

The role of disaster memorial parks with trees -case studies of Hsinkai tribe memorial park and Hsiaolin village victims' memorial park in Taiwan

Chiao Chi CHEN

Key Words: Memorials, Monumental value, Memorial park, Natural disaster, Public participation, Tree, Taiwan

1. Background

In recent years after the disaster happened, people build memorial parks up to commemorate the victims. Recent years, there were two new natural disaster memorial parks established in Taiwan. Interestingly, the two new memorial parks use “trees” instead of traditional stone monuments as main memorials. What is the monumental value of trees for those victims and others, and what role it plays in a memorial park has become the base point of the research. Also to know the trend of using memorial trees as design in a memorial park and find out other monumentality items are the purpose of this research.

2. Research site

After Typhoon Morakot happened in 2009 in Taiwan, over 600 victims were died because of this natural disaster. There were two new memorial parks established in the most seriously damaged towns, Hsinkai tribe memorial park and Hsiaolin village victims' memorial park. Both of the memorial parks are located in Kaohsiung city in the south of Taiwan. Hsinkai tribe memorial park was opened to public in 2011, and Hsiaolin village victims' memorial park is still an on-going project which will be open in 2012. These two memorial parks use the same concept of tree designs for memorials.

3. Methodology

To clarify the memorials and monuments and the value of them, the literature reviews on memorials and monuments are important. Several comparisons of important memorial parks in Taiwan by design plans have been done to sort out the clues of tree design trends and the meanings as memorials. A questionnaire was done with the 60 local people who live near to Hsinkai tribe memorial park as well as 50 general people in order to understand the viewpoints of memorial trees and other monumentality items.

4. Results and discussions

According to the design reviews and questionnaire, the preference of memorial trees and its values were different for different groups. People who were more affected by the nature disaster had more personal emotions towards the memorial trees. Different monumental values and forms could reflect different social, cultural and individual values.

One of other key findings is public participation, it is necessary in establishing a long-lasting memorial park. Local people or victims' families could provide their own opinions based on their cultural and backgrounds to decide what memorials were more valuable for them. In the case studies, memorial trees were designed by aboriginal and Chinese culture of victims. Also, the memorial trees in memorial parks have more therapeutic power than other memorials.