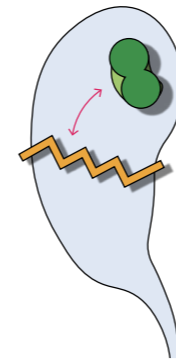
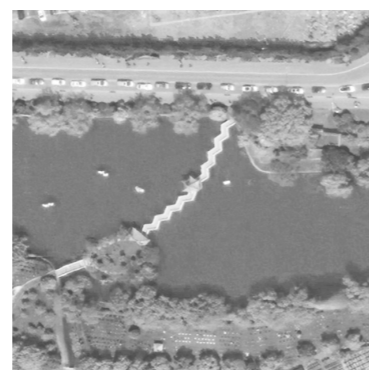
*Kaplan's preference matrix*

| Availability of information | Making sense | Involvement |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Direct                      | Coherent     | Complex     |
| Promised                    | Legibility   | Mystery     |

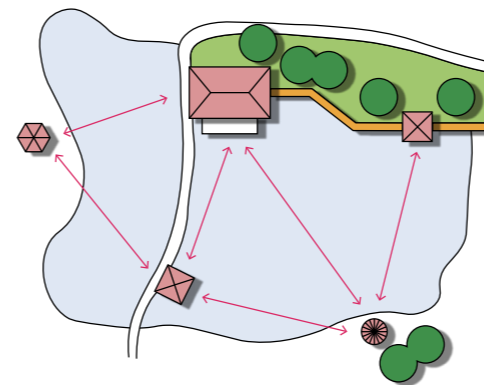
## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.2 Case B: Fushou cemetery

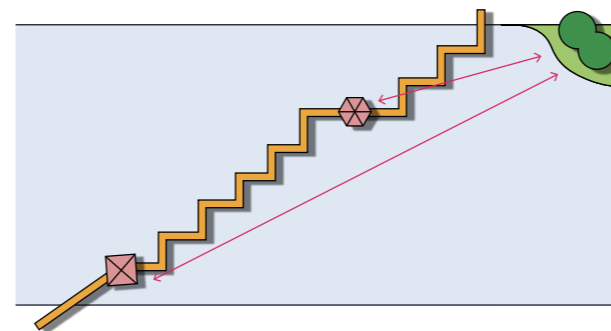
▼  
Figure  
Traditional Chinese land-  
scape types



*Type 1*  
*Zig-zag-shape bridge*  
*Small island for tree growing*



*Type 2*  
*Zig-zag-shape bridge*  
*Pavilion by the water*  
*Pavilion in the water*  
*Platform by the water*



*Type 3*  
*Zig-zag-shape bridge*  
*Pavilion in the water*

## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.2 Case B: Fushou cemetery

The design of Fushou cemetery meticulously adheres to principles of environmental harmony and cultural respect, showcasing an innovative approach where the cemetery functions as an island within a vast water area, with the entire site enveloped by water. This unique setting not only contributes to the site's tranquility but also enhances its ecological footprint.

The cemetery is divided into two main areas, left and right, with the primary entrances located along a central road that bisects these areas. This central access way facilitates easy navigation and divides the space efficiently, allowing for clear demarcation and organization of different zones. Each side is designed to cater to specific functions, with areas designated for traditional graves, urn placements, and ecological burials, each featuring different design styles and levels of greening to meet varied needs.

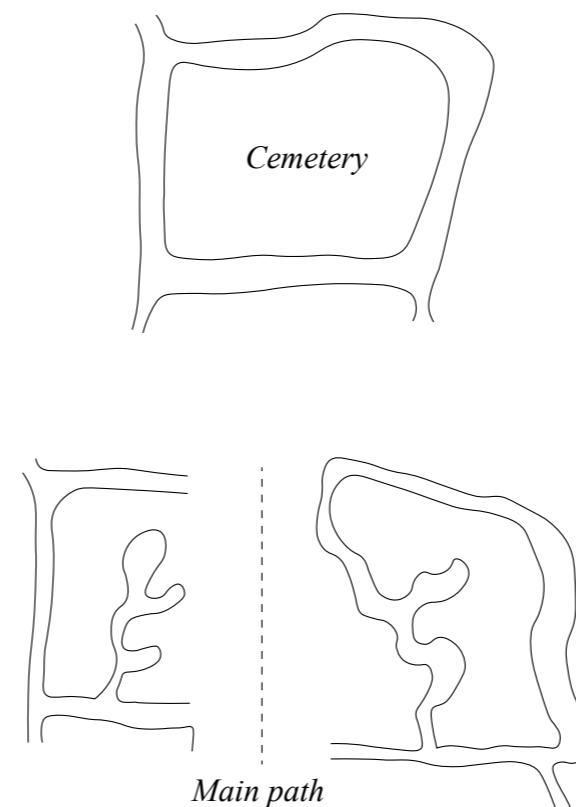
Extensive green elements and water features such as small lakes and streams are incorporated throughout, maintaining ecological balance and providing a soothing environment for visitors. Fushouyuan also embraces elements characteristic of Chinese culture, such as traditional pavilions and stone bridges, enhancing both the memorial significance and the cultural identity of the space.

The cemetery employs sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting and uses environmentally friendly materials for construction and maintenance. Comprehensive

service facilities, including rest areas and a reception center, are strategically placed to ensure visitor comfort and convenience.

Overall, Fushou cemetery not only serves as a dignified resting place for the deceased but also as a serene retreat for the living, reflecting a deep understanding of ecological, cultural, and social needs within its unique island-like design.

▼  
Figure  
Layout of Fushou cemetery

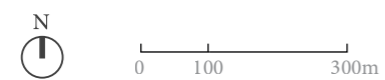


## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.3 Case C: Woodland cemetery

▼  
Figure  
Map of Woodland cemetery

▼  
Legend  
B Bus stop  
□ Building  
▶ Entrance



1 Main entrance with lawn



2 Memorial hill



3 Small hill



4 Lily pond



## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.3 Case C: Woodland cemetery

5 The Way of the Seven Wells to Resurrection Chapel



6 Tombstones



7 Personalization of tombstones



Personal remembrance



In 1915, during World War I, architects Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz won an international competition to design Stockholm's new cemetery, Skogskyrkogården. Their task was to create a secular public cemetery that preserved the site's natural elements. Located on the city's outskirts, the cemetery was intended as a stop along a new metro line, transforming an overgrown gravel quarry into a serene space for Stockholm's deceased.

The designers used the existing pine forest and site materials to emphasize nature as the cemetery's central element. Built structures are secondary, blending into the landscape with low heights and often hidden from view. Themes of life cycles, ascension, and descent recur throughout the site. Deciduous trees and shrubs outside the main tombstone areas lose their leaves in fall and winter, regaining them in spring and summer. The main entryway opens to a large grassy area, with a sod-covered hill and weeping elms on the right and a smaller hill with a large stone cross on the left. A lily pond at the crest of the Way of the Cross reflects the sky, symbolizing the meeting of heaven and earth.

Asplund and Lewerentz created framed views guiding visitors through allées, natural rooms, gateways, and repetitive forms. Long straight paths, like the walkway from Elm Hill to Resurrection Chapel and the Way of the Seven Wells, offer direction and space for contem-

plation. Natural spaces formed by tall hedges and columnar evergreens provide a sense of comfort, with the pine canopy serving as the roof. The Woodland Chapel integrates seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, enhancing the feeling of moving from one space to another.

The designers balanced personalization and uniformity in tombstone design, recognizing the need for individual expression while maintaining the cemetery's overall harmony. Tombstones are limited in size and symbols to prevent visual clutter and ensure a cohesive aesthetic. Graves are leased for 25 years, with survivors allowed to decorate within guidelines. If neglected, graves revert to state care, promoting sustainability as spaces are reused. Up to four bodies can occupy one grave width, and cremation, chosen by 90% of Stockholm's citizens, is supported by a burial tax covering costs for 25 years.

Many opt for anonymous burial on Memorial Hill, where wildflowers and shrubs grow among scattered ashes. The walkway features stone slabs and benches for mourners to leave offerings. Asplund and Lewerentz's design ensures equality in death and provides a green space for the living. Bikers, joggers, walkers, and pre-school classes enjoy the cemetery, with a city bus offering transport on weekends and amenities like seating, restrooms, fountains, and trashcans available for all visitors.

## Case study on public cemeteries

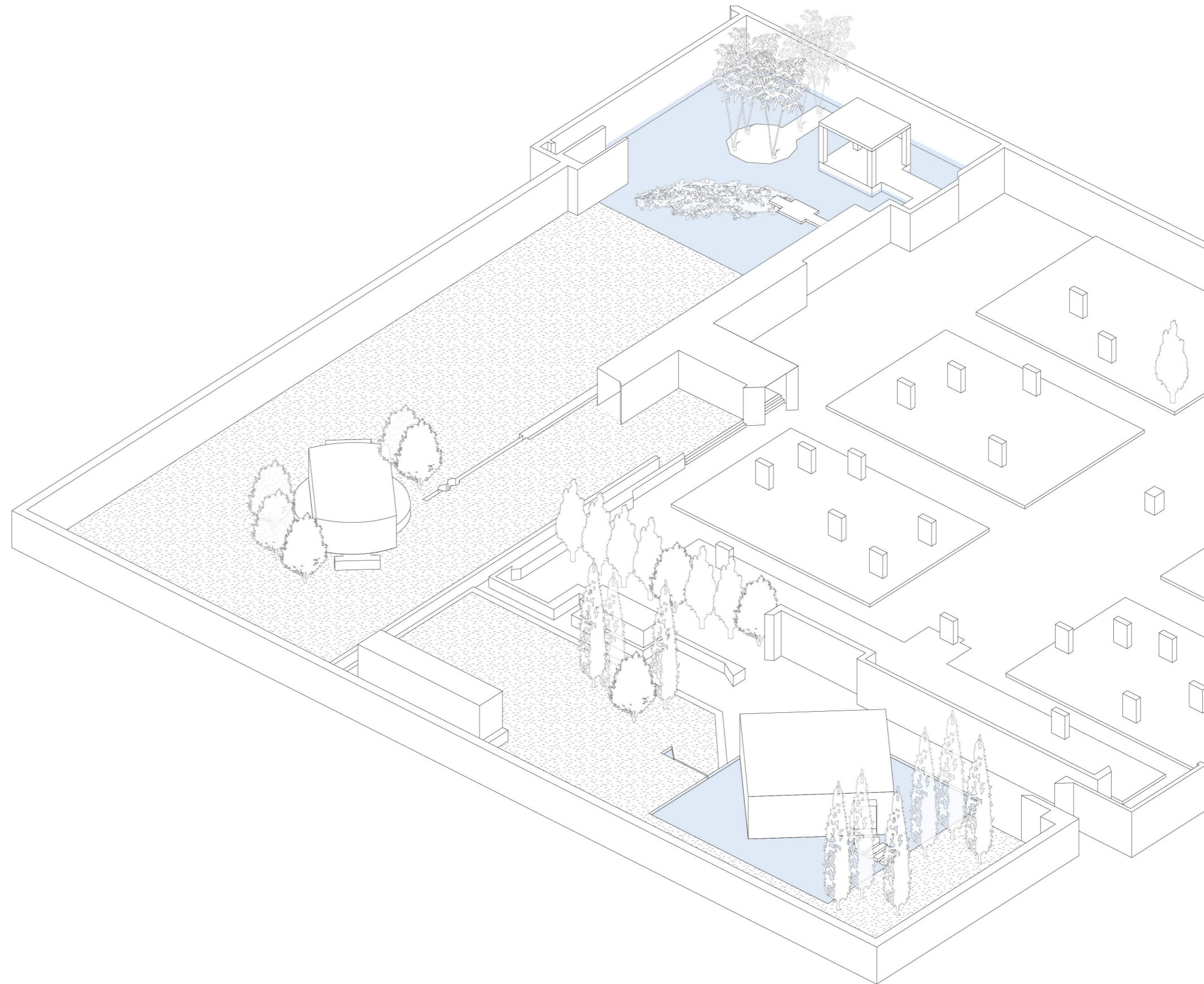
### 5.4 Case D: Brion cemetery



Figure  
Perspective of  
Brion cemetery

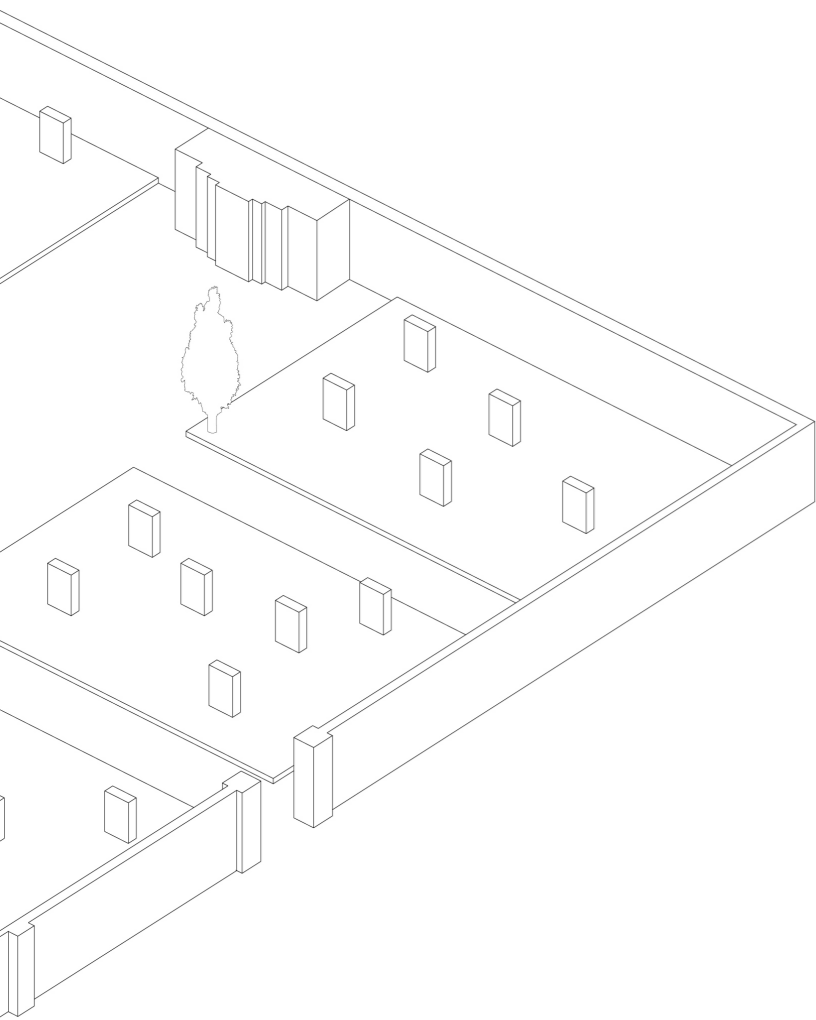
Figure  
Map of Brion Cemetery in  
the area scale

Figure  
Birdview of Brion Cemetery



## Case study on public cemeteries

## 5.4 Case D: Brion cemetery



North of Venice, Carlo Scarpa designed a private mausoleum for the Brion family, highlighting his unique architectural style and creativity. This project, seen as his architectural manifesto, uses concrete to form thoughtful shapes and decorations. Scarpa's work, mostly found in the Venice region, was deeply influenced by literature. As an avid book collector, Scarpa developed his critical thinking and artistic vision through reading. He embraced modernism but believed that hands-on craftsmanship and innovation at the building site were the highest forms of creativity. He had a profound respect for historical architecture and Venetian culture.

The Brion Cemetery is considered Scarpa's most important project. This private burial ground, an extension of San Vito's municipal cemetery, combines Scarpa's historical knowledge, regional influences, and creativity. Completed in 1978, this mausoleum represents the peak of his career, with concrete playing a central role.

The L-shaped cemetery surrounds the old village cemetery, covering over 2000 square meters with symbolic architectural features. Visitors can enter from either the cemetery or the village, both paths leading to the central tomb via a symbolic walkway. The entrance, an asymmetrical façade, features a vesica piscis—a symbol of the Brion couple's union—made with blue and pink mosaic tiles. Nearby, the meditation pavilion, influenced by Japanese architecture, is a concrete structure that appears to float

above water, promoting balance and reflection.

The Brion couple's tomb, at the center of the L, combines concrete, metal, marble, and glass. Water and vegetation elements guide visitors through a peaceful introspection. The tomb design, inspired by ancient arcosolia, features a semi-circular niche with an arch over the coffins of Onorina and Giuseppe Brion, symbolizing their bond. Scarpa's use of concrete, mixed with mosaic and bronze, achieves both aesthetic and spiritual harmony, positioning the tomb in the sunniest part of the cemetery.

Adjacent to the couple's tomb is a space for the Brion family, leading to the final building of the complex: the chapel. This large, light-filled room, surrounded by water and influenced by Japanese architecture, has no religious decorations. Its concrete form suggests its function, embodying Scarpa's minimalist yet innovative approach.

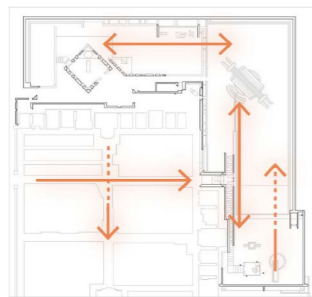
The complex concludes with distinct roles for each element. The meditation pavilion offers personal introspection, while the chapel serves collective celebration, meeting at the central spouses' tomb. Vegetation, cypresses, and water paths unify the elements, inducing stillness around the pavilion and movement through canals. These landscape features, combined with architectural and sculptural concrete elements,

## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.4 Case D: Brion cemetery

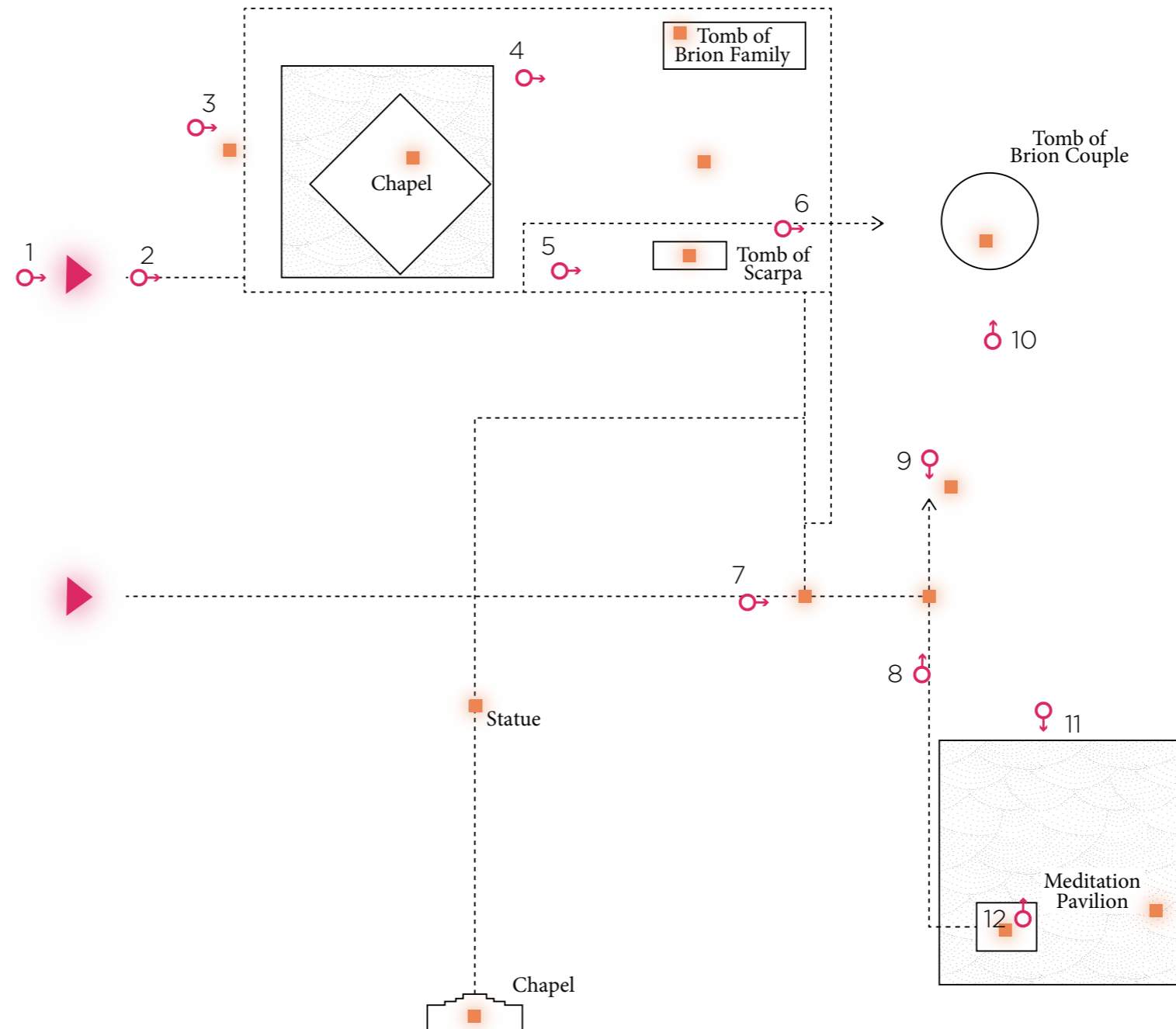
▼  
Figure  
Sequences followed by sym-  
bols in Brion Cemetery

Figure  
Axis of symbols in Brion  
Cemetery



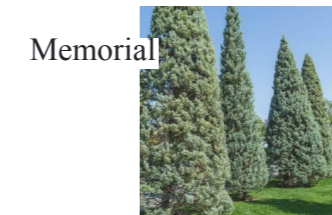
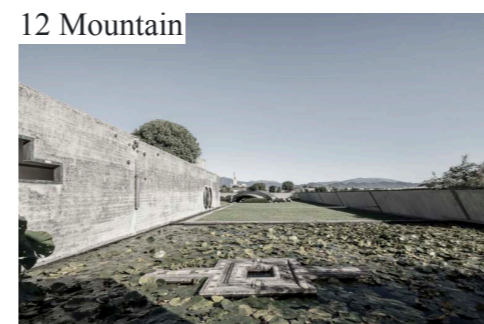
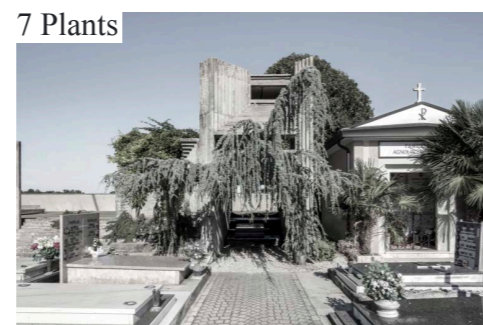
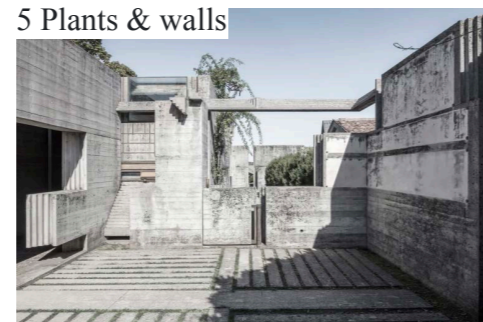
▼  
Legend

- View
- Trigger/Symbol
- Entrance



## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.4 Case D: Brion cemetery



create an evocative harmony—Scarpa's narrative architecture. The Brion Sanctuary is a place for both the dead and the living, with Scarpa himself buried in a modest white tomb adjacent to his masterpiece in San Vito, symbolizing the bond between life and death.

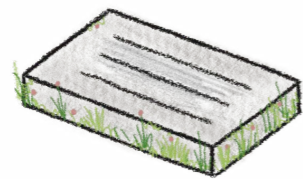
The plants used in Brion cemetery are also noteworthy: three important plants are lotus, wisteria and cypress, which are distributed in the pool, in the vesica piscis gate, the chapel, and in San Vito's public cemetery. Three kinds of plants inherit certain cultural connotations in this cemetery, deepening the theme of life and death, expressing the sanctity of death and mourning for the deceased.

## Case study on public cemeteries

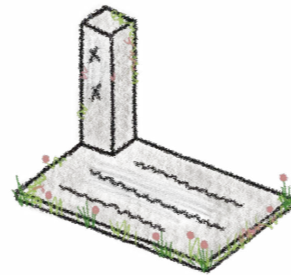
### 5.5 Conclusion



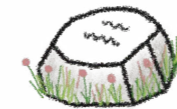
Tombstone with an oval top



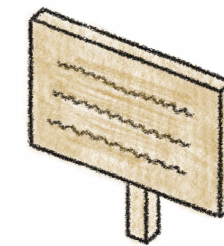
Rectangular tombstone embedded in the grass



Small tombstone with stone column and slab



Small and medium-sized stones



Embalmed wooden board



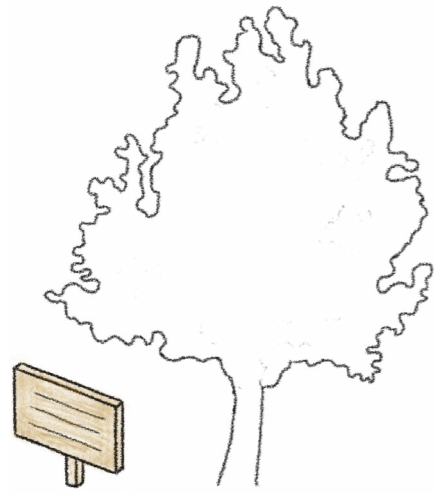
Embalmed wooden board

## Case study on public cemeteries

### 5.5 Conclusion



wooden cross



Remembrance trees

In addition to analyzing the four cases previously mentioned, I have also examined additional examples, such as the Nieuwe Ooster graveyard in the Netherlands, Igualada cemetery in Spain, and Tianshou cemetery in China and so on. From this research, I have concluded the types of tombstones and the spatial organization of cemeteries.

Tombstones vary widely in size and design, including large, medium, and small types. Notably, small and new tombstone designs are particularly valuable for reference due to their minimal spatial combination and their ability to blend closely with the surrounding landscape. This integration enhances the creation of diverse and multifunctional public spaces within cemeteries.

In the picture on the left, various examples of tombstones are illustrated: a small tombstone with an oval top, a rectangular tombstone embedded in the grass, a combination of a small tombstone with a stone column and slab, and several other small and medium-sized tombstones. Additionally, there are more environ-

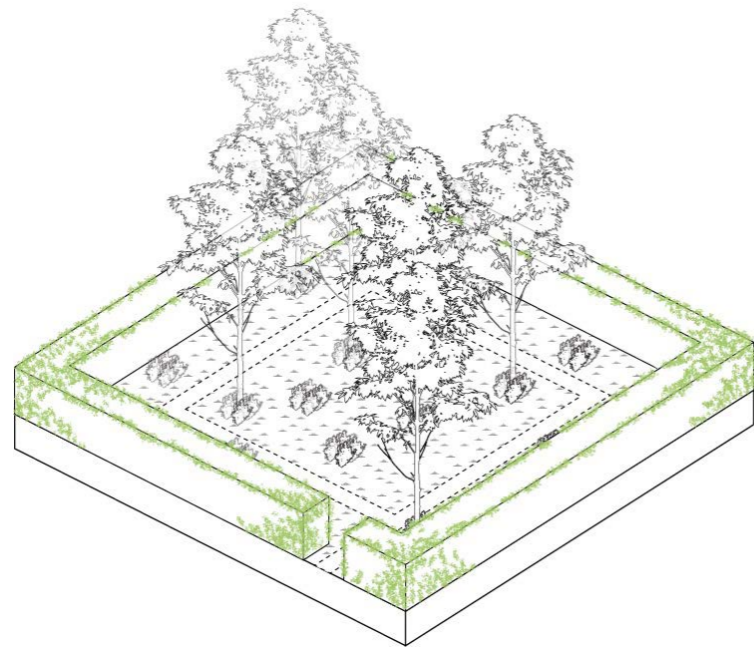
mentally friendly gravestones made from embalmed wood, crafted into shapes such as crosses and plain cubic blocks.

Moreover, there are ecological burial practices where ashes are scattered beneath small and medium-sized remembrance trees purchased by individuals. Wooden signs are then placed under these trees to notify passers-by.

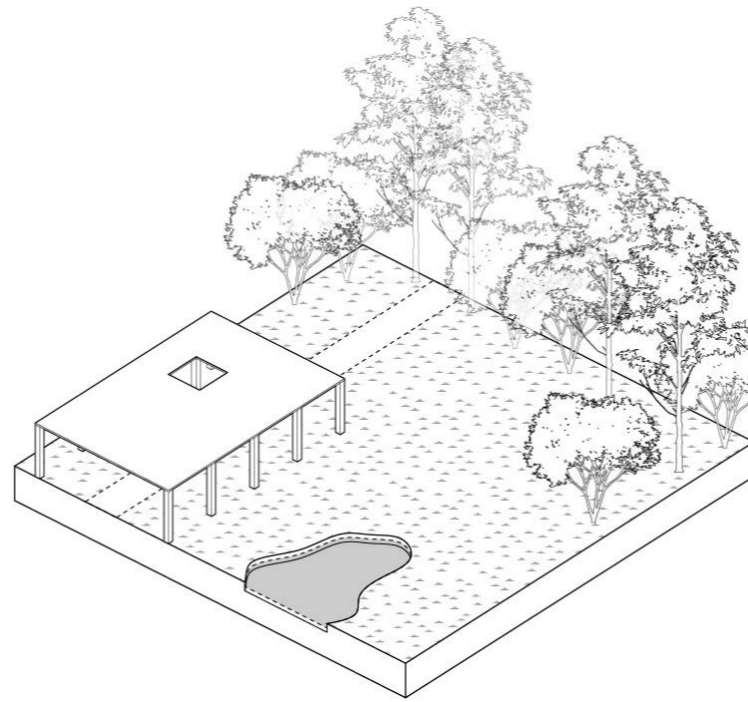
The spatial organization of cemeteries is very diverse and interesting, there are a variety of burial areas and public areas. Due to the presence of these two distinct types of spaces, the path system within the cemetery are varied and intricate. This diversity in paths' design enhances the overall atmosphere and spatial experience. Paths are often used to distinguish between different types of spaces. Due to the privacy of public cemetery, the proportion of public space is generally less than burial areas, which will be shown in detail in the following perspectives.

## Case study on public cemeteries

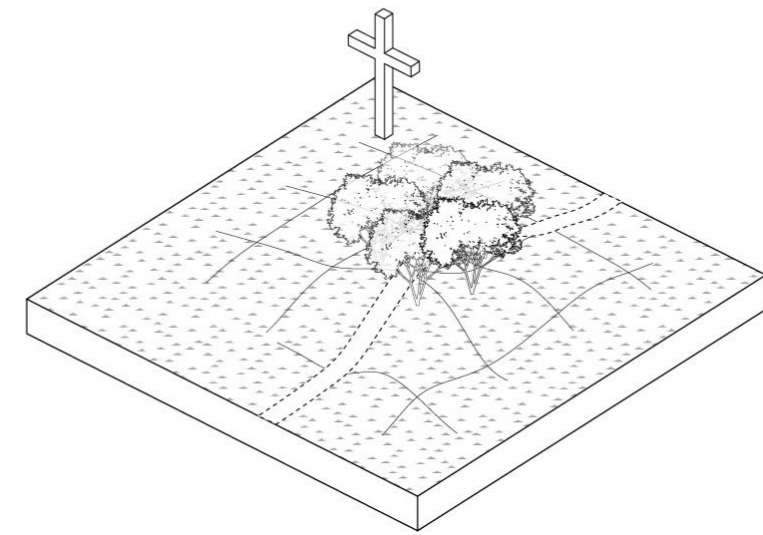
### 5.5 Conclusion



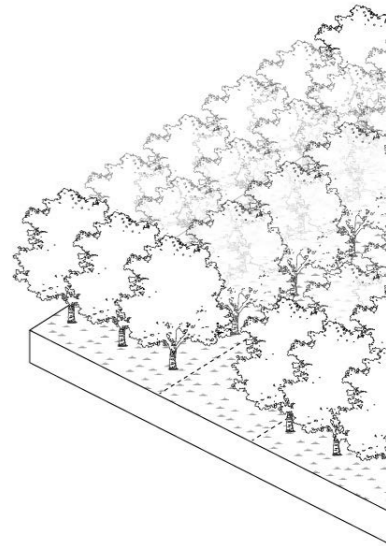
A private square surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, provided with tall trees in the middle and small shrubs, creating quiet atmosphere



An open square on the lawn, with a pavilion to see through the surroundings and a pond nearby; the contrast between the forest and the open space is connected by the small path



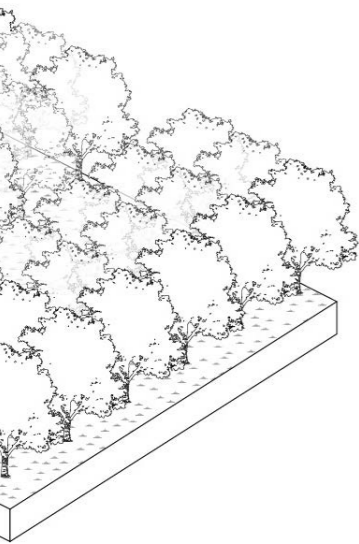
An open space from a small path leading people to the hill to rest and look down, with a circle of small trees, while blocking the view, it reinforces the large cross symbol in the distance



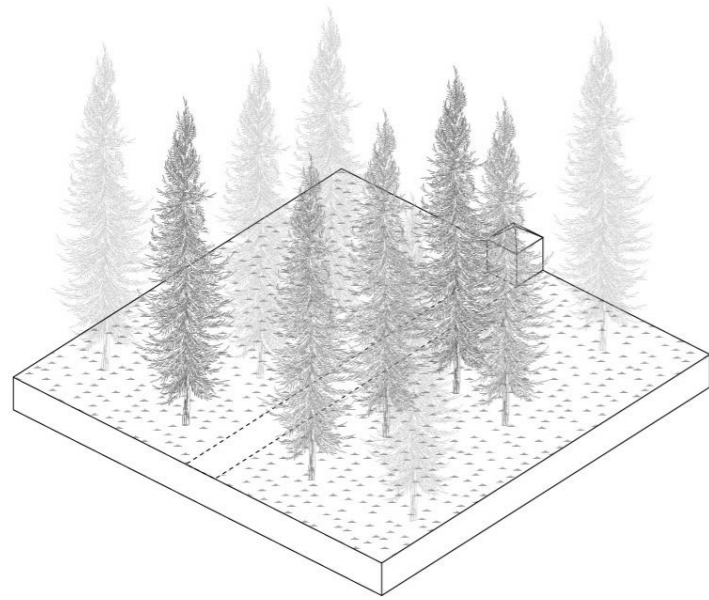
A main unpaved path through the forest, with some lines of deciduous trees in the distance

## Case study on public cemeteries

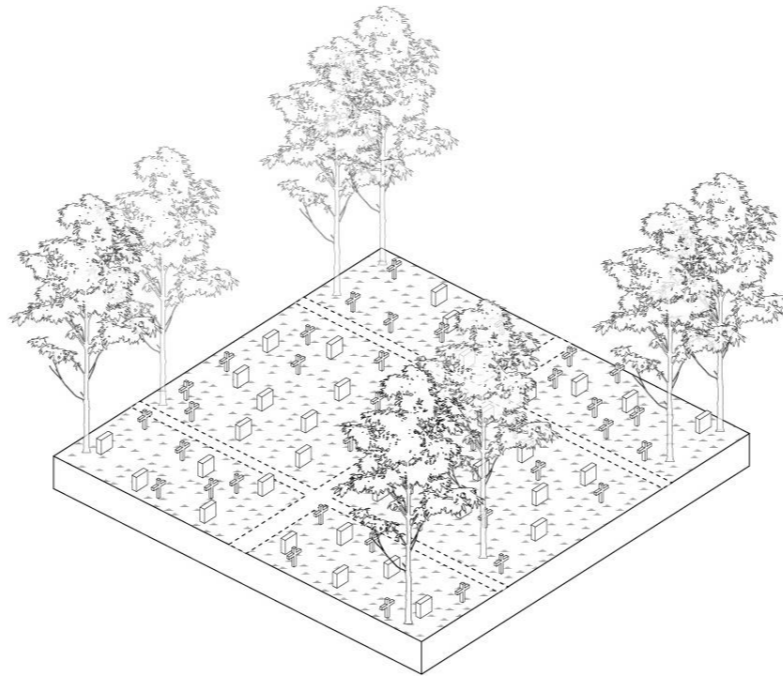
### 5.5 Conclusion



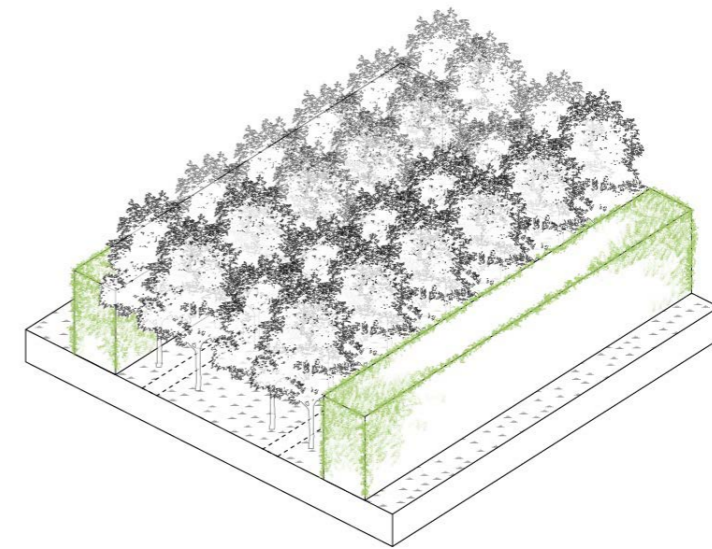
With an adventurous atmosphere, trees on each side



A main path inside pine/evergreen forest, with an important building in the end of the path signify the way of ritual



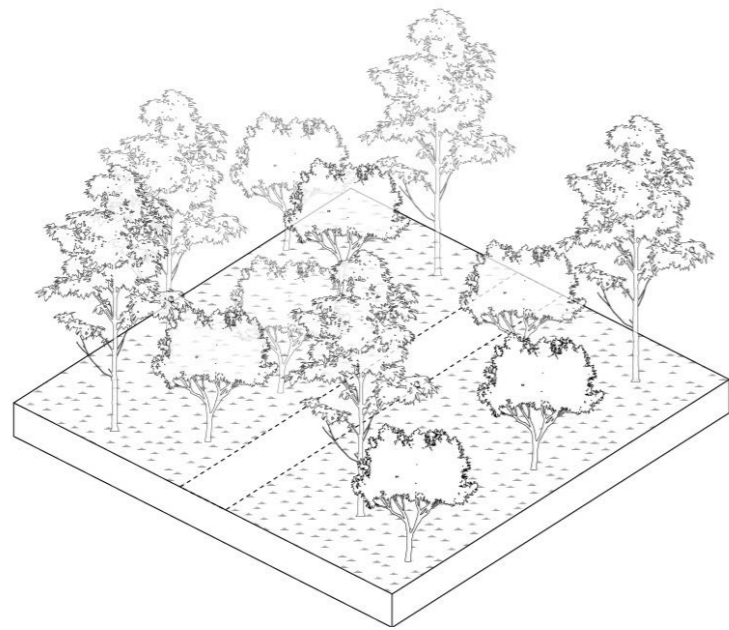
A big tombstone burial area on a big lawn with only some tall trees to shape the open atmosphere, while paths are of different width



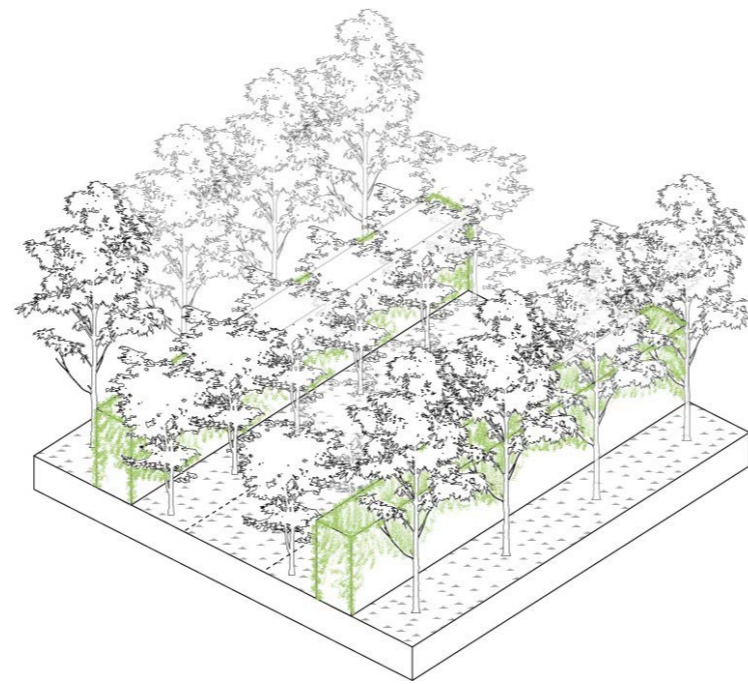
Two side paths inside a deciduous forest, the exterior side with 2 lines of well-maintained shrubs, leaving a quite enclosed atmosphere

