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Golden Chamber Monthly 1.2 (February 1929)
PRESERVING THE REMNANTS OF EMPIRE IN TAIWAN: THE CASE OF HAMAXING

Jeremy E. Taylor

Introduction: The Search for British Graves

On a crest off Lane 60, Dengshan Street (登山街), just a few minutes' walk from the offices of the Kaohsiung Harbour Bureau (Gaoxiong gangwuju 高雄港務局), can be found two British graves dating from the late nineteenth century. They are all that is left of what was, more than one hundred years ago, the Kaohsiung foreigners' cemetery, established by the port's European community at a time when the town was a small but thriving treaty port. What is now a quiet residential district housing a locally-employed working-class community was once in view of the town's Bund. The Custom House that once stood here is gone now too, as are the offices of the opium trading firms and the port's expatriate club that once graced the area. In fact, apart from the two remaining gravestones, there is little in this corner of Kaohsiung to remind one of "the good old days," as one author has described it, "when merchants were adventurers and when the long arm of John Bull reached even into the Formosan jungle."¹

The two graves themselves can hardly be counted as visually exciting for visitors, and the romance associated with foreigners' cemeteries in other former treaty ports in China, Japan, or Taiwan is nowhere to be found in Kaohsiung. One of the surviving tombstones has developed a lean to it, and is almost completely lost beneath a century of sediment, whilst the other is lodged between two buildings.

Yet despite this, these two rather unspectacular remnants of treaty-port Kaohsiung still hold an important place in the historiography of the city and provide topic matter for those writing gazetteer-like histories of Kaohsiung that are characteristically international and cosmopolitan, though at the same time fiercely local. Take this example from a 1999 description published in

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Geremie Barmé, Miriam Lang and Tom Griffiths for their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper, as well as the anonymous readers of East Asian History. I also wish to thank Wen-yan Chiau 邱文願 and Yeh Chen-huei 葉振輝, as well as staff at the Kaohsiung City Government, the Kaohsiung Harbour Bureau and the Kaohsiung Historiography Commission for their kind assistance with my research in Taiwan. Many thanks also to the Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, for its assistance and guidance. Any errors which may occur in this paper are my own.

¹ Poulney Bigelow, Japan and her colonies: being extracts from a diary made whilst visiting Formosa, Manchuria, Shantung, Korea and Sakhalin in the year 1921, (London: Edward Arnold, 1923), p.119. Bigelow’s description was inspired by visits to the former British Consulate buildings in Kaohsiung and Anping 安平.
The grave was that of William Hopkins, an Irish sailor who died “crossing the bar at Kaohsiung.” See Harold M. Orness, One thousand westerners in Taiwan, to 1945: a biographical and bibliographical dictionary (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1999), p.79.


Professor Yeh Chen-huei of the National Sun Yat-sen University has organised a number of searches for lost graves in the area. I thank Professor Yeh for inviting me to take part in one of these searches in January 2000.


3 It makes one sad just looking at it [a British grave]. We learn from the words that can still be read that this grave belongs to an Englishman who died here in 1869. The name on the grave has been hidden so much by another stone that it can no longer be seen properly . . . . It must be lonely enough for the souls of these foreigners who left their homes and came such a long way to this beautiful island called Formosa, only to die here and be buried in this exotic soil. Who could have thought that after a century they would still be occupying this piece of land, and would be competing for it with the living. Though it might well be said that their bones have long since grown cold, surely it isn’t proper to treat them this way.2

Descriptions of the grave of an Irish sailor who drowned in Kaohsiung harbour in 1880,3 that was still in view in the 1980s, display similar sentiments:

Stroking the surface of this foreigner’s tombstone gives one an unusual feeling. I wonder whether he feels any regret about never being able to return to the land of his roots.4

The tone of such descriptions is unambiguously sympathetic. There is no question of the graves belonging to imperialist invaders, and even in the battle for space in this country renowned for exorbitant real estate prices, the authors seem to consider the graves well worthy of sympathy. Nor is there any lack of interest. Indeed, the search continues for other lost European graves that are believed to be sitting somewhere amongst the brambles on Mount Longevity (Shou shan 壽山).5

What has spawned interest in sites such as these graves is not their appearance or significance in themselves, but rather their location within the boundaries of what has since the mid-1990s become “the Greater Kaohsiung area citizens’ coastal leisure space” and the city’s “cultural area for the restoration of historic glory”—a district known as Hamaxing 哈瑪星.6 In this paper, I wish to outline the emergence and creation of the Hamaxing district as an historic and cultural centre for Kaohsiung. Hamaxing is a space in which the political and academic elite of this city have seen fit to present a specific vision of Kaohsiung’s modern history that links the city with the earlier imperial ambitions of Britain and Japan, and further, to the prosperous and exotic realms of Southeast Asia. From the treaty port graves that are held in such veneration to the impressive monuments left by Japanese colonial authority, Hamaxing is replete with the symbols of empire.

Located on the south-western coast of the Taiwanese “mainland,” yet in many ways not conforming to dominant perceptions of the Taiwanese “South,” Kaohsiung is a fascinating locality in which to examine the role of heritage in the place- and nation-building projects of present-day Taiwan. This paper seeks to explore the way in which the memory of various empires present at one time or another in Kaohsiung has come to be worked into certain historic narratives of the city centred around the district called Hamaxing. As we shall see, the construction of these narratives owes just as
Figure 1

much to present political and cultural forces in Taiwan as it does to the imagination of past imperial glory.

**The Coastal Line**

The area today referred to as Hamaxing covers a triangular corner of harbourside Kaohsiung, approximately sixty-seven hectares in size (including land and water) within the Gushan 鼓山 district, one of the eleven districts into which the municipality of Kaohsiung city is divided. The area is geographically tiny in relation to the sprawl of greater Kaohsiung, and is home to just over 16,000 people. Its proximity to the city’s premier tertiary educational institution, the National Sun Yat-sen University (Guoli Sun Zhongshan daxue 國立中山大學), means that there is a large student and university-based population in the area; however, the area is also home to long-term local residents, mostly low-income-earners, or else people employed in service industries.

