

The Landscape of Historical Memory

The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan

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Introduction

Since the late 1970s, Taiwan has metamorphosed from a single-party state ruled by the authority of martial law (1949–1987) under the Nationalist Party (國民黨, Guomindang or Kuomintang, hereafter KMT) to a fully functioning, multiparty democratic nation with guaranteed rights of freedom of speech. Unlike the People’s Republic of China (PRC) across the Strait, Taiwan has a true civil society in which ideas are exchanged freely and without fear of political repercussions. Since the democratization process first began in the late 1970s and early 1980s and especially since the formal end of martial law in 1987, historical memories once politically taboo under the Nationalists have been unearthed, and as that process continues, Taiwan has been shaping for itself radically new identities that are pluralist and multicultural, in stark contrast to the Sinocentric identity that dominated under martial law.

Not surprisingly, this process has become embroiled in the political struggles of Taiwan’s emergent democracy. The debate over issues of Taiwan identity—in which historical memory has played a critical role—often seems to replicate or reflect the political clashes between Taiwan’s two major parties: the KMT and the Democratic Progressive Party (民進黨, hereafter DPP). These two parties and their supporters and sympathizers are often referred to, in the polarizing chromatic language that is typical of democratic politics around the world, as the “blue camp” (藍營) and “green camp” (綠營), or “pan-blue” (泛藍) and “pan-green” (泛綠), respectively. Their political and cultural platforms are strikingly at odds, but it should be said that many people in Taiwan reject this kind of binary, either/or mentality and are able to balance quite easily multiple identities, such as “Chinese” and “Taiwanese,” which for many are not as irreconcilable as they might appear to be through the lens of political discourse. One remarkable thing about the people of Taiwan is the way many of them “code switch” seamlessly between different languages, most obviously Taiwanese (referred to variously as Taiyu, Minnanyu, Hoklo, or Hokkienese) and Mandarin, but other languages as well. Although, like everything else in Taiwan, language has been politicized (Wei 2006; Chang and Holt 2014)—Mandarin is associated with Mainlanders and the KMT’s monolingual cultural policy, Taiwanese with Taiwan nativism/nationalism and the DPP—the notion of multiple identities within an individual is a very visible and audible part of daily life in Taiwan.

The issue of Taiwan identity—often also referred to as “subjectivity” (主體性) in the intellectual discourse—is not just a reflection of political liberalization and the emergence of alternative views of the past; it also has much to do with global politics and Taiwan’s changing international position. It is not coincidental that the interest in nativist Taiwan culture first emerged in the wake of the 1971 decision by the United Nations to grant the PRC a seat as the official “China.” As countries around the world recognized the PRC, Taiwan’s status as a nation, one that had been at the heart of Cold War struggles, crumbled. This provoked much soul-searching about Taiwan’s place in the world and, eventually, what it meant to be Taiwanese in a world that did not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation. This early concern about Taiwan identity in literature and in intellectual discussions was heightened with the political liberalization of the 1980s and 1990s, when academics, journalists, artists, filmmakers, and writers explored and asserted new forms of national identification.

Museums and museum exhibitions have also been important agents in promoting and reflecting these politicized interpretations of Taiwan identity and historical memory. Much of the debate over identity and subjectivity initially took place in the intellectual realm; museums then brought those debates into the public arena. Museums are, by their very nature, public institutions that anyone with the inclination and/or financial means can enter and enjoy; they put the past on display through exhibits that tell stories for general consumption. Because the museums I discuss are, for the most part, state-funded, their founding, development, budgets, and personnel are inherently intertwined with politics. In this book, I explore the place of museums and exhibitionary culture more generally in the political landscape of Taiwan’s young democracy. How have the end of martial law, the emergence of Taiwanese identity politics, and the rise of multiparty democracy affected museums and their representations of history, culture, ethnicity, and the environment in Taiwan? How do museums in Taiwan contribute to the shaping of new forms of historical memory and cultural identity? I am particularly interested in the transformation of museums in the post-martial law context, especially in the influence of the DPP through its campaign to “de-sinify” (去漢化) Taiwan—that is, its attempt to forge a unique history and culture for Taiwan that is not defined in terms of a cultural and historical relationship with the Mainland—and subsequent efforts by the KMT camp to “re-sinify” it. Although the complex issue of historical memory and Taiwan identity should not be reduced to a relationship with China, the looming presence of the Mainland is never far away from how and why the past in Taiwan is remembered in the ways it is. With the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism under Xi Jinping and with the 2019 protest movement in Hong Kong, that presence is being felt more keenly than ever.

My concern is with the political and ideological uses of the past. Museums have played an important role in Taiwan identity politics because they are very public and symbolic platforms; as such, they become magnets for debate and contention in Taiwan’s open public sphere. Proposals for new museums are greeted with much

discussion and debate, and the media then dissect and evaluate the resulting exhibitions. Political parties in power are key agents in the founding of new museums and the hiring of museum directors, who in turn assemble the curatorial teams that mount the exhibits. Although economic and urban development is another important motivation, the degree to which party politics has shaped the museum world in Taiwan is quite remarkable.