## Case study on public cemeteries

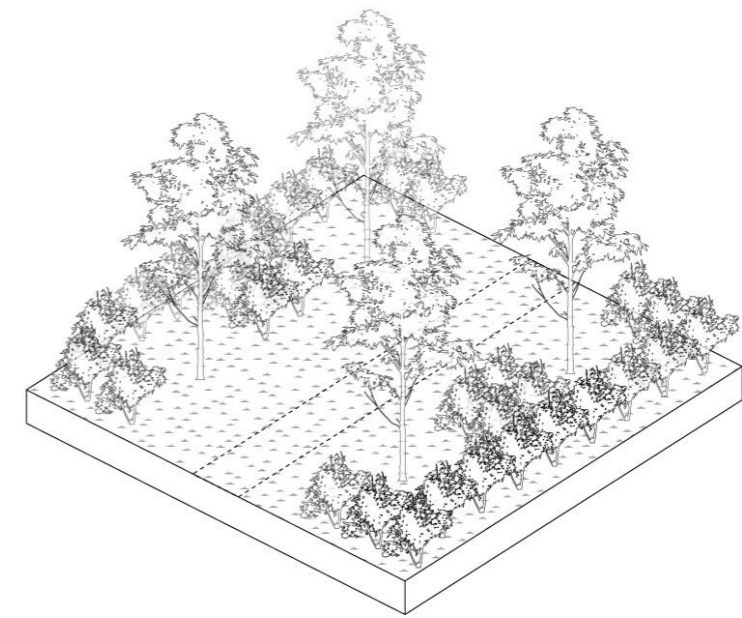
### 5.5 Conclusion



A paved main path with some kinds of tall trees and lawn space



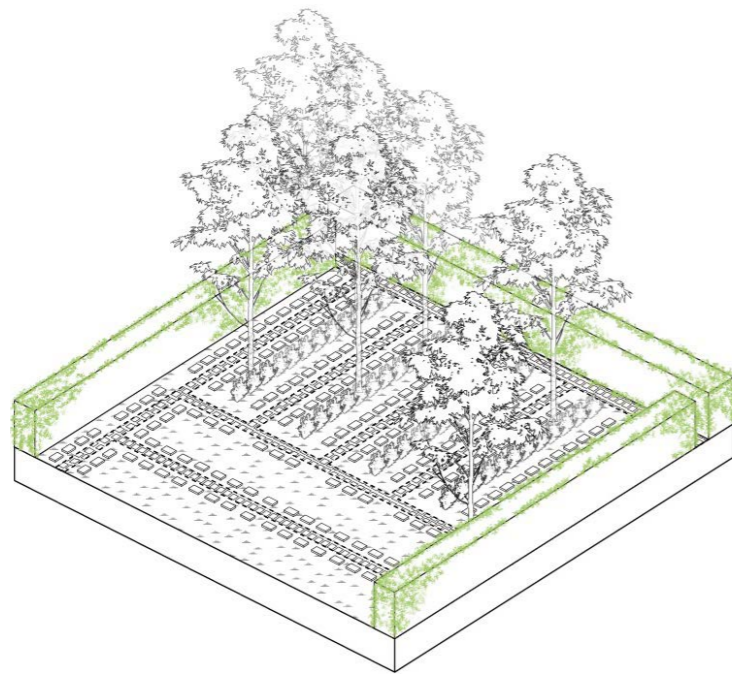
An unpaved main path with tall trees on the exterior side and lower trees on the interior side while with well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors in the middle



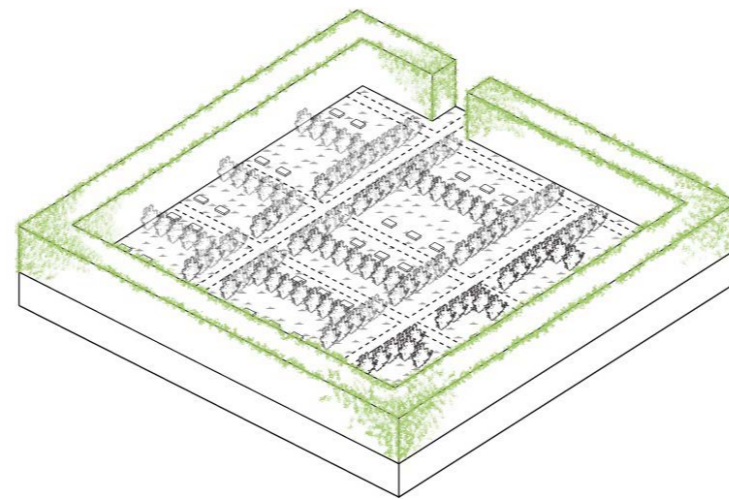
An unpaved main path with tall trees with lawn space and shrubs shaping the border

## Case study on public cemeteries

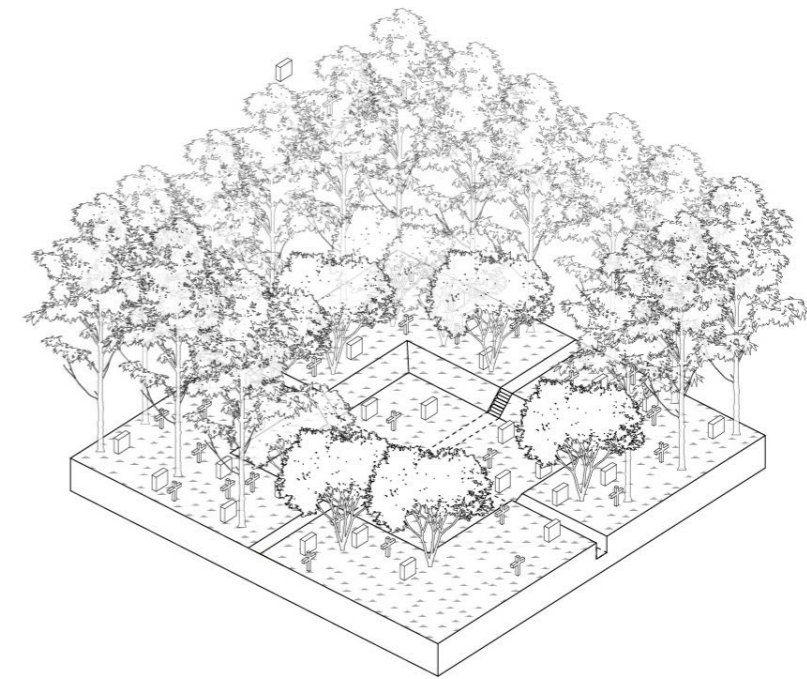
### 5.5 Conclusion



A small tombstone burial area, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, with small paths and tall trees inside



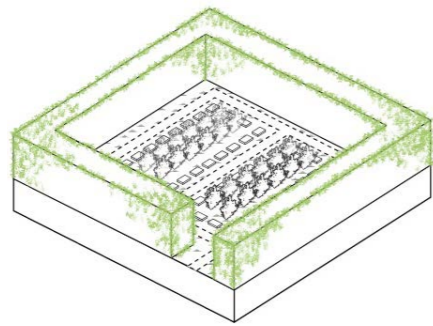
A small tombstone burial area, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, allows them to plant their favorite fruits and vegetables near the tombs



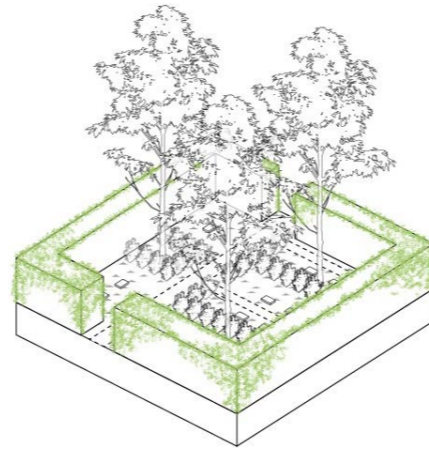
A big tombstone burial area, with different height of grounds and tall trees, creating a central gather space and memorial space under tree crowns

## Case study on public cemeteries

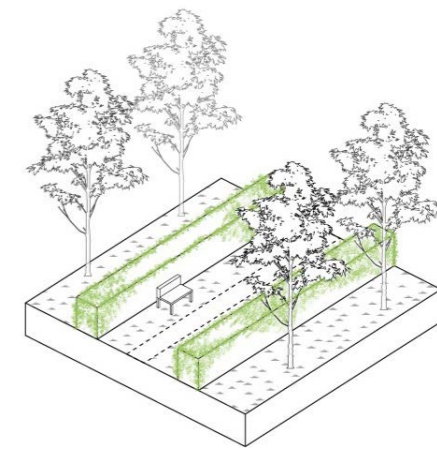
### 5.5 Conclusion



A small tombstone burial area, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, allows them to plant their favorite fruits and vegetables nearby



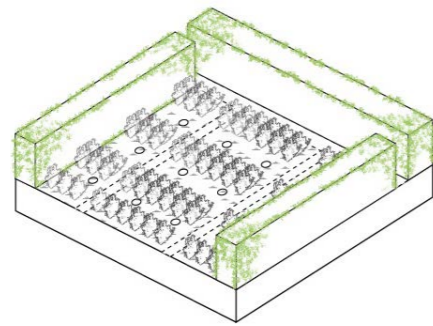
A small tombstone burial area, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, a few trees and lower shrubs around tombstones



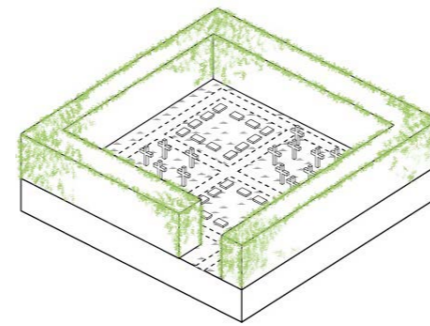
An intimate path with benches, lined with tall trees, while the interior features two rows of well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors

## Case study on public cemeteries

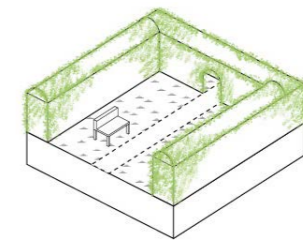
### 5.5 Conclusion



A stone-shape tomb burial area, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors, and lower shrubs inside, with a side path through the high shrub



A small tombstone burial area, with all kinds of shapes, divided to 4 areas, surrounded by well-maintained shrubs higher than visitors



An intimate path surrounded with high shrubs, private resting area with mysterious atmosphere



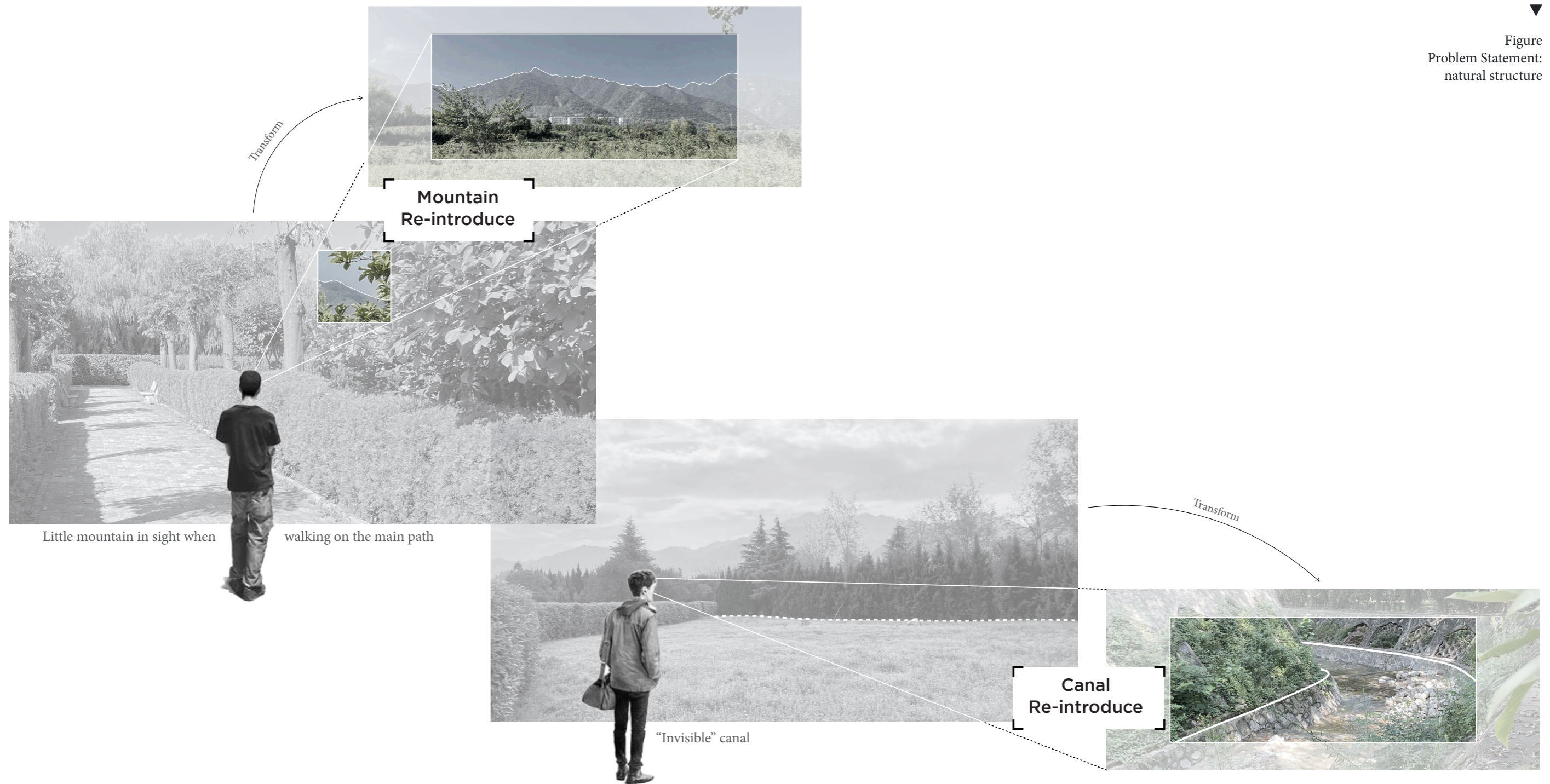


## Design with Memory

- 6.1 Problem Statement*
- 6.2 Design concept*
- 6.3 Design principle*
- 6.4 Redesign - water*
- 6.5 Redesign - symbol*
- 6.6 Redesign - construction*
- 6.7 Redesign - path*
- 6.8 Redesign - plantation*
- 6.9 Zoom-in(s)*
- 6.10 Routes and views*
- 6.11 Management*

# Design with Memory

## 6.1 Problem Statement



▼  
Figure  
Problem Statement:  
natural structure

# Design with Memory

## 6.1 Problem Statement

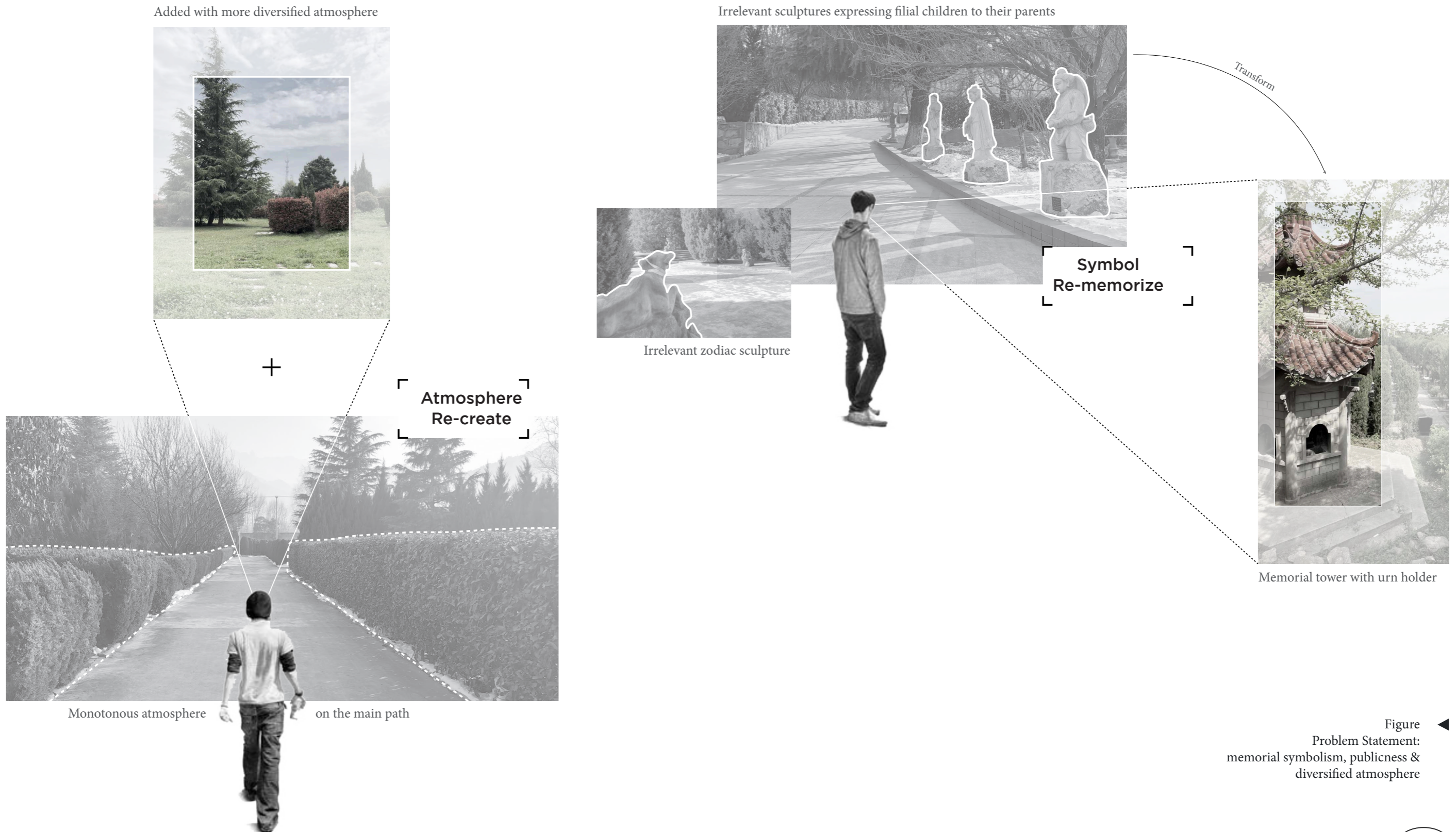


Figure  
Problem Statement:  
memorial symbolism, publicness &  
diversified atmosphere

## Design with Memory

### 6.1 Problem Statement

Upon closely analyzing the current situation of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, it is obvious that the four perspectives highlighted in the questionnaire are also missing here.

#### *Natural Structure*

While walking on the main path, the mountains in the far are often obscured by dense trees, preventing a full view of the picturesque landscape. Full view of mountains is only possible outside the cemetery. Similarly, the canal is hidden by thick vegetation. Given that the river is up to 5 meters deep, visitors cannot perceive its presence unless they are quite close to it. So some transformations need to be made to re-introduce the mountains and the canal.

#### *Memorial Symbolism*

Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery features many irrelevant sculptures, such as 12 Chinese zodiac sculptures at the main entrance and various sculptures in the entrance square depicting filial children to their parents. These symbols clash with the cemetery's memorial atmosphere. Additionally, a beautiful pagoda, which is favored by most people according to the questionnaire, is tucked away in a hidden corner and often goes unnoticed unless a grave is located nearby, visitors will pay a visit. Similarly, some extraneous symbols need to be replaced or re-memorize to better align with the cemetery's purpose.

#### *Publicness & Diversified Atmosphere*

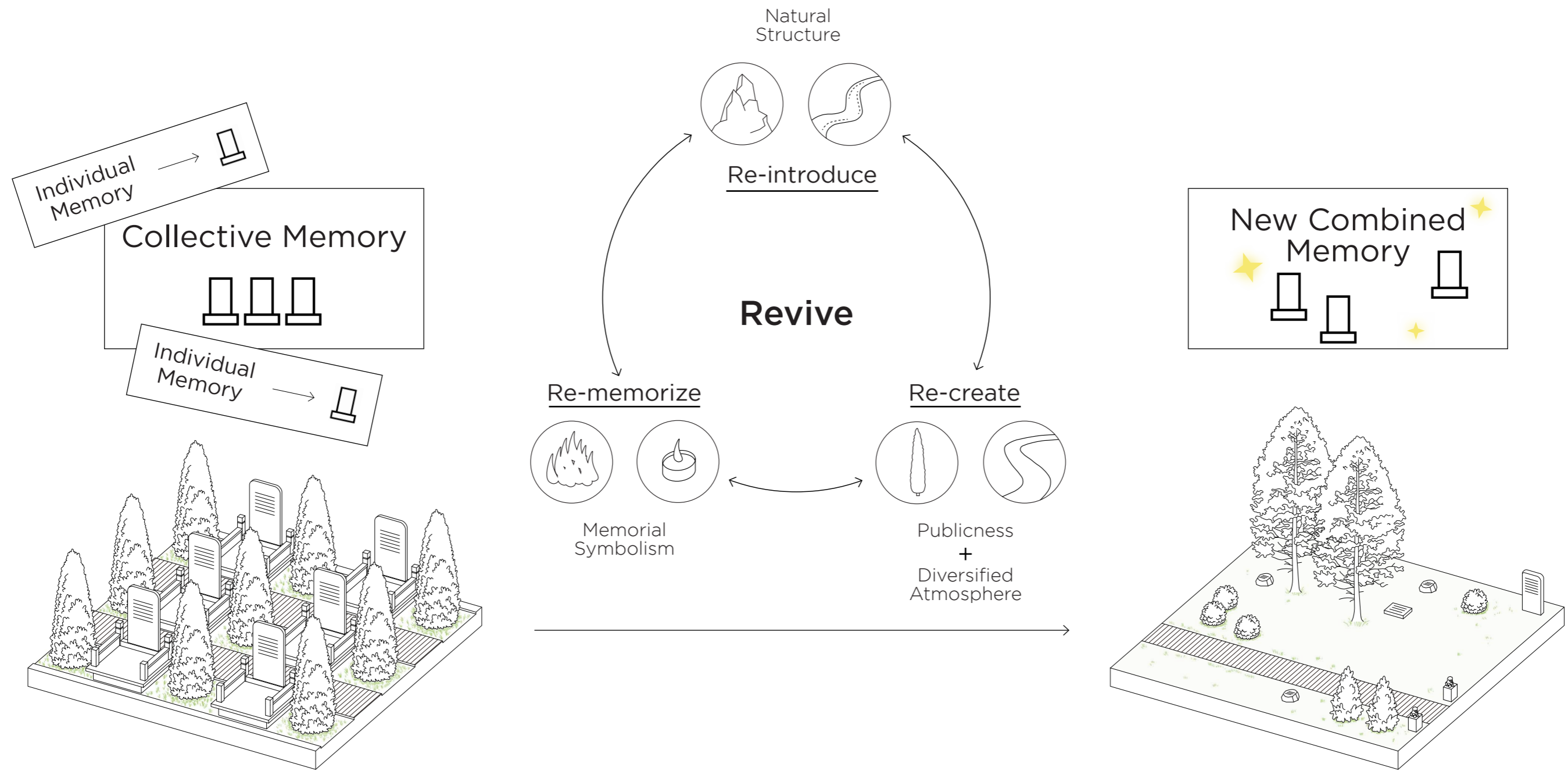
Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery features many burial spaces that adopt relatively enclosed designs, such as shrubs surrounding the tombstones and slightly taller trees in more internal areas. This plant arrangement is also used in many non-burial areas, which could serve as public spaces but currently share the same design language as the burial spaces. The questionnaire revealed that people expect public cemeteries to be transformed into public spaces, which is a notable deficiency in Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery. Although it has potential public spaces, their enclosed and overly private design causes them to be overlooked. Therefore, there is a need to reimagine and recreate the overall atmosphere of this public cemetery.

#### *Conclusion*

The 4 perspectives : natural structure, memorial symbolism, publicness and diversified atmosphere are presented with some room for improvement. Among these, natural structure and memorial symbolism represent aspects of traditional culture that are still preserved and need to be inherited, expressing our collective and social memory. This includes the appreciation and visibility of mountain and water, as well as the expression of ritual and memorial symbols. While the other 2 express new vision for future.

# Design with Memory

## 6.2 Design concept



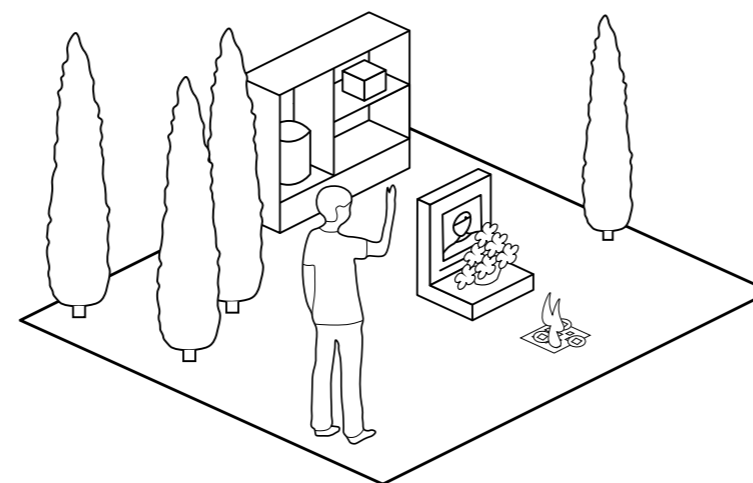
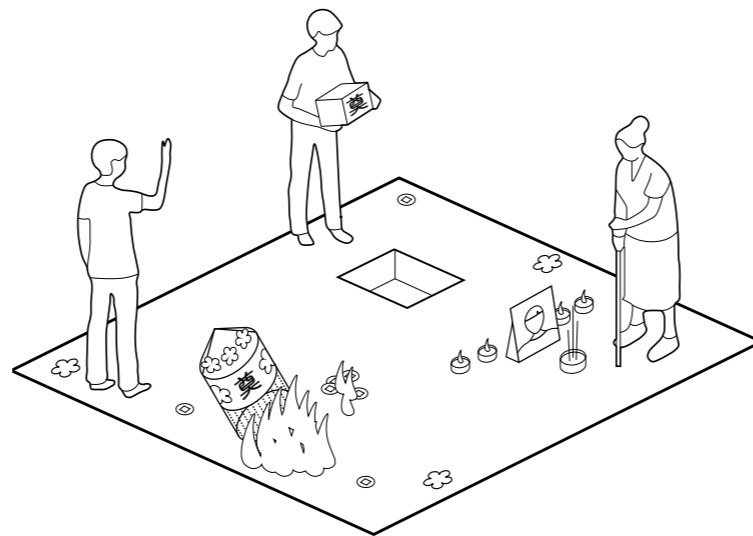
## Design with Memory

### 6.2 Design concept



Figure  
Collective memory moments in public cemetery

Figure  
Individual memory moments in public cemetery



Public cemeteries serve as repositories for both collective and individual memories. When a loved one passes away, we may attend their funeral, carrying a small urn, and in the flickering light of the fire, burn paper items, weeping as we mourn beside their photograph. Alternatively, we might revisit their grave with family members, offering a bouquet of white flowers or lighting incense. These collective memories support us throughout our lives, perpetuating cultural rituals and traditions.

Or a random morning, drive alone to a loved one's grave, without the strict adherence to tradition, simply wishing to share long-held thoughts. Lingering at the grave allows one to experience a renewed sense of connection. Or perhaps one desires a tranquil afternoon, to meander through a public cemetery with a book in hand, strolling leisurely and sensing the presence of the many souls resting peacefully. Individual memories like these imbue public cemeteries with countless moving moments.

From the questionnaire, respondents vividly described their perceptions and expectations of cemeteries, noting that their perceptions are frequently rooted in their experiences within public cemeteries, be they collective or personal in nature. However, their expectations transcend mere individual and collective memories, incorporating visionary ele-

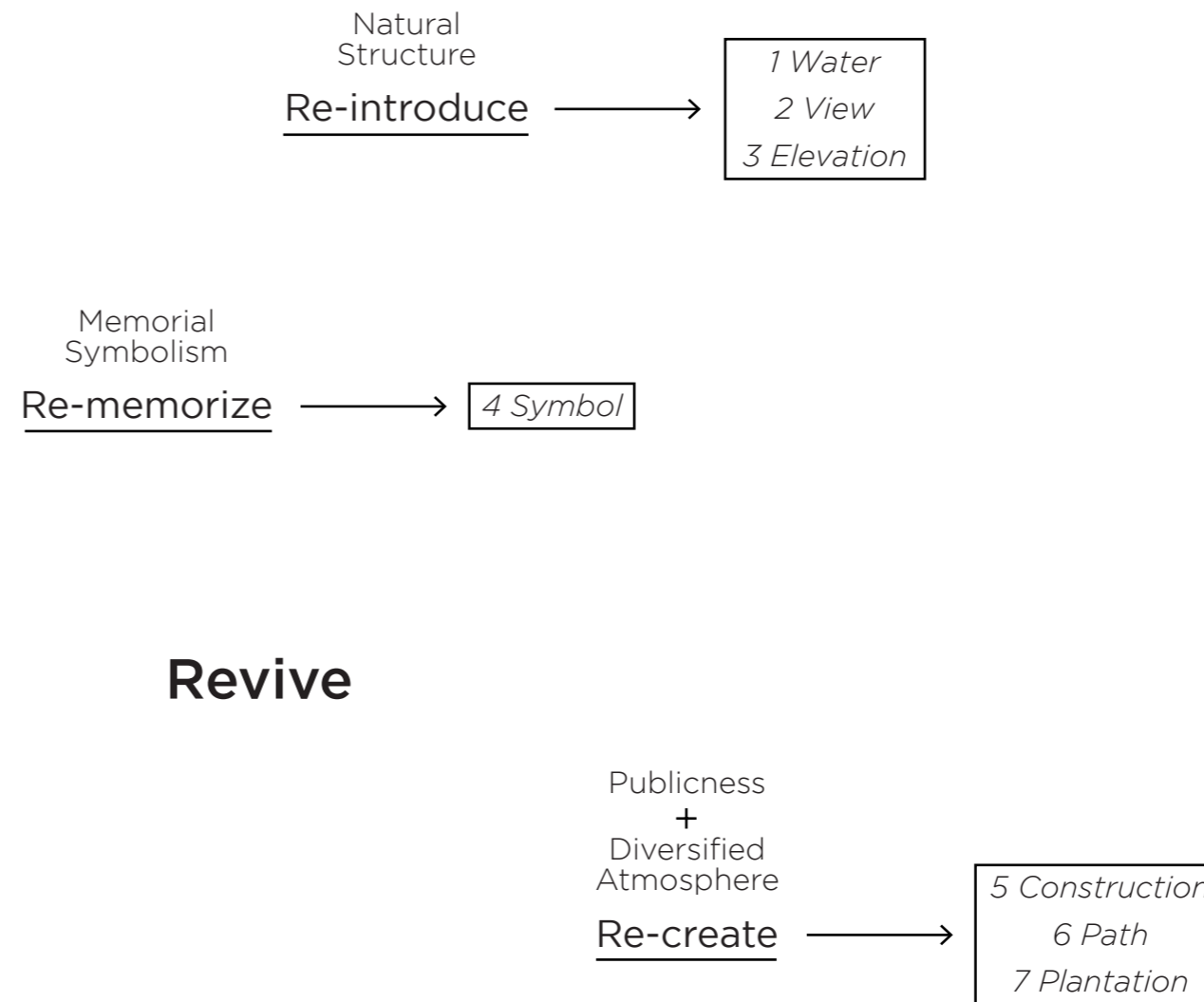
## Design with Memory

### 6.2 Design concept

ments and creative imaginations, a concept I have termed “new combined memory.”

Analyzing the problem statement, when we reassess Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery through the lens of the four anticipated qualities of cemeteries (natural structure, memorial symbolism, publicness, and diversified atmosphere), it becomes evident that the natural structure requires to be re-introduced, memorial symbolism needs to be re-memorized, and both publicness and diversified atmosphere demand to be re-created. By re-appearing, remembering, and re-creating, we can effectively revive Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery. So this will be the design concept of this redesign project.

Specifically, in addressing natural structure, my analysis and redesign efforts will concentrate on elements such as water features, scenic views, and elevation variances to enhance the sensory and aesthetic appeal of the cemetery. Regarding memorial symbolism, the focus will be on the evocative power of symbols that connect visitors with the deeper meanings associated with remembrance. For the dimensions of publicness and diversified atmosphere, the redesign will involve a thoughtful reconfiguration of buildings, paths, and plantation to create a more welcoming and varied environment. These concerted efforts are designed to ensure that Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery not only meets but exceeds the contemporary expectations of a cemetery for remembrance and reflection.



## Design with Memory

### 6.3 Design Principle



Figure  
Burial rate in Shaanxi Province and in  
China

According to the design concept, the principle behind the redesign of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery encompasses four perspectives: natural structure, memorial symbolism, publicness, and diversified atmosphere. These perspectives will be addressed through re-introduction, re-memorization, and re-creation, with the goal of revitalizing the cemetery.

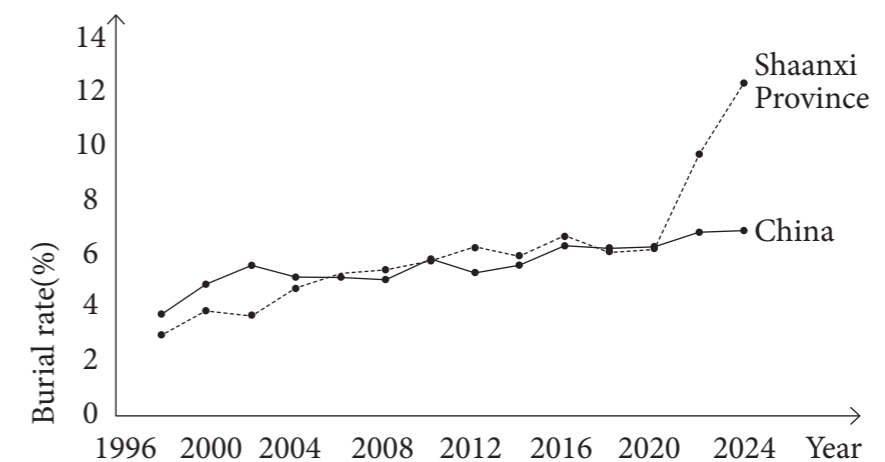
The re-introduction phase consists of three primary layers: water, view, and elevation. To reinvigorate public engagement with the canal and increase the usage frequency of the surrounding public spaces, the canal will undergo a transformation. The current hard material construction will be replaced with grass slopes, and small water-resistant herbs will be planted, enhancing both the aesthetic and ecological value of the area. Due to the current dense planting, the distant vistas of Zhongnan Mountain are not fully visible. To enhance visibility and improve the viewing experience, it is proposed to selectively reduce the vegetation. Additionally, leveraging the natural topography to create elevated grounds will offer an enhanced perspective of the surrounding landscape.

Additional commemorative elements, such as remembrance trees, candle holders, and urn display walls, will be introduced to replace existing symbols that may be perceived as dull, irrelevant, or overly solemn, including terracotta warrior sculptures, lion statues, and pillars. These new features are intended to enhance the emotional

and personal connection for visitors, aligning more closely with the intended memorial atmosphere of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery.

In addressing the perspectives of publicness and diversified atmosphere within the cemetery, the approach incorporates three layers: construction, path, and plantation. To accentuate the cemetery's publicness, designs will include outdoor walls featuring small windows, which will enhance the connectivity between public spaces and offer visitors a variety of exploratory experiences. Moreover, Chinese pavilions will be strategically placed in certain public areas to furnish visitors with spaces for rest and reflection.

The principle also involves the addition of multiple



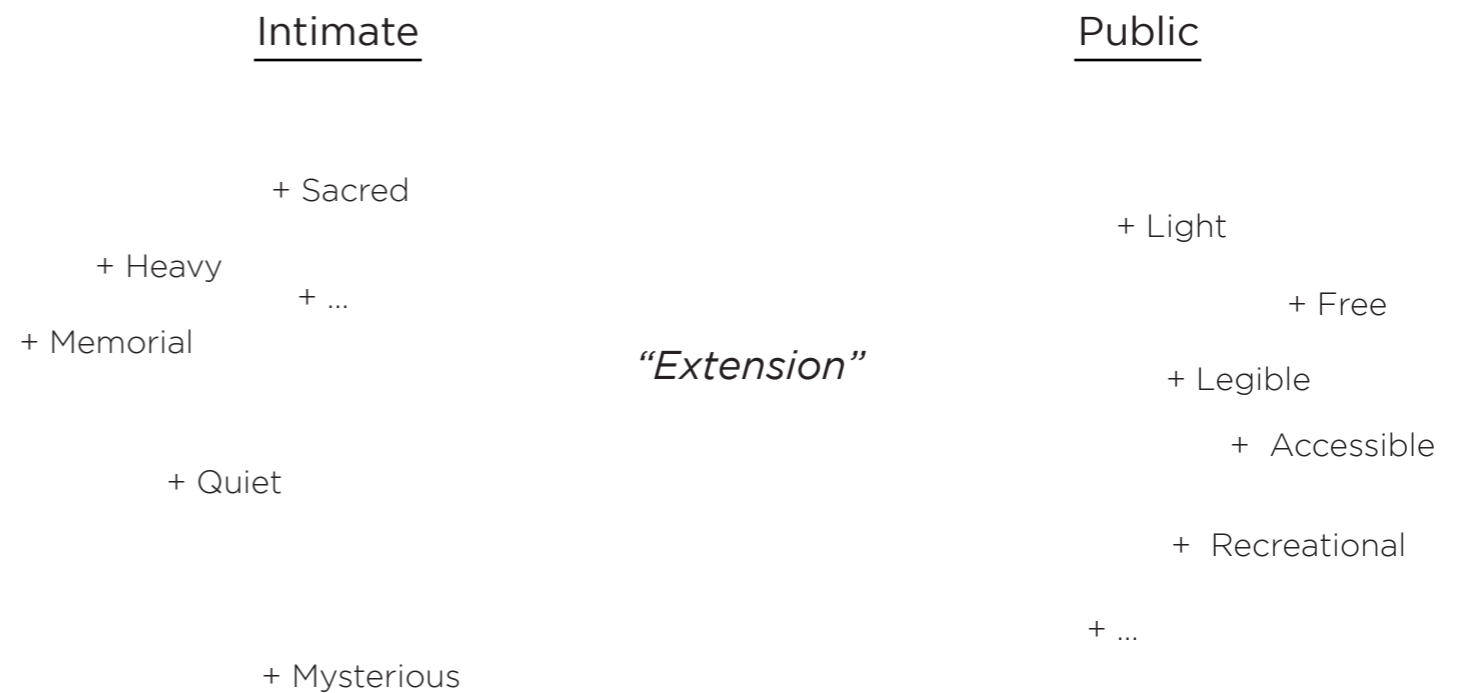
## Design with Memory

### 6.3 Design Principle

path throughout public zones and burial areas, which will serve to increase the site's openness and accessibility. Furthermore, to mitigate the starkness of exposed burial areas, supplementary vegetation will be introduced, enhancing both the aesthetic appeal and the sense of privacy within these spaces.

Investigations indicate that the burial rate in Shaanxi Province is projected to significantly exceed the national average in China post-2020. In response, this design proposes the addition of an extension area to trial a new, more environmentally sustainable burial method. This innovative approach allows visitors to purchase trees of various ages to plant within a designated memorial park created by the extension.