The toponym “Hamaxing” is the Taiwanese Hokkien approximation of a Japanese toponym. In Japanese, “hama” 浜 means “coastal,” and “sen” 線 means “line” (i.e., railway line). The term *hamasen* 浜線 was in turn pronounced in Taiwanese Hokkien as *ba-ma-se* 前, and in turn, in Mandarin as *Hamaxing* 哈瑪星. In modern day descriptions of the word’s origins, the term “hama” is linked to another toponym that shares the same character, i.e., Yokohama 横浜. Whilst this may simply be practical in explaining the origins of the word to Chinese readers, it also points to the importance that Yokohama has had in shaping perceptions of Kaohsiung. Throughout most of the Japanese colonial era in Taiwan, Yokohama was the main Japanese port with which Kaohsiung was linked by way of shipping routes.

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**Figure 2**

-Colonial Takao with view of the coastal line (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)
docking in the newly-dredged deep-water harbour and facilitating the movement of goods and labour between these two places. It was later extended to include branch lines servicing the Kaohsiung fish market and other sites nearby. Interest surrounding the origins of the name Hamaxing corresponds to the popular revival of other archaic toponyms in recent years. This includes the name of Kaohsiung itself. Kaohsiung’s late Qing-era toponym of Dagou 打狗 (which was most often transliterated as “Takow” in English-language texts of the day) is now frequently used in poetic or literary references to the city and its past. Dagou was only christened with the two characters 高雄 (which in Japanese are pronounced together as “Takao”) in 1920. In Mandarin, 高雄 is pronounced “Gaoxiong,” and is most often romanised as Kaohsiung today.

The construction of the railway line, the harbour station and the adjoining infrastructure was, furthermore, only made possible through a massive land-reclamation project undertaken in the same period. The area that has inherited the name Hamaxing today was in fact artificially created by a series of land-reclamation and harbour-dredging schemes of mammoth proportions undertaken between 1907 and 1920 by the Taiwan Land Construction Company (Taiwan jisbo kenchiku kabushiki kaisha 臺灣地所建築株式會社), a consortium established in Tokyo and backed by the Japanese colonial authorities in Taiwan. Sand dredged from bars within Kaohsiung harbour was used to fill in mangrove swamps around the harbour foreshore, whilst part of Mount Longevity, which dominates the skyline in Kaohsiung, was completely flattened to provide further land on which to build. The result was four entirely new cho 町, or suburbs. In the process, the entire shape

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**Figure 3**
The Takao railway station during the colonial era—home of the 'coastal line' (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)
Going the use of Shaochuan tou canal as a submarine base, British reports from the 1910s were already speculating thus: "It is possible ... that the port might make a fairly useful base for submarines and destroyers and there already exists a canal (parallel to and behind the quay and with a depth of 15 feet at low water) which might prove a safe and convenient anchor for the former craft in all weather." National Archives of Australia: Governor-General; A11804, General Correspondence of the Governor-General (excluding war files), 1 Jan 1887–30 Apr 1937; 1920/303, Takao (Japan) Harbour Works, 1919–1919.

13 Tanaka Kazumi and Shiba Tadachi, Taiwan no kōgyōchi: Takao kō [The industrial area of Taiwan: Takao harbour] (Taipei: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1918), p.1.

Figure 4
Takao’s deep-water harbour shortly after construction (courtesy of the Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica)

of Kaohsiung harbour was altered, with the original site of the treaty port at Shaochuan tou 嘉義港 being reduced to a canal.

These changes to the natural landscape of the port marked the final step in a massive “Cape-to-Cairo”-inspired rail project linking the northern port of Keelung 基隆 to Takao in the south via all main cities along Taiwan’s western coast. Given the importance of the railway station and the proximity of the land around it to the new deep-water harbour, the area soon attracted numerous financial institutions and government departments. Sugar from Taiwan’s southern plains and timber from the central mountain ranges were transferred here on their way back to metropolitan Japanese consumer markets. Prior to the development of Zuoying 左營 harbour further north in the late 1930s, the area was also important to naval interests (a tradition that continues today) with what was left of the Shaochuan tou canal being designed as a possible submarine base.12

According to accounts by Japanese authors in the 1910s, the land-reclamation and harbour-dredging works that saw this new area created were attributable to Japanese empire-building as well as events half a world away from Taiwan.13 Improvements in Kaohsiung were made possible through war in Europe that saw industries such as harbour construction and shipbuilding decline in that part of the world for much of the decade 1914–24. The involvement of the Japanese navy in the Far Eastern Front during that
war, and the Pacific mandated territories that Japan extracted from the Versailles Peace Treaty, also added much to the development of Kaohsiung harbour, railway and other public works by stimulating the shipping and deep-water fishery industries, almost all of which would eventually use the new deep-water harbour as a base from which to travel southwards.

The creation of this entirely new portion of the city also owed much to the imagination and memory of earlier empires that had been present in the port. As was the case elsewhere on the island, improvements made by Japanese colonial authorities in harbour construction and the bunding of the waterfront were based upon the ideas and failed attempts of European governments and private firms present in the port. This is clear from Japanese-language works of the Taishō and Shōwa eras, in which public-works projects are written into a long line of improvements that Europeans had attempted to make to the town. The triumph of Japanese imperialism, in literally moving mountains and parting seas, was only the latest and most successful of these.

Ironically, the project also literally filled in most of the watered area that had been the main part of Takao’s treaty port—once home to the opium hulks of Jardine Matheson, Dent & Co, and other bongs of the Victorian “China trade” (the same small community that left its dead in the above-mentioned graveyard). Some of the buildings from this earlier era of foreign presence in the harbour, including the British Consulate building and a number of godowns, were incorporated into the expanded harbour infrastructure and given new functions under colonial Japanese administration, though much else was demolished in the process.

Yet the very raison d’être of this new harbourside area was the policy and ideology of the Nanshin 南進, or Southern Advance, of the Japanese colonial empire. As the site of the southernmost railway station in the empire, the coastal line marked the extremity of Japanese industry, the place where landbound transport by train and automobile gave way to ferries and ocean-going steamers. In like fashion, the wharves of Kaohsiung harbour marked the spot from which ships sailed to and from the South Sea territories and the countries of Southeast Asia, and where Taiwanese products and expertise were dispatched to southern spheres of influence. Maps of the period show the railway ending at the Kaohsiung waterfront, with ships sailing through the mouth of the harbour towards a horizon peppered with names such as “Manila,” “Celebes” and “Hong Kong.”