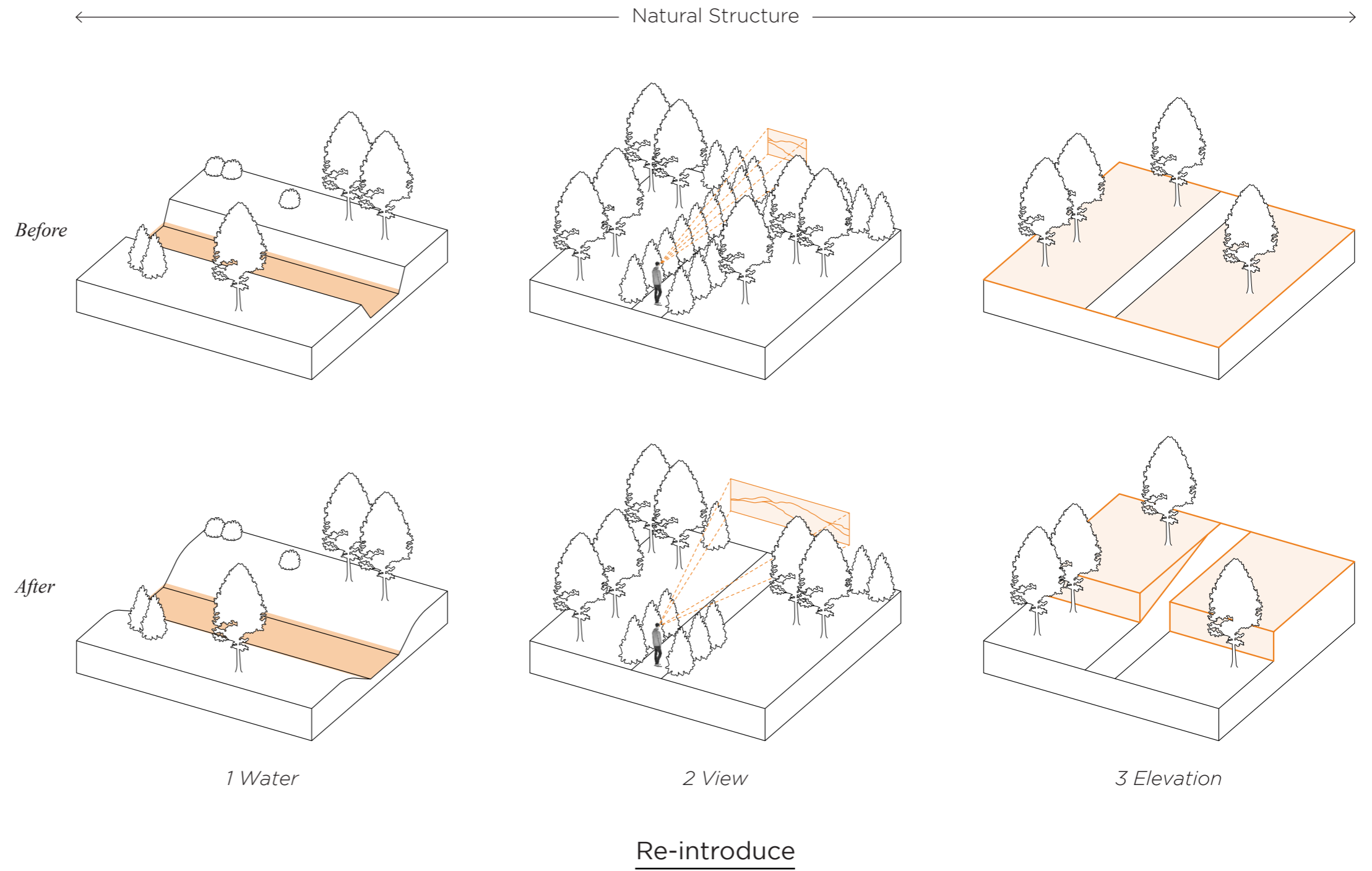
Following the expansion, the layout will be organized according to three spatial categories, aligning with the 4 previously mentioned perspectives: intimate space, public space, and an intermediary extension that corresponds to the memorial park. The intimate space, which primarily encompasses burial or ritual areas, is designed to evoke a sacred, heavy, mysterious atmosphere conducive to reflection and remembrance. Conversely, the public space introduces a dynamic element to the cemetery, fostering a light, legible, recreational atmosphere. This structured division ensures that each area fulfills its intended emotional and functional purposes within the cemetery's environment.



# Design with Memory

## 6.3 Design Principle

▼  
Figure  
Design principles for Chang'an Ci'en  
Yuan cemetery

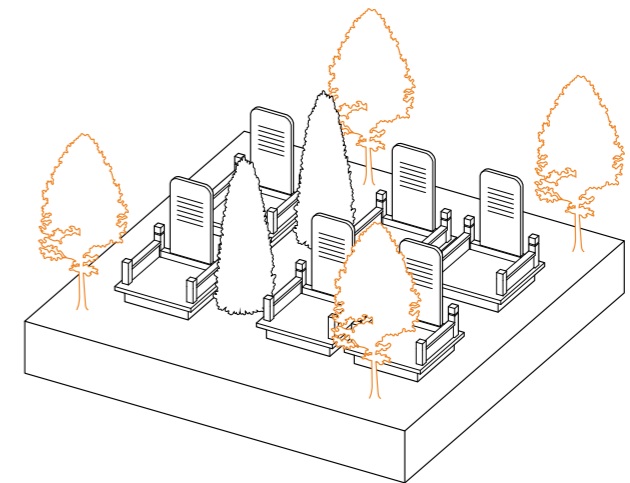
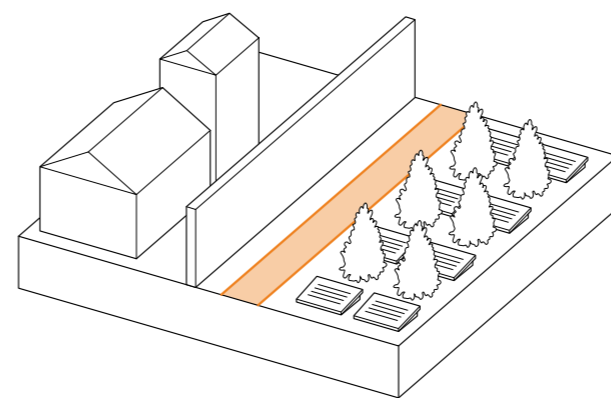
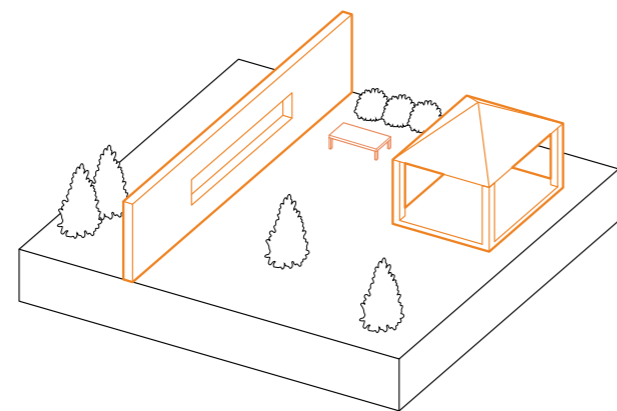
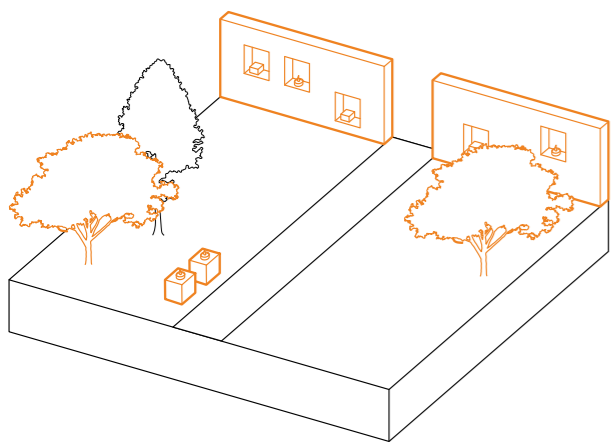
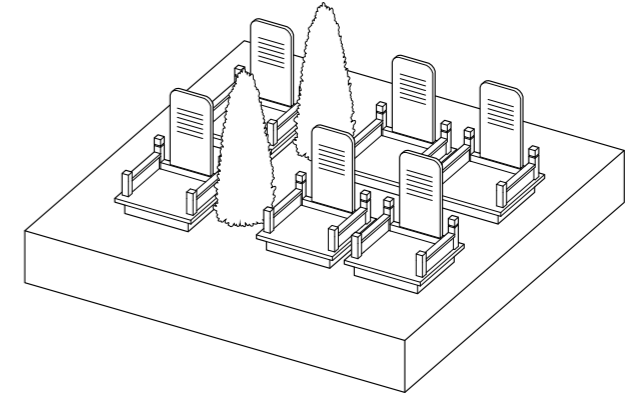
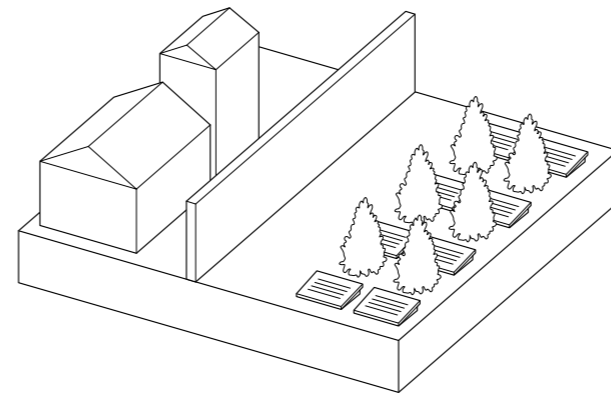
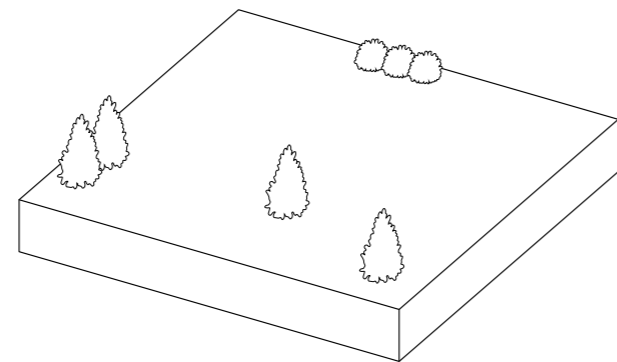
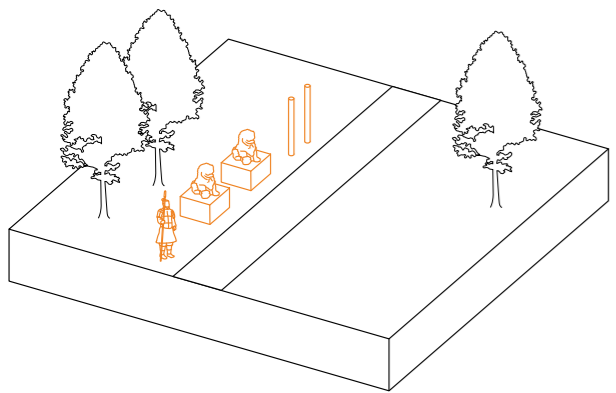


# Design with Memory

## 6.3 Design Principle

← Memorial Symbolism →

← Publicness + Diversified Atmosphere →



4 Symbol

5 Construction

6 Path

7 Plantation

Re-memorize

Re-create

## Design with Memory

### 6.3 Design Principle



Figure  
Design strategy



#### Legend

- ←... Existing route
- ← New route
- ▼ Entrance
- Parking
- Public space
- /// Intimate space



In accordance with the established design principles, the proposed redesign will involve an expansion of both the intimate and public spaces, with a particular emphasis on enlarging the public areas. Previously underutilized spaces within the site, which held potential for public use but were left undeveloped, will now be transformed to extend the public zones into the central area of the site, thereby distinctly segregating them from the intimate areas.

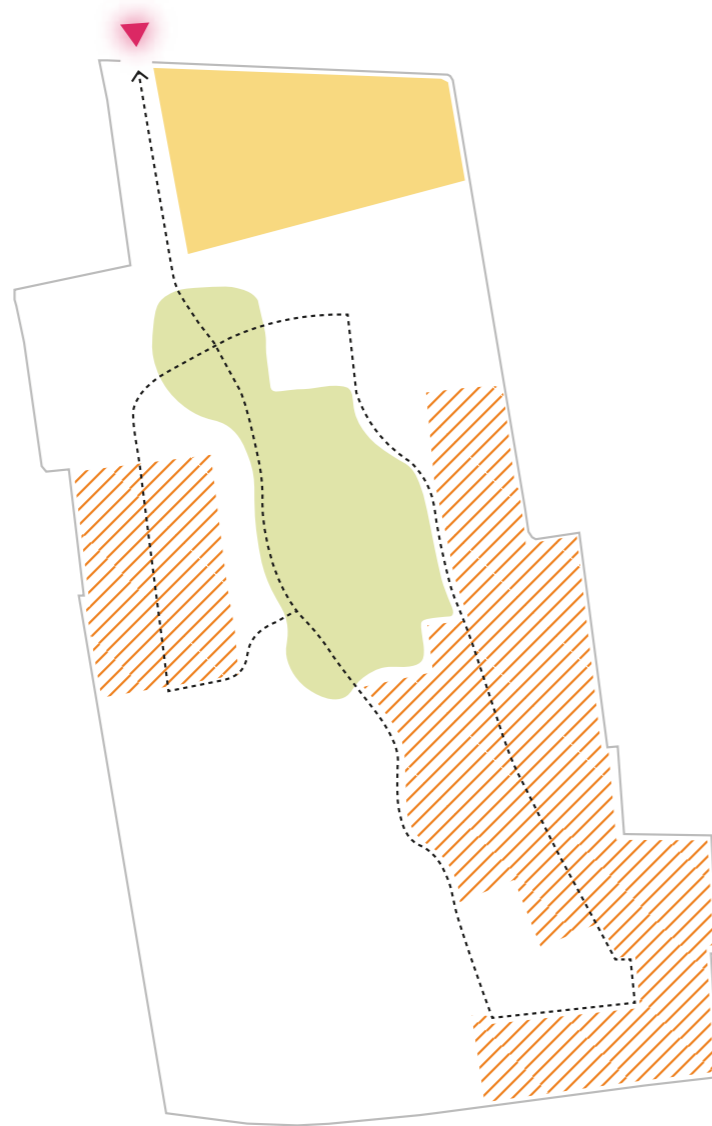
Additionally, multiple entrances will be introduced, strategically located on the eastern and southern perimeters of the site, near major external roads to enhance both accessibility and visibility of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery. To alleviate congestion at the primary parking area on the northern side, two smaller parking lots will be constructed on the eastern side. This adjustment allows the southern area adjacent to the northern parking lot to be repurposed into additional public space.

The redesign will also include the introduction of several main paths, positioned strategically throughout various sections of the site to foster diverse sight-seeing experiences. A significant aspect of this redesign is the creation of an extension memorial park on the southern side, which is envisioned as a key feature of the site.

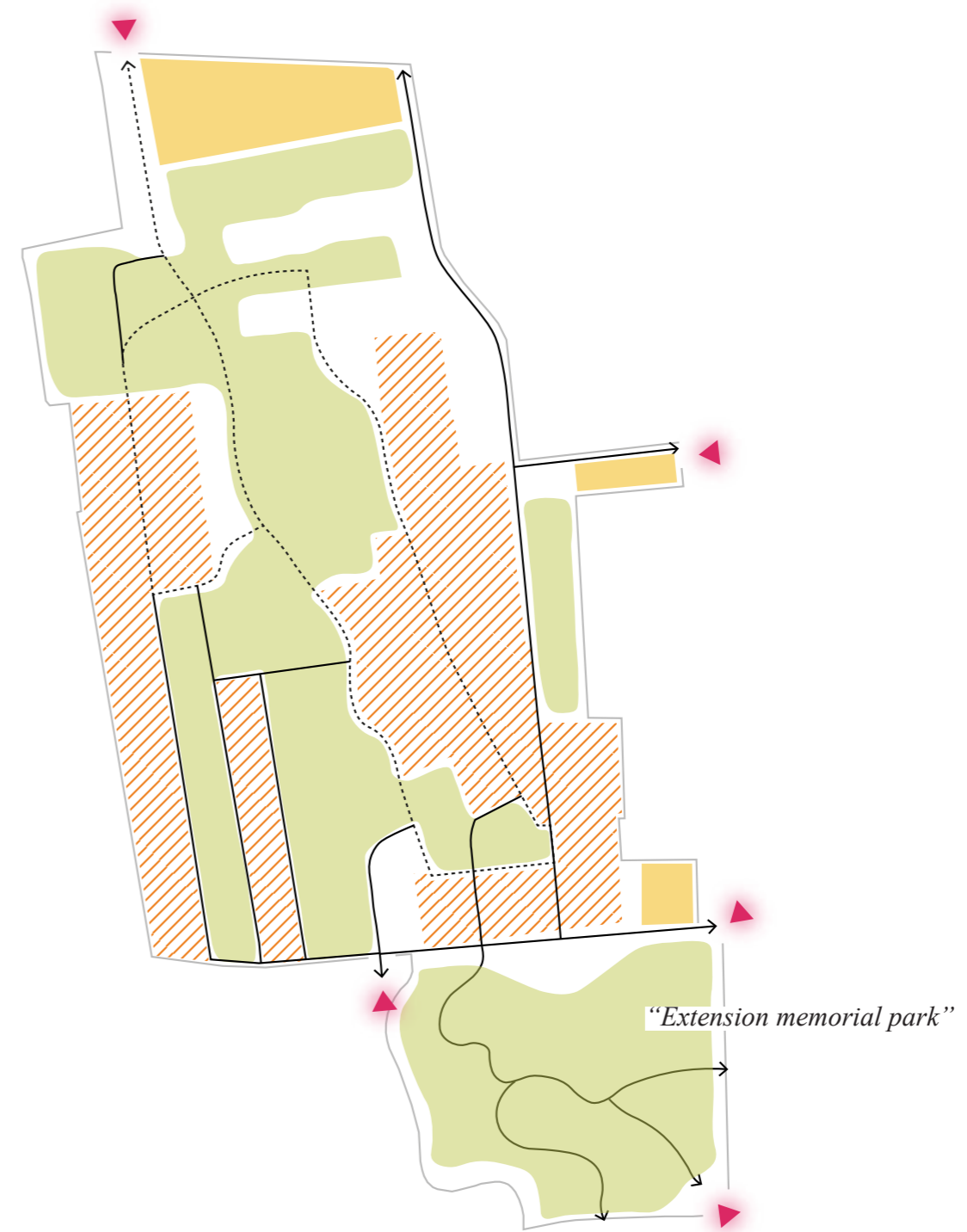
# Design with Memory

## 6.3 Design Principle

Before



After



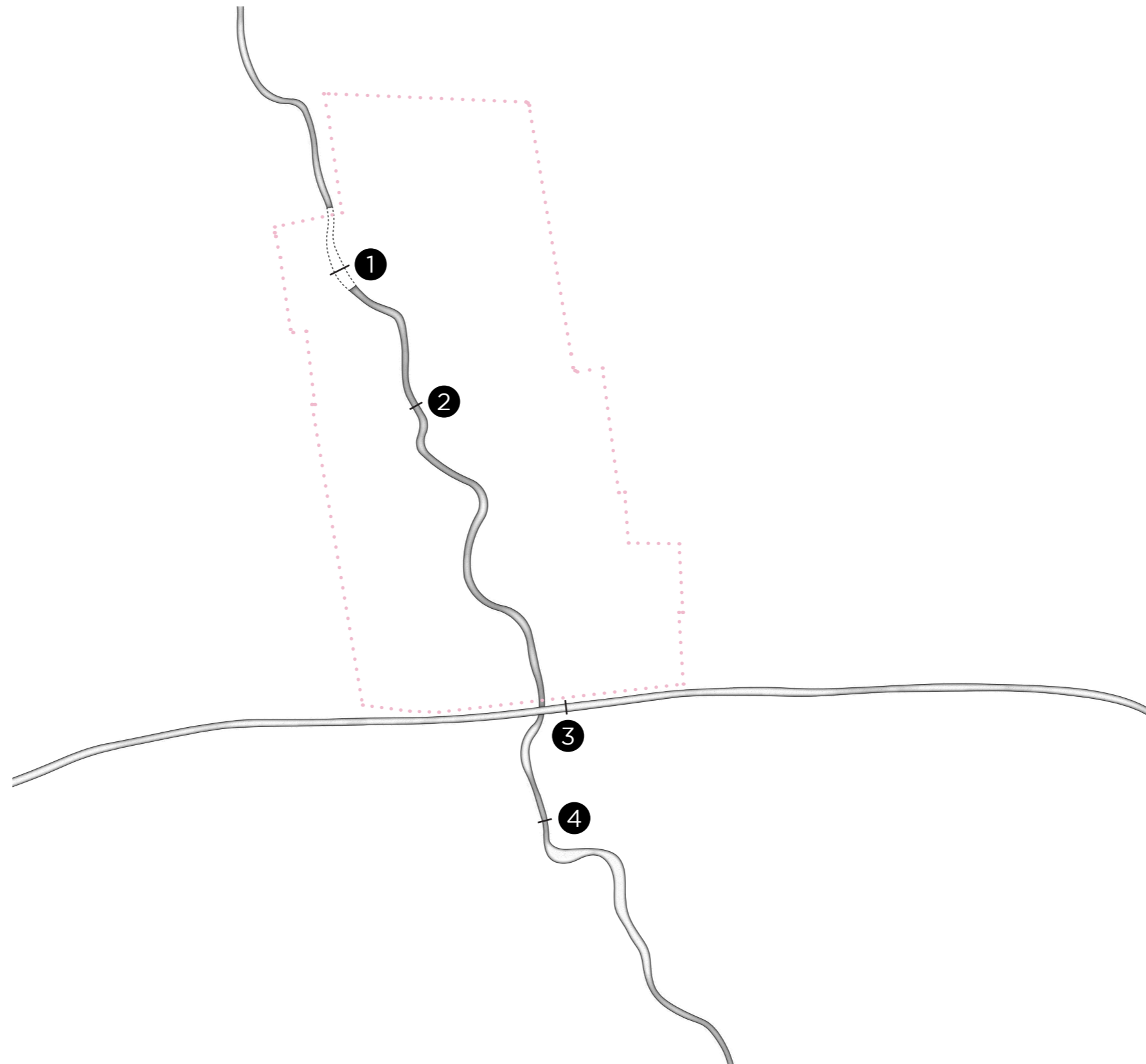
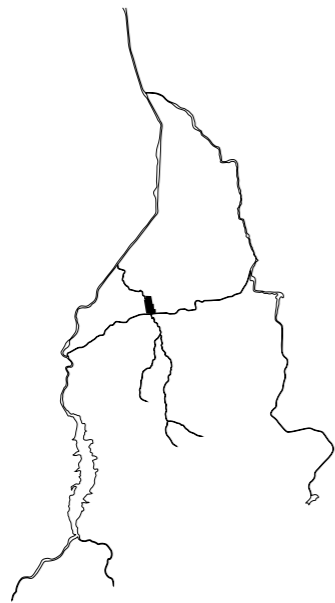
## Design with Memory

### 6.4 Redesign - water



Figure  
Main rivers running through Chang'an  
Ci'en Yuan cemetery

Figure  
Before design - water layer

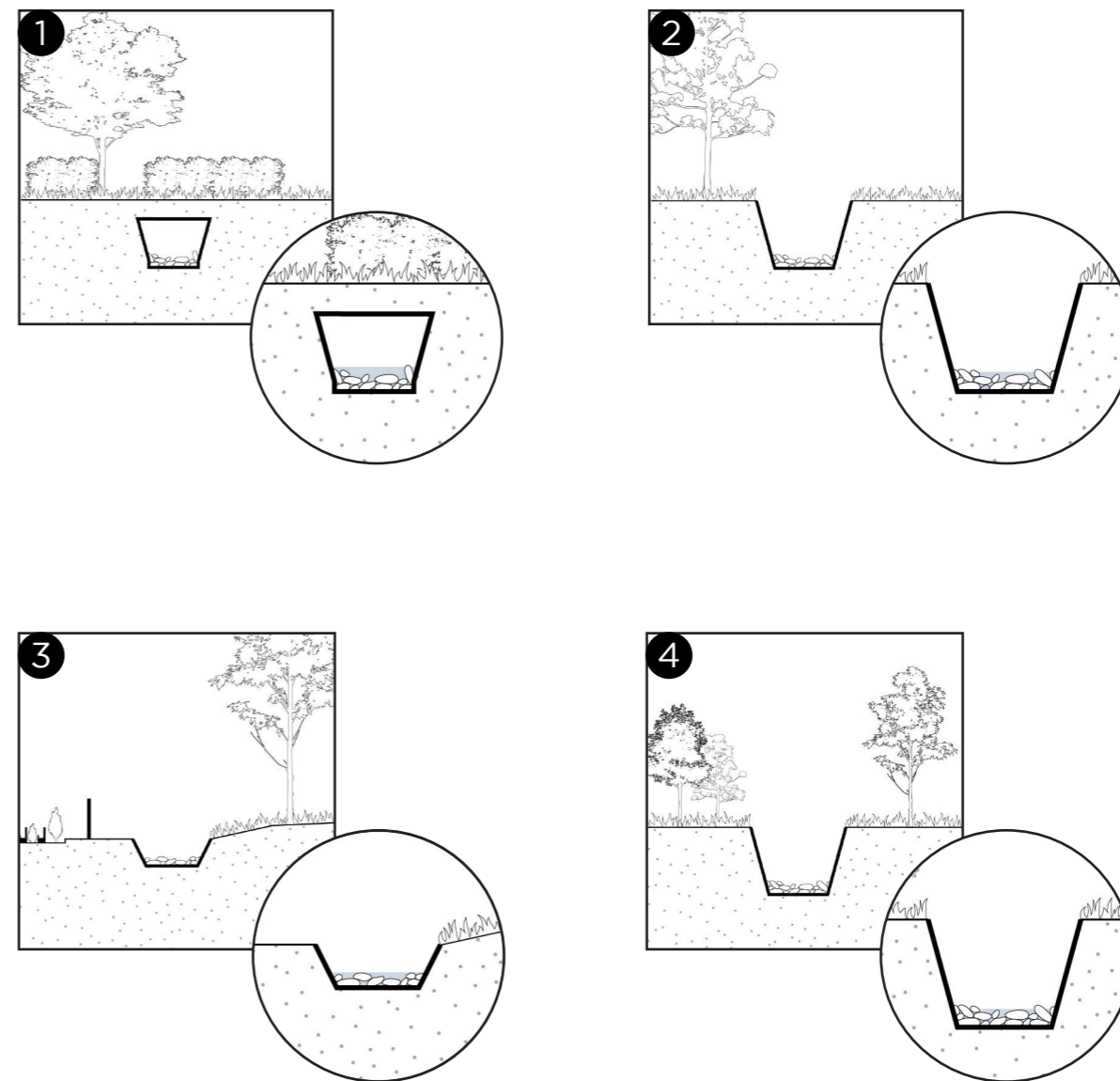


## Design with Memory

### 6.4 Redesign - water

Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery is situated at the confluence of two rivers, with one flowing from west to east and the other from south to north. The east-west river canal has a depth of approximately 2 meters, whereas the north-south canal is deeper, measuring around 5 meters. Notably, the east-west canal is positioned above the north-south.

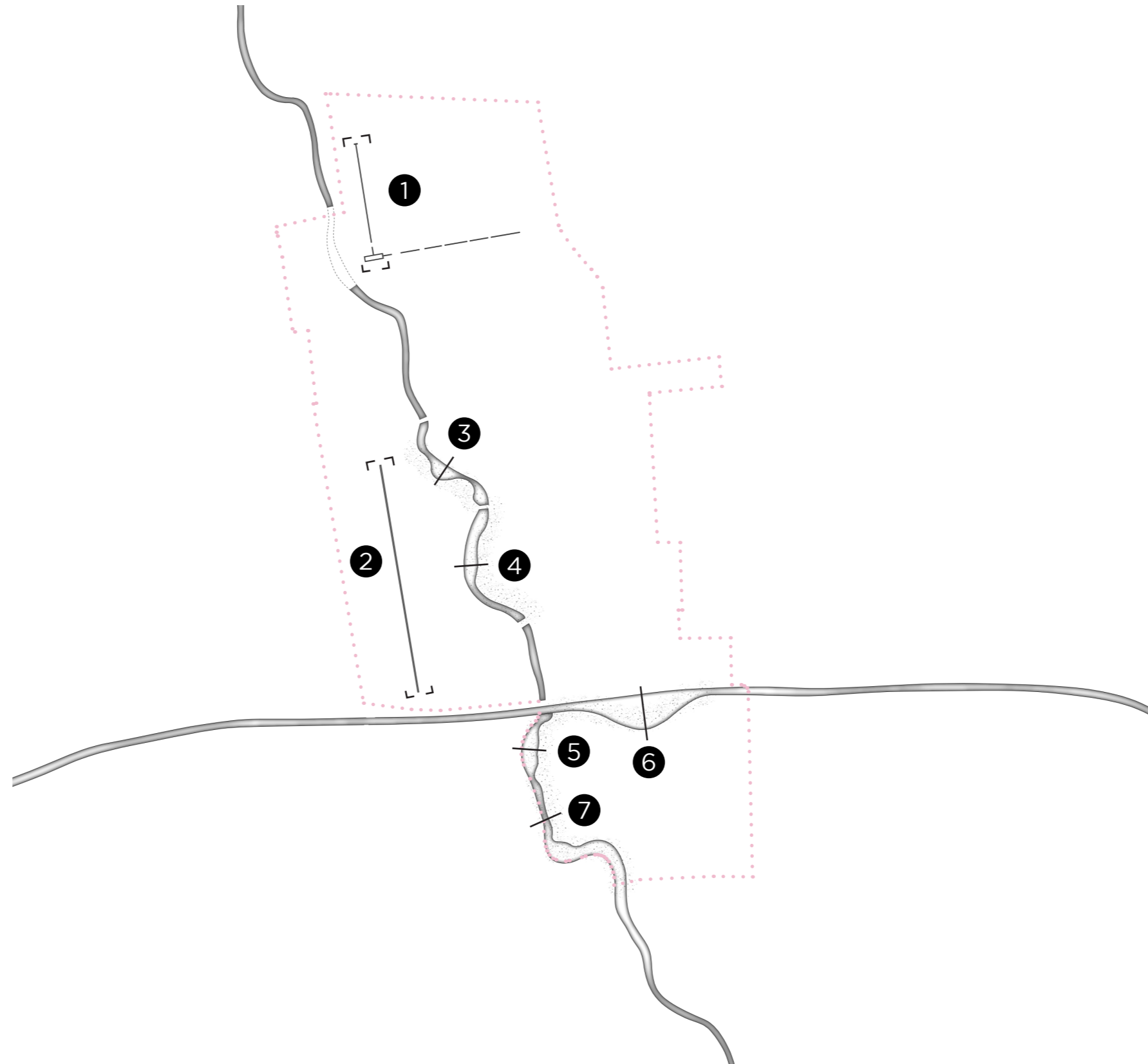
The north-south traverses the central area of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, but its depth often results in it being overlooked by visitors. To provide a detailed analysis, I have selected four key nodes for sections. The sectional views reveal that the river enters its flood period annually from July to September; however, the water level remains relatively low, typically between 20cm and 30cm. Consequently, even during periods of rainfall, the river fails to significantly capture the interest or attention of visitors.



## Design with Memory

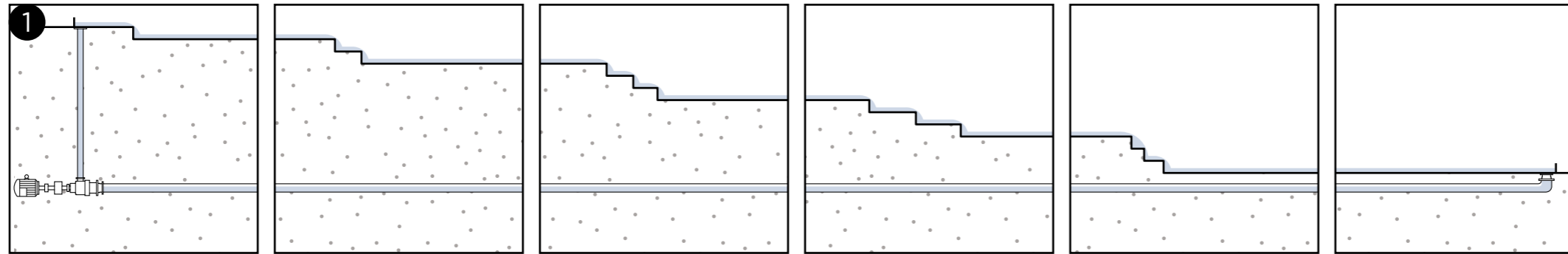
### 6.4 Redesign - water

▼  
Figure  
After design - water layer



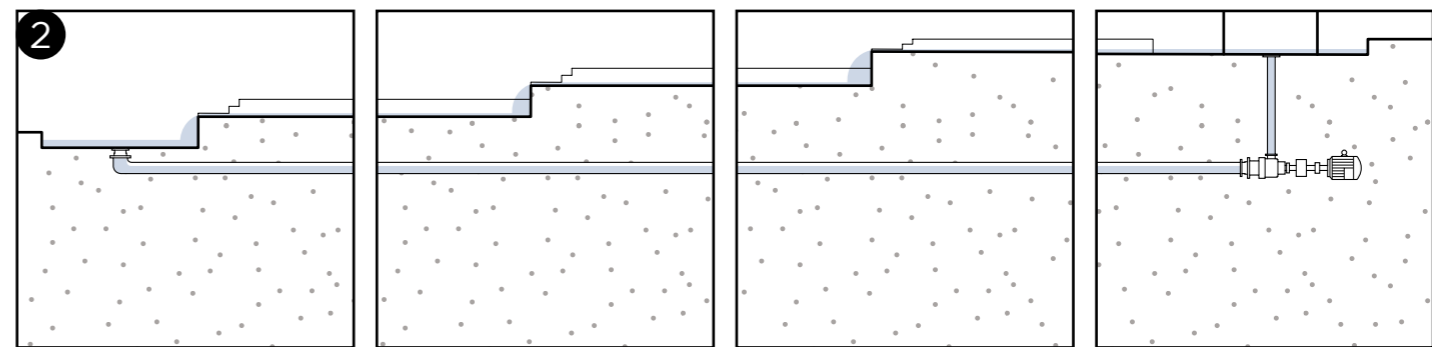
## Design with Memory

### 6.4 Redesign - water

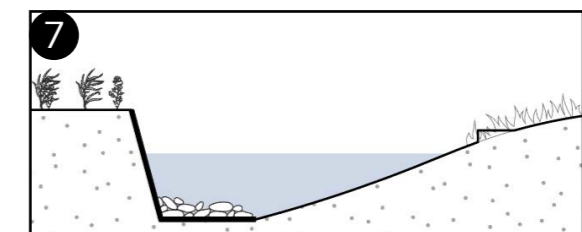
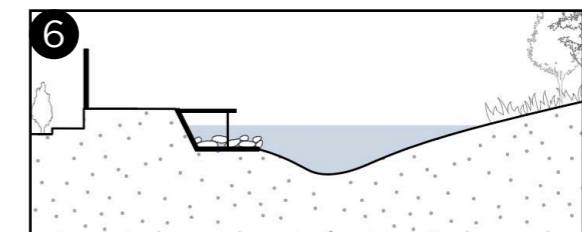


In the redesigned layout, new water feature has been incorporated: two parts of water cascade. The first part, situated on the north side of the main entrance, serves as an inviting element, employing both visual form and auditory cues to draw visitors into the cemetery, thereby enhancing the formal ambience of the entrance. The second cascade is strategically placed in the new burial area on the west side, where the notable elevation difference accentuates the clarity and strength of the water's sound, yet it is designed to not encroach upon the tranquil and solemn atmosphere of the intimate area.

Sections 1 and 2 delineate the origins of the water used in these cascades, about 30cm deep. In the summer and autumn months, the water is sourced from precipitation and is then pumped to the highest point to facilitate circulation. During the drier seasons of spring and winter, the water supply is maintained through an artificial water system.



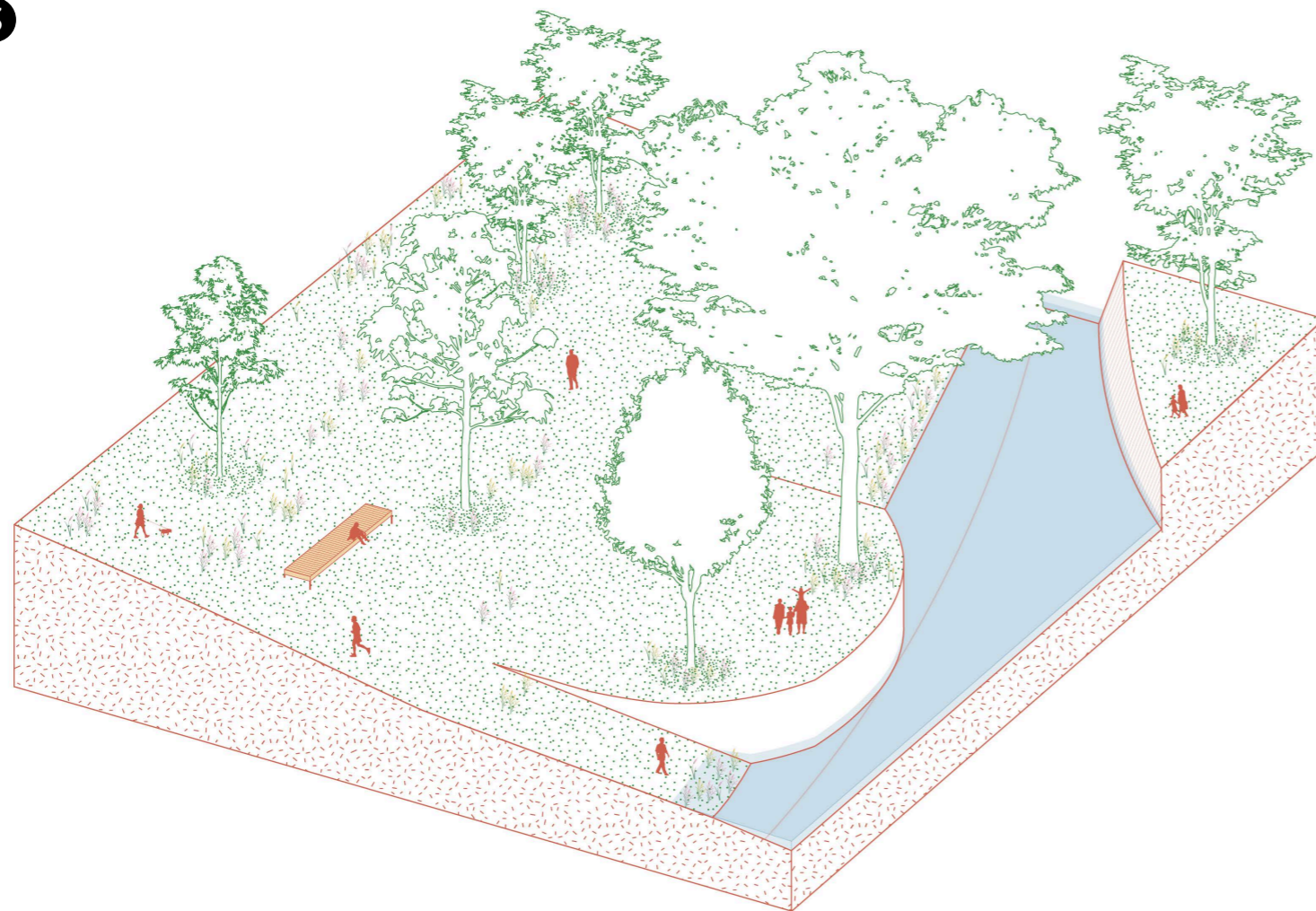
In addition to the implementation of the water cascade, considerable modifications have been made to the north-south canal to enhance the creation of public spaces. Displayed in axonometrical drawing 3 and 4, the canal has been transformed with a riverbank featuring soft grassy slopes leading into the water, while the opposite sides retain the original rigid canal structures. Specifically, at axonometrical 3, the northeast side of the canal maintains its hard structure, whereas the southwest side transitions to a gentle slope. The arrangement is reversed at axonometrical 4.