Hamaxing: Kaohsiung’s ‘First’

The lineage of the toponym Hamaxing is featured frequently in the current literature about the precinct. Today, the term Hamaxing is used to denote an area far beyond the space in and around the original railway line itself, and it has been broadened to include not only those areas near the railway, but also other districts which had previously not been associated

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14 See for instance ibid., pp.67-8. See also Taiwan Sōtokufu Kōtsūkyoku [Taiwan Governor General’s Office, Bureau of Transport], *Takao kō* [Takao harbour] (Taipei: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1928), pp.2-6, and Taiwan Sōtokufu Kōtsūkyoku, *Taiwan no kōwan* [The harbours of Taiwan] (Taipei: Yoshimura Shōkai Insatsubu, 1930), pp.73-7.
15 For further discussion of the bongs in Taiwan, see Lin Yuru, *Qingdai Taiwan gangkou de kongjian jiegou* [The spatial construction of Taiwan’s harbours during the Qing dynasty] (Zhonghe: Zhi Shufang, 1996), pp.261-317.
Figure 5

Map of shipping routes linking Takao with Southeast Asian ports (source: Taiwan Sōtokufu Kōtsūkyoku [Taiwan Governor General's Office, Bureau of Transport], Taiwan kaiji yōran [An overview of Taiwan's maritime affairs] (Taipei: Taiwan Sōtokufu, 1928), p. 55
with it. Ironically, parts of the railway line which gave the district its name are not even included within the area in City Government-published accounts of Hamaxing.\textsuperscript{16}

Today, Hamaxing is registered by the Kaohsiung City Government (Gaoxiong shi zhengfu 高雄市政府) as “an aquatic recreational area,” and is recognised as being the home to a multitude of relics dating from the Japanese colonial era and the earlier treaty-port period of Taiwanese history.\textsuperscript{17} It also includes parks, newly-opened or soon-to-be-opened museums (including a special “Hamaxing Museum” to be housed in a former Japanese military training hall, and a Fisheries Museum which is to be built nearby), and it is commonly featured in tourist literature promoting the city as a special place where one can not only see the remnants of past ages, but actually taste and feel the seaside nostalgia of Taiwan’s \textit{baiyang sboudu 首都海洋} or “maritime capital.”\textsuperscript{18} Work goes on to build in Hamaxing waterside promenades and other tourist-orientated infrastructure.\textsuperscript{19}

The conversion of this area into a special historic district is a trend that began only in the mid-1990s, and can be traced to a number of influencing factors at local, national and international levels, all of which I will discuss briefly below.

The Hamaxing Community Construction Workshop (Hamaxing shequ yingzaoyongzuoshi 哈瑪星社區營造工作室), a community-based project that also involved academics from Kaohsiung’s main tertiary institutions as well as a number of well-known “lay scholars,” was formed in 1995. It grew out of a larger non-governmental group known as the Association for Urban Development in 21st century Kaohsiung (Gaoxing ershiyi shiji dushi fazhan xiehui 高雄二十一世紀都市發展協會), comprised of local scholars, architects and activists who sought to improve the conditions of urban life in the city.\textsuperscript{20} Scholars of particular importance in the promotion of Hamaxing’s revival included the geographer Jaspn Hung (Hong Fufeng 洪富峰) and the scholar Wu Yingming 吳英明, of the National Kaohsiung Normal University (Guoli Gaoxiong shifan daxue 國立高雄師範大學) and the National Sun Yat-sen University respectively. By 1998, the Workshop had evolved into the Hamaxing Cultural Association (Hamaxing wenhua xiehui 哈瑪星文化協會). At first, the group’s work involved publicising the existence of the area called Hamaxing, much as a multitude of other community groups were doing for their own respective areas throughout the city (and other cities in Taiwan), and also publishing educational material, organising tours for school and local community groups, and researching sites of interest within the precinct.

Active participation from various agencies of the Kaohsiung City Government followed, concentrating on the area as a possible site in which to take up plans to promote the city to domestic tourists island-wide, and to renovate an area that had been for many years considered merely a blot on the landscape. The result was a concerted effort on the
For further details of the “maritime capital” and “maritime Taiwan” ideas, see Wen-yan Chiau, “Haiyang shoudu ‘kuale chuhang’ de xingdong celiu” [An operational strategy for letting the maritime capital ‘set sail happily’], Gaoxiong huakan 1999.1: 24. See also Wu Mengfang, “You chuan zai tianshang feiyang de chengshi: haiyang wenhua su zao Gaoxiong jiao’ao” [The city that has ships soaring through its sky: maritime culture molds Kaohsiung pride], Xin Taiwan 200 (2000.1.23): 42–3. The “maritime capital” idea was also clearly influenced by the broader “maritime Taiwan” concept that had gained popularity in the early 1990s. See for instance Yin Ping, Haiyang Taiwan [Maritime Taiwan] (Taipei: Tianxia Zazhi, 1993).

An organisation which has been using maritime symbols such as whales and ships in much of its political iconography over the last decade. At the time of writing, Frank Hsieh was concurrently mayor of Kaohsiung and chairman of the DPP.

These were the same years in which slogans such as dongfang mingzhu (Pearl of the Orient), lanse gonglu 藍色公路 (Blue Highway) and the like were gaining popular currency within the Kaohsiung City Government, ideas that were to culminate in 1998 with the adoption of the “maritime capital” policy of the city government under Mayor Frank Hsieh (謝長廷). The idea of Kaohsiung as Taiwan’s maritime capital, though broad in definition, included the promotion of a specifically “maritime culture” that set Kaohsiung apart from the landlocked capital of Taipei. An important element of this was to stress Kaohsiung’s cultural affinities with the world of the Pacific Rim by way of its shipping and trade links to the societies of Southeast Asia. Concurrently, Kaohsiung was consciously turning its tropical back on the cooler, “northern” cultures of both Taipei and mainland China.

The “maritime capital,” with its prosperous harbour and Pacific outlook, represented another Taiwan far removed from the grand visions of Chinese antiquity that were so common during the martial-law years of authoritarian KMT rule. In this respect, the concept was also linked ideologically to the nation-building project of Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In
terms of heritage preservation, this shift was to translate into ongoing attempts to reposition the historic focus of Kaohsiung away from the Romanesque features of the nineteenth-century Fengshan old city wall (鳳山舊城) in the outlying (and overwhelmingly mainland-émigré-populated) Zuoying district towards the suitably maritime vistas of the harbour.23

Events leading towards the creation of Hamaxing were also obviously influenced by trends in historic preservation elsewhere in Taiwan, most noticeably in the Dihua jie 迪化街 district of Taipei where groups such as the Yaoshan Foundation (Yaoshan wenjiao jijinhui 樂山文教基金會) had been active in promoting the preservation of both historic architecture and a general historic “character.”24 The same sort of dynamics could be observed in other Taiwanese localities such as Tamsui 淡水 and Yilan 宜蘭 during the early 1990s. The development of “historic districts” along the lines of European “old quarters” is something quite new in Taiwan, and has been influenced largely by the movement in other countries towards the development of heritage sites. Just as the European “old quarter” could be echoed in the colourful New Year’s shopping festivals of Dihua jie, so could Kaohsiung invent its own “old quarter” in which a historic lifestyle, as well as a historic streetscape, could be promoted. Hamaxing is unique, in that it represents one of the few examples of this sort of “historic area” preservation project to be undertaken in Kaohsiung city.