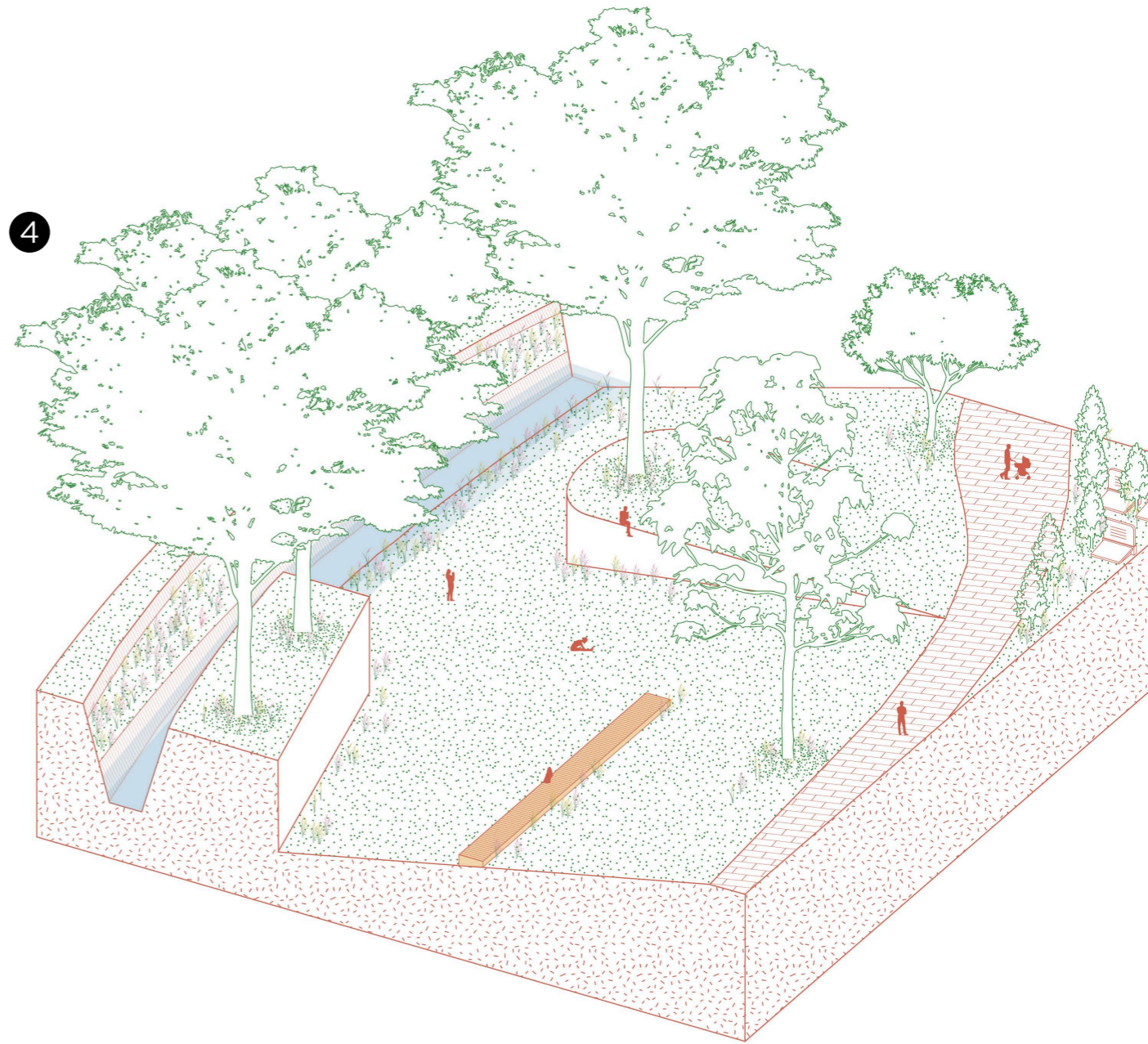
## Design with Memory

### 6.4 Redesign - water

3

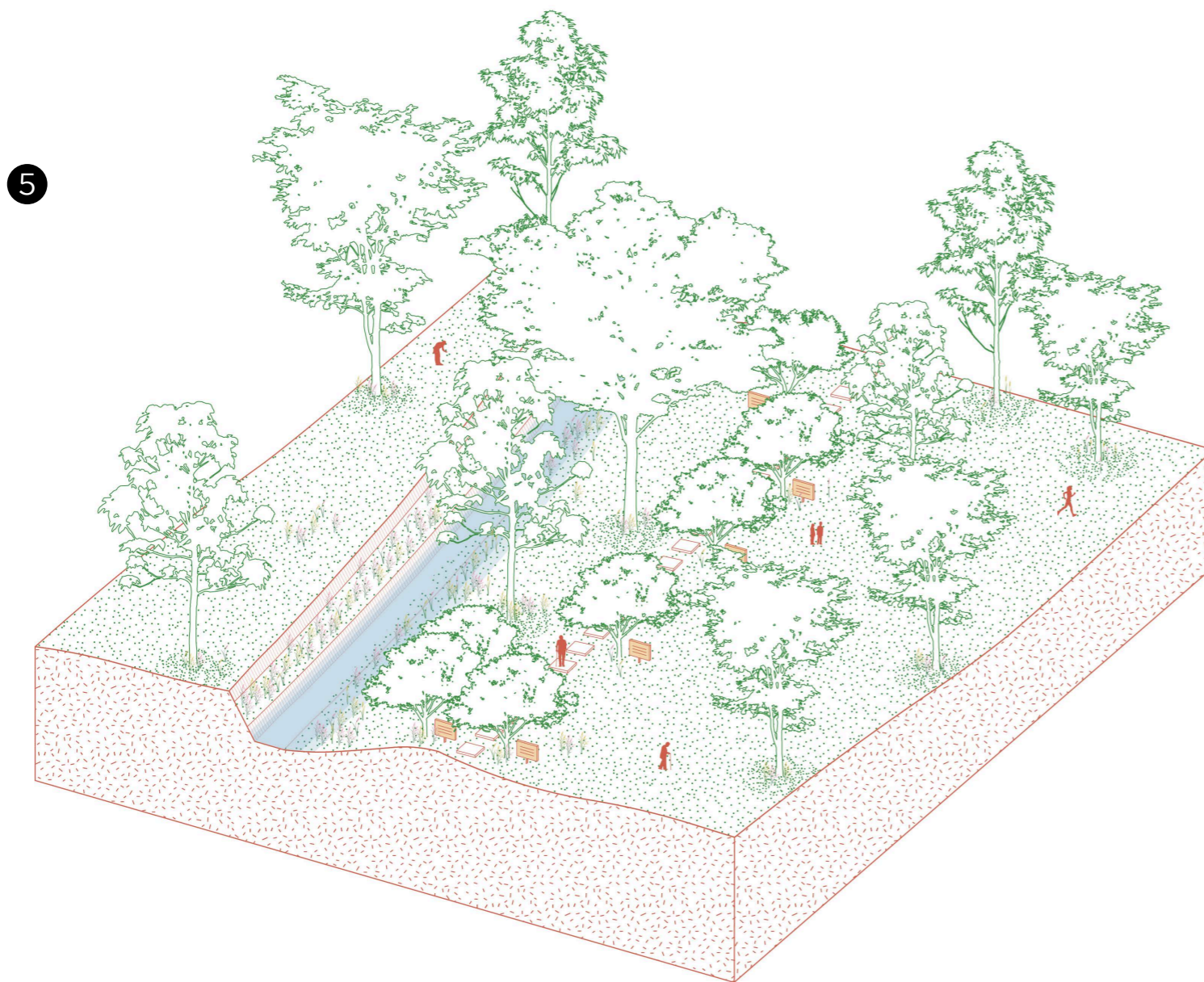


4



## Design with Memory

### 6.4 Redesign - water



Both nodes preserve much of the original vegetation, providing an environment conducive to continued growth; thus, the design incorporating the slopes is only implemented in treeless areas. The zones containing existing trees adjacent to these slopes effectively serve as viewing platforms, overlooking both the grassy inclines and the areas across the river. This configuration not only heightens the visual interest of the site but also expands the functional possibilities of the river setting.

The design principle of the slope is further applied at axonometrical 5, situated within the extension memorial park. Here, a path and an area for planting remembrance trees—which visitors can purchase—are thoughtfully integrated near the water, crafting a picturesque, water-adjacent space. Although the accompanying image illustrates the site during the wet season, it is envisaged that during the dry season, the grassy slopes will continue to provide a verdant and inviting public area, ensuring a consistently pleasant experience.

In the extension memorial park, the east-west canal have been developed to a lake during the wet season and to a rain garden in the dry season. The existing hard structure on the north side has been preserved, while the south side been transformed into a gently sloping grassy area, incorporating soft plantings.

## Design with Memory

### 6.5 Redesign - symbol



Figure  
Before design - symbol layer

Figure  
After design - symbol layer

Then we move to the design of the symbol layer. In the current layout, symbolic elements within the cemetery are notably sparse. The existing zodiac statues and sculptures at the main entrance on the north side, which depict filial children honoring their parents, are elements that do not inherently relate to the cemetery's theme. Additionally, a tower located on the west side of the site is often overlooked due to its remote positioning.

In the revised design, I have incorporated elements that were favorably received in our surveys. For instance, the zodiac sculptures at the main entrance have been replaced with apricot trees bearing white blossoms, which not only provide shade but also contribute to a more serene atmosphere. Additionally, a designated burn area has been thoughtfully designed on the west side of the entrance square to ensure that sacrificial traditions can continue in a safer environment.

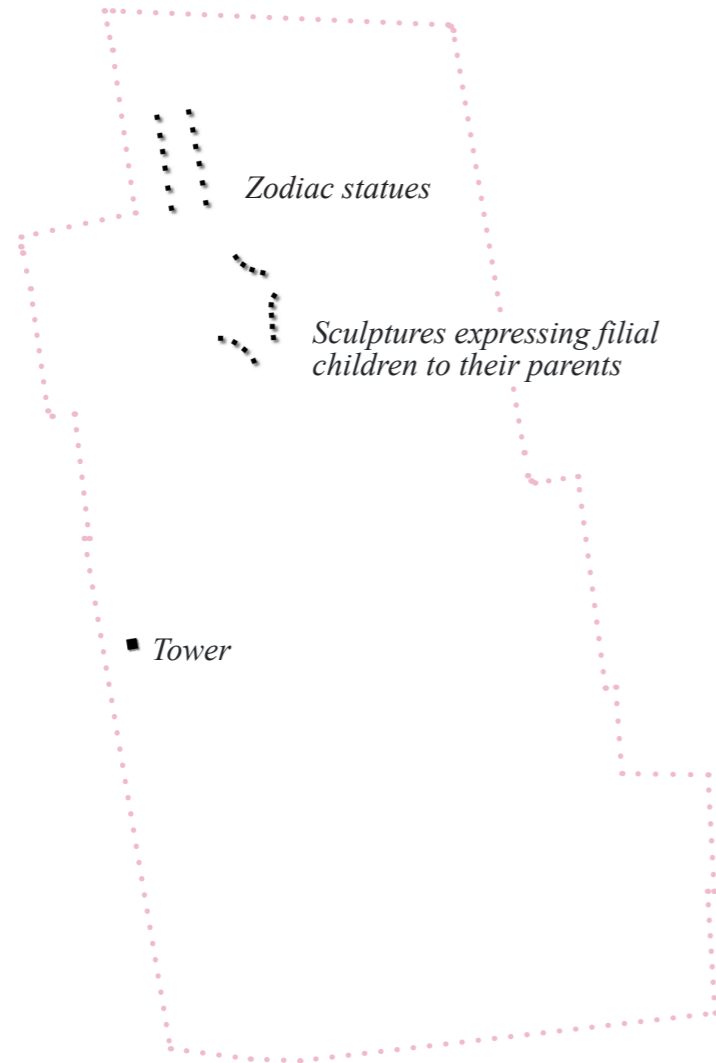
Further enhancing the site, urn display walls in the central area serve dual purposes: it acts as a landscaping feature that delineates and organizes space, and it also manifests a form of memorial that is significant yet not overly somber. At the termini of numerous paths, flower altars have been constructed to cultivate a peaceful atmosphere, allowing visitors to place flowers as expressions of their longing.

Moreover, three new pavilions, all styled as traditional Chinese styles, have been strategically placed to provide spaces not only for rest but also for contemplation and reflection. Additionally, the introduction of remembrance trees in the extension memorial park broadens the opportunities for memorial activities, enhancing the cemetery's capacity to serve as a space for remembrance and reflection.

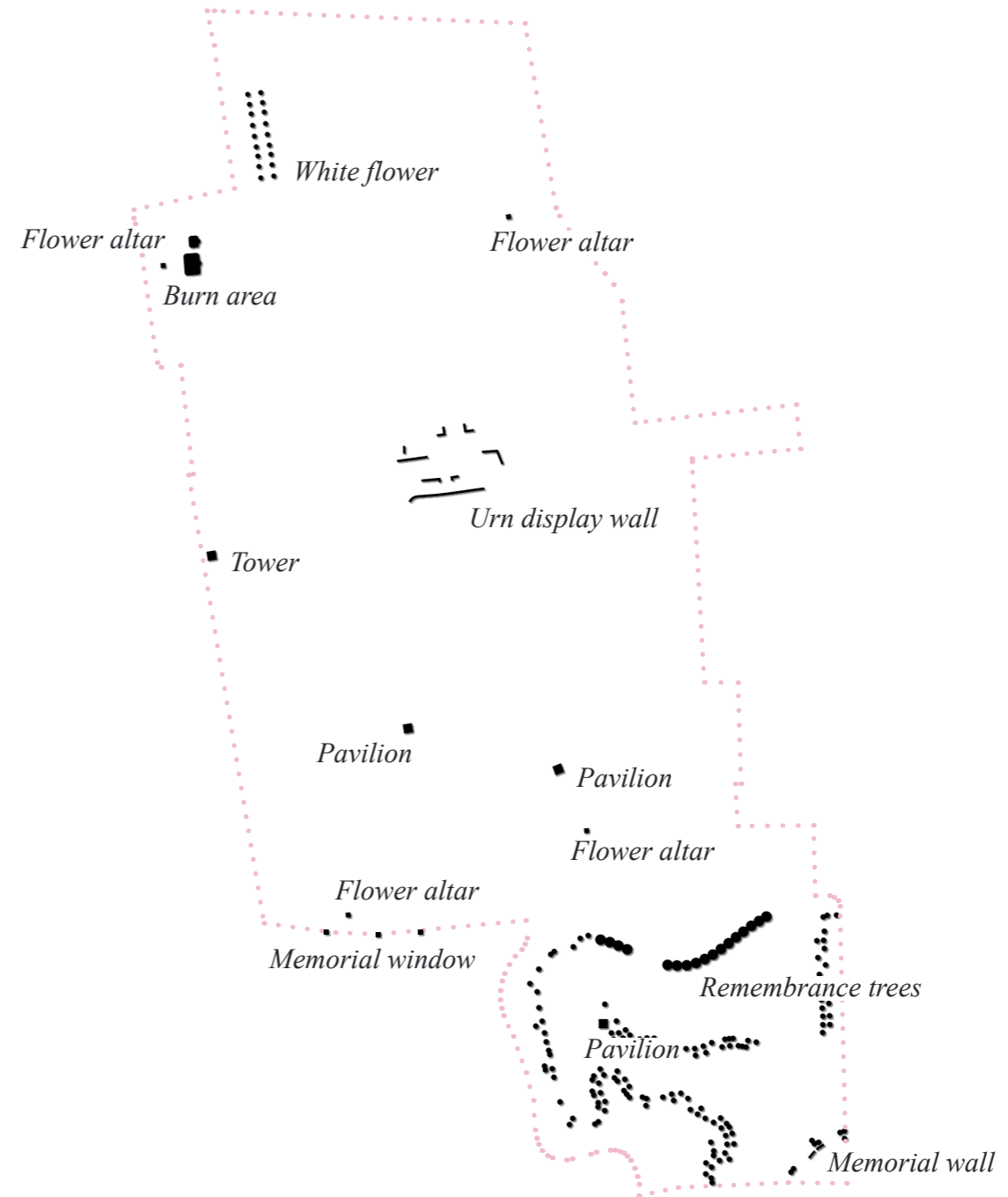
# Design with Memory

6.5 Redesign - symbol

Before



After



## Design with Memory

### 6.5 Redesign - symbol



Figure  
Rituals through Chang'an Ci'en Yuan  
cemetery

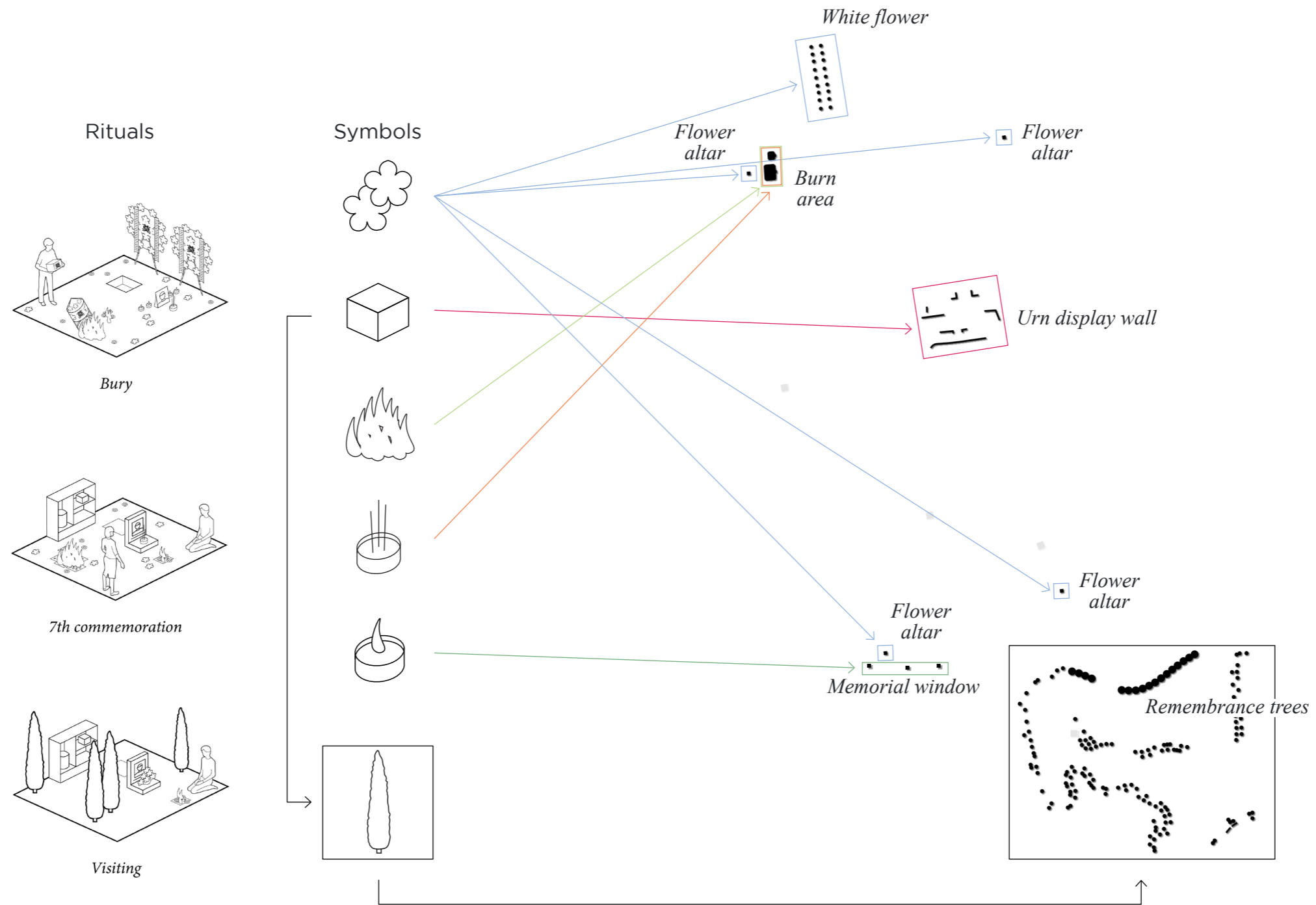
Throughout these symbols, some rituals are performed, such as Bury. People enter the cemetery through the main entrance, walk through apricot trees adorned with white flowers on both sides, proceed to the burn area to burn paper offerings for their deceased relatives as a way to express their blessings, and light incense. Flowers are then laid for loved ones at the flower altar next to the burn area. The ritual incorporates symbols such as white flowers, urn, fire, and incense.

Additionally, there is 7th commemoration, which takes place in multiples of seven days after death, such as on the 7th day, the 14th day, etc., continuing until the 49th day. Some people choose to place the urn on the urn display wall, allowing the deceased to better integrate with nature. Candles can be placed. After the 49th days, worship can be conducted at any time in front of the tombstone, and flowers can be laid at the flower altar.

The burial area on the south side of the site also features memorial windows where people can place candles on niches. Moreover, people can purchase remembrance trees to transfer their sorrow from the urn to the hope embodied in the growth of a tree. Watching a slowly growing tree symbolizes seeing their loved ones reborn, continuing to live silently and steadfastly in the world.

# Design with Memory

## 6.5 Redesign - symbol



## Design with Memory

### 6.5 Redesign - symbol



Figure  
Before design - symbol layer

Before the redesign, the site contained six distinct types of tombstones located on the west, east, and southeast sides. These can be categorized into large tombstones, designated as types 1, 2, and 4. These large tombstones, which feature minimal plantings, are predominantly situated on the eastern side of the site, contributing to a more pronounced sense of solemnity due to their size and density.

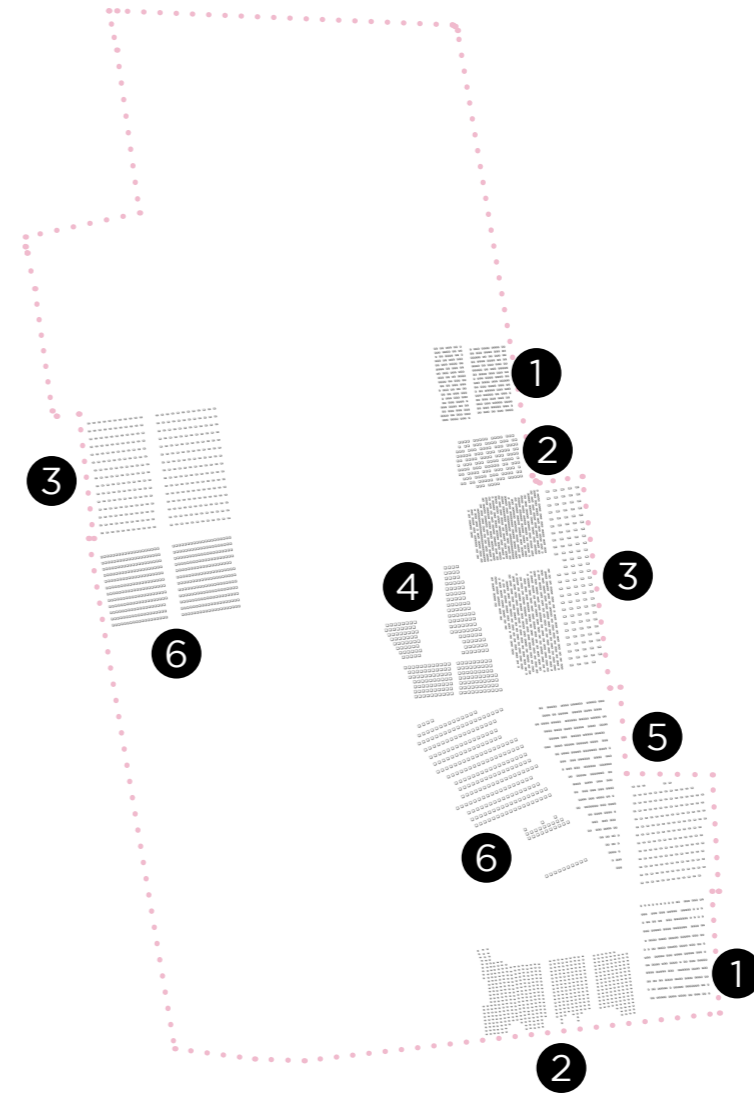
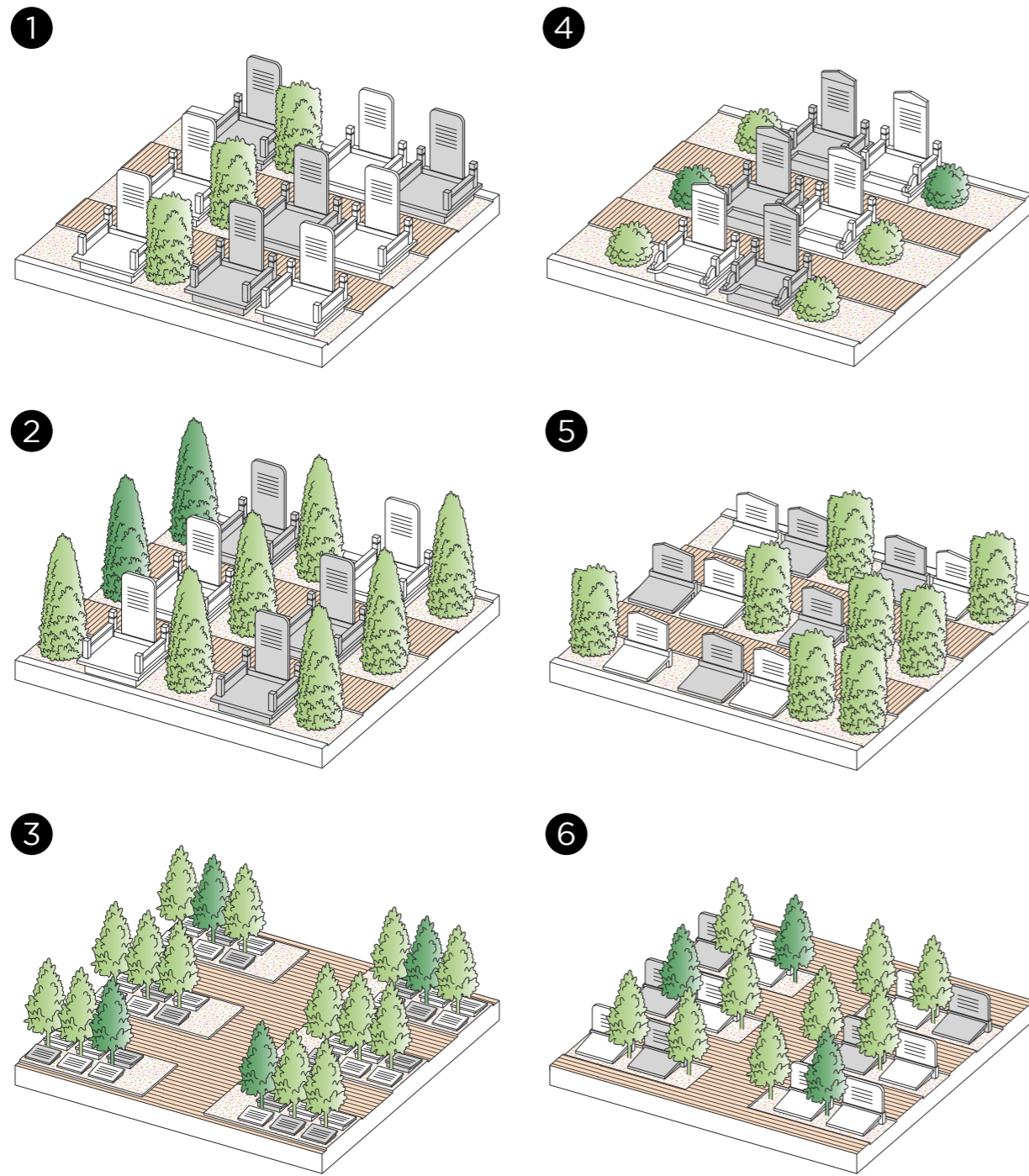
Conversely, the remaining three categories, which include types 5 and 6, consist of small to medium-sized tombstones and are accompanied by more abundant vegetation, primarily consisting of cypress shrubs. Type 6, being the smallest tombstone type, is typically encircled by dense clusters of cypress trees. This distribution results in a noticeable disparity: the sparse vegetation around the large tombstones contrasts sharply with the dense foliage surrounding the smaller tombstones, creating a sense of imbalance within the site's overall aesthetic and atmosphere.

The design will implement strategic adjustments to the six existing tombstone types to enhance spatial balance. This includes planting additional trees in areas where tombstones are excessively clustered and reducing tree density in areas where foliage is overly abundant. These modifications aim to harmonize the intimate spaces within the site.

# Design with Memory

6.5 Redesign - symbol

Before



## Design with Memory

### 6.5 Redesign - symbol



Figure  
After design - symbol layer

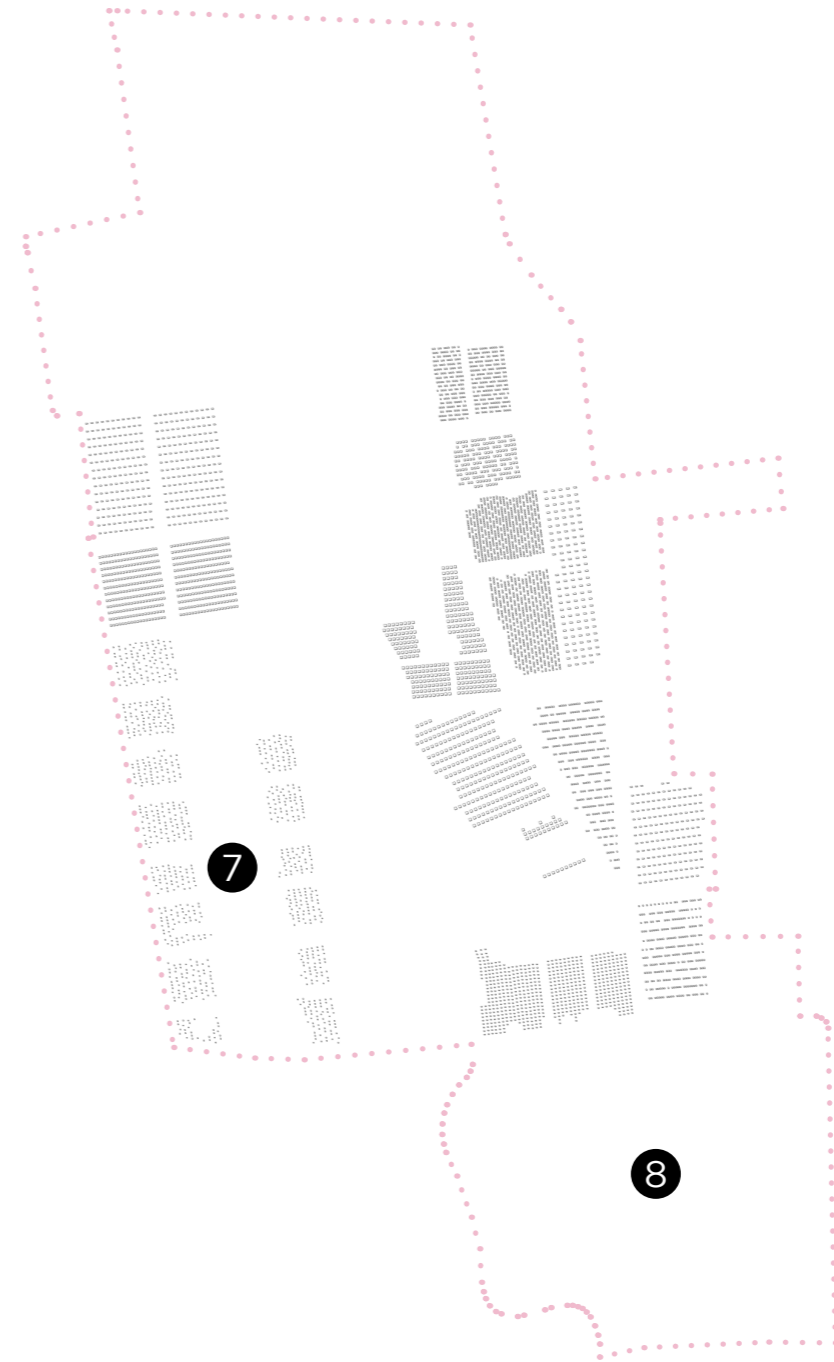
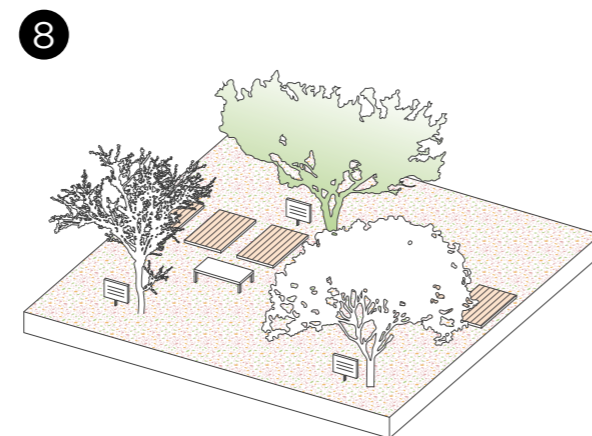
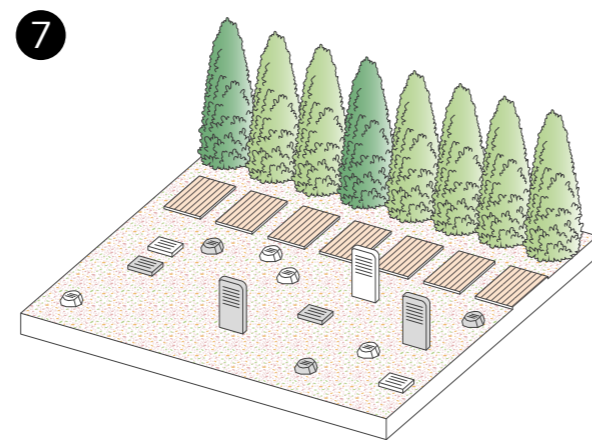
Additionally, two new tombstone types will be introduced. Type 7 is designated for the southwest area of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, which is characterized by an abundance of existing trees. This new type will integrate three distinct small-size tombstones: stone blocks, small vertical tombstones, and small stone slabs embedded in the ground. The arrangement of these tombstones will be intentionally flexible, designed to disrupt the uniformity of existing patterns and provide a visual contrast to the eastern side of the site.

The 8th new type involves the use of remembrance trees, which have been discussed previously for many times. These trees will function as an innovative form of "tombstone." Individuals can purchase these trees to plant in a designated area, where they may also scatter ashes. Customizable options around the trees could include placing plaques with epitaph inscriptions, adding benches, or setting up additional memorial objects. This approach aims to infuse traditional memorial spaces with vitality and allow for personalization beyond conventional tombstone formats.

# Design with Memory

## 6.5 Redesign - symbol

After



## Design with Memory

### 6.6 Redesign - construction



Figure  
Before design - construction layer

Figure  
After design - construction layer

In the construction layer of the design, it is evident that additional structures have been incorporated. Notably, a burn area has been established on the northwest side of the site, urn display walls have been positioned centrally, and several pavilions have been constructed on the south side. Conversely, certain structures have been removed to enhance site functionality, such as the new parking lot on the east side of the site.

In pursuit of greater openness, numerous walls have been eliminated, and plantings have been strategically utilized to define the site's boundaries, thereby softening the harshness typically associated with rigid architectural forms. Additionally, the inclusion of numerous windows in the remaining walls serves to foster a stronger connection between the site's internal and external spaces, enhancing the overall cohesion and fluidity of the environment.

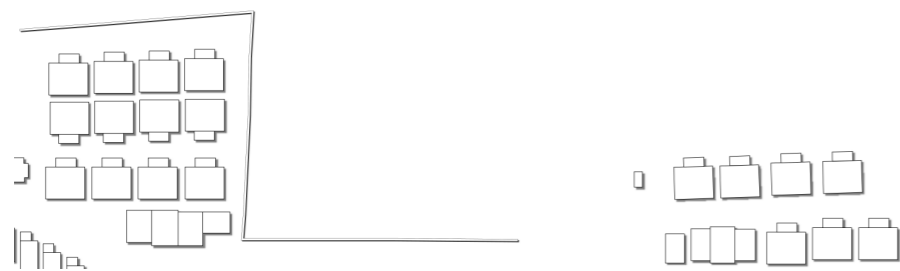
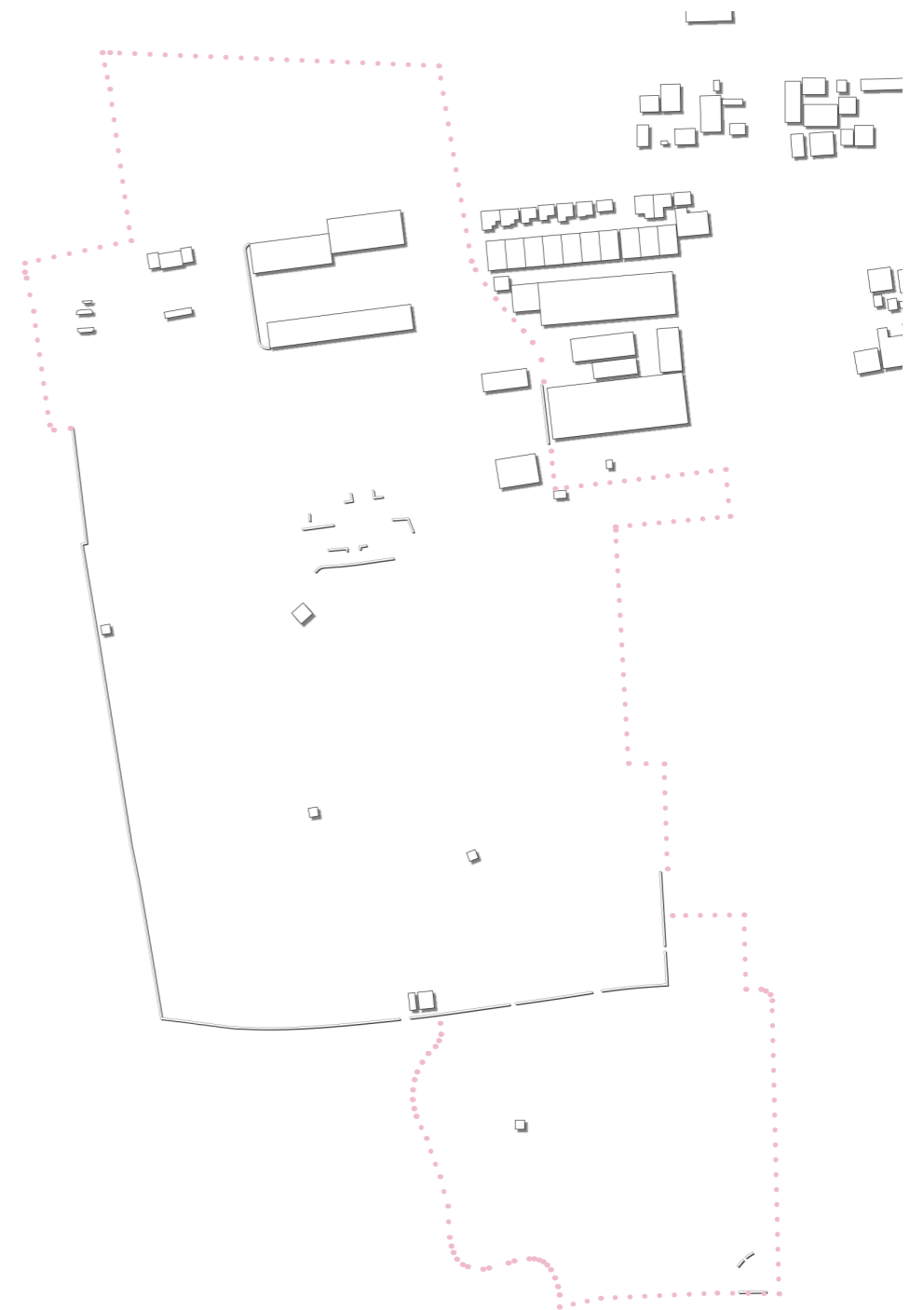
# Design with Memory

## 6.6 Redesign - construction

Before



After



## Design with Memory

### 6.7 Redesign - path



Figure  
Before design - path layer

Figure  
After design - path layer

The path system of the original layout, where the path predominantly favored the east side, leaves the west side without systematic planning. Additionally, within the extension memorial park, the existing paths did not traverse the entire extension area. Given that the main entrance is situated on the northernmost side, all paths historically began or concluded from the north, which did not capitalize on the potential for enhanced openness across the site.

In the redesign, the intimate space on the west side is now accessible via a north-to-south connection, and the path design, rooted in the site's original path layout, delineates the burial area into numerous smaller areas. At the eastern boundary of the site, introduced with a new path that extends into the extension, guiding visitors from the mountainous vistas directly to the lake.

In the extension area itself, additional paths have been incorporated around remembrance trees planting area, effectively linking the extension memorial park with the main area to the north. A paved square has also been established in the southeast corner to function as a transitional space leading to the entrance, enhancing the flow and accessibility of the entire site.



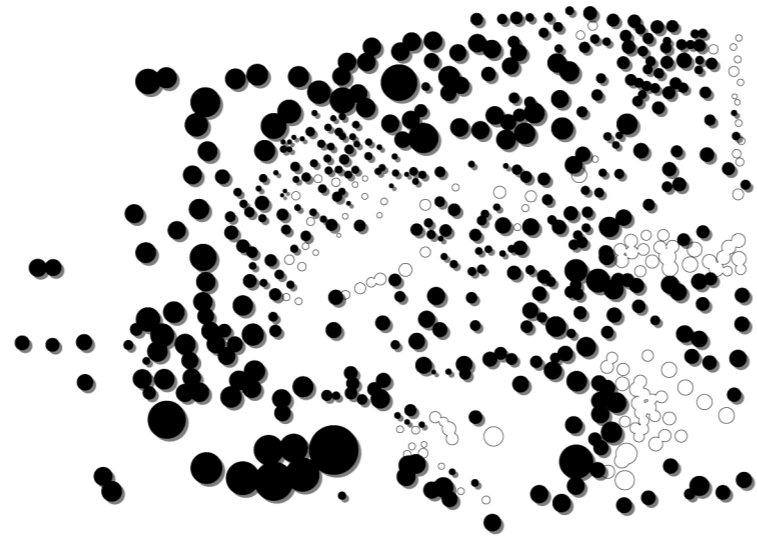
# Design with Memory

## 6.8 Redesign - plantation

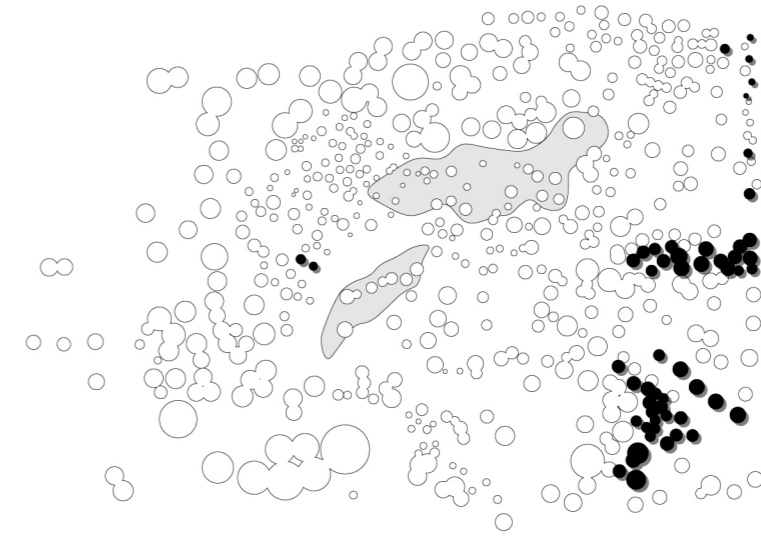
▼  
Figure  
Classification of 4 types  
of trees within extension  
area

Figure  
Current seasonal changes  
within extension area

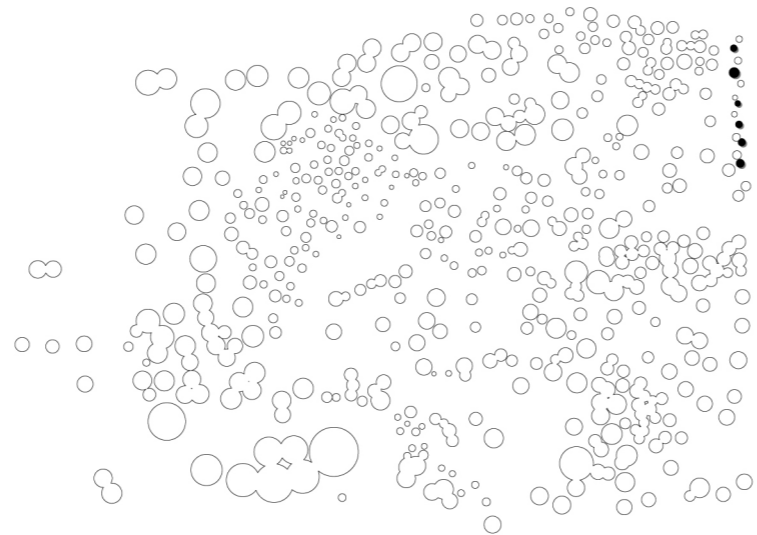
Deciduous trees



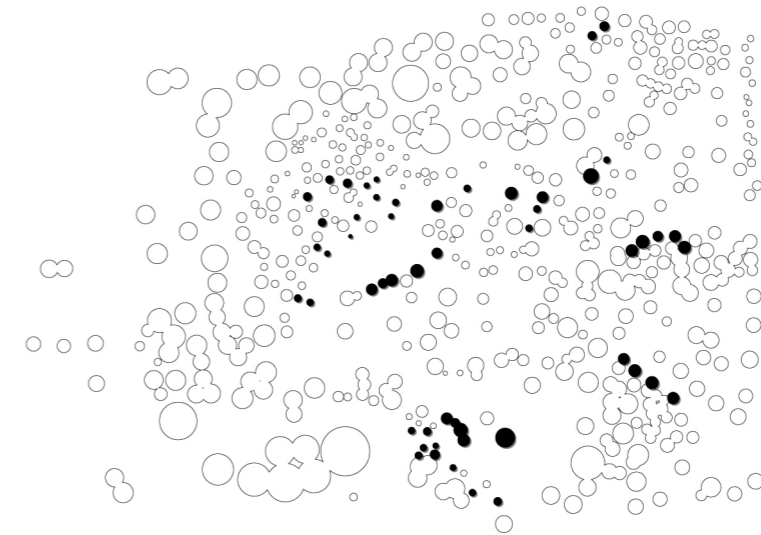
Evergreen trees



Deciduous trees  
(With colorful flowers)



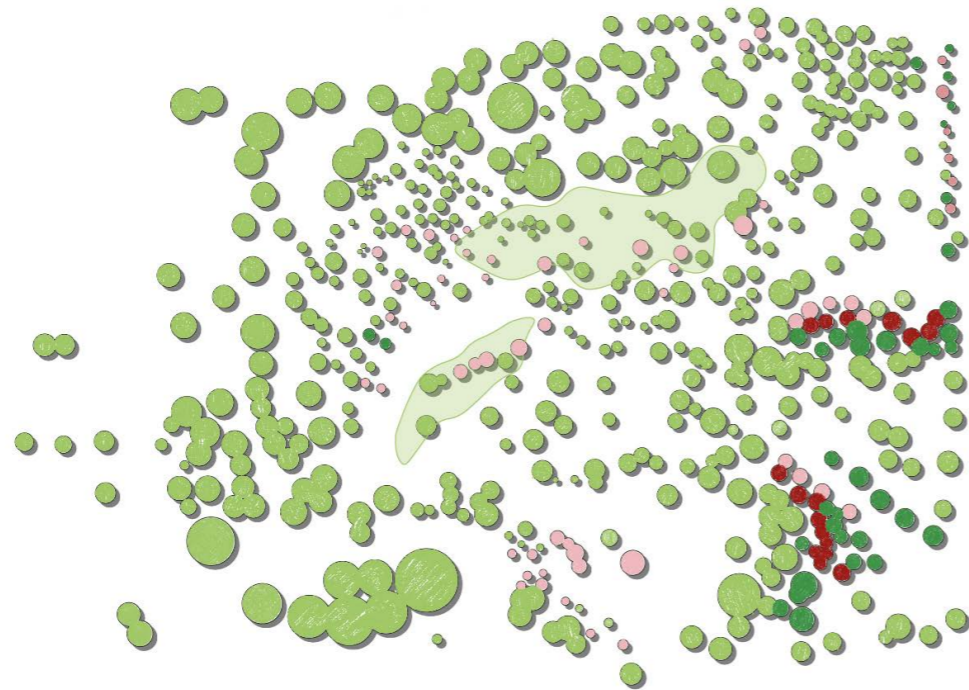
Deciduous trees  
(With colorful leaves)



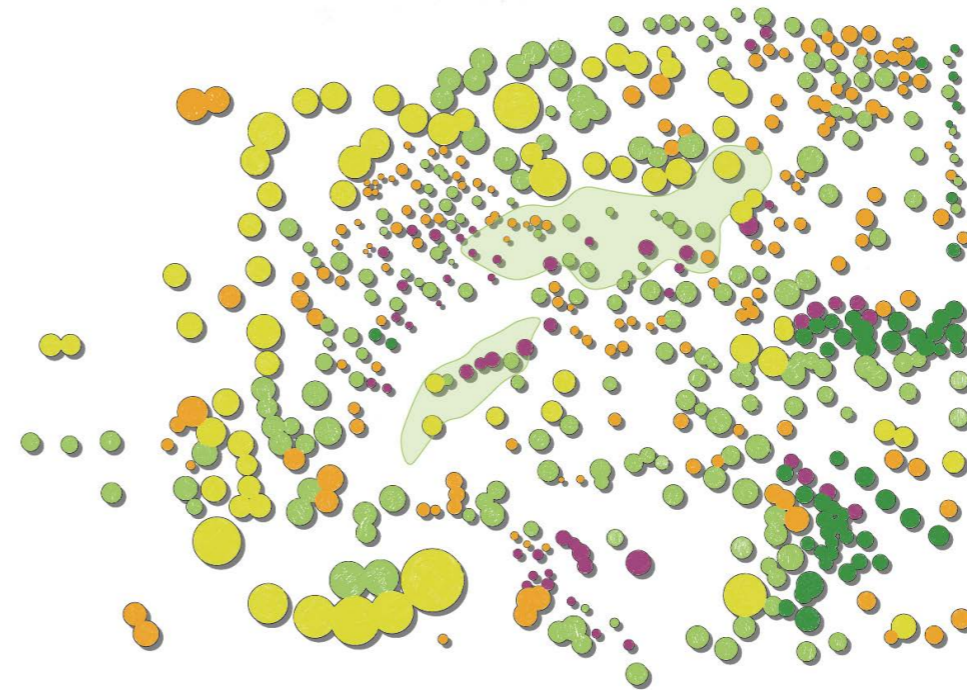
# Design with Memory

## 6.8 Redesign - plantation

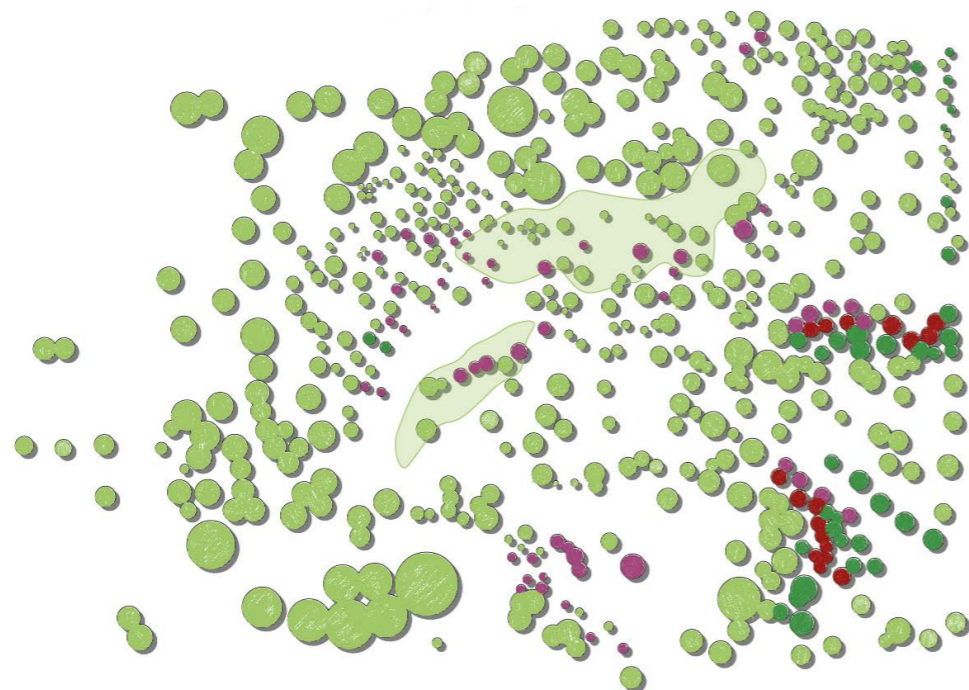
Spring



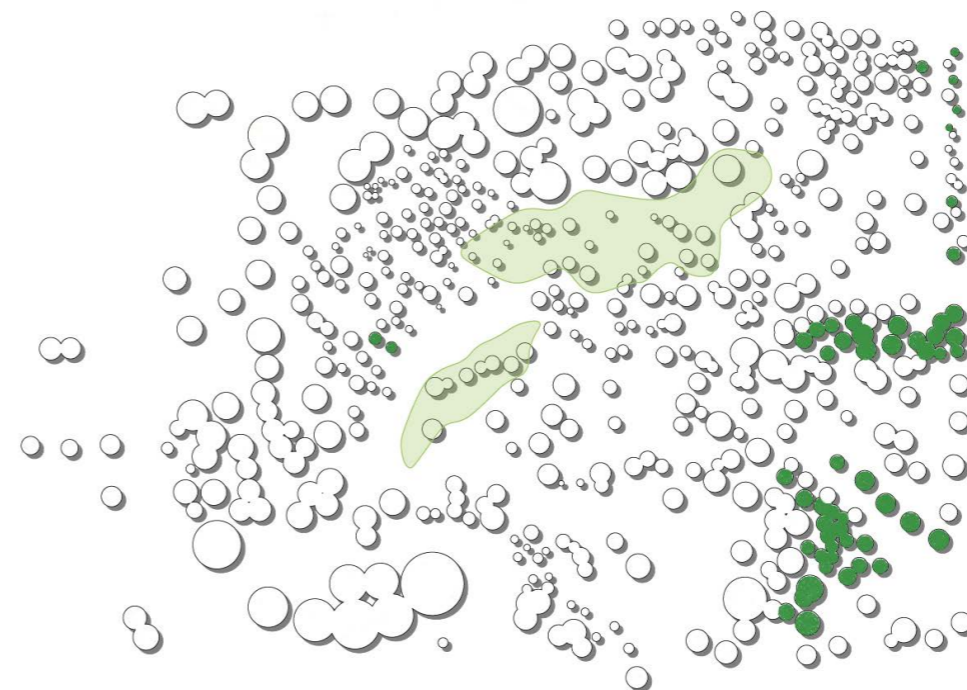
Autumn



Summer

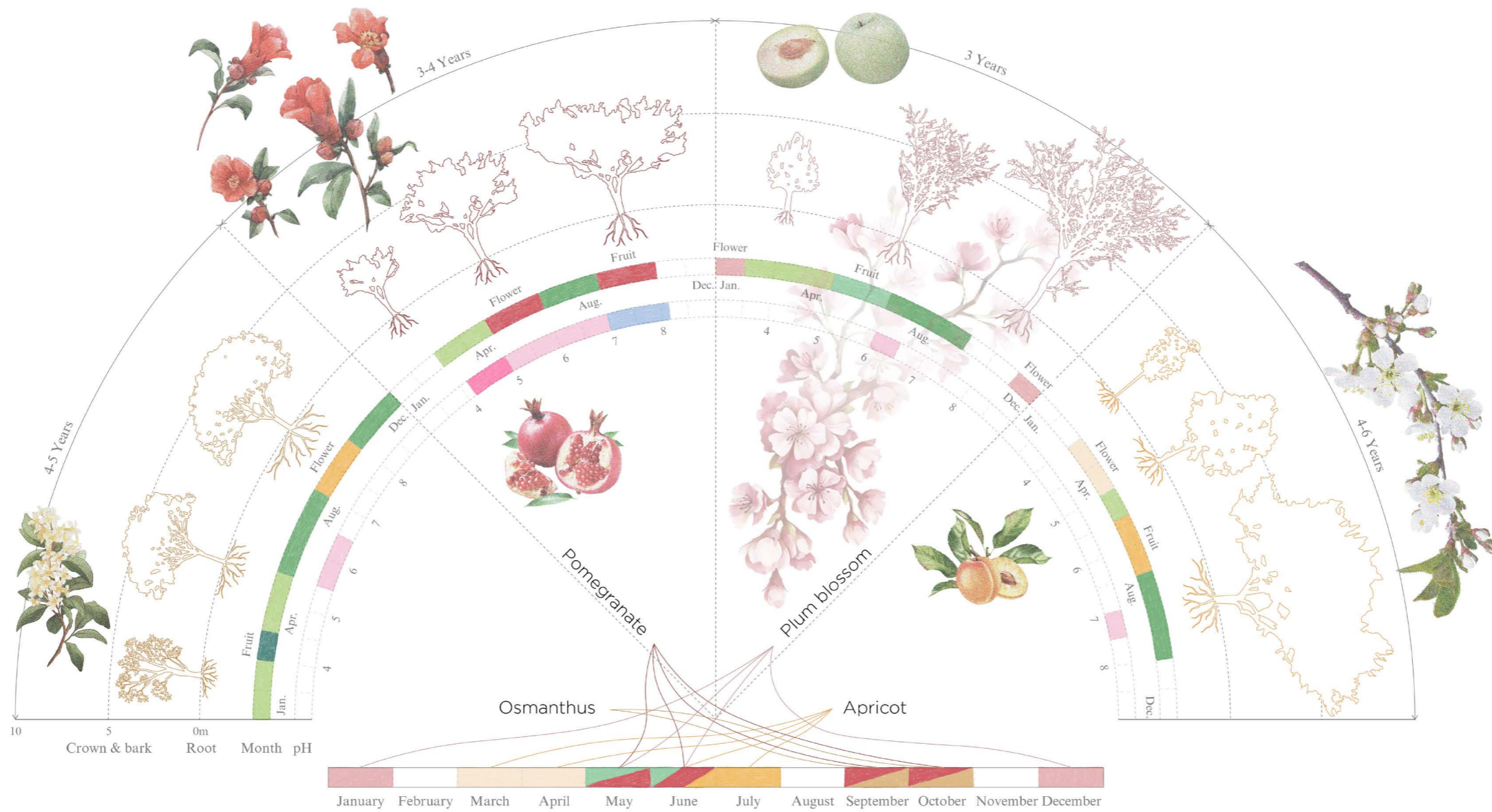


Winter



# Design with Memory

## 6.8 Redesign - plantation



## Design with Memory

### 6.8 Redesign - plantation

In developing the design of plantation layer, my initial focus was on the extension area, which previously lacked any formal landscaping planning. The existing tree species within this area are categorized into four groups: common deciduous trees, deciduous trees with colorful flowers, deciduous trees with colorful leaves, and evergreen trees.

Each category includes native species commonly found in Xi'an. The common deciduous group comprises ginkgos, chestnuts, catalpas, and locust trees. The colorful flower category features cherry trees, while the colorful leaf group includes purple plums, noted for their year-round purple foliage. The evergreen category contains firs, loquat trees, cypresses, photinias, pines, and bamboos, with photinias displaying bright red leaves in spring and summer that transition to dark green in the autumn and winter months.

Among these, common deciduous trees are the most prevalent, followed by evergreen trees and those with colorful leaves, while trees with colorful flowers are the least distributed. Notably, evergreen species are predominantly located on the eastern side of the site. Seasonally, the main colors in spring and autumn, aside from green, are concentrated around the two path entrances on the east side, drawing visual attention and discouraging deeper exploration into the site. The distribution of autumn colors is more balanced, whereas in winter, the central area features only bamboo, and the east side remains dominated by

evergreens, mirroring the seasonal visibility issues noted in spring and autumn.

Therefore, the redesigned plant strategy for the extension area aims to inject more color into the site through the introduction of remembrance trees. These trees are intended to draw visitors into the site and enhance their experience, moving away from the traditional cemetery atmosphere toward a more relaxed, park-like setting.

Four types of remembrance trees, all small deciduous species with colorful flowers (except osmanthus being evergreen) native to Xi'an, have been selected: osmanthus, pomegranate (the city tree of Xi'an), plum, and apricot. Each species blooms and fruits at different times, providing distinctive colors and scents throughout the seasons. Osmanthus blooms in autumn with a sweet fragrance, pomegranate exhibits bright red flowers and fruit primarily in summer and autumn, plum blossoms appear in early spring with a similar fragrance and yield green fruit in the summer, and apricot trees produce beige-white blossoms in spring followed by yellow fruit in late summer, both fragrant and visually appealing.



Figure  
Species of remembrance trees

## Design with Memory

### 6.8 Redesign - plantation



Figure  
Designed seasonal changes  
within extension area

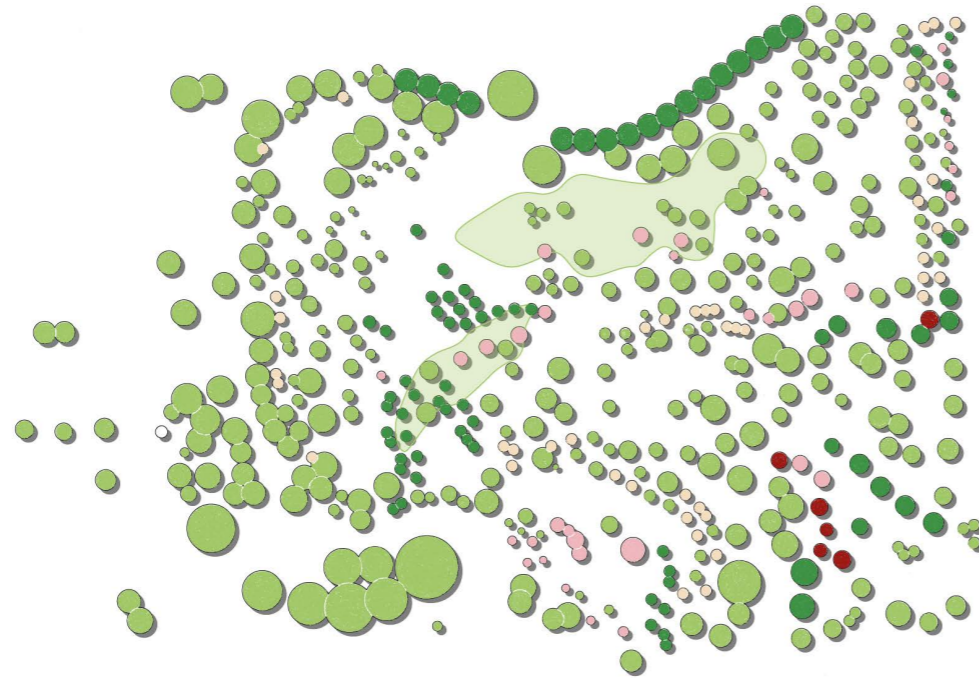
Following the redesign, the seasonal transformations within the extension area are evident and thoughtfully guide visitor engagement. In spring, an infusion of color into the west, center, and northeast sections encourages visitors to meander through the smaller paths, leading them towards the area planted with remembrance trees. By summer, these trees are in full bloom, distinctly marking the west and central parts of the site with vibrant hues, thereby enriching the landscape with both visual interest and a sense of vitality.

In autumn, the color palette across the site remains balanced, offering a harmonious and visually pleasing environment. Winter, however, highlights the strategic placement of cypress trees around the lake, which play a crucial role in maintaining the landscape's aesthetic appeal. Additionally, the evergreen osmanthus continues to contribute greenery and color during the colder months. The flowering of plum trees in late winter and early spring further enhances the site, introducing a delicate fragrance and additional beauty to the setting, ensuring year-round engagement and enjoyment.

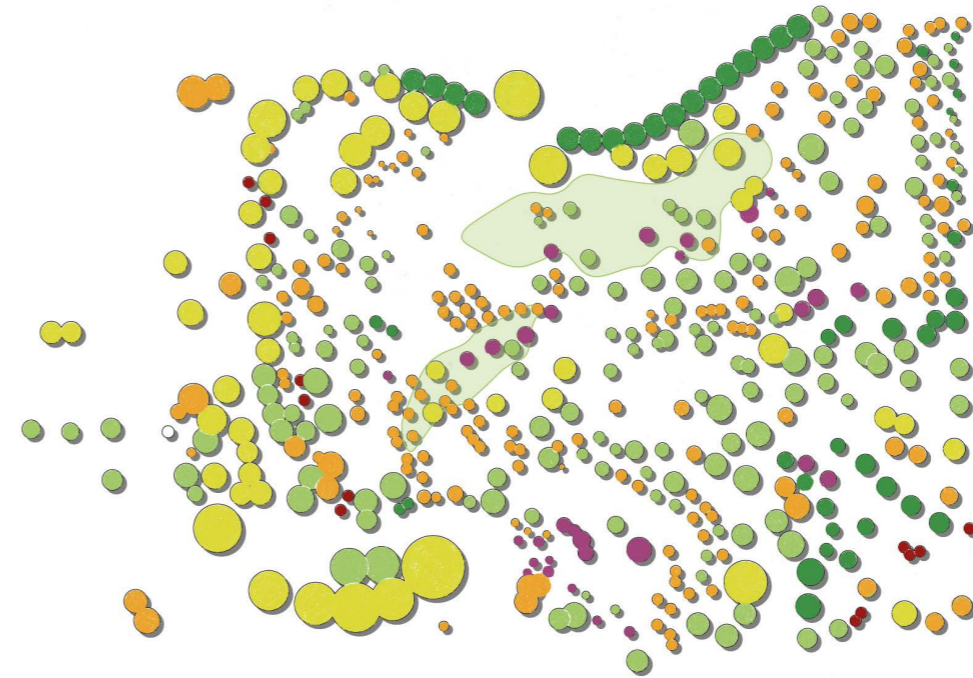
# Design with Memory

## 6.8 Redesign - plantation

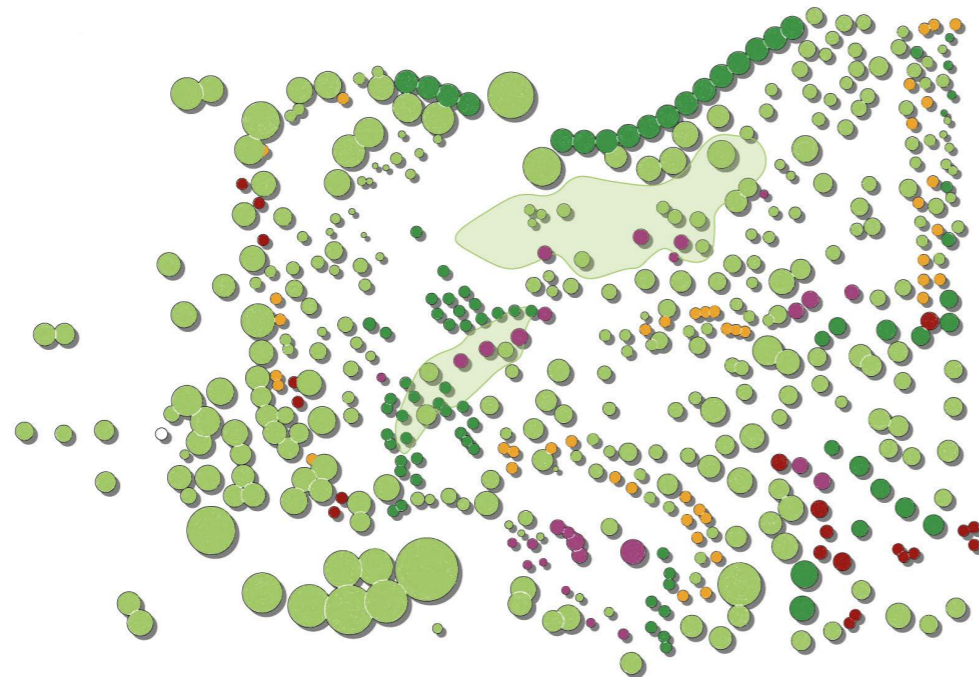
Spring



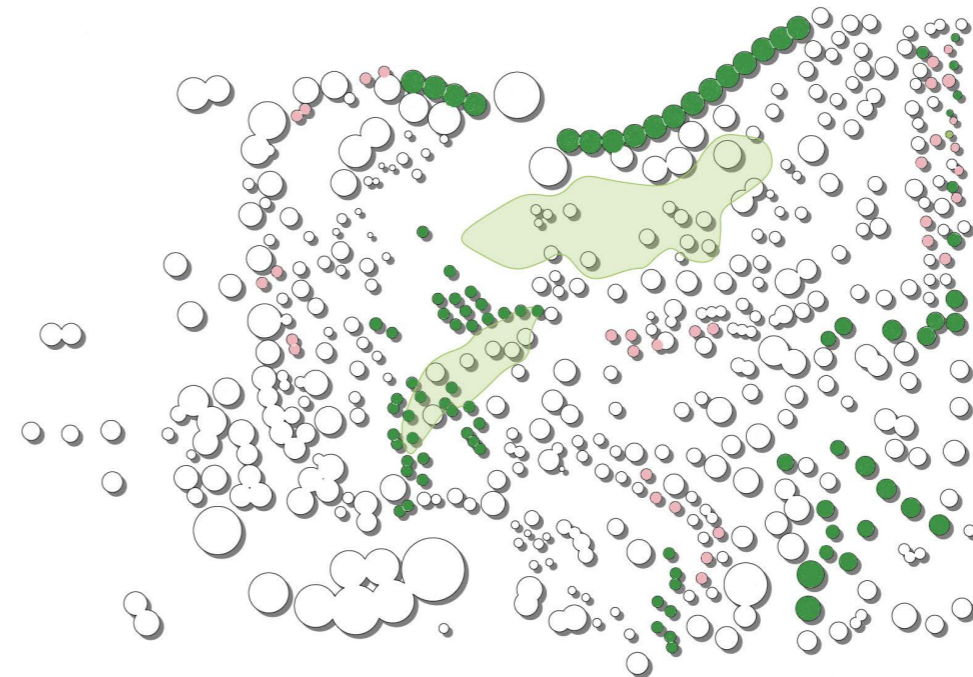
Autumn



Summer



Winter



## Design with Memory

### 6.8 Redesign - plantation



Figure  
Before design - plantation layer

Figure  
After design - plantation layer

The redesign of plantation layer primarily focuses on some details and smaller parts, with significant alterations occurring in the extension memorial park on the south side. Here, some younger trees have been removed, while older trees have been preserved and new remembrance trees introduced. This adjustment creates varied densities across the site, replacing the previous uniform compactness. A circle of cypress trees has been added around the lake to accentuate its contours.

Furthermore, the center of the site has experienced substantial modifications. Several shrubs have been cleared to reduce the enclosed feel along the pathways, thereby enhancing the transition between public and intimate spaces. Additionally, more trees have been planted in the burial area on the eastern side to provide increased shade and improve the overall aesthetic and comfort of the environment.

# Design with Memory

## 6.8 Redesign - plantation

*Before*



*After*



# Design with Memory

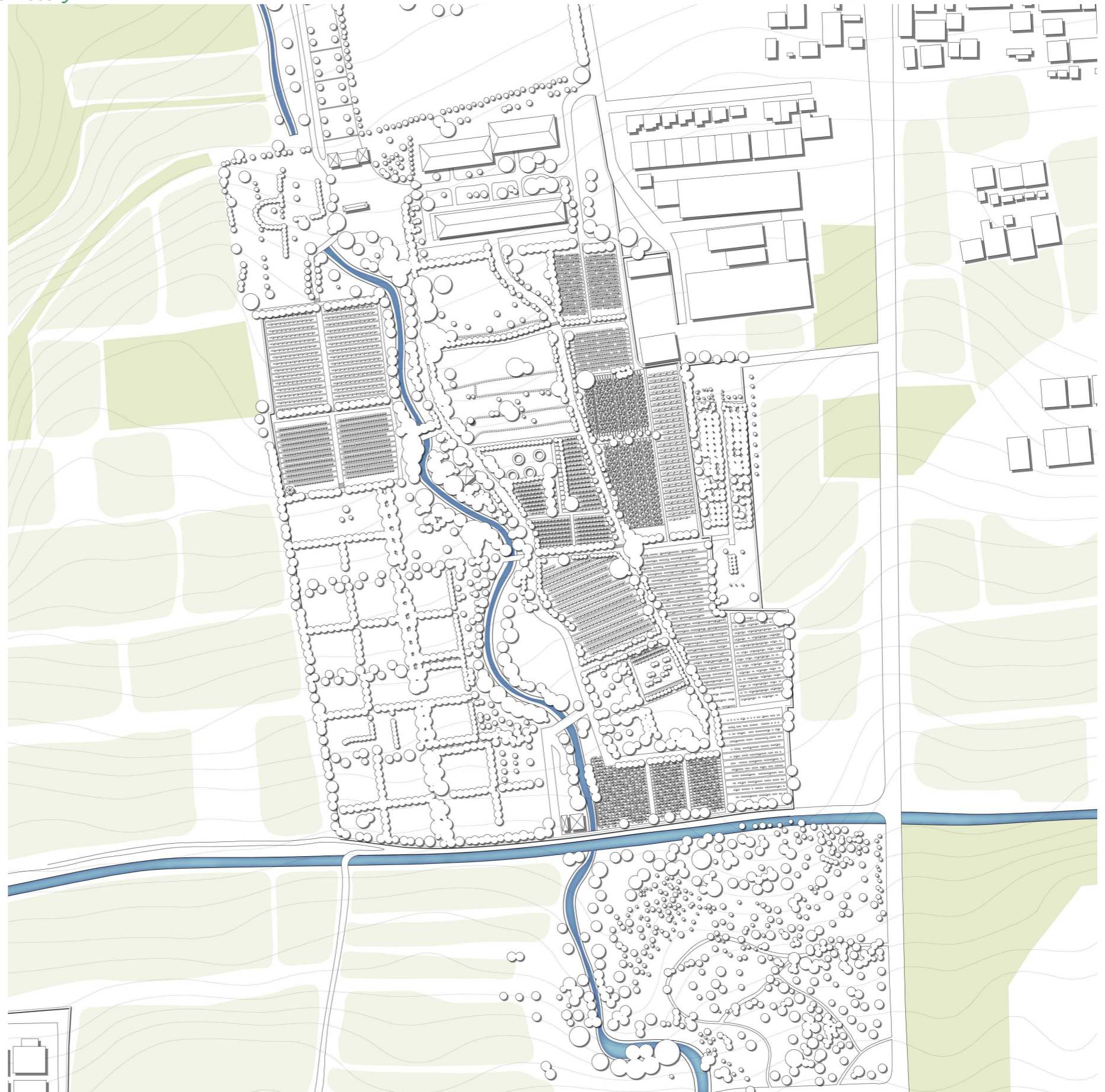
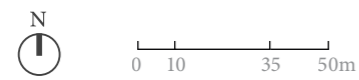
6.9 Zoom-in(s)

▼  
Figure  
Current situation of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

Figure  
Masterplan of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery

▼  
**Legend**

- Contour line
- Road
- Wall
- ..... Tomb
- Agricultural land
- Forest
- Water
- Building
- Tree





## Design with Memory

### 6.9 Zoom-in(s)



Figure  
Zoom-in(s) of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan  
cemetery

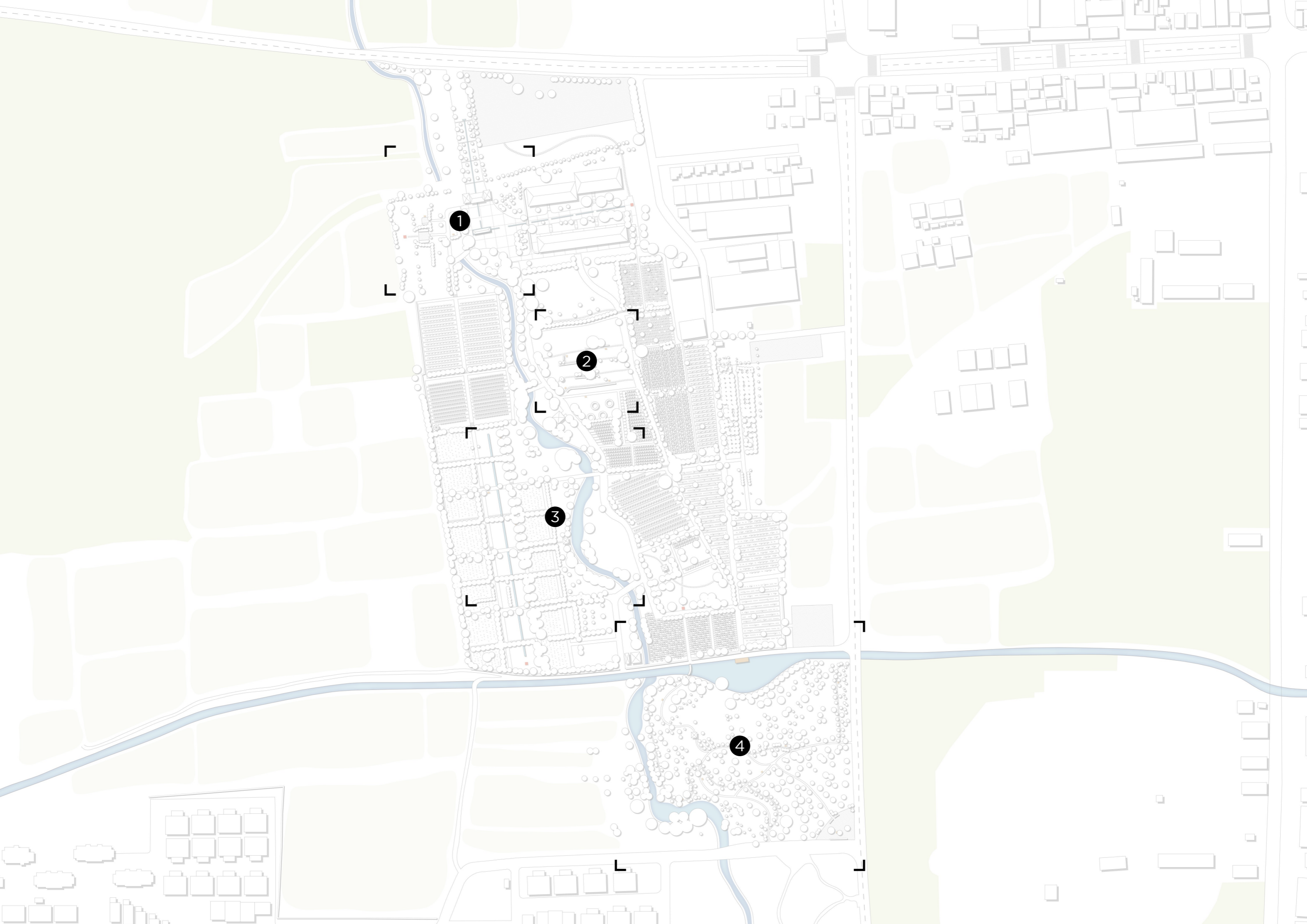
Four zoom-in design areas will be examined in greater detail.

The first area is the burn area located on the north-east side of the cemetery, encompassing the main entrance and the entrance square. This area represents the principal ceremonial section of the cemetery, where significant events are conducted, marking it as the most solemn site within the cemetery.

The second area comprises the urn display walls situated in the central part of the site. Existing vegetation has been removed or replaced to create a more open public space, thereby enhancing the utilization of potential communal areas within the cemetery.

The third space is a newly designated burial area on the southwest side of the cemetery. Currently, this area is quite remote and infrequently visited. To address this, a design featuring water cascade and waterfront ecological slope has been introduced.

The fourth space is the extension memorial park, which offers individuals the opportunity to purchase and plant remembrance trees within a designated area. Additionally, this space has been designed to include a comfortable, water-friendly environment.