The role of international, as well as Taiwanese, influences is also clear in Hamaxing’s development. Through Hamaxing, Kaohsiung could lay claim to what all “cities on water,” be they Venice, Yokohama or San Francisco, possess—that is, an historic waterfront district. “The city has also promoted the Hamahsing and Hsiaochuantou areas of the city for renovation, planning their conversion to aquatic recreational and coastal art areas which will rival even San Francisco’s famed Fisherman’s Wharf,” claims one publication, openly stating that it can compete with any historic waterfront district in the world.25 The example of trends in heritage conservation in Japan, particularly in places such as Nagasaki, Yokohama and Kitakyushū,26 where the exotic remnants of European treaty-port life make for attractive waterfront districts, has also provided inspiration for officials and academics in Kaohsiung. The Yokohama Minato Mirai (横滨港未来) 21 project for example, was specifically studied as an example worth emulating in Hamaxing.27 What all this suggests is that the very idea of a precinct like Hamaxing has been made a possibility through changing attitudes amongst the Taiwanese academic and bureaucratic élites, influenced in particular by trends in the North American and Japanese heritage ‘industries’ to incorporate elements of industrial archaeology and museum studies into urban planning and history-making. The arrival of words such as “gongye yiji 工業遺跡 (relics of industry), “chanye wenhua 產業文化 (industrial culture)” and the English “heritage,” all of which have been used in reference to Hamaxing at one time or another, suggest that the influence of the international heritage movement is very important to understanding the way in which Hamaxing has developed.

The list of registered sites falling within the boundaries of Hamaxing is

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23 The Fengshan city wall, dating from the 1820s, has been compared to Roman architecture as regards both its historical significance and its aesthetic appearance. See Zeng Yuku, Discussion of the origins of Kaohsiung’s toponyms, p.177.

24 The case of Dihua Jie, also a former treaty port near Taipei’s riverfront, set a particularly important precedent as it introduced for the first time the concept of an historic district that went beyond mere preservation of architecture and touched upon the preservation of a uniquely historic lifestyle. This has been raised as a positive example to be followed in other parts of Taiwan, such as Kaohsiung, since the mid 1990s. See Du Ling, “Taiwan ‘guji baocun’ guannian de yanbian” [The development of the concept of “historic relic preservation” in Taiwan, Xin bao caizhong xinwen, 3 March 1998.

25 Ko King-yi, Ko King-yi, Kaohsiung: Taiwan’s maritime capital, p.15.


27 It is worth noting that Japan has been the main training ground for many Taiwanese academics in the field of architecture, and there exist strong links between Japanese and Taiwanese heritage preservation organisations.


impressively comprehensive, covering buildings belonging to four main categories: (1) former governmental or administrative buildings including the Post Office, the British Consulate and so on; (2) sites associated with private enterprise and trade such as Jinrong jie 金融街 (Finance Street), the New Wharf (Xinbin matou 新濱碼頭), and historic shops; (3) religious buildings such as the former Shinto shrine, the Gushan church and the Daitian Temple (Daitian gong 代天宮); and (4) buildings associated with war and defence, such as the Wude dian 武德殿 (a former martial arts training hall for the Japanese military), and the British-designed North Gate Battery (Xiongzhen beimen paotai 雄鎮北門砲台). Almost all of these and other sites (twenty-three altogether) are now marked with explanatory tourist placards outlining a brief history of each building. As well as architecture, the area’s other attractions include historic or historically-inspired modes of transport—the classic symbols of an historic modernity. The ferries that ply between Hamaxing and Qijin 旗津 on the other side of the harbour (and their wharves) are counted herein, as are the trains of the coastal line itself which have now been adapted for nostalgic rail trips through the area and along the harbourside.

The inclusion of other props such as signs shaped to look like ship sails fluttering in the wind and marked with the phrase “Hamaxing’s seaside ambience” (Hamaxing haiian fengqing 哈馬星海岸風情), which have been provided for almost every shop and place of business in the area, also points to the influence of what has been referred to by some critics as “shallow maritime fantasies”30 in the style of London’s Tobacco Dock or Sydney’s Darling Harbour.

The common threads that link all of these sites and artefacts together, and thus perhaps make Hamaxing stand out from other parts of Kaohsiung, is the

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29 For a complete list, see Yucheng Guoji Guihua Sheji Gongsi, Gaoxiong shi Hamaxing diqu duchi sheji, pp.2/17–2/24.
30 Peter Quartermaine, Port architecture: constructing the littoral (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1999), p.16.
way in which they work to present a narrative of a modern, technologically advanced and exotically foreign history of Kaohsiung harbour. Hamaxing makes Kaohsiung look prosperous, cosmopolitan, and the sort of place in which one might spend a fascinating and fun-filled weekend away from Taipei. In Hamaxing there are few of the Mazu 媽祖 temples, shop-houses or any of the bentu 本土 or nativist clichés that dominate the preservation landscape in other parts of Taiwan. In their place lie industrial relics inspired or actually built by Japanese or British imperial planners. It is this link to the foreign elements of Kaohsiung local history which in particular allow Hamaxing to stand out from other examples of heritage areas in Taiwan, and indeed, which work to give Hamaxing a certain air of mystery.

Hamaxing’s history is presented as a story of ‘firsts’. As local scholar Zeng Yukun 曾玉昆 puts it, Hamaxing’s significance lies in it being “the harbinger of Kaohsiung’s modernisation.”31 “Hamaxing was the site of Kaohsiung’s first complete street layout,” claims the Hamaxing Cultural Association over its website, “… as well as the first place to have running water (1913), electric power, electric lighting, telephones etc.”32 Reports commissioned by the Kaohsiung City Government’s Department of Urban Planning continue in a similar vein, claiming that the area’s importance lies in its representing “Kaohsiung’s first” (高雄第一) in numerous fields.33

Many of Hamaxing’s sites are recorded as being the first of their type. The former British Consulate building, for instance, is important primarily because it is Taiwan’s oldest, and thus first, yanglou 洋樓 (foreign-style building).34 The Kaohsiung Harbour Station is likewise marked with a placard stating that it is “Kaohsiung’s first modern train station.” The first railway station, the first deep-water harbour, the first apartment block—the list of Hamaxing’s firsts is inexhaustible in the city’s first historic waterfront district.