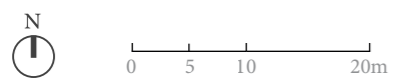
# Design with Memory

## 6.9 Zoom-in(s)

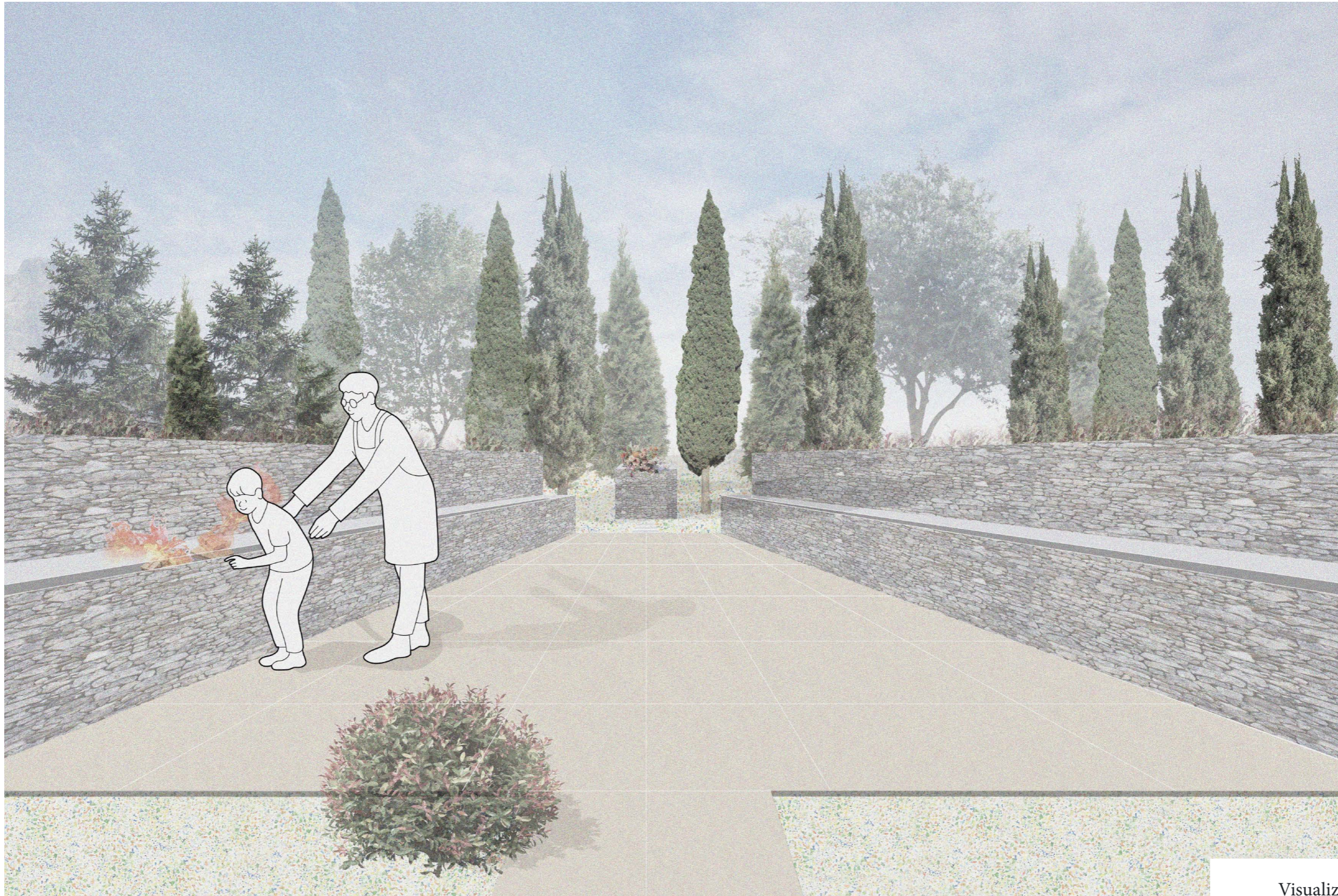
Zoom-in 1  
Before



After



- |   |               |   |                 |   |                |
|---|---------------|---|-----------------|---|----------------|
| — | Contour line  | ■ | Square pavement | ○ | Hedge          |
| ■ | Path pavement | ■ | Lawn            | ○ | Old tree       |
| — | Wall          | ■ | Tomb            | ○ | Tree           |
| ■ | Building      | ■ | Water           | ○ | Evergreen tree |
| ○ | Old evergreen | ○ | Willow          | ○ | Deleted Tree   |
| ○ | Added tree    |   |                 |   |                |



Visualization of  
burn area

## Design with Memory

### 6.9 Zoom-in(s)



Figure  
Visualization of zoom-in 1

#### *Zoom-in 1*

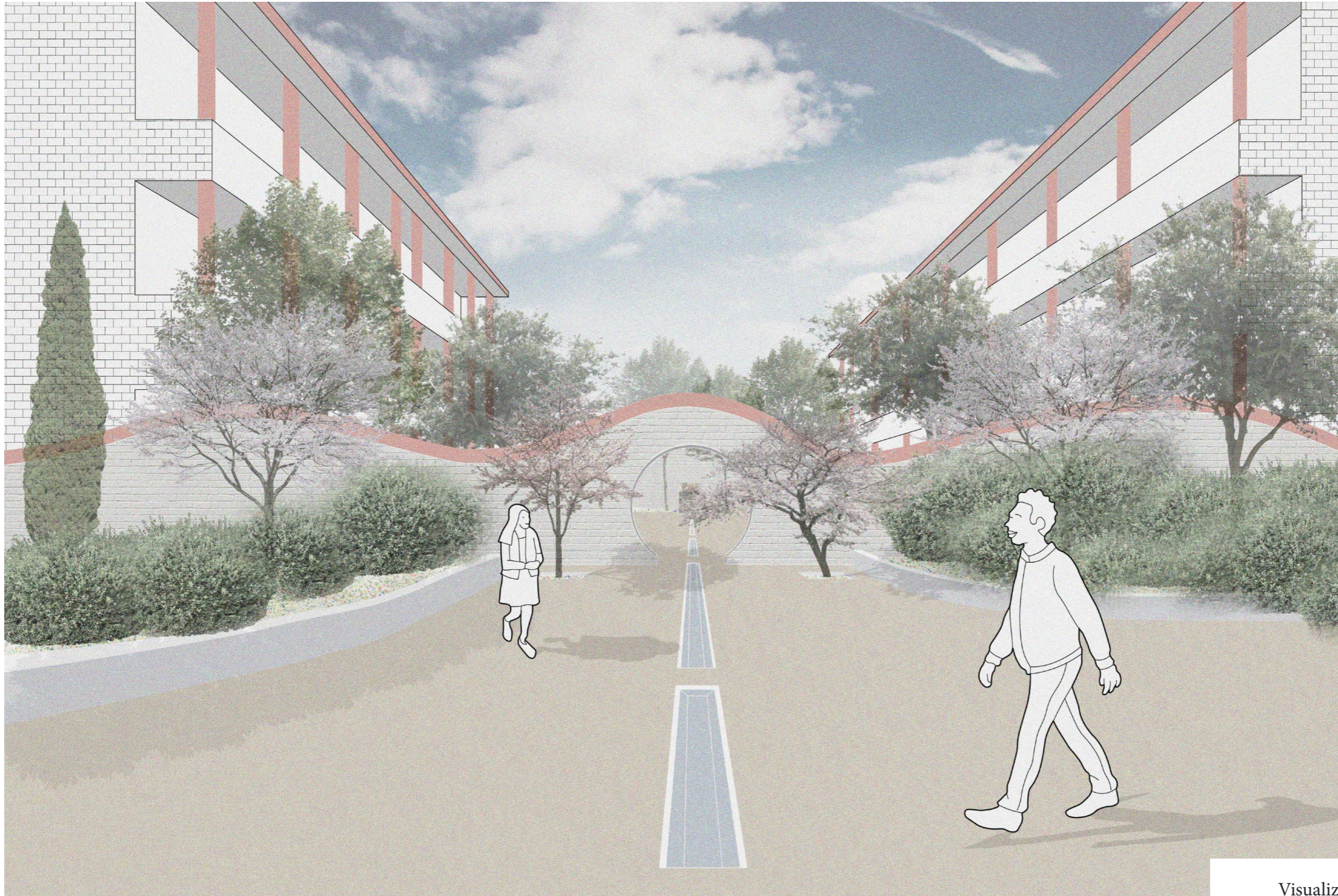
Zoom-in 1 primarily encompasses the design related to the burn area and entrance area. The design has been adapted largely based on the existing vegetation, with the burn area divided into two sections: a larger section intended for significant funeral ceremonies and a smaller section designated for daily paper burning. The burn area features a raised stone platform with a recessed interior to ensure safety. As visitors approach the burn area, they will observe the flower altar at the end of the path, framed by cypress trees, which imparts a visually ceremonial atmosphere.

The east waterway, almost aligned with the east-west axis of the burn area, guides visitors into the urn building area, which is typically less frequented. The inclusion of the waterway and the flower altar at the waterway's end extends the visual axis for visitors, creating a sense of order as described by Kaplan. The channel is approximately 30cm deep, and the water primarily originates from the recycling of natural precipitation.

#### *Zoom-in 2*

In Zoom-in 2, several urn display walls have been incorporated to foster a symbiotic relationship between life, death, and nature. These walls will be constructed from anti-corrosive wood and feature windows designed for the placement of urns. Additionally, these windows allow visitors to observe from a panoramic window, adhering to a traditional Chinese viewing practice that evokes the sensation of looking out through a series of framed structures.

Furthermore, numerous small shrubs have been removed from the perimeter to enhance openness, and seating has been added to make the area more inviting and accommodating for visitors.

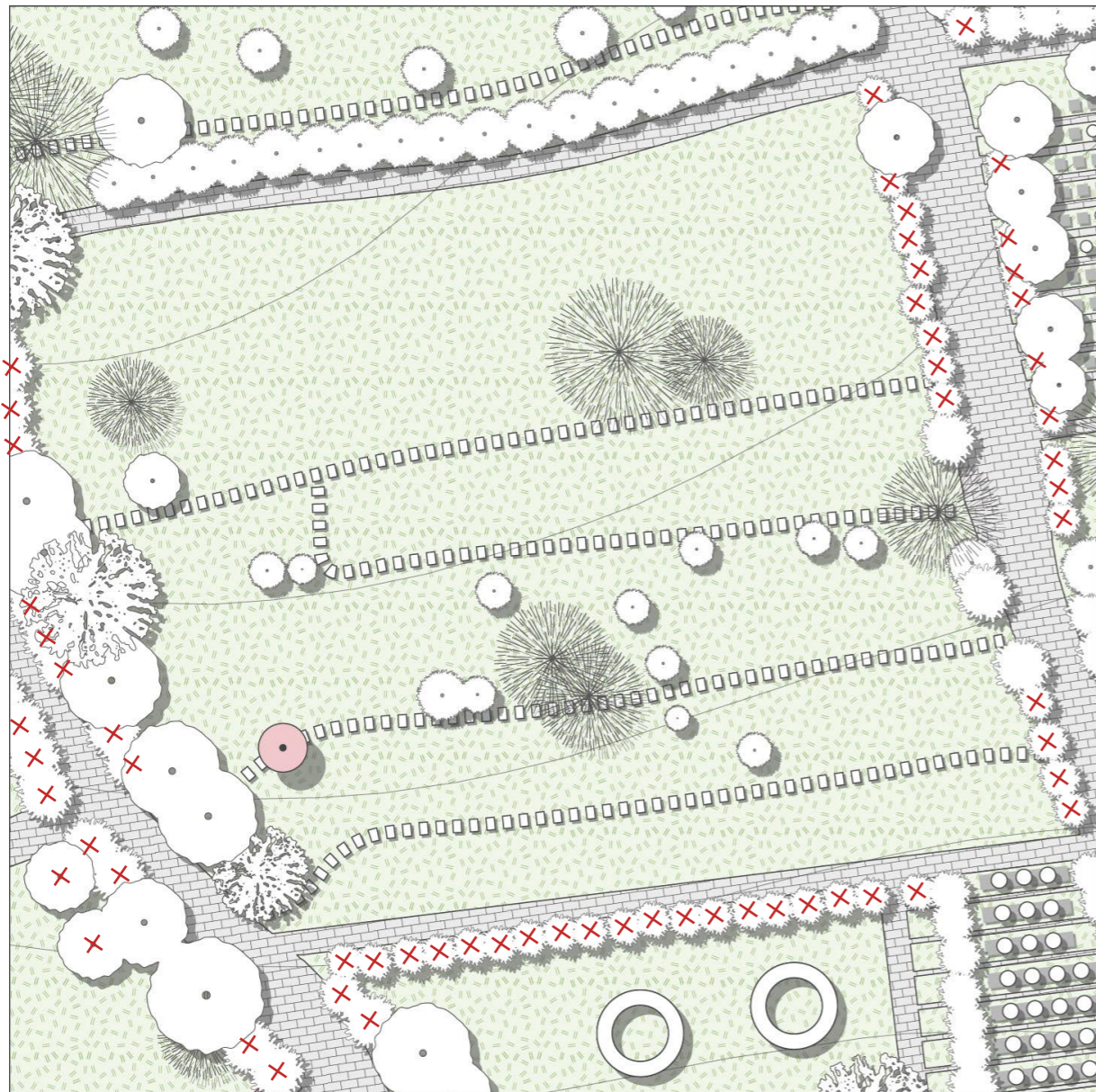


Visualization of  
small water canal

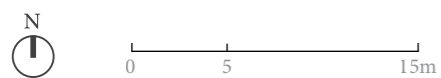
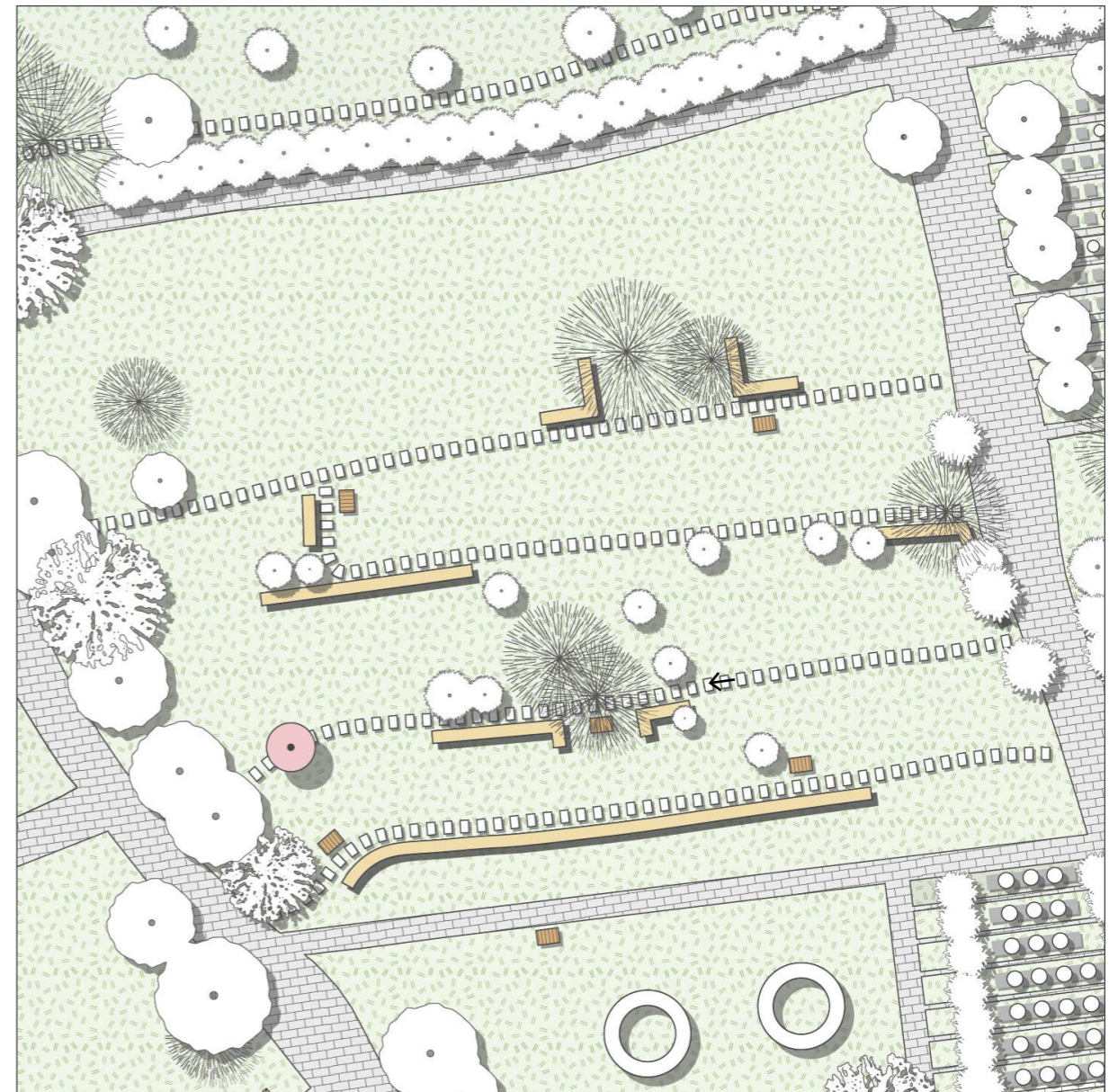
# Design with Memory

## 6.9 Zoom-in(s)

Zoom-in 2  
Before



After



- |   |               |       |                 |   |                |
|---|---------------|-------|-----------------|---|----------------|
| — | Contour line  | ■     | Square pavement | ○ | Hedge          |
| ■ | Path pavement | ■     | Lawn            | ○ | Old tree       |
| — | Wall          | ..... | Tomb            | ○ | Tree           |
| ■ | Building      | ■     | Water           | ○ | Evergreen tree |
| ○ | Old evergreen | ○     | Willow          |   |                |
| ✗ | Deleted Tree  |       |                 |   |                |

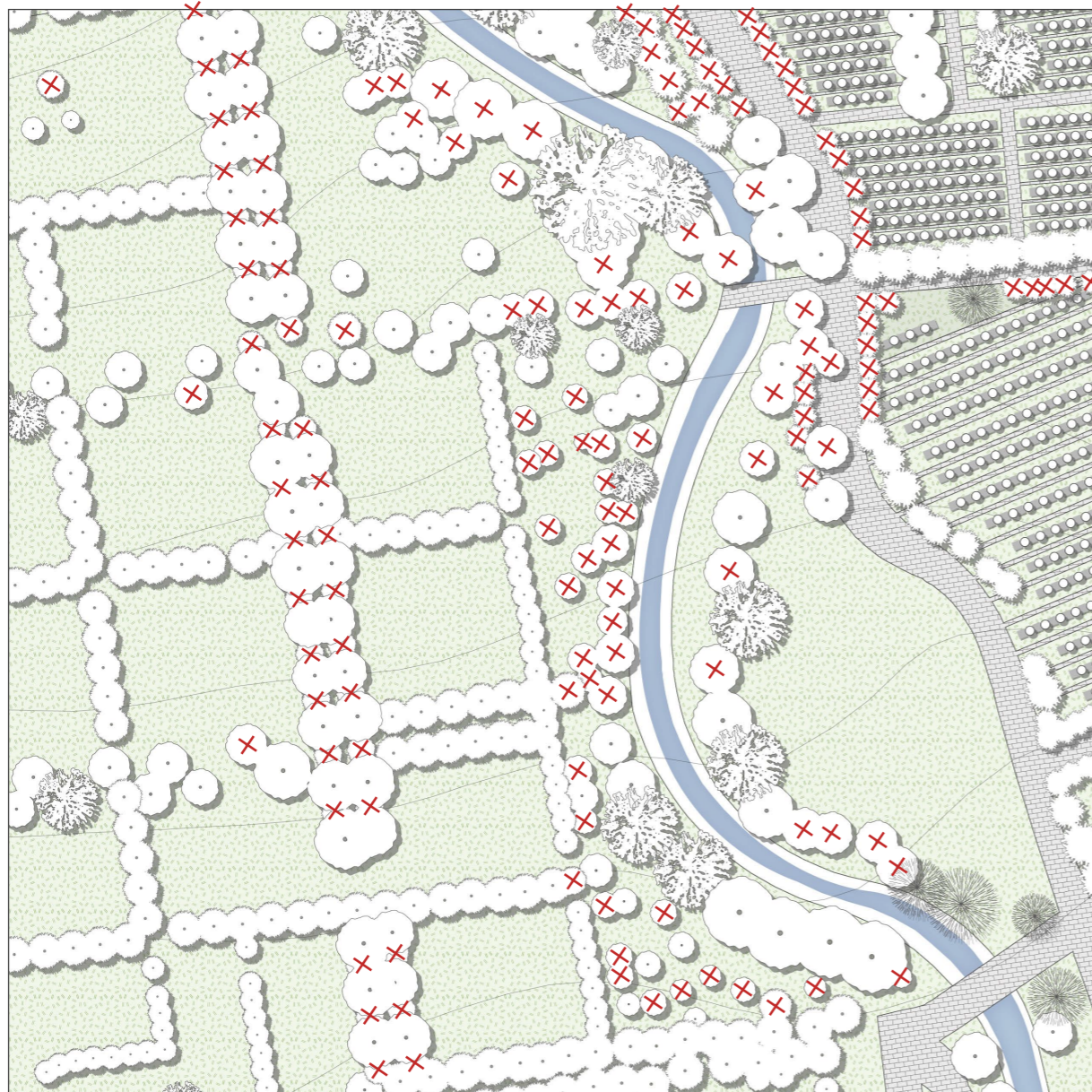


Visualization of  
urn display wall

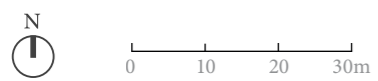
# Design with Memory

## 6.9 Zoom-in(s)

Zoom-in 3  
Before



After



- |   |               |   |                 |   |                |
|---|---------------|---|-----------------|---|----------------|
| — | Contour line  | ■ | Square pavement | ○ | Hedge          |
| ■ | Path pavement | ■ | Lawn            | ○ | Old tree       |
| — | Wall          | ■ | Tomb            | ○ | Tree           |
| ■ | Building      | ■ | Water           | ○ | Evergreen tree |
| ○ | Old evergreen | ○ | Willow          |   |                |
| ✗ | Deleted Tree  |   |                 |   |                |



Visualization of  
water cascade

## Design with Memory

### 6.9 Zoom-in(s)

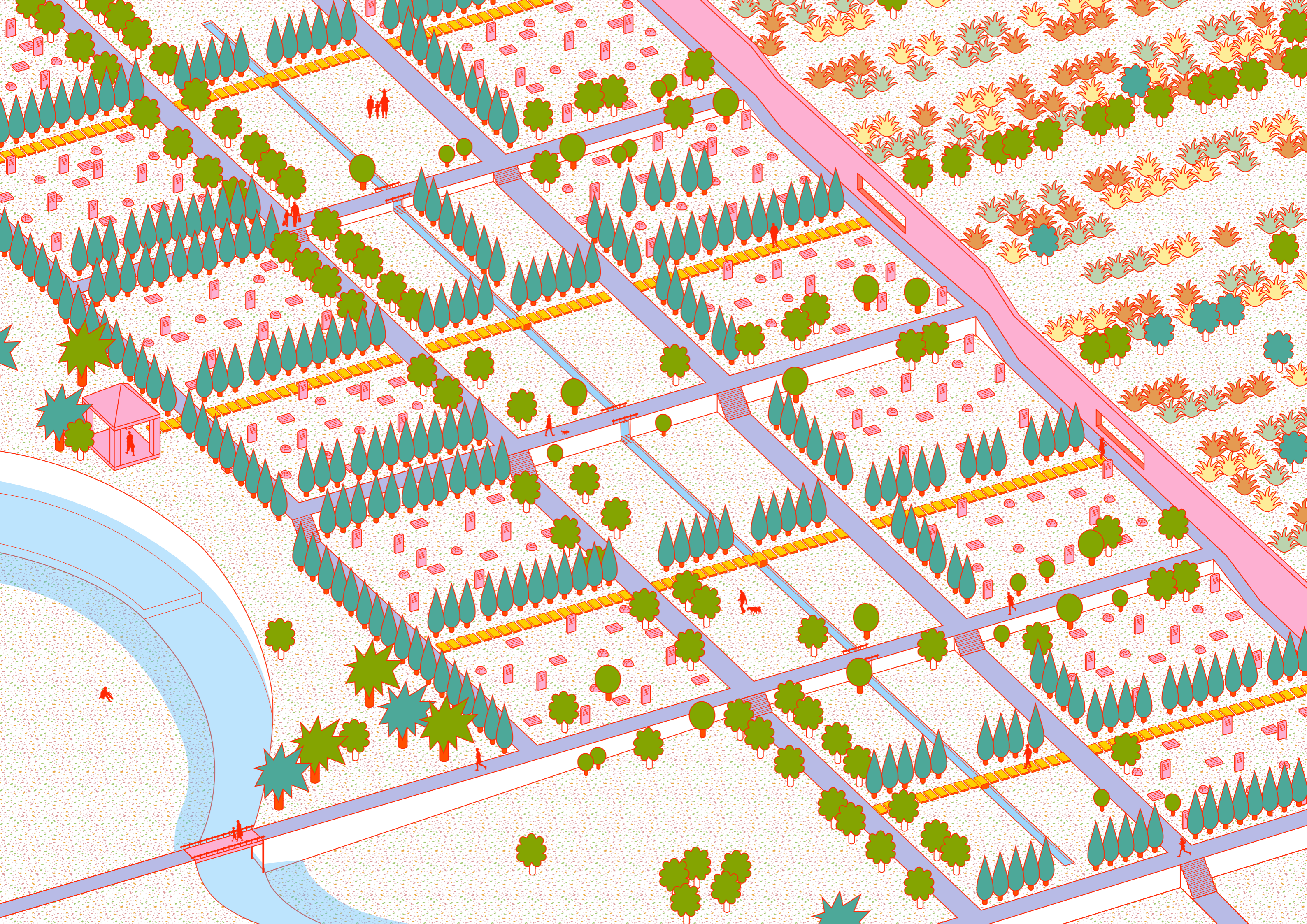


Figure  
Visualization of zoom-in 3

#### *Zoom-in 3*

Zoom-in 3 illustrates the design for the southwest side of the cemetery. Based on the existing vegetation, paths have been created to demarcate the burial area from the public space. Additionally, a water cascade has been integrated into the public space to introduce the soothing sounds of flowing water. Given the significant elevation changes within the site, the materials and structure of the cascade have been carefully considered. The design features small steps and a gently sloping structure, ensuring that the sound of the water does not disrupt the tranquil atmosphere of the cemetery while adding a sense of vitality.

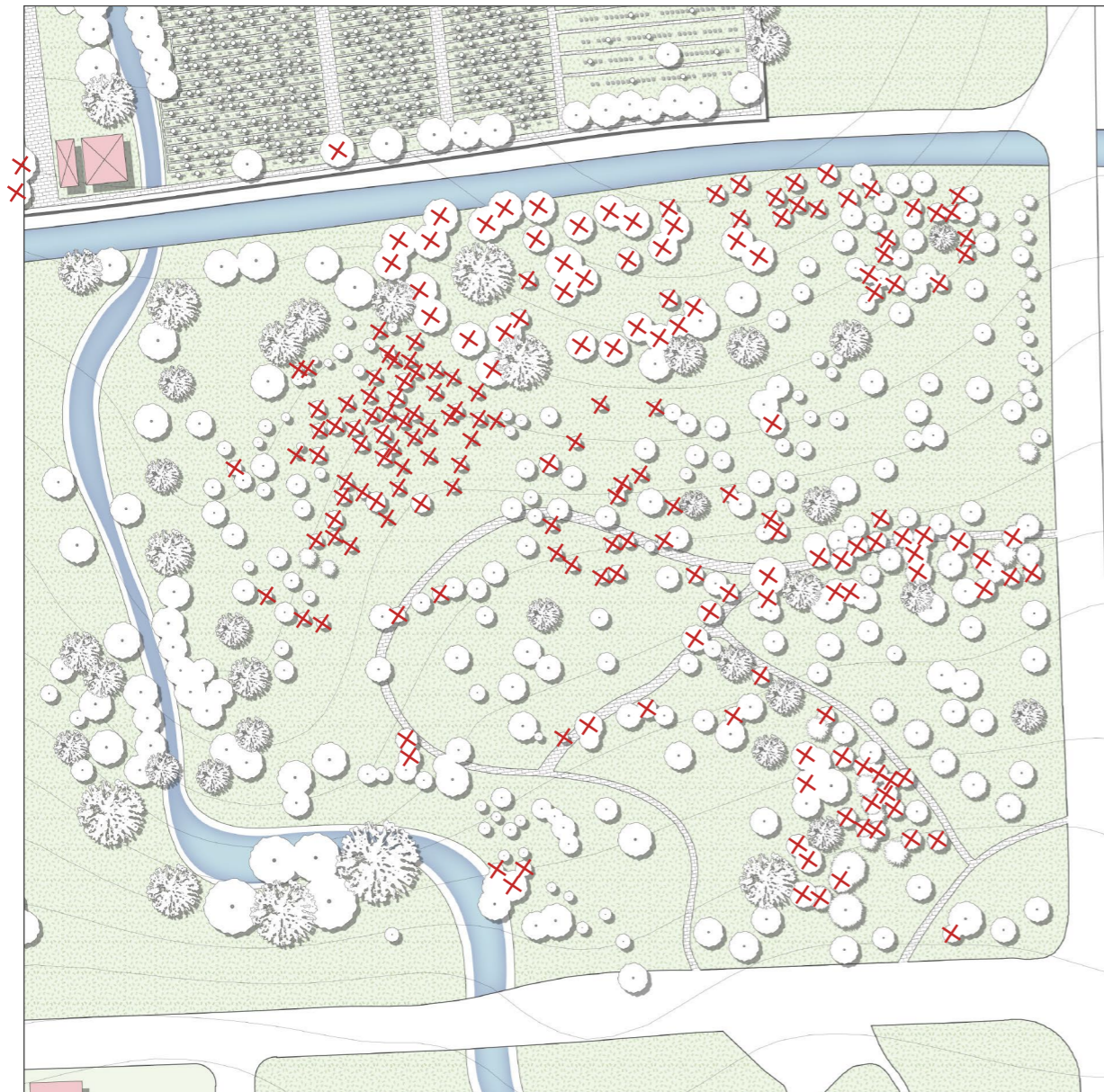
The water steps are approximately 30 cm deep, with the primary water source being natural precipitation, supplemented by a recycled water pump system. The burial area in this section predominantly consists of small tombstones, slabs, and stones, which are situated on both sides of the cascade. Additionally, picture windows and memorial windows are located on the south and west sides of the burial area. The expansive green area near the river will be transformed into a hydrophilic space with a natural slope leading into the water, enhancing the area's accessibility and aesthetic appeal.



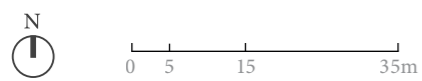
# Design with Memory

## 6.9 Zoom-in(s)

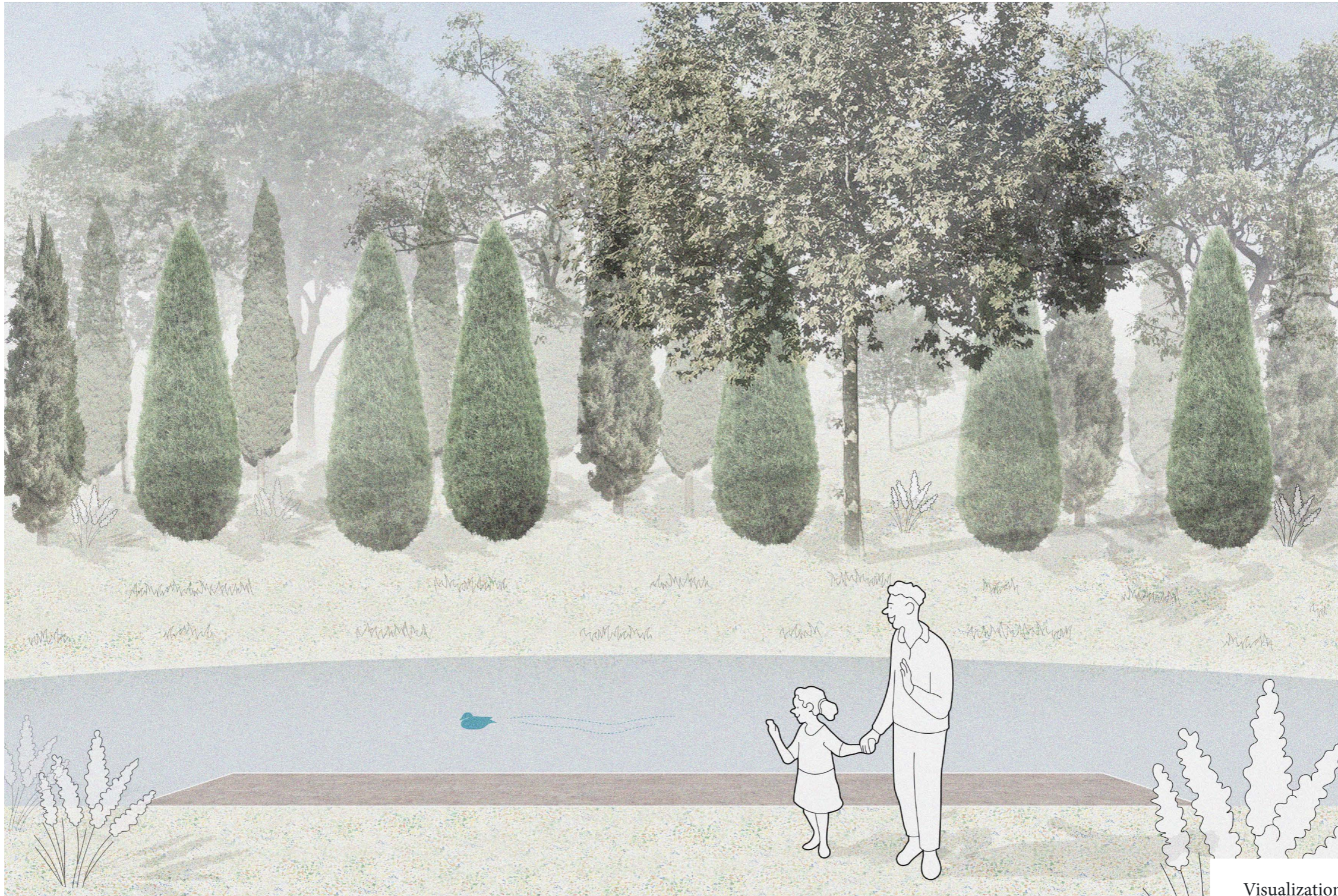
Zoom-in 4  
Before



After



- |                 |                   |                  |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| — Contour line  | ■ Square pavement | ○ Hedge          |
| ■ Path pavement | ■ Lawn            | ○ Old tree       |
| — Wall          | ..... Tomb        | ○ Tree           |
| ■ Building      | ■ Water           | ○ Evergreen tree |
| ○ Old evergreen | ○ Willow          |                  |
| ● Added tree    | ✗ Deleted Tree    |                  |



Visualization of lake  
inside extension  
memorial park

## Design with Memory

### 6.9 Zoom-in(s)



Figure  
Visualization of zoom-in 4

#### *Zoom-in 4*

Zoom-in 4 presents a newly designed memorial park that emphasizes ecological burials through the planting of remembrance trees.

Based on the characteristics of the existing tree species, the remembrance tree area has been arranged to diversify the site's arboreal species and enhance seasonal variety. The water canal on the north side of the site has been expanded into a rainwater lake, with the south side featuring a gentle slope to facilitate access to the water, thereby increasing the attractiveness and functionality of the public space. During the summer and autumn seasons, the area transforms into a lake. In spring and winter, it dries up and becomes a sunken area where visitors can engage in recreational activities. The water level fluctuates in accordance with precipitation.

The original paths within the site have been slightly adjusted to incorporate a path crossing the lake, as well as several paths meandering through the remembrance trees, allowing for intimate moments of reflection. On the southeast side of the memorial park, an entrance square has been designed, marked by two walls to clearly denote the entry point. Additionally, ample seating has been incorporated throughout the venue to enhance comfort and accessibility for visitors.



Visualization of  
entrance square of ex-  
tension memorial park

## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views



Figure  
Main routes in Chang'an Ci'en Yuan  
cemetery



#### Legend

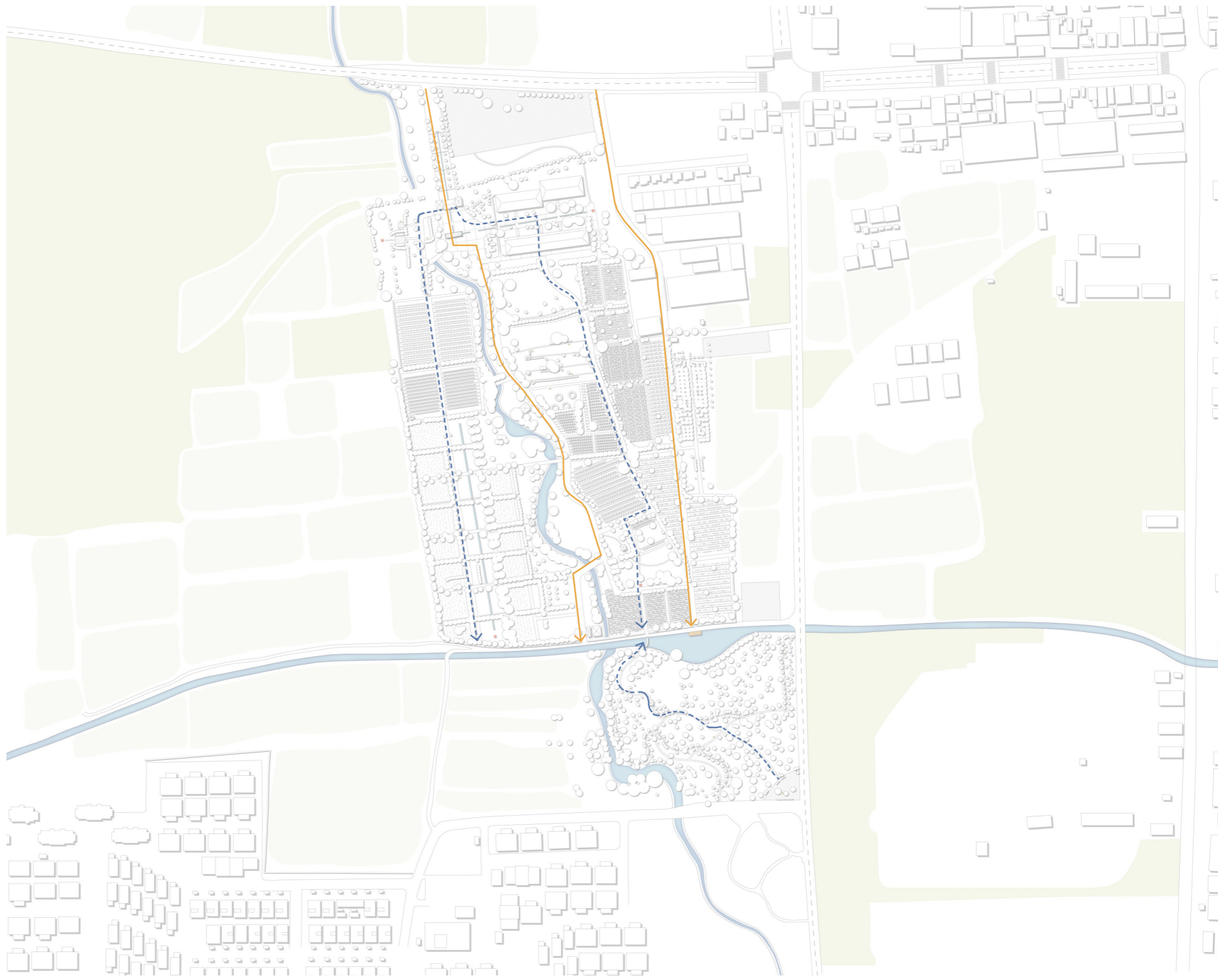
- Recreational route
- > Memorial route



Based on the previously established classification of space types, the spaces within Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery are divided into intimate and public spaces. Consequently, the main paths within the site are categorized into two types: memorial routes and recreational routes, enhancing visitor's convenience within the cemetery.

The dotted blue lines represent memorial routes, designated for individuals seeking a contemplative and remembrance-focused experience. The solid yellow lines indicate recreational routes, designed to facilitate the use of the cemetery as a communal space. Each route is strategically aligned with an exit, ensuring that visitors can fully traverse the cemetery without the need to retrace their steps.

The following five routes will be presented next, illustrating the spatial transformations along each path.