33 Yucheng Guoji Guihua Sheji Gongsi, Gaoxiong shi Hamaxing diqu dushi sheji, p.1. There are echoes here of the “Taiwan first” 台灣第一 craze that followed in the wake of Zhuang Yongming’s book of the same title published in 1995. See Zhuang Yongming, Taiwan diyi [Taiwan first] (Taipei: Shibao chuban, 1995). It should also be noted that the city of Tainan, just a short drive northwest of Kaohsiung, has long been known as “Taiwan’s first” on the basis of the amount of Ming- and Qing-dynasty architecture to which it lays claim. There thus may be an element of inter-city rivalry at work in such statements.
34 Li Qianlang, Taiwan jianzhu yuelan [Reading Taiwanese architecture] (Taipei: Yushan She, 1996), pp.115-18.
Indeed, the term Hamaxing seems to have been used very rarely outside the area itself prior to the early 1990s.


Hong Suli, *Kang-to 'ia u* [Rainy night in the harbour city] (Taipei: Qianwei Chubanshe, 1986), p.12. The title of this book is given in Taiwanese Hokkien as it is borrowed from the title of a well-known song recorded in the same language.

Tu Xingzhi, *Chaishan zbiyu* [Chai mountain-ism] (Taizhong: Chenxing, 1993).


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**The Making of an Exotic Waterfront District**

Prior to becoming an officially-designated “historic district” in the mid-1990s, the name Hamaxing was associated with the shabbier bank of Shaochuan tou and its adjoining set of lanes and alleys. It was considered home to old and dying industries—local fisheries that could no longer catch any black mullet in polluted Kaohsiung harbour, for example. Indeed, Hamaxing’s relative shoddiness and decrepitude ensured that the area was commonly made the backdrop to fiction. The writer Hu Changsong 胡長松, for instance, describes the Hamaxing area in accounts of childhood visits to his grandmother’s house “in a little alley beside the ferry wharf,” as “a tangle of fishing nets, lines and tackle; broken furniture covered in dust; a television with fuzzy reception; walls made out of layer upon layer of sea salt; and a sense that nothing would ever dry out, there always being a salty, sticky feeling in the air.”

The fact that Hu’s autobiographical account is written from prison also seems to fit the usual mode of description for Hamaxing as a place at the peripheries of mainstream Taiwanese society. The Kaohsiung author Lin Yuyi 林裕翼 also used the area as a backdrop against which to write his story of homosexual life in his work *Hamaxing duchuan chang* 哈馬星渡船場 (The Hamaxing Ferry Yard). The *bentu* writer Hong Suli 洪素麗 likewise focuses on her childhood years in “the old Takao community of Hamaxing” in a collection of essays she published in 1986 under the title of *Rainy Night in the Harbour City*:

> What I remember most about it was the old fellow who collected used newspapers and scrap metal. “Ho! Bring out your newspapers, scrap metal. Anyone selling?” I can still remember his loud, throaty yelling. There was the putt-putt sound of small motor boats on the harbour, interspersed with one or two bursts from their whistles. And then there was the murmuring sound of the monks chanting the *sutras* in one of the lanes—the empty sound of a disappearing culture. So terribly polluted had the harbour become that the culture of the boatyard (*chuanchang* 船場) was falling apart. Its decline could be put down to all kinds of factors, from politics and economics, to the changing standards of the people.

The reference to pollution is an important one, for in the 1980s, other, greener areas of Kaohsiung were receiving far more attention than the grey (only later to become “blue”) alleys of Hamaxing. The public clamour to open Chai Mountain 柴山, a few kilometres north of Hamaxing, as a national park, eventually successful following the end of martial law, meant that Hamaxing remained far from popular as a site for recreational pursuits.

Paintings of the area likewise portrayed a sad nostalgia. The Kaohsiung artist Lee Chun-cheng 李春成 depicts still, sleepy waterfront scenes in works such as *Hamaxing Harbour* (1990), and *Fish Market in the Twilight* (1994) in which fishing boats are pictured as stationary, at times rusty, additions to a quiet and forgotten corner of Kaohsiung harbour.
Prior to its ever being considered an historic district, then, Hamaxing was old, dilapidated and decidedly unpleasant. It also marked the literal end of the road for Kaohsiung residents, beyond which the city gave way to an unknown world of military road-blocks and army camps. Further along, the coastal road led only towards one of the many seaside residences belonging to Chiang Kai-shek and his family, thus being completely off-limits to the general public. Behind this lay the militarised zone of Chai Mountain, and further on still, the main base of the ROC Navy at Zuoying. It was certainly not the cradle of a maritime culture (in the Venetian sense of the term41) as much as it was a mere patch of water in a city more often than not described as Taiwan’s “cultural desert.” Many of the buildings and relics that are now proudly marked with explanatory tourist plaques were not codified in any sense. Some housed squatters; others were seen to be fit only for demolition.

This change from seediness to nostalgia and exoticism has been focused most noticeably on buildings, relics and other inanimate objects. Interestingly, despite numerous statements about Hamaxing embodying a specific maritime culture in government literature on the area, people—their stories and faces—are generally absent from the entire Hamaxing project. In the plaques that give background details to each historic attraction in the area, it is the architecture itself that takes centre stage, with people only present in vague references to “the Japanese” who built them or in the form of figures caught in the corner of old photographs. As yet, there are very few examples of the usual human stories and oral histories—yarns about foreign sailors or the recollections of old wharf labourers, for instance—that are often used so extensively in waterfront heritage projects in other Taiwanese towns (especially Tamsui42), and in similar projects worldwide. The human touch also appears to be missing from Hamaxing in its general lack, relative to other districts in Kaohsiung, of xiao chi 小吃 or snackfood, one of the most distinct symbols of a locality’s historic and cultural identity in Taiwan, and often the focal point of oral histories or local myths.43

Nonetheless, the district has switched from being “old” to “historic” (though crucially not necessarily tied to any one particular historic period), and agents of this change have been quick to attribute to the area a history that actually promotes Hamaxing’s modernity. In like fashion, the origin of the sites listed in the area, or indeed of the very culture that Hamaxing apparently represents, is presented as linked positively to a vague sense of the foreign, without being associated with the less savoury attributes that words such as “empire” or “colony” might sometimes imply. Indeed, this exotic element, though present, remains vague to the extent that Hamaxing cannot be tied down to any one particular foreign influence.