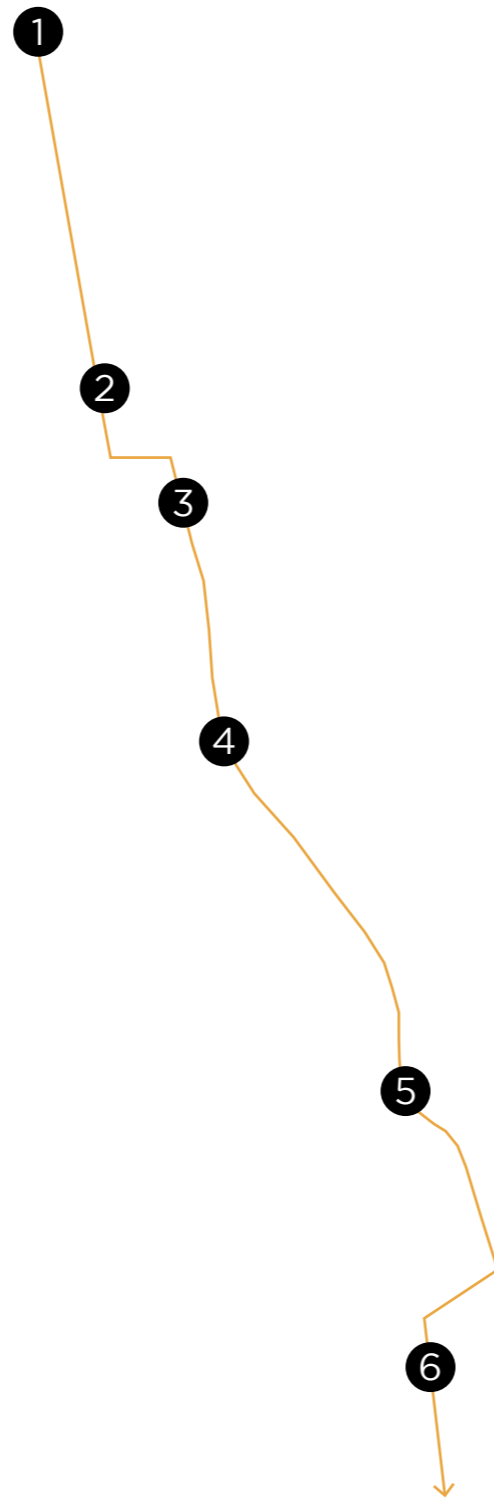


## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views



Figure  
Sequences of main recreational route 1



Begin by presenting recreational route 1:  
(Yellow represents new added elements)

1. The water cascade at the main entrance, flanked by apricot trees, creates a formal and serious atmosphere.

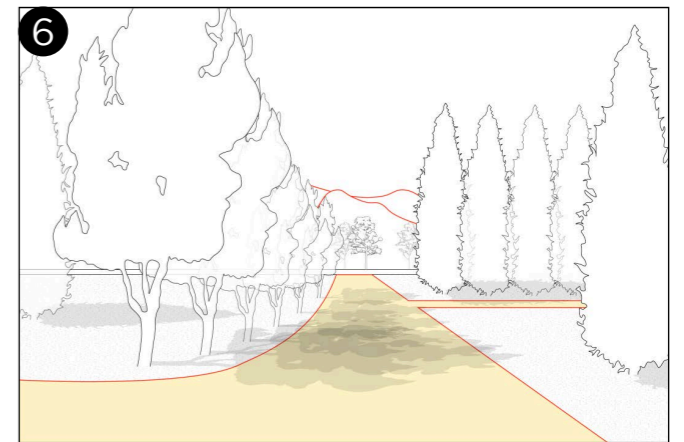
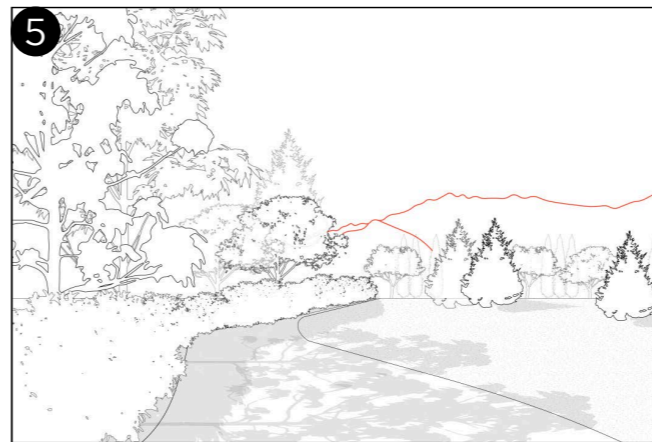
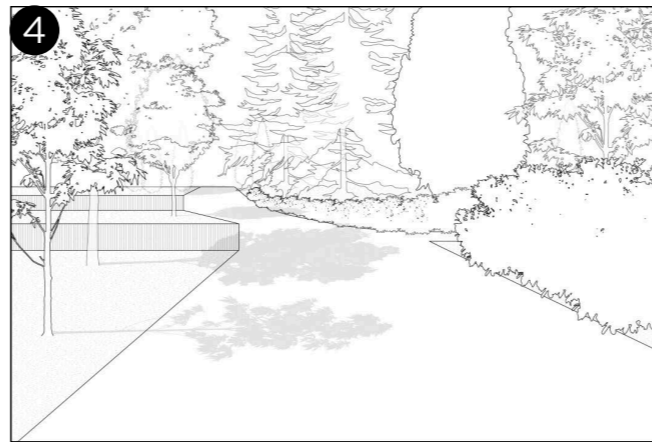
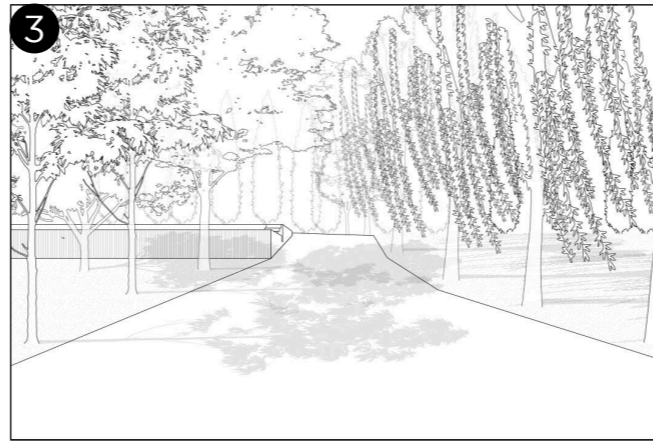
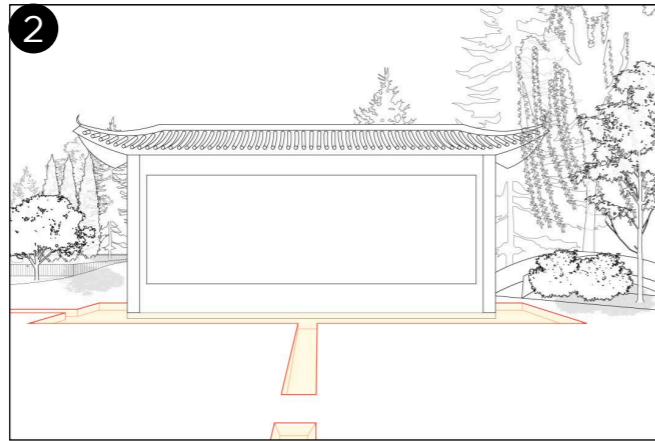
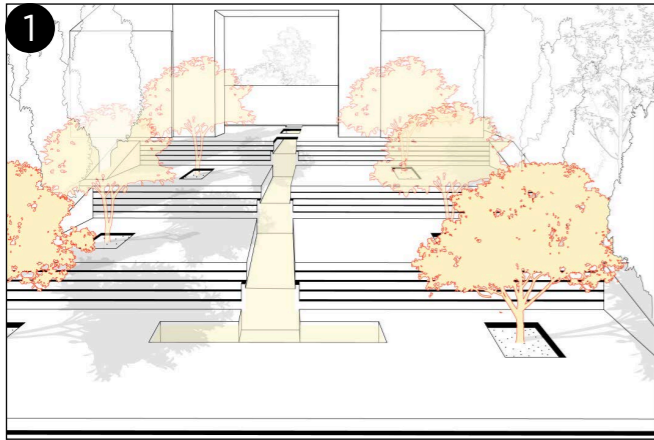
2. The water canal around the mural wall visually guides visitors to the left, enriching the variety of spatial experiences.

3. The main road gradually rises, bordered by open space under crowns on both sides.

4. Different spatial types are evident on both sides; the left is more open while the right side is more enclosed, indicating intimate and public spaces, respectively.

5. Continuing to show the different spatial types, the left side now represents intimate space while the right side denotes public space. The open area offers a view of the distant mountains.

6. Newly added side roads and exits guide visitors forward, complemented by the distant mountain scenery.

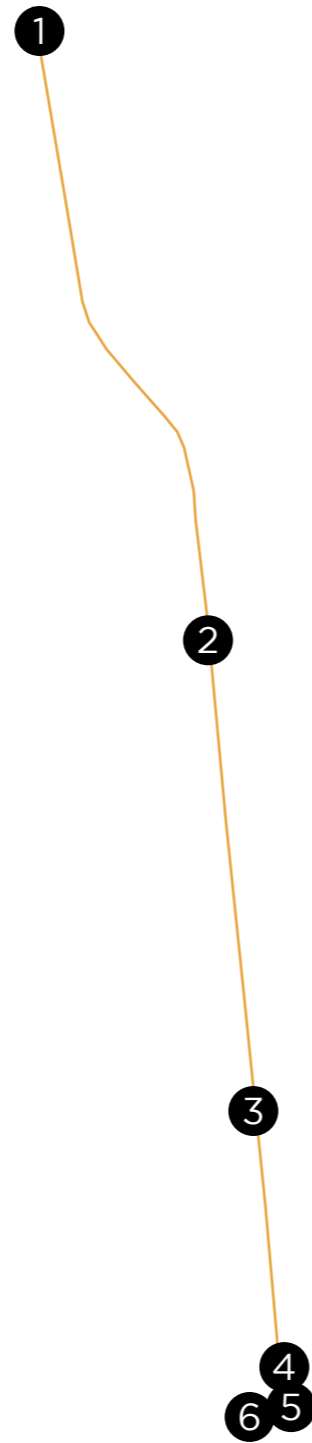


## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views



Figure  
Sequences of main recreational route 2



Next, we proceed to the 2nd recreational route:

1. Enter from a new entrance, characterized by the distant mountain view and tall newly planted trees, creating a very open space.

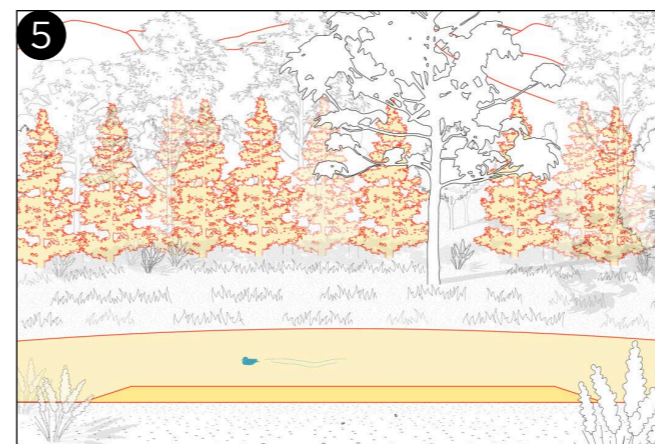
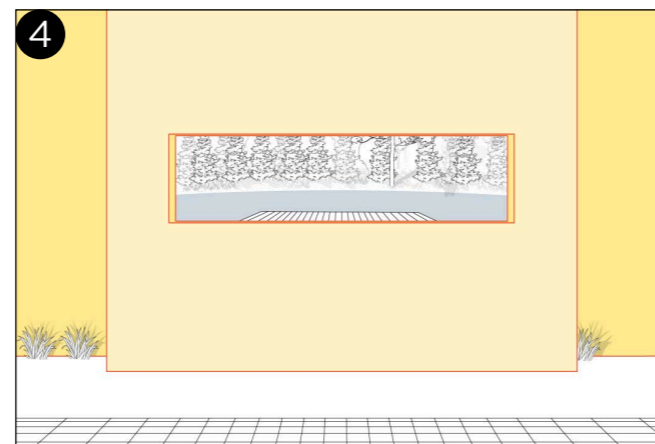
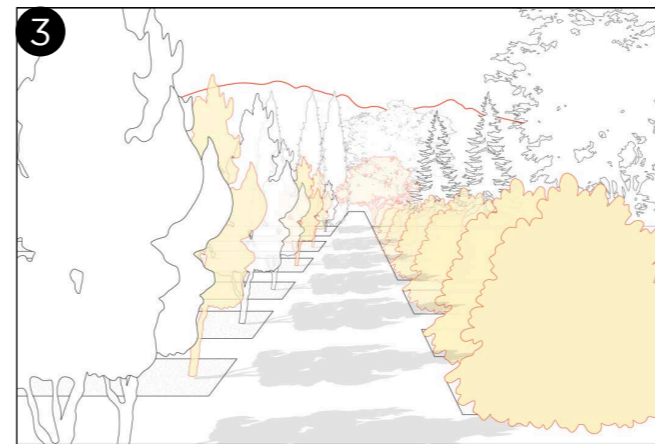
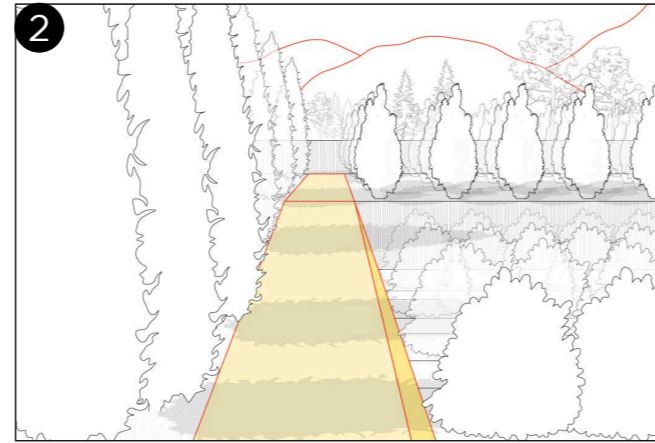
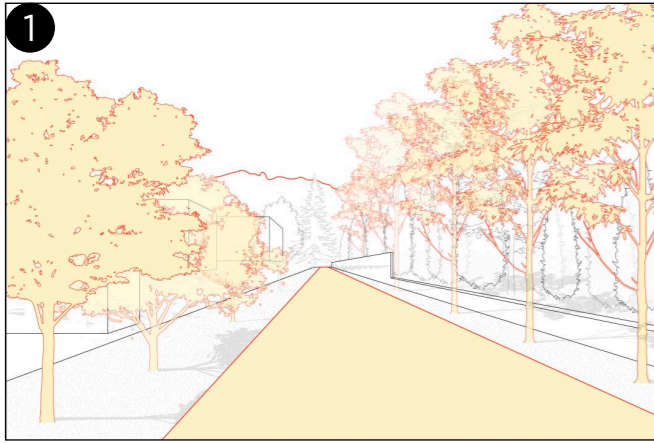
2. The main road then ascends, flanked by different spaces on both sides; a remembrance tree nursery garden on the left and burial area on the right, both relatively enclosed.

3. Burial areas appear on both sides, with views generally extending straight to the distant mountains.

4. At the exit, a wall with a panoramic window in the center offers a view of the lake in the memorial park.

5. Passing the viewing wall, we arrive at the lake, surrounded by cypress trees, with the mountains faintly visible in the distance.

6. Through the large trees on the other side of the lake, the distant pavilion becomes visible, evoking a sense of mystery.

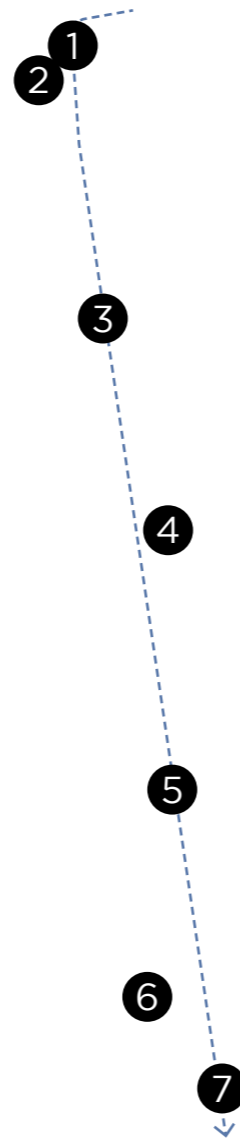


## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views



Figure  
Sequences of main memorial route 1



Then we enter the memorial routes:

1. After entering from the main entrance, turn right to encounter a straight path with several steps, flanked by cypress trees, leading to an elevated burial area. This creates an atmosphere where visitors can ascend and feel a sense of meeting the deceased.

2. The burn area, serving as the most important ceremonial site in the cemetery.

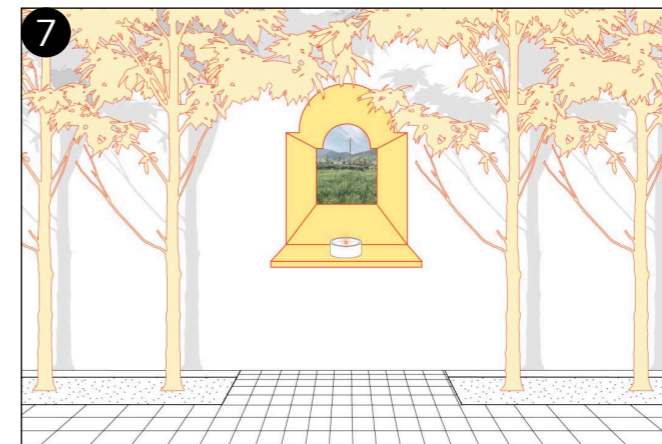
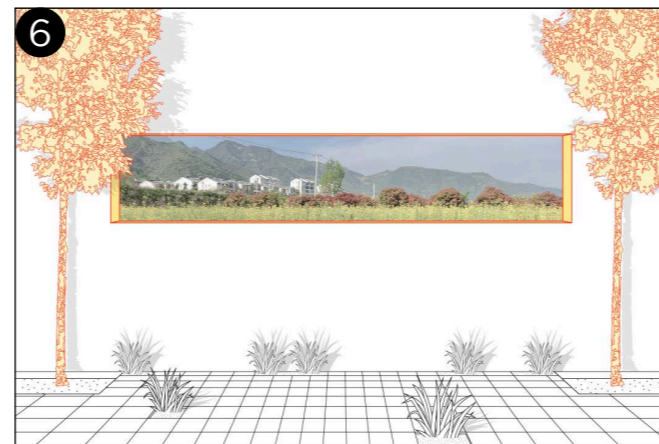
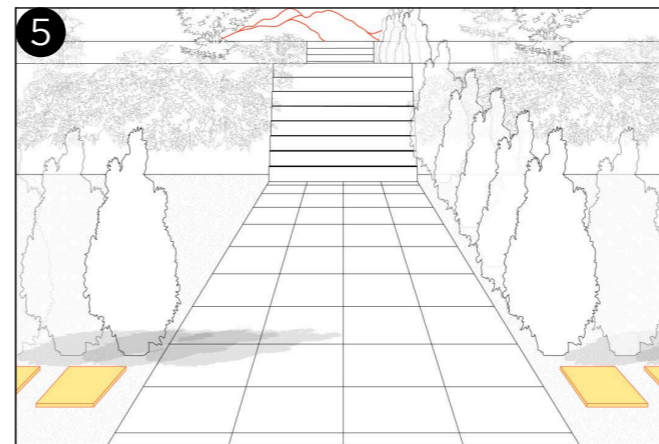
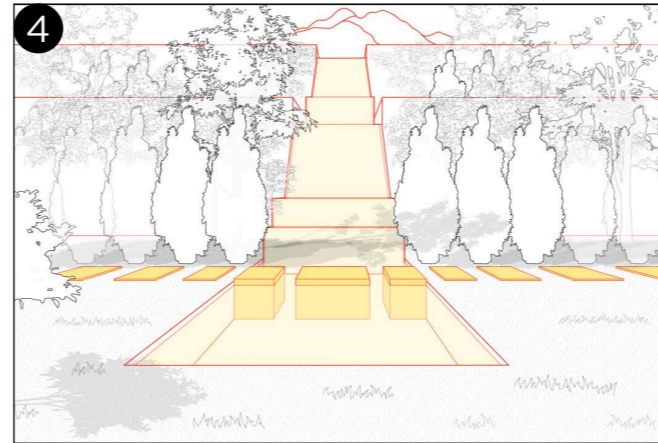
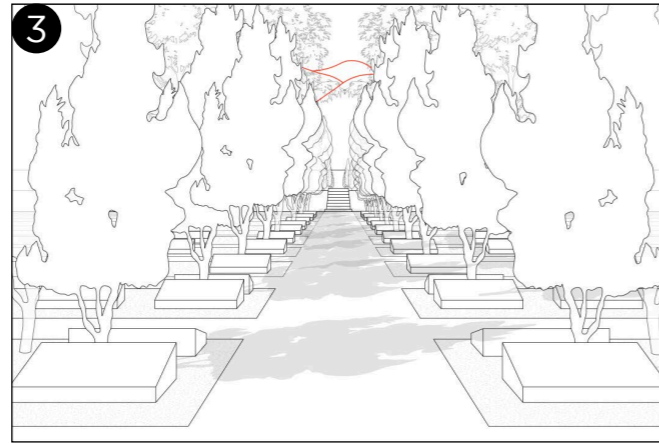
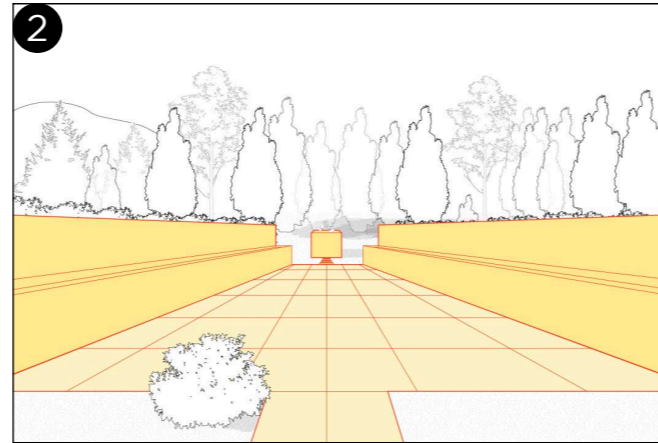
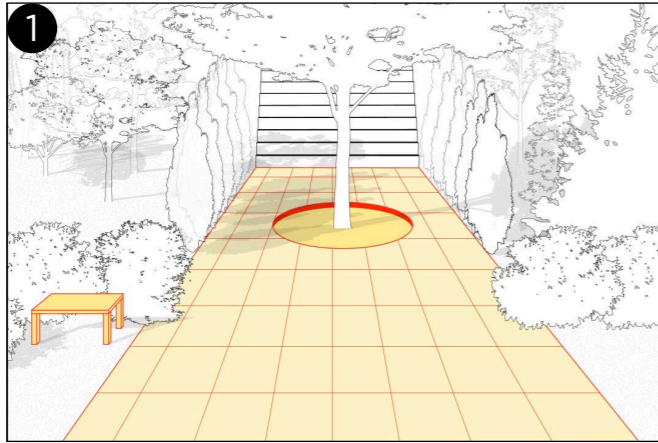
3. Upon entering the burial area, a sense of tranquility and peace is felt, with the distant mountains providing a serene backdrop.

4. Arrive at the beginning of the water cascade.

5. Proceed into the newly planned burial area.

6. The panoramic window on the west side of the site offers views of the farmland and mountains beyond the wall.

7. The memorial window on the south side of the site, shaped like a niche, allows for the offering of candles.

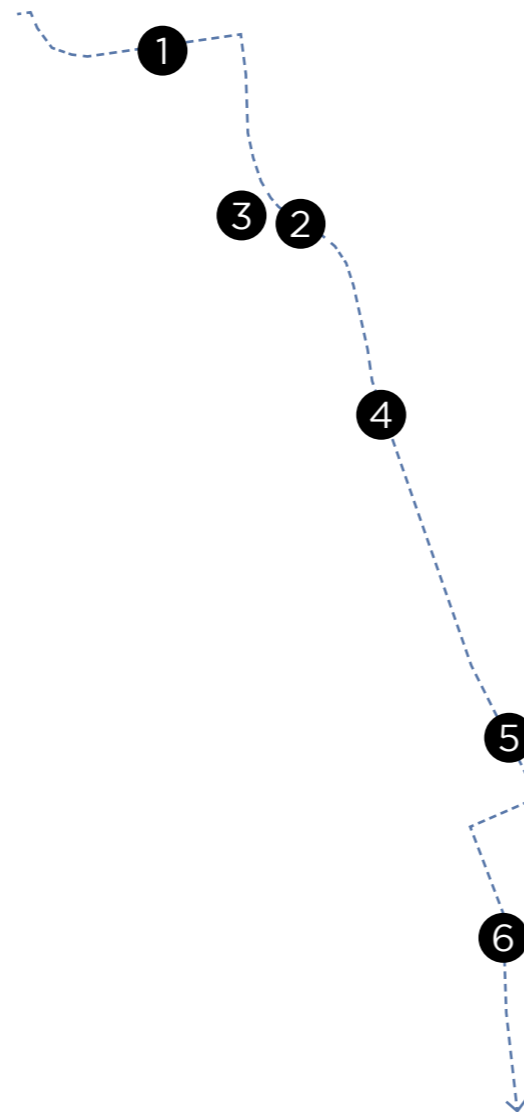


## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views

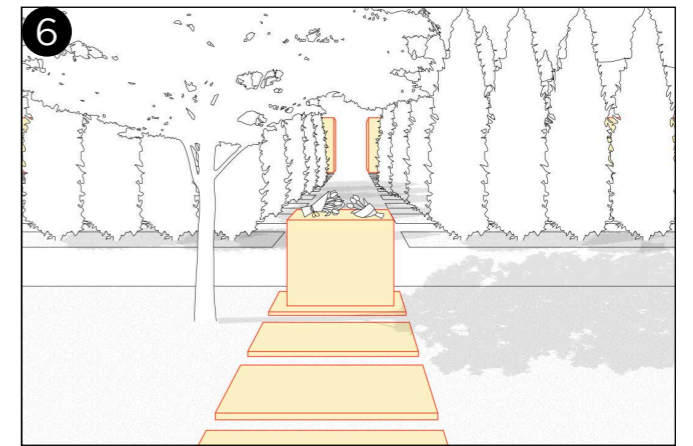
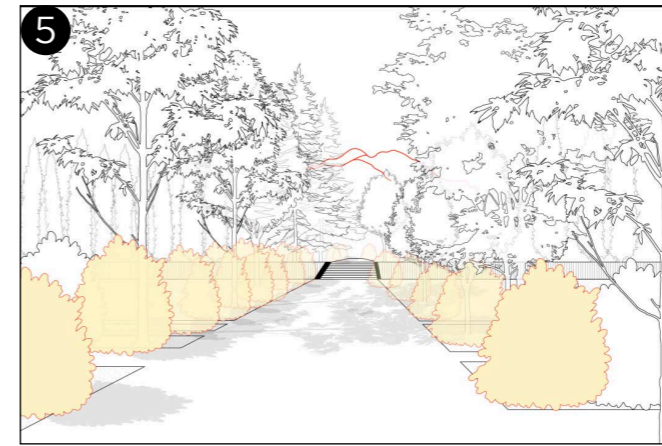
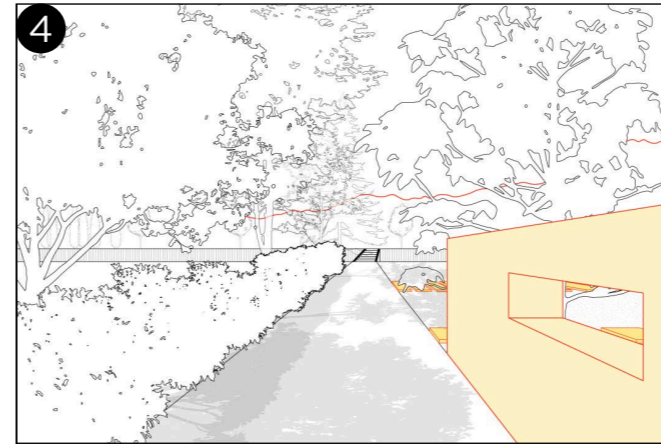
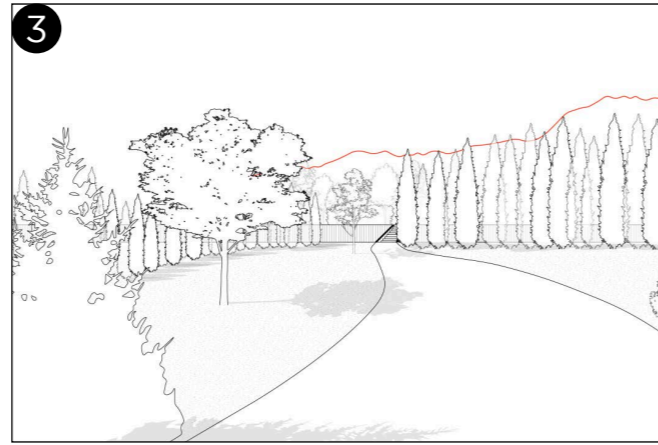
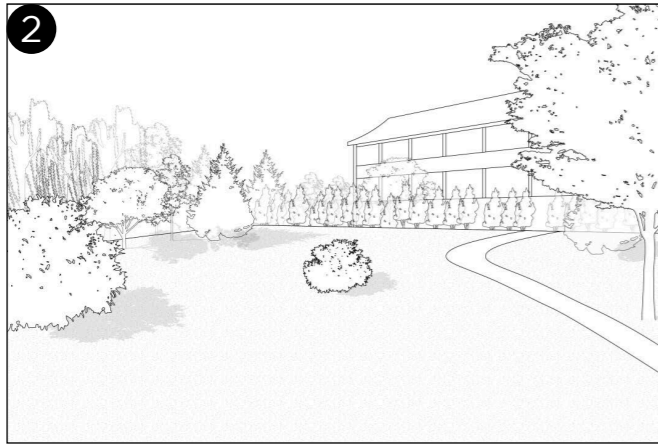
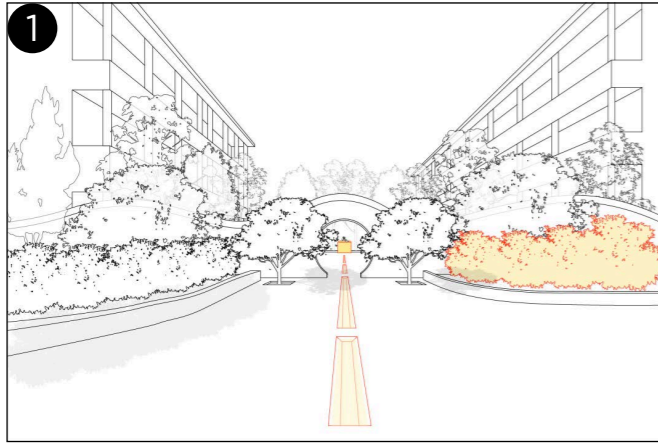


Figure  
Sequences of main memorial route 2



Then there's the second memorial route:

1. Upon entering from the main entrance, turn left and follow a small water canal into the small courtyard where the urn buildings are located. At the end of this courtyard is a flower altar.
2. Walk through the urn building to reach a relatively empty and open area.
3. Turning your head, you can see the distant mountains stretching ahead, contributing to an open and comfortable atmosphere.
4. At this point, the space on both sides changes. The left side features a more intimate and enclosed burial area, while the right side hosts open urn display walls, integrating some urns with nature.
5. Continuing forward, the burial area on the left is enclosed by small shrubs, with mountains visible in the distance.
6. Pass by a lawn with a flower altar for laying flowers, arriving at the end of the route.

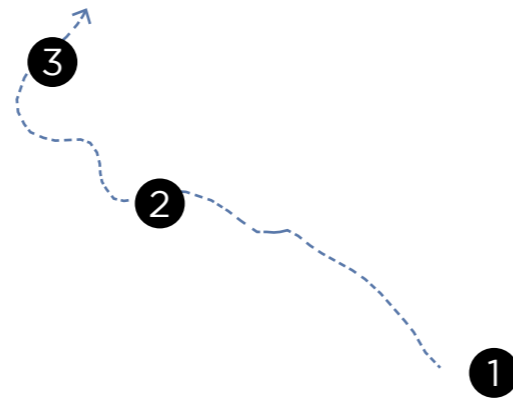


## Design with Memory

### 6.10 Routes and views

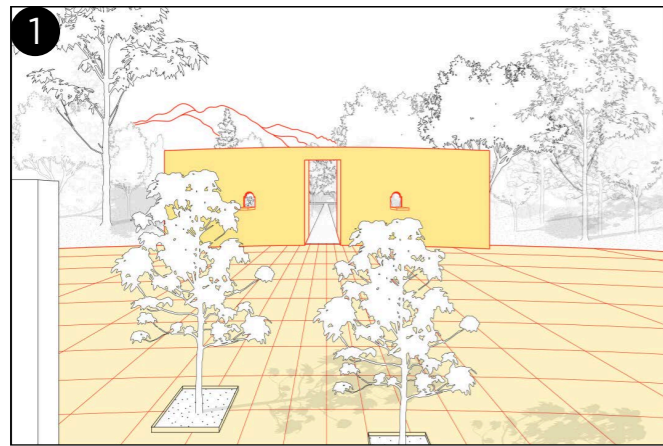


Figure  
Sequences of main memorial route 3



The final memorial route is located in the memorial park:

1. Enter from the paved entrance square on the southeast side. Through the entrance wall in the center, your sight is drawn to the road behind and the distant mountains.
2. A small pavilion, hidden among the remembrance trees and existing trees, evokes a sense of mystery and attracts visitors to come closer.
3. Follow the viewing path through the remembrance trees to the lake, where you can see the bridge in the distance and the entrance into the main part of the cemetery.



## Design with Memory

### 6.11 Management

The management of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery encompasses various aspects to ensure the orderly operation and maintenance of the cemetery.

#### *Regulations and Policies*

##### 1. National and Local Regulations:

The management of cemeteries is stringently regulated by national and local government directives. For instance, the <Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Funeral and Burial Administration> mandate that cemetery construction be incorporated into urban and rural planning with scientific layout and rational allocation. The establishment of cemeteries must be managed according to the law, prohibiting private construction of cemeteries. Relevant standards encourage ecological burial practices to conserve land resources.

##### 2. Environmental Protection Requirements:

With increasing environmental awareness, green cemeteries and ecological burial methods (such as tree burials and sea burials) have garnered significant attention. In this design, remembrance trees replace traditional tombstones, augmenting tree planting and creating more green spaces.

#### *Cemetery Planning and Design*

##### 1. Layout Planning:

Cemeteries are typically designed by professional planning and design teams, encompassing cemetery area division, road planning, and landscaping design.

##### 2. Infrastructure:

Necessary infrastructure is provided, including parking facilities, public restrooms, burn areas, pavilions, and other rest areas.

#### *Maintenance and Management*

##### 1. Daily Maintenance:

This includes cemetery cleaning, landscaping maintenance, and facility upkeep. Cemeteries usually employ professional gardening and maintenance teams according to the design proposal, while the cleaning and upkeep of individual tombstones are the buyer's responsibility.

##### 2. Security Management:

Security measures include the installation of monitoring systems and routine patrols by security personnel to ensure cemetery safety.

#### *Service and Management*

##### 1. Cemetery Sales and Service:

The cemetery offers sales services, and it will be sold as tombstones, not land. The cemetery will propose more economical small tombstones to customers based on their needs and lowering prices compared to the original. It also provides burial ceremonies and maintenance services.

##### 2. Customer Management:

Customers must regularly clean and maintain their purchased tombstones. Each visit requires registration at the cemetery. The cemetery builds client

## Design with Memory

### 6.11 Management

profiles and maintains regular contact with families. If a tombstone is not maintained for one year, the cemetery reserves the right to reclaim and resell it.

#### *Culture and Education*

##### 1. Cultural Activities:

The cemetery may organize commemorative events and cultural lectures to preserve and promote traditional Chinese funeral and burial culture.

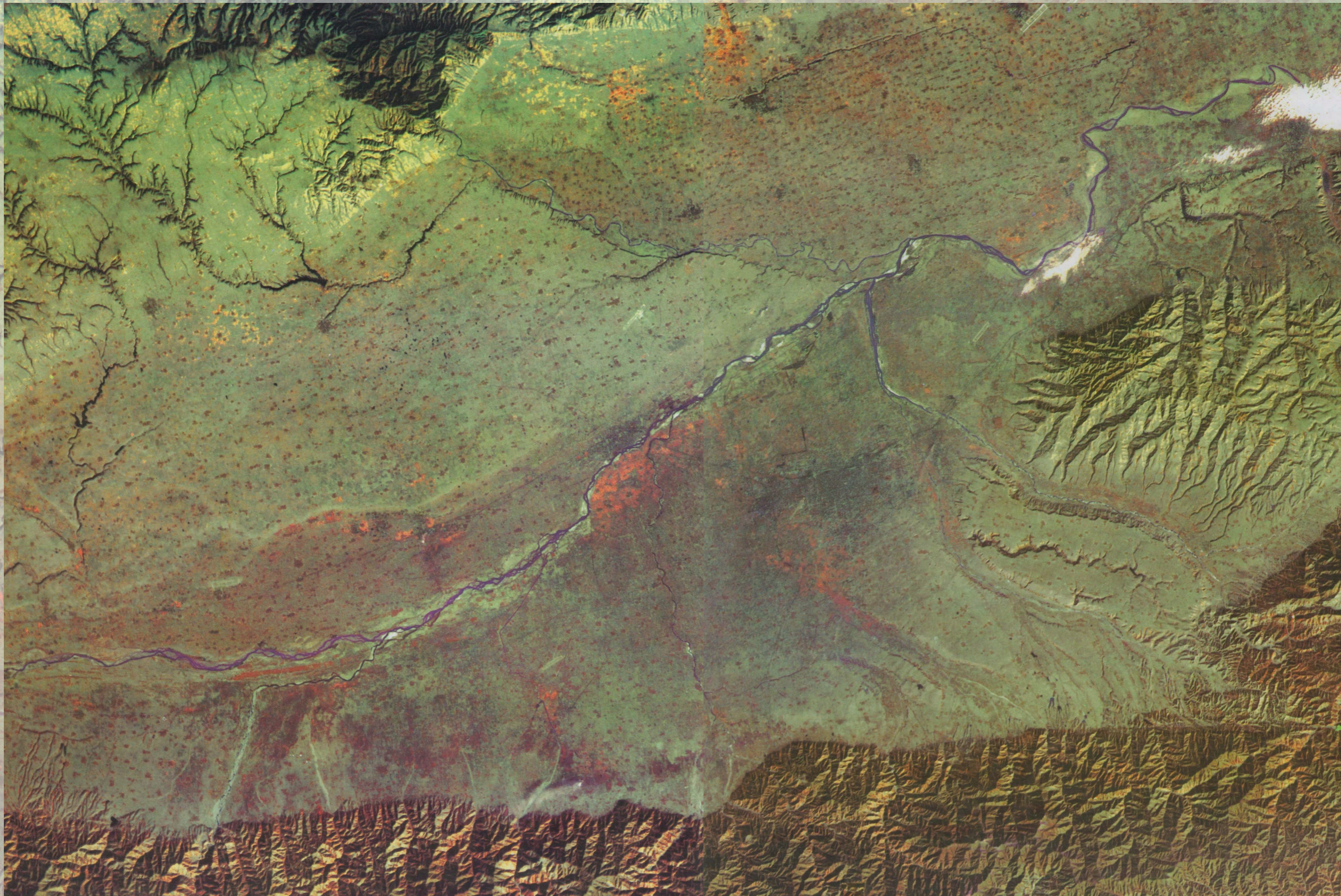
##### 2. Publicity and Education:

Through brochures, websites, and social media, the cemetery disseminates its management philosophy, service offerings, and funeral culture to the public.

#### *Technology and Informatization*

Management software is utilized for cemetery information management, including archive management, sales management, and maintenance records.