A case in point is the Kaohsiung Branch of the Taiwan Provincial Fisheries Laboratory (Sheng shuichan shiyansuo Gaoxiong fensuo 省水產試驗所高雄分所), a building located just around the corner from the Shaochuan tou canal and within a short distance of the old Consulate building. The Kaohsiung Provincial Fisheries Laboratory, established in the 1930s, was one of the earliest examples of foreign influence in Taiwan, and its significance was widely recognised both in the past and in the present. The building itself is a fine example of colonial architecture, with its characteristic slope roof and large windows, and it has been well preserved over the years. The laboratory has been a major player in the development of the local fishing industry, and its history is closely intertwined with the history of the area. The laboratory has been the site of many important scientific studies, and it has played a key role in the development of the local fishing industry. Today, the laboratory is still active, and it continues to be an important centre of research and development in the field of fisheries.

41 The spectre of Venice tends to shadow every study of historic harbourside districts, and Kaohsiung is no exception, though the comparison may at first seem strange. In Chinese, Venice was the first city to be dubbed shuidu 水都 or “water capital.” This term has only begun to be extended in recent times as a more generic term, and has been applied to cities on or near harbours, or for which water forms an important part of the city’s identity, including Kaohsiung.
42 Much of the Tamsui heritage is linked in particular with the Canadian missionary-cum-dentist George Leslie Mackay. In Tamsui, stories of MacKay and his disciples are frequently worked into tourist literature and plaques adorning historic buildings. There is no equivalent figure for Hamaxing.
43 There seems to be a connection between historicism and xiao chi or local snack food in Taiwan, with the most obvious example being Tainan, which is not only Taiwan’s “oldest” town but which also apparently has some of the island’s best food. Though there have been efforts to promote distinctive Hamaxing dishes, the area is not yet known specifically for its xiao chi. For details of Hamaxing xiao chi, see Huang Huirong, Gaoxiong xiao chi [Kaohsiung snack food] (Taizhong: Caoshi Tang, 1997), pp.206–15.
The Taipei Provincial Fisheries Laboratory / British Imperial Commercial Affairs Office (photograph by the author)

Caituan Faren Dushi Gengxin Yanjiu Fazhan Jijinhui [The foundation for urban renewal research development], Gaoxiong shi Shaochuan tou Hamaxing disu dushi gengxin yanjiu ji tuidong an qimo baogao [Final-phase report on the research and promotion of urban renewal in the Kaohsiung city districts of Shaochuan tou and Hamaxing] (Taipei: Xingzhengyuan Jingji Jianshe Weiyuanhui, 1998), pp.6-51.

hsiung City Government’s Bureau of Civil Affairs and other groups have listed the site as dating from 1860, at which time it was built as the British Imperial Commercial Affairs Office at Takow (Ying diguo Dagou shangwu banshichu 英帝國打狗商務辦事處). This was enough for some to suggest that the building should be included in a hypothetical “Hamaxing district British colonial-era cultural sightseeing circle” along with the Consulate building, and presumably with other associated sites such as the British graves mentioned above. That the building now found on the site in fact dates from the Japanese era in effect does not matter. What is important is that it looks suitably foreign and can be connected to sites associated with the foreign treaty-port experience in the area.

A similar case is an example of what is somewhat ambiguously called Southern-Seas-style architecture (Nanyangjiengweijianzhu 南洋風味建築) — a privately-owned residence just a few minutes’ walk up Binhai First Road (Binhai yi lu 濱海一路) from the Gushan ferry wharf. The name given to the building in government reports and tourist literature, by referring to its Nanyang or “Southern Seas” style of architecture, makes it unmistakably foreign. Yet the fact that it was constructed during the Japanese colonial era by a Chinese merchant family in colonial, European style (aesthetically reminiscent of the grandiose colonial architecture found in the Malayan Straits settlements) does not necessarily mean that it is Japanese, Chinese or European. Not only is the house foreign-looking and obviously of considerable age, but further, by nature of its size and the obvious wealth that underpinned its construction, the building serves well the themes of prosperity, modernity and trade that typify the new Hamaxing narrative and the “maritime capital” rhetoric that accompanies it. Like the Fisheries Laboratory mentioned above, it in effect no longer matters when this house was built or by whom, provided
that, in its role as a tourist attraction, it reinforces a uniform cultural history of Hamaxing.

This vagueness about dates and origins reflects a wider trend within popular history-writing in Taiwan. In particular, it has been the revival of a far more ancient form of history-writing, the difang zhi 地方誌 or gazetteer, which has enabled government agencies and their intellectual allies to overlook the question of time and period, and focus on place as the defining force behind their creation of a district such as Hamaxing.

In Kaohsiung, the work of scholars from outside the mainstream of university history departments, such Lin Shuguang 林曙光, Zheng Shuiping 鄭水萍, and Zeng Yukun 曾玉昆, has had a crucial influence on the way the local past is perceived both at the government level and also amongst the public. The work of such scholars not only shows a strong stylistic influence from gazetteers, but consciously refers back to nineteenth-century Chinese and early twentieth-century Japanese gazetteers for information regarding their chosen (and “native”) locality of Kaohsiung. A glance through the work of a scholar such as Lin Shuguang would explain just how important it is for any-and-everything in the Kaohsiung universe to be made worthy of a history: chapters on mangrove swamps, oil refineries, and post offices are lined up next to treatises on rickshaws, telephones and banks. Even the abstract and the imaginative is deemed worthy of inclusion in the form of ghost stories and local legends.45

The revival of the gazetteer style in the last decade has also directly challenged history as a discipline in Taiwanese universities. This academic field in Taiwan by its very nature stresses the element of time, the island’s history being separated into specific periods corresponding to the changes in its political rule. At the same time it tends to follow the Rankian model of a singular and linear national history,46 whilst stressing the importance of empirical evidence over theoretical or other kinds of analysis. As Prasenjit Duara has suggested in his work on linear histories in early Republican China, the uses of such narratives are closely related to the project of nation-building.47 Taiwan is no exception, with historians in Taiwan predominantly choosing time and period rather than locale in their construction of the nation’s history.

Many professional historians will thus mark their studies of Taiwan history by era: “the late Qing,” “the Japanese period,” “post-retrocession,” and so on, and will usually avoid questions that take them beyond the safer boundaries of written texts. Questions about abstract concepts such as the “maritime capital” or nostalgia are seldom addressed, most often being shifted to other disciplines such as comparative literature. This approach differs dramatically from the work of a scholar such as Lin Shuguang, who might

45 Lin’s best known work is that published by Chunhui Publishing (春暉出版社). See Lin Shuguang, Dagou soushenji [Notes on the search for gods in Takaol (Kaohsiung: Chunhui Chubanshe, 1994); Dagou suotan [Trifling discussions about Takaol (Kaohsiung: Chunhui Chubanshe, 1994); and Dagou caifenglu [A record of collected anecdotes from Takaol (Kaohsiung: Chunhui Chubanshe, 1994). The work of Zheng and Zeng will be discussed further below.


examine the history of a place such as Hamaxing, and in so doing jump across decades or centuries in the process.

For bureaucrats and community groups working in Kaohsiung to preserve and promote a specific geographic area, gazetteers themselves provide a wealth of information. The gazetteer style of writing likewise affords a means by which to interpret the history of an area that has been invaded, exploited and ruled by a never-ending line of empires and colonists, without being tied down to any particular era. Hamaxing can thus include relics from various eras without this mix seeming in any way incongruous. Scholars using this style, especially Zheng Shuiping, have been widely consulted on Hamaxing-related projects, both by the Hamaxing Cultural Association and by groups within the City Government. Much of Zheng’s work on “old Kaohsiung” has appeared in the pages of City Government publications such as Kaohsiung Pictorial (Gaoxiong huakan, Gaoxiong pictorial, Pratas Islands’ special edition) (1999): 39–45.


**Mercantile Histories for a Maritime Capital**

As we saw earlier, the very land occupied by the area now known as Hamaxing was in every way a product of empire building. The area is, moreover, replete with the symbols of empire: a railway station, ferries, a consulate building and so on, all of which are common sights in colonial cities from Hong Kong to Sydney. Whether it be the relics of late Victorian laissez-faire capitalism and its system of treaty-port-based opium dealing in Asia, or the large-scale industrial and public works programmes of the Japanese empire in Taiwan, Hamaxing is, by its very nature, “imperial.”

This being the case, Kaohsiung in effect faces the same problems that many other colonial cities or former treaty ports have encountered when trying to deal with a history of violence or exploitation, and simultaneously, an architectural inheritance of aesthetic novelty. Balanced against this are the dynamics of “national history”-writing in a Taiwan increasingly distancing itself from the Greater China histories that were so common during the martial law years.

For Kaohsiung-based scholars influenced by these earlier traditions of Chinese Nationalist historiography, such as the aforementioned Zeng Yukun, the relics of British and Japanese imperialism in Kaohsiung more often than not speak of systems of social exclusion and exploitation. In a section of his monumental work Fengyi jiucheng sbanzhang 風邑舊城山長 (The old scholar from the ancient city of Feng), Zeng writes in great detail about the
The former British Consulate building (photograph by the author)
Yet interestingly, in the writing of Hamaxing’s new history as “Kaohsiung’s first” and the “harbinger of the city’s modernity,” there seems to be little awareness of the extent to which Hamaxing’s reinvention in the 1990s also owes so much to the memory of empires in Kaohsiung. For not only was the harbourside land that is now called Hamaxing linked directly to the ideology of the Southern Advance of the Japanese empire; the same ideology inspired Hamaxing’s re-creation as well.

In 1993, the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Jingji bu 經濟部) introduced the Nanxiang zhengce 南向政策 or “Southward-gaze policy” (sometimes referred to as Nanjin zhengce 南進政策 or “Southern-advance policy”), a plan that encouraged Taiwanese investment, exchange and contact with Southeast Asia so as to offset reliance on economic relations with the PRC.57 This policy not only borrowed its very name from the imperial Japanese philosophy of the 1930s, but also focused on Kaohsiung as a key point from which such a “gaze” or “advance” was to be put into practice. In the wake of the policy’s introduction, it was largely Kaohsiung-based enterprise that moved offshore to southern pastures, such as Vietnam and Subic Bay.

The Southward-gaze rhetoric of the 1990s has had a clear and lasting influence on the way in which Kaohsiung history has been written throughout the past decade. This can be most clearly seen in the inclusion of ASEAN exotica in and around the sites listed in Hamaxing: the South Seas-style architecture mentioned above, for instance, or the Coffee Can Ta Ta (a renovated café also listed as an historic site as it once housed Kaohsiung’s first bookshop) with loud echoes of Spanish Manila or Portuguese Macao in its internal design as well as its menu.58 All this may indeed reflect broader trends in Taiwanese intellectual circles, in which ideas about a Southern focus and the concept of the “maritime capital” have been accompanied by increasing debate around Taiwan as a Pacific country and member of an Asia-Pacific community of nations, setting it culturally apart from continental China.59 The critique of the Southward gaze offered by Kuan-hsing Chen would certainly seem to support the argument that the revival of this concept in the 1990s was closely tied to the rise of Taiwanese nationalism in that decade, and its desire to express a Taiwanese national identity focused away from China.60

In any case, what is true of the Southern gaze/advance rhetoric is also true of the free-market ideology that has typified other economic policies relevant to Kaohsiung in the 1990s, most noticeably the adoption of the “Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Centre” (APROC) (Yatai yingyun zhongxin 亞太營運中心) plan,61 under which the Taiwanese government has justified the privatisation of state-owned industry and the liberalisation of trade, whilst promoting Kaohsiung as an entrepôt that can rival the harbours of Hong Kong and Singapore.62 Political slogans and policies of this sort have provided the makers of Hamaxing with business-inspired vocabulary from which to borrow. In one chapter of a 1998 report published by the Kaohsiung City Cultural Centre (Gaoxiong shili Zhongzhen wenhua zhongxin 高雄市立中正文化中心), it is claimed that “Hamaxing was the crest of modernity’s wave in Taiwan.”63 The


59 Increasing academic interest in ethnic links between Austronesian aboriginal groups in Taiwan and other Austronesian peoples throughout the Pacific for instance has arisen at much the same time as ideas about the Southern gaze and the maritime capital.