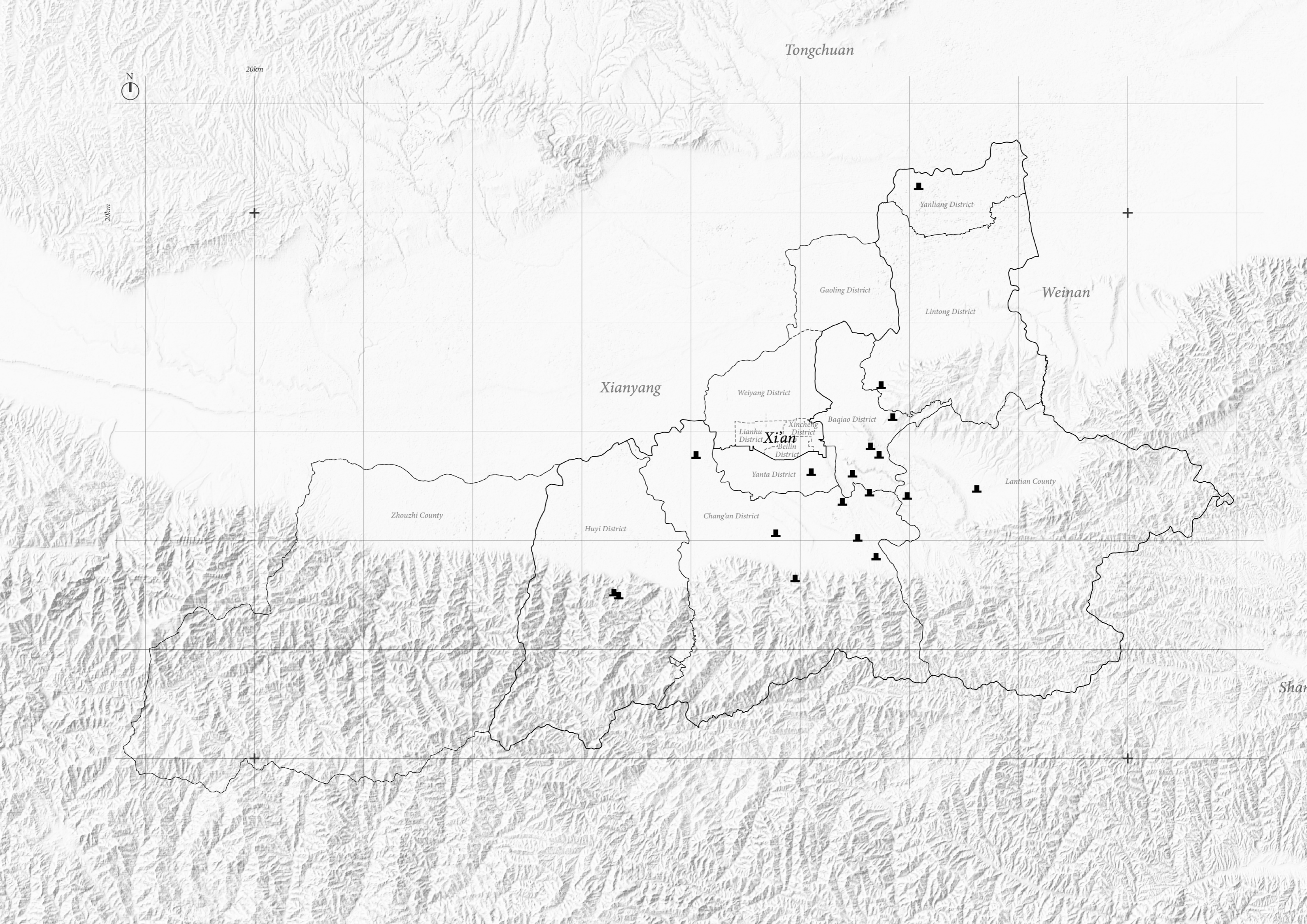
Through these comprehensive management measures, Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery not only provides essential funeral services but also emphasizes environmental protection and cultural preservation, striving to offer a solemn, peaceful, and green memorial space for the public.





## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

- 7.1 Classification of public cemeteries*
- 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries*
- 7.3 Future predictions*



Tongchuan

20km



20km

Weinan

Xianyang

Weiyang District

Gaoling District

Lintong District

Yanliang District

Baqiao District

Lianhu District

Beilin District

Beilin District

Yanta District

Chang'an District

Huyi District

Zhouzhi County

Lantian County

Shan

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.1 Classification of public cemeteries

After completing the redesign of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, I began to consider whether I could summarize some specific and effective suggestions and design methods for cemetery design. My goal is to provide a set of guidelines that can be referenced and utilized for the design and renovation of other public cemeteries in Xi'an in the future.

There are 18 cemeteries in Xi'an. Unsurprisingly, they are mainly distributed in districts with higher grounds, close to mountainous area, forests or rivers. The central districts such as Weiyang district, Lianhu district, Xincheng district and Beilin district, are the oldest area in Xi'an. With many old residential buildings, ancient defense walls, and various administrative office areas, it is not suitable to build cemeteries here in Chinese context.

While in Yanliang district, there is one public cemetery; in Lintong district, there is one cemetery; in Lantian district, there are two cemeteries; in Baqiao district, there are four cemeteries; in Yanta district, there is one cemetery; in Chang'an district, there are seven cemeteries, which is also the district where Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery is located; in Huyi district, there are two cemeteries. In Gaoling and Zhouzhi district, it's far from the city center, so no public cemeteries have been built there.

After the proclamation of PRC, the territory of Xi'an underwent numerous changes. The site selection and con-

struction of these 18 cemeteries were, to varying degrees, influenced by the expansion of the city. The distribution of these cemeteries also reflects the shifting boundaries of Xi'an over time.

Most of public cemeteries in Xi'an are commercially operated, although a small number of graves are donated for free. Initially, public cemeteries were owned by the state or collectives, but they were gradually privatized. The main types of tombs are tomb burials and wall burials. The earliest public cemetery in Xi'an is Muslim Cemetery, which was built in 1985 and covers an area of approximately 14.8 hectares.

In 1992, the central government issued the Interim Measures for Cemetery Management, designating public cemeteries as the only legal burial areas in China. As a result, family cemeteries and individual cemeteries that had previously existed were no longer protected by law. The government of Xi'an also implemented this regulation, so after 1992, more public cemeteries were built.

Therefore all 18 public cemeteries in Xi'an could be divided into 5 time periods, before 1992, 1992-1995, 1996-2000, 2000-2010 and after 2010.



Figure  
Map of distribution of public  
cemeteries in Xi'an region

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.1 Classification of public cemeteries



Figure  
Map of classification of public cemeteries in Xi'an based on the time of construction



Figure  
Before 1992: map of surroundings of Muslim Cemetery, Sanzhao Cemetery and Shouyang Shan Cemetery



#### Legend

- Road
- Contour line
- ..... Water
- Building
- ▶ Entrance
- ▨ Agricultural land
- ▲ Forest



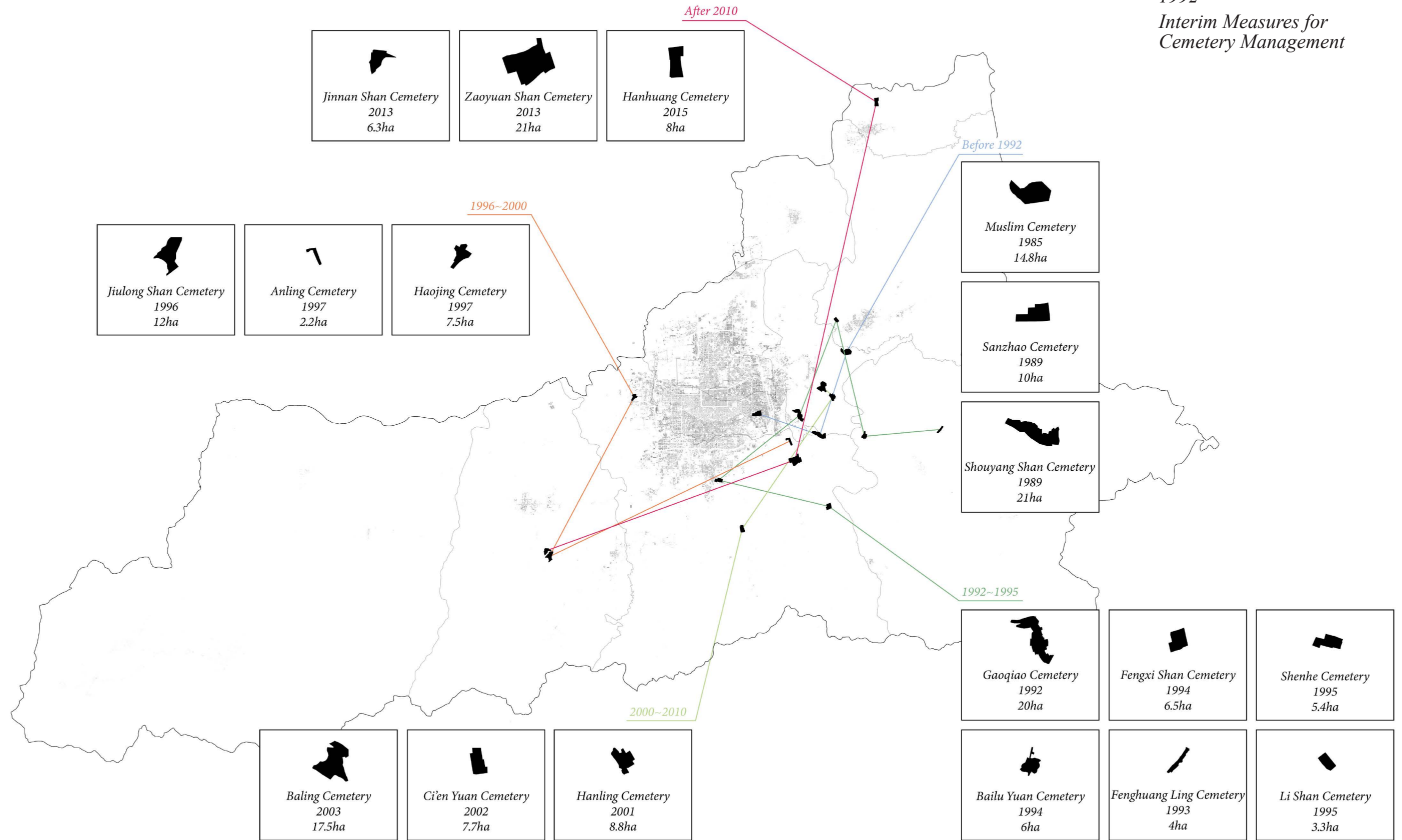
The surrounding environment of each public cemetery will be presented and analyzed. Most public cemeteries are located on the outskirts of the city, often near agricultural land, industrial areas, or natural forests.

Muslim Cemetery is situated within a large forest, adjacent to agricultural land on the northwest side. It is surrounded by a few winding mountain roads, with a small number of houses scattered throughout the mountain. The entire space is seamlessly integrated into the natural environment. Sanzhao Cemetery is located in the middle of an

industrial area. To the south is an highway. The cemetery is surrounded by many direct roads. The area used to be on the edge of the city, but it has been re-incorporated into the planning due to the expansion of Xi'an. The entrance to the cemetery is located on the west side.

Shouyang Shan Cemetery is the first cemetery in Xi'an to achieve located within mountains and rivers, with many entrances, it's like a public space in a forest. The height difference provides visitors with excellent views of the river.

• 1992  
*Interim Measures for  
 Cemetery Management*

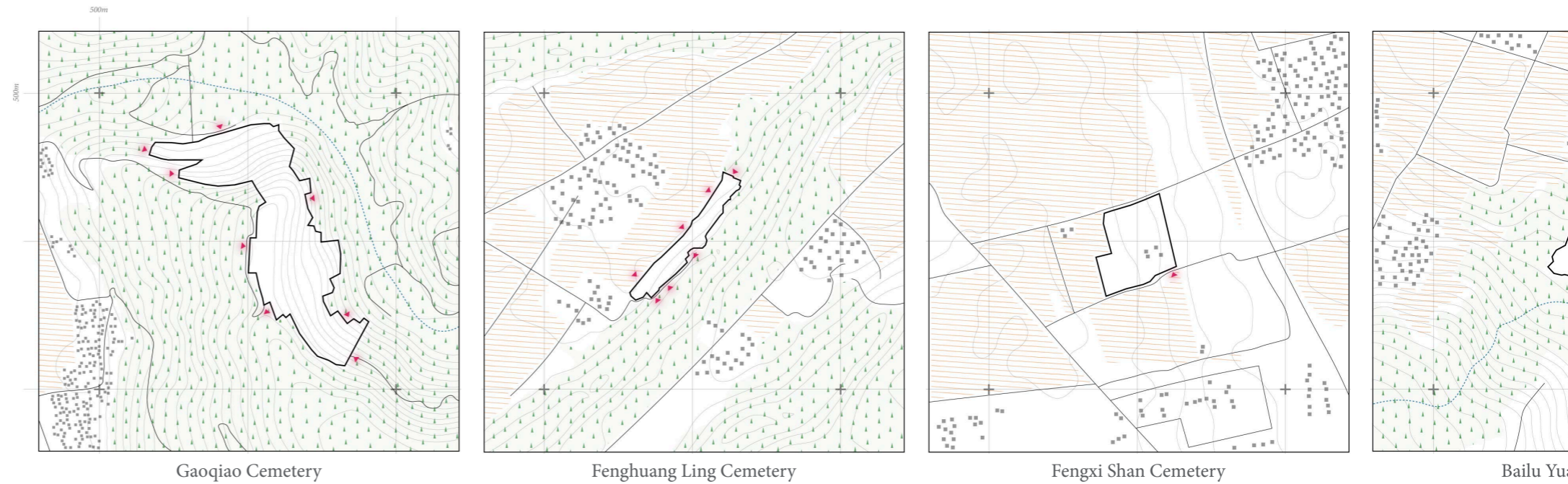


## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

▼  
Figure  
1992-1995: map of surroundings of Gaoqiao Cemetery, Fenghuang Ling Cemetery, Fengxi Shan Cemetery, Bailu Yuan Cemetery, Shenhe Cemetery, Li Shan Cemetery

Figure  
1996-2000: map of surroundings of Jiulong Shan Cemetery, Haojing Cemetery and Anling Cemetery



- ▼  
Legend
- Road
  - Contour line
  - ..... Water
  - ■ ■ Building
  - ▶ Entrance
  - ▨ Agricultural land
  - Forest



6 cemeteries were built between 1992 to 1995. Gaoqiao Cemetery is similar to Shouyang Shan Cemetery. They both have excellent landscape features, excellent views and many entrances. The difference is that the natural conditions of the Gaoqiao Cemetery are better, since it is located in a natural forest.

Fenghuang Ling Cemetery is located next to a small village, close to the agricultural land near the village and a small forest in the middle of the agricultural land, which is very similar to the location of the cemetery in prehistoric times, in a modern perspective, it performs like a pocket public green space

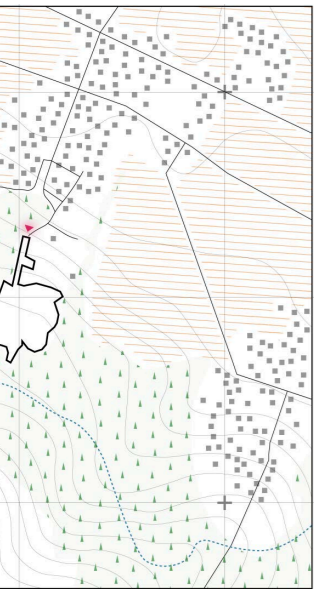
beside the village.

Fengxi Shan Cemetery is also close to a village, unlike Fenghuang Ling Cemetery, this village is larger, so the cemetery is built directly on agricultural land, with the entrance at the southeast corner of the cemetery.

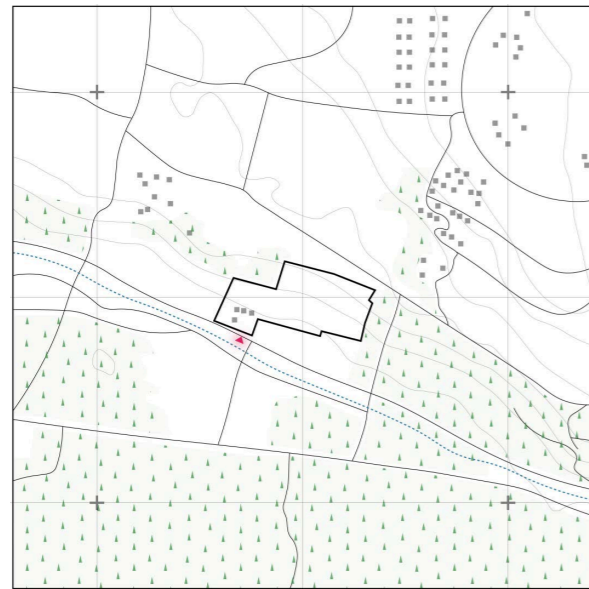
Bailu Yuan Cemetery lies in a forest area on the high ground, between three villages, from the entrance on the north side, overlooking a river to the south, with beautiful natural scenery.

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries



An Cemetery



Shenhe Cemetery



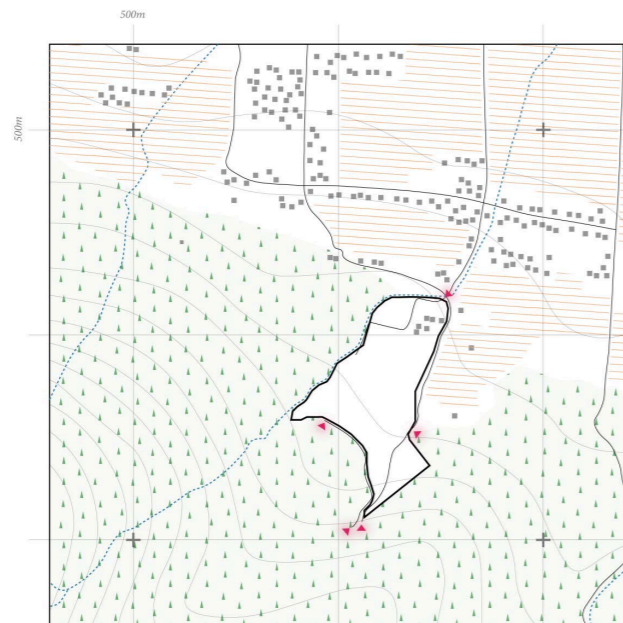
Li Shan Cemetery

Shenhe Cemetery is located on the edge of a forest, the north side of the cemetery are industrial and low-cost housing is to be built, the entrance is located on the southwest side of the cemetery.

Li Shan Cemetery is similar to Muslim cemetery, located in the mountains, surrounded by forests, only a mountain road passes by the northwest entrance of the cemetery, very quiet and peaceful.

3 cemeteries were built between 1996 to 2000. Jiulong Shan Cemetery is located at the foot of the mountain adjacent to the village, with multiple entrances and a river running through the cemetery.

The surroundings of Haojing Cemetery and Sanzhao Cemetery are very sim-



Jiulong Shan Cemetery



Haojing Cemetery



Anling Cemetery

ilar, both inside industrial areas and close to the highway. The difference lies with a river on the southeast side of Haojing Cemetery.

Anling Cemetery is similar to Fengxi Shan Cemetery in that it is both located on agricultural land near villages, but the size of Anling Cemetery, its freer form and four entrances make it more like a public green space.

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

▼  
Figure  
2000-2010: map of surroundings of  
Hanling Cemetery, Chang'an Ci'en  
Yuan Cemetery and Baling Cemetery

Figure  
After 2010: map of surroundings of  
Jinnan Shan Cemetery, Zaoyuan Shan  
Cemetery and Hanhuang Cemetery



▼  
**Legend**  
— Road  
— Contour line  
..... Water  
■ Building  
▶ Entrance  
▨ Agricultural land  
■ Forest



## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

There are 3 public cemeteries built between 2000-2010. Hanling Cemetery lies in the agricultural land in the middle of three villages and the natural forest at the foot of a mountain, and the entrance is located in the southeast corner of the cemetery, facing one of the villages.

Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery is located in the middle of two large villages, surrounded by natural forest and agricultural land, a river flowing through the cemetery. The entrance is located on the north side, facing the mountains on the south.

Baling cemetery is situated next to a small village, in a natural forest with a wide variation in elevation and complex terrain. Entering from the northeast entrance and heading to the southwest, visitors can gradually feel the undulation of the mountain and sight being gradually broadened.

In the period after 2010, there built with 3 public cemeteries as well. Jinnan Shan Cemetery could be regarded as a further expansion of Jiulong Shan Cemetery. It inherits the unique geographical advantages of Jiulong Shan Cemetery. The overall structure and design concept of the cemetery are almost identical to those of Jiulong Shan Cemetery.

Zaoyuan Shan Cemetery, the largest of its kind built after 2010, is one of the most popular public cemeteries in recent years due to its low elevation and proximity to

agricultural land. Its main entrance is located on the north side of the cemetery.

Hanhuang Cemetery is the most recently built cemetery in Xi'an. It is surrounded by agricultural and industrial land. There are a few residential houses on the north side, and the main entrance of the cemetery is on the west side.

#### *Conclusion*

The close-look of 18 public cemeteries within Xi'an reveals that the average size of these cemeteries is approximately 10.1 hectares. Typically, these cemeteries are situated in elevated regions, encompassing natural forests on mountainous terrains or at the foot of mountains, as well as in flat areas near villages, adjacent to farmlands, or within industrial zones. While the design of most cemeteries aims to harmonize with the local landscape, while the openness and accessibility of cemeteries remains weak. Several cemeteries have been designed to include areas that provide diversified atmospheres, in addition to designated burial spaces. Furthermore, temporal analysis indicates a reduction in the size of public cemeteries, with a concurrent trend of these cemeteries encroaching increasingly upon areas densely populated, such as villages or towns.

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries



## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

## 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

Upon acquiring a foundational understanding of 18 public cemeteries in Xi'an, it becomes evident that these sites exhibit certain design deficiencies, such as a lack of natural structures, limited publicness, and a paucity of diversified atmospheres, all of which necessitate enhancements. The aspect of memorial symbolism, being more intricate, proves challenging to assess solely from surrounding maps, and the remaining three dimensions warrant a more thorough investigation. Consequently, to facilitate relevant design and enhancement recommendations for the Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, I selected one public cemetery from each construction period. The selection criterion focused on identifying cemeteries that closely resemble the environmental context of Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, thereby ensuring that the proposed improvements could be more seamlessly applicable. Based on this criterion, the chosen cemeteries are Shouyang Shan Cemetery from before 1992, Fenghuang Ling Cemetery from 1992-1995, Anling Cemetery from 1996-2000, Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery from 2000-2010 and Jinnan Shan Cemetery from after 2010.

### *Shouyang Shan Cemetery*

Shouyangshan Cemetery is the earliest built and most expansive among the five cemeteries under consideration. Its main entrance is situated at the southeast corner, featuring a meticulously designed square that includes a circular and a rectangular pool, complemented by a mural wall and a pair of lion statue, which lend a formal air to the

entrance. The cemetery is equipped with 12 smaller entrances, enhancing its public accessibility and convenience. These minor entrances are strategically positioned in various directions, with the quartet on the north side opening towards a large river nestled in the mountains, adding a distinctly poetic element to the landscape. One can imagine entering through the main gate and meandering through diverse paths, each leading seamlessly to the mountainous forest or serendipitously to the riverbank.

The cemetery also boasts several symbolic features such as pavilions, stones, and lion statues, horse statue, and animal statues. Although such symbols might not universally appeal to all cultural sensibilities, the vast area of the cemetery allows for a dispersed arrangement of these elements, which prevents any singular location from cultivating a disconcerting atmosphere. The planting strategy includes evergreen species, which enhance the existing natural forest, ensuring that the area at the entrance serves as a gentle transition to the burial zones. The spaces between tombstones is kept generous, maintaining the natural and tranquil feel of the forested area.

Shouyangshan Cemetery exemplifies an elegant approach to cemetery design from the four perspectives, while also aligning closely with the traditional principles of Chinese cemetery Feng Shui.

▼  
Figure  
Map of surroundings of 18 public  
cemeteries in Xi'an

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

▼  
Figure  
Map of Shouyang Shan Cemetery

Figure  
Map of Fenghuang Ling Cemetery

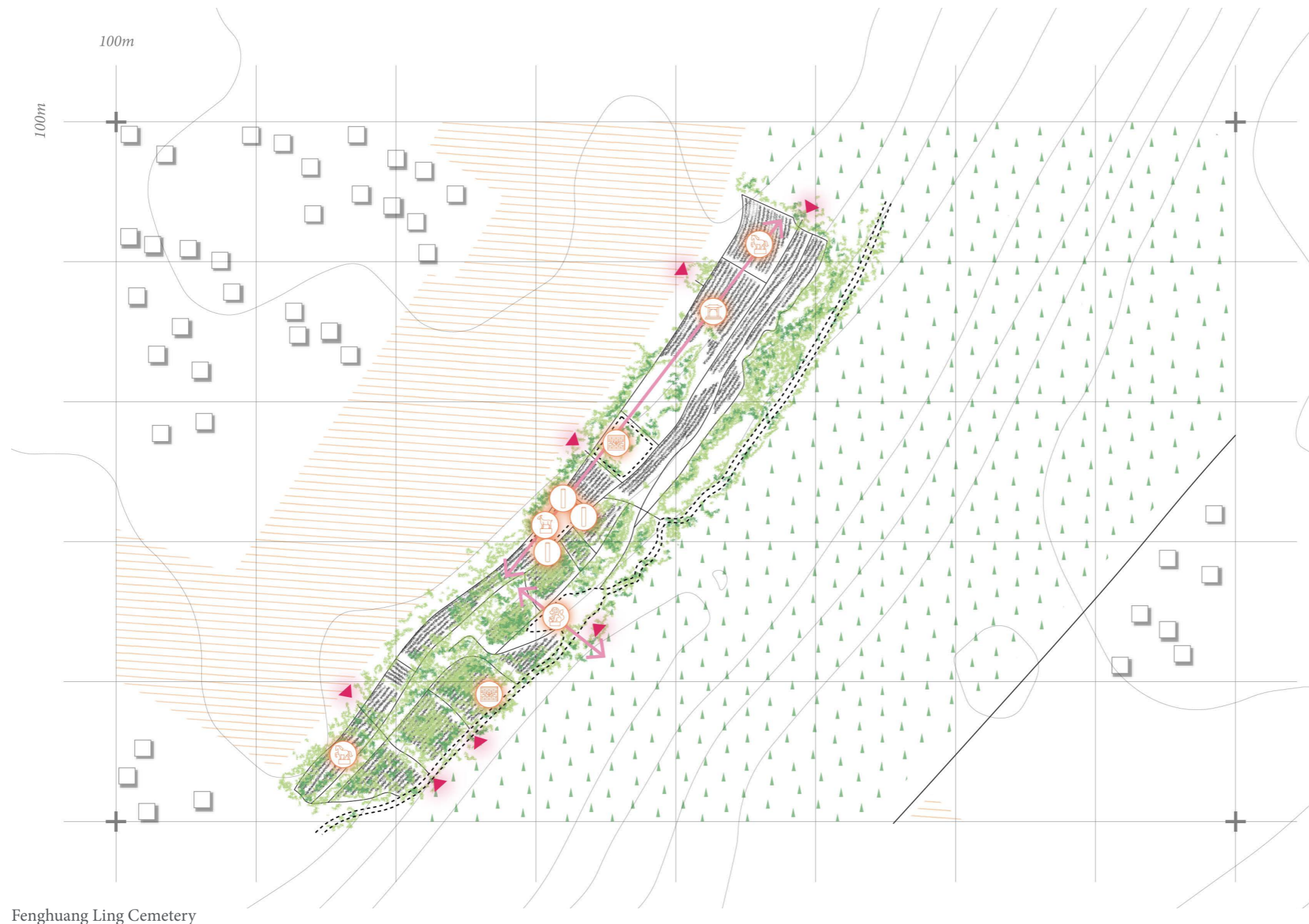
- ▼  
Legend
- Contour line
  - Road
  - ↔ Axis
  - Water
  - Symbol
  - ▼ Entrance
  - Building
  - ▨ Tomb
  - 🌳 Plantation
  - Square



Shouyang Shan Cemetery

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries



Fenghuang Ling Cemetery

#### *Fenghuang Ling Cemetery*

In comparison to Shouyang-Shan Cemetery, Fenghuang Ling Cemetery occupies a modest area of 4 ha, yet its layout remains compelling. Positioned amid agricultural fields and forest, it resembles a small park. The main entrance is centrally located on the eastern side, complemented by 6 smaller gates. The disparity in design between the main entrance and the smaller ones is minimal, suggesting a uniformity in their perceived importance. The southern part of the cemetery is adorned with a blend of deciduous and evergreen plants covering the tombstones, while the northern part presents a stark contrast with its unsheltered and plant-free tombstones. The northeastern green space serves as a transitional area that integrates with the natural forest on the east, fostering a varied spatial experience within the

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries



## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries



cemetery.

Despite these thoughtful integrations, the choice of symbols within the cemetery can be seen as unconventional. Predominantly featuring sculptures and stone columns, which generally do not appeal to the public, the aesthetic cohesion is further disrupted by the solitary pavilion situated amidst the exposed tombstones, an element that stands out awkwardly. This placement does not enhance the cemetery's design but rather emphasizes the rigidity of two intersecting axes, which I believe detracts from the overall design quality of Fenghuang Ling Cemetery.

#### *Anling Cemetery*

Anling Cemetery and Fenghuang Ling Cemetery are comparably sized and are situated along the periphery of agricultural lands. The eastern

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

Figure  
Map of Jinnan Shan Cemetery

- Legend
- Contour line
  - Road
  - ↔ Axis
  - Water
  - Symbol
  - ▼ Entrance
  - Building
  - ▨ Tomb
  - 🌳 Plantation
  - Square
- ↑ N



## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.2 Current situation of public cemeteries

boundary of these sites is flanked by a relatively wide road, accommodating all 4 entrances on this side, with the main entrance positioned as the third from the north. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a mural wall and sculptures of a lion and a horse, establishing a pronounced axial path that leads them through a modestly sized main entrance and into the central square of the cemetery, which features a circular pool. Proceeding westward from the square, the path offers views of the surrounding farmland, creating a visually appealing route that diminishes the typically solemn atmosphere of a cemetery and enhances a sense of leisure.

The planting strategy predominantly avoids the tombstone areas, reminiscent of the design principles observed at Fenghuang Ling Cemetery, which likely aimed to highlight the tombstones during that time. Adjacent to the entrance axis on the north is a public green space, which may serve as an early model of public spaces in Xi'an's cemeteries. This area acts as a transitional zone, softening the divide between the northern and southern tombstone regions and contributing a distinctive atmosphere to the cemetery. However, a slight drawback lies in the placement of 3 symbols on the north side, which, if relocated to the public green space, could potentially enhance the overall aesthetic and functional coherence of the site.

Because Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery is the site of this research & design project, so it will not be repeated here.

#### *Jinnan Shan Cemetery*

Jinnan Shan Cemetery and Chang'an Ci'en Yuan Cemetery share a similar geographical setting, though Jinnan Shan Cemetery is situated closer to the mountains, offering an exceptional view from above. The main entrance of the cemetery is located on the northwest side, accessed via a longer, winding path leading to an entrance square. At the center of this square lies a pool formed by two circles, surrounded by 4 symbols that create a cross-shaped axis. Additionally, the cemetery features four smaller entrances that enhance its accessibility and produce a landscape effect comparable to that of Shouyang Shan Cemetery: entering from various directions allows visitors to traverse the cemetery and venture into the mountain forest, adding elements of surprise and adventure.

From the entrance square to the mountain, various visual axes are established. However, these axes are nearly completely obscured due to the planting, which becomes sparser at higher elevations and denser at lower ones. Despite this, the cemetery includes several pavilions intended to provide restful spaces for visitors, enhancing their experience. Moreover, a public green space at the eastern entrance serves to welcome and guide visitors into the cemetery, further enriching the visitor experience.

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.3 Future predictions

The future predictions for public cemeteries in Xi'an involves various changes and developments to meet the multiple requirements of social needs, environmental protection, and cultural inheritance.

#### *Green and Ecological Cemeteries*

##### 1. Eco-friendly Burials:

With the increasing awareness of environmental protection, green and ecological cemeteries will become the future direction of development. Burial methods such as tree burial, flower burial, and natural burial will become increasingly popular.

##### 2. Eco-design:

Cemetery designs will emphasize integration with the natural environment, creating eco-friendly memorial spaces through getting as much as possible lands back to green, various tree planting, and water features.

#### *Multi-functional Memorial Space*

##### 1. Cultural and Educational Functions:

Cemeteries will evolve from mere burial sites to significant cultural and educational hubs. In a city like Xi'an, known for its deep-rooted traditional culture, it is imperative to preserve the heritage significance of cemeteries amid modern advancements. As pivotal venues for imparting values related to life and death, cemeteries can perpetuate traditional funeral customs and the humanistic spirit by

organizing commemorative events and cultural exhibitions.

##### 2. Community Service Functions:

To enhance accessibility and functionality, cemeteries should feature multiple entrances, thereby clarifying internal zoning and improving navigation. Additionally, integrating community functions within cemetery grounds can transform these spaces into vital components of community life. This includes offering public areas for leisure, fitness, and social activities.

#### *Land Resource Optimization*

##### 1. Land Conservation:

In light of the growing scarcity of land resources, cemeteries must prioritize land conservation. This can be achieved by adopting practices such as utilizing small tombstones, constructing columbarium walls, and promoting ecological burials, thus ensuring that the living are not unduly deprived of land.

##### 2. Three-dimensional Burial:

Maximizing land use efficiency can be further realized through three-dimensional burial methods. This includes the development of multi-storey columbaria and high-rise columbaria, which optimize vertical space utilization.

## Public cemeteries in Xi'an

### 7.3 Future predictions

#### *Humanistic Care*

##### 1. Personalized Service:

Cemetery management will increasingly emphasize humanistic care by offering personalized burial and memorial services. Tailored memorial methods and spaces will be designed to meet the specific needs of the deceased and their families, ensuring a unique and meaningful experience.

##### 2. Psychological Counseling:

To support the bereaved, cemeteries should forge stronger connections with social charities, thereby providing essential psychological counseling and support services. These initiatives will aid individuals in overcoming grief and rebuilding their lives.

#### *Conclusion*

The future of public cemeteries in Xi'an is promising. Through green and ecological development, intelligent management, the creation of multi-functional memorial spaces, optimal land use, enhanced humanistic care, and robust policy support and international cooperation, cemeteries will transcend their traditional role. They will become not only places for interring the deceased but also vital spaces for cultural preservation, public service provision, and the promotion of social harmony.





Reflection &  
Discussion

## Reflection & Discussion

### *Methodology Relevance*

Public cemeteries represent a frequently overlooked aspect, transcending mere landscape issues to touch on profound life matters. While the majority often concentrate on enhancing the lives of the living, the considerations for the deceased tend to be marginalized. Typically, the design of public cemeteries might involve simple tombstones and rudimentary arrangements. Yet, for me, the public cemetery holds significant importance. It has been a part of my growth over many years, subtly shaping my early perceptions of life and death. My research project focuses on the renovation and expansion of the Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery, where my grandparents are interred, and includes the integration of sustainable burial practices.

In China, the culture surrounding burial is steeped in tradition. Often, this culture not only emphasizes but also dramatizes death, rendering it a grave and fearsome concept. Historically, cemeteries were established amidst beautiful landscapes, with the hope that the deceased could rest peacefully. During the Qingming Festival, it is customary for friends and relatives to visit graves and appreciate the surrounding beauty—a testament to our ancestors' intentions. However, modern public cemeteries sometimes fail to offer solace; towering, densely packed tombstones may intimidate visitors, prompting them to depart swiftly, contrary to the original wish for a reflective space.

The methodology of this research diverges from conventional approaches. It commences with a review of the historical context and development of cemeteries in Shaanxi Province, followed by an evaluation of 18 public cemeteries in Xi'an. The investigation then extends to burial customs. Initial findings informed the design process and questionnaire development, with subsequent insights from the questionnaire helping to assess and refine the proposed enhancements for Chang'an Ci'en Yuan cemetery. Further, the feedback gathered led to the execution of four case studies. This layered investigative approach, which builds upon each phase of discovery, represents a novel and engaging methodology that has significantly aided in structuring and advancing the project with clear focus.

In exploring contemporary perspectives on public cemeteries, I utilized a questionnaire for the first time in my research. The responses ranged from predictable to surprising, prompting reflection on whether, as landscape designers, we might sometimes project our subjective views too confidently, overlooking the actual needs of the public. Given that designers are not always the end-users, employing questionnaires has proven to be a crucial tool in aligning design intentions with user requirements.

During the design phase, my experience as a long-

## Reflection & Discussion

term user with habits similar to the general public was invaluable. Through meticulous observation of the site, I identified areas with the potential to become cherished public spaces, yet many of these thoughtfully designed zones remain underutilized due to lack of visibility, such as the central area obscured by dense hedges. This insight has driven home the importance of not just creating spaces, but also ensuring they are accessible and inviting to all who visit.

## Reflection & Discussion

### *Social Relevance*

Public cemeteries fulfill several crucial roles within society. They serve as custodians of cultural heritage and traditions, providing a venue to honor both eminent historical figures and ordinary individuals, thereby reflecting the manner in which a society venerates and remembers its deceased. Moreover, they play a vital role in community engagement by offering a communal space for mourning and remembrance. Such collective memorial activities are instrumental in fostering community cohesion and enhancing a sense of belonging among individuals.

For many, public cemeteries also provide a sanctuary for expressing grief and seeking emotional solace, offering psychological comfort and mitigating the sorrow associated with the loss of loved ones. From an ecological standpoint, modern public cemeteries increasingly emphasize sustainability and environmental protection. They advocate for green burial practices and natural burial methods, which minimize environmental impact. These practices demonstrate reverence for the deceased while simultaneously showcasing a commitment to ecological preservation and respect for nature.

Aesthetically, well-designed public cemeteries can also serve as places of beauty and tranquility, offering recreational value to the community. Landscaped gardens, walking paths, and serene environments transform these spaces into areas of contemplation and peace. Achieving such

an environment requires a nuanced understanding of human experiences and the careful integration of diverse elements to craft spaces that fulfill both functional and symbolic needs. This comprehensive approach to cemetery design is what I aspire to contribute to through this project and beyond.

### *Further questions*

During the research process, several issues emerged that, while only briefly addressed in this design, are critical for the future development of public cemeteries:

#### a. The Future of Public Cemeteries:

My project is focused on redesigning cemeteries for the new generation, specifically targeting individuals born in the late 1990s and onwards. This demographic has matured during a period of swift development in China, which has widened the cultural and perceptual gap between them and previous generations. Contemporary discussions among this group often revolve around ecological practices, green burials, and even digital commemorations, contrasting sharply with traditional burial methods. This dichotomy poses a challenge: how can landscape designers reconcile these divergent preferences? My research often led me to question the extent to which tradition should be preserved or discarded. Initially, I contem-

## Reflection & Discussion

plated completely eliminating traditional elements, but insights gained from a study on traditional Chinese landscapes gradually highlighted the potential evolution of Chinese cemeteries into a unique, modern form that still respects its roots. Nevertheless, the erosion of old traditions is a significant loss.

### b. Future Functions of Public Cemeteries:

Looking ahead, public cemeteries might continue to fulfill their traditional roles by preserving individual and collective memories and symbols. They are envisioned not only as places for relaxation and reflection, situated near urban areas, but also as sacred spaces where everyday life intersects with solemnity. Furthermore, cemeteries could provide educational opportunities for younger generations to learn about death and life cycles. Positioned as transitional zones between urban and natural environments, they could also enhance the ecological and aesthetic value of urban settings by serving as pockets of greenery.

### c. Management of Public Cemeteries:

Currently, public cemeteries are predominantly managed by governmental entities, operating on a model where individuals purchase graves, with larger graves commanding higher prices. As ecological burial options gain acceptance, offering choices such as tree or shrub plantings at variable costs, cemeteries could support a wider range of burial practices. Maintenance of these sites would involve relatives tending to the graves, with those neglected for

over a year reverting to government management. Moreover, removing stringent visiting hours could render cemeteries more accessible, allowing for flexible visiting times. Such measures would ensure that cemeteries remain dignified, well-maintained, and open to all, aligning with public needs and expectations.





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4. Arlington National Cemetery (the US)
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6. Tianshou cemetery (China)
7. Vietnam veterans memorial (the US)
8. Igualada Cemetery (Spain)
9. Mariebjerg Kirkegård (Denmark)
10. Carlo Scarpa family cemetery (Italy)
11. The Nieuwe Ooster graveyard (The Netherlands)
12. San Cataldo Cemetery (Italy)
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