60 Kuan-hsing Chen, “The Imperialist Eye: the cultural imaginary [sic] of a subempire and a nation-state,” Positions 8.1 (Spring 2000): 9–76. Chen’s analysis of this concept takes the form of an attack on what he terms the “nativist Left” in Taiwan, and his analysis of the Nanxiang ideology is problematic on a number of points. For instance, the author attributes the rise of the Southern gaze/advance ideology of the 1990s to a small group of Taipei-based intellectuals, and does not take into consideration the crucial role that Kaohsiung played in rediscovering and reinterpreting this Imperial Japanese concept. This also brings into question the extent to which the Nanxiang ideology can be read, as Chen has done, as one driven solely by Taiwanese Nationalist sentiment. The Nanxiang concept has been used just as often to stress Kaohsiung’s historic and cultural distance from Taipei, as it has to express a separate cultural or geographical space for Taiwan vis-à-vis China.

61 For details of the APROC plan, see Lin Zhengjie and Guan Hongshi, eds., Yatai yingyun zhongxin [The Asia-Pacific regional operations centre] (Taipei: Xinguohui Zazhi, 1995).

62 Zhao YiHong, The evolving Kaohsiung (Kaohsiung: Kaohsiung City Government, 1997), p.35.

63 Chen and Zhang, eds., Mirror image of the sea, p.54.
entire history of the district is written from the point of view of modern-day economic policy, prosperous and free-wheeling Hamaxing being presented as an historic condition to which Kaohsiung residents should aspire. “Hamaxing was once an Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Centre,” it goes on to say in the same report. In reference to the currently trendy catchphrases of Taiwanese business, the same report describes colonial land-reclamation schemes that transformed the area into “Taiwan’s first BOT.” Trade metaphors are used in abundance not only in Government reports, but also in articles on Hamaxing appearing in the popular press. “Mountains, ocean and people,” writes one author in the architectural magazine jianshe 建設 (Construction), “are Hamaxing’s rich resources.”

Discussion of trade in these histories of Hamaxing focuses specifically on sweet products: tea and camphor in the case of the late nineteenth century; sugar, as well as pineapples and bananas, in the case of the early twentieth century. Sweet products that were so instrumental in driving imperial modernity in Western Europe, and indeed within the Japanese colonial empire, seem still to have a role in informing more recent histories of Kaohsiung. Most conspicuously absent is opium, despite the pivotal position this product had in the first opening of Kaohsiung harbour to foreign trade (that is, via the Opium Wars and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Tientsin), or the role that the Japanese military and their associated industries played in determining the very shape of Kaohsiung harbour.

Through such narratives Hamaxing is given not a series of heydays, but a permanent golden era that keeps repeating itself under British, Japanese and DPP management, perhaps even becoming an ahistoric state to which modern-day visions of Hamaxing as a commodified tourist area are completely applicable. Hamaxing’s reinvention is presented as the natural return to an original state of entrepreneurialism in Kaohsiung. Rediscovering this latent mercantile spirit is as easy as turning the pages of a gazetteer, or walking from one relic to the next, there being little need for historical context or attention to dates. Nineteenth-century trade routes can be read into present-day shipping, just as Japanese imperial policies can aid in the writing of mercantile histories for Taiwan’s “maritime capital.” The harbour can gaze southwards again, be confident in the prospect of “re-opening” itself to foreign trade, and commercialise its own past, all because Hamaxing proves that Kaohsiung has an historical precedent to do so.

In this way, the same dynamic that shaped writing about “old Shanghai” and its relation to that city’s economic strength during the Deng Xiaoping era in the Anglophone academy is evident: modern trade liberalisation was justified in that city with the claim that Shanghainese culture was historically determined as entrepreneurial, thanks to the cultural residue that benevolent European firms and their compradors had left behind along the city’s Bund in 1949. In an interesting connection, the French architectural firm ‘arte charpentier et associés’, which has worked with Shanghai city authorities on the rehabilitation of the former French Concession quarter in that city (a project not far removed from the Santiago Calatrava-designed future home of the Bund Military Barracks museum), has adapted that style in the design of a new tourist attraction in Kaohsiung’s former Japanese Concession district.

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Conclusion

In his influential book *The Heritage Industry*, Robert Hewison demonstrates how the dynamics of heritage preservation in Margaret Thatcher's Britain were closely linked to economic policies that saw the death of that country's northern-based industries such as mining and—importantly for our consideration of the case of Kaohsiung—shipbuilding.\(^{72}\) Hewison argues that the decline of industries and their related ways of life could essentially be mapped by the parallel growth of heritage villages and open-air museums. He reads the rise of Britain's heritage 'industry' in the 1980s as a process driven by a profound sense of loss and morbidity in that country. Hewison's work is, as such, driven by the mood of his age, a period of British history bogged down in the mire of unemployment and economic stagnation.

There is an obvious parallel to be found between Hewison's Britain of the 1980s and Hamaxing in the mid- to late-1990s, where the relics of deceased industries take precedence over living things in newly-created historic districts. And it is perhaps telling that at the heart of this modern and lively vision of old Hamaxing, hidden amongst the lanes and alleys running down to the harbour, one finds some of the most potent of all symbols of death—the treaty-port graves with which this paper started.\(^{73}\)

However, Kaohsiung is far from being a dead city. Its population continues to grow and expand, whilst anyone who visits the city cannot fail to be impressed by the energy present in its streets and waterways. The image presented in Hamaxing, moreover, is one of movement, life and prosperity, far removed from the morbidity of which Hewison writes. In Hamaxing, it is dead and inanimate objects that are being worked into prophesies of a bright and lively future, as well as a golden past. Even in death, the graves of foreign customs officers and sailors compete for the commodity of land, and provide a justification for the writing of modern, mercantile histories.

The challenge that historic districts like Hamaxing lay in front of the chronological strictures of Taiwanese historiography is refreshing and novel. In appealing to abstract concepts such as the "maritime capital" or the "Southern gaze" they have also managed to move beyond the limitations inherent in the academic discipline of history and its fascination with archival detail. Yet in examining the development of Hamaxing, we are reminded that the history being made there is itself an artefact, a relic of a certain place and time. Reading the sign-boards in front of the Kaohsiung harbour station, the Gushan ferry wharf or the old British Consulate, one cannot help but wonder whether, a century from now, the same plaques upon which are written the story of mercantile Kaohsiung will not themselves be viewed nostalgically as relics of a long-lost age when Hamaxing was Kaohsiung's 'first'.

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71 Jean Marie Charpentier, "The experiences of a French architect in Asia," paper presented at the Megacities 2000 Conference, Department of Architecture, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 10 February 2000.


73 Even more ironically, British ones.