At least from a geopolitical perspective, Taiwan may be an obscure part of the world, a political no-man's-land, a nation without nation-state status—rendering it, as Shu-mei Shih (2003: 144) puts it, “insignificant” and “illegible”—but it is precisely this that makes the contestation over historical memory there so intense, so fascinating, and so important. The case of Taiwan tells us much about Cold War politics and its legacy in East Asia; about the role of culture and history in shaping identities in what is a multiply “postcolonial” landscape; and about the politics of historical memory in an emergent democracy potentially threatened by the Mainland. The example of Taiwan also forms a counterpoint to that of the PRC; in the Cold War era, both Taiwan and the PRC were single-party states, but Taiwan has evolved since then into a multiparty democracy with a strong civil society and public sphere. To be sure, issues of historical memory are contested in the PRC, but in Taiwan that contestation takes place not behind closed doors but in the media, in academia, and in the political arena for all to see. Juxtaposing exhibitionary culture in the PRC and Taiwan, as I do from time to time throughout the book, reveals much about how different politics and political systems influence and shape cultural identities and historical memories.

Many of the recent trends in remembering the past in Taiwan museums have been led by the DPP and/or cultural gatekeepers sympathetic to what is referred to as Taiwan “consciousness” or Taiwan “nativism” (本土化). I outline later in the introduction some of these trends, which inform a significant part of the analysis of museums throughout this volume. But it must be said that the KMT has not stood idly by while the DPP runs roughshod over the memory landscape. Particularly after 2008, when it was voted back into political power following eight years of DPP control, the KMT launched a “re-sinification” project akin to the de-sinification of DPP rule. With regard to political rhetoric, Jonathan Sullivan (2014) frames the recent shift in these terms:

My research of many of Ma's [Ma Ying-jeou, KMT president] speeches since 2008 shows that Taiwanese identity has all but disappeared from the presidential lexicon—with the notable, and transparently instrumental, exception of his election campaigns. There are signs that the Taiwanese have more pressing things on their minds than identity too: neither the Sunflower student occupation, nor the plethora of social protests that have mobilized tens of thousands of people, were, on the surface, fought in the name of Taiwanese identity. However, to think that we have reached a post-identity moment in Taiwan is misguided—and for pro-unificationists in Taiwan and China, wishful thinking. Taiwan's status is too fragile

and too contested for that: The latent identity cleavage exists, and at some point, it will resurface as a major driver of Taiwanese mass political behavior and elite political competition.¹

In January 2014, for example, the KMT-controlled Ministry of Education proposed changes to high school history textbooks that included the following: emphasizing Zheng Chenggong's 鄭成功 (Koxinga) ties to the Ming dynasty; referring to the Japanese era as the "colonial" era; and calling the return of Taiwan to Chinese control after the war a "glorious retrocession" (光復). The DPP responded with accusations that these changes were attempts to "re-sinify" or "de-Taiwanize" Taiwan history. Protests were organized in front of the ministry offices, and cities under DPP control, such as Tainan, said they would refuse to adopt the new curriculum.²

In her 2016 presidential inauguration speech and with the accompanying celebratory parade, Tsai Ing-wen sent a signal that the DPP would seek to restore some of the cultural "losses" suffered under eight years of KMT rule and its re-sinification efforts. Even as she issued calls for "unity" and "leaving behind the prejudices and conflicts of the past," Tsai proposed that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission be convened to "discover the truth" about historical grievances.³ Although she did not mention it by name, the injustices of February 28, 1947 (hereafter 2–28), when thousands of Taiwanese were killed on suspicion of insurrection against the newly established KMT regime, were clearly implied. Less subtle was the appearance, in the parade that followed the speech, of a stylized reenactment of the 2–28 incident. Moreover, just days before her inauguration, the historian and former director of the National Museum of Taiwan History, Wu Micha (吳密察), was appointed head of the Academia Historica (國史館), Taiwan's national archives.⁴ Chang Yen-hsien (張炎憲), who had held that position during the eight years of DDP rule from 2000 to 2008, was closely involved in researching 2–28 and other examples of KMT political persecution, so it seems likely that Wu will continue that work.⁵ In February 2017, Tsai declassified all official documents related to 2–28 (Horton 2017a). These developments came in tandem with a shift in economic orientation away from trade with mainland China toward interaction with Southeast Asia and India, referred to as the "new southbound policy" (新南向政策).

In Taiwan society, historical memory in general and exhibitionary culture in particular are contested in multiple ways and on multiple levels. First, the driving force behind the construction of museums and memorial sites in Taiwan has been political parties and their ideologies, and identity politics more generally. The

1. For more on this, see Lam/Liao 2011.

2. See *Taiwan Communiqué* 145 (January–February 2014): 13–16. URL: <http://www.taiwandc.org/twcom/tc145-int.pdf>. See also Tsoi 2015.

3. For an English translation of Tsai's speech, see <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201605200008.aspx>.

4. See <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/05/16/2003646384>. For information on the Academia Historica, see http://www.drnh.gov.tw/index_eng2.asp.

5. One product of Academia Historica research is the *Dictionary of the 2–28 Incident* (二二八事件辭典) (Zhang Yanxian, ed. 2008).

struggle has involved decisions about what new sites of memory to establish and what kinds of memories to exhibit at those sites. Second, once a site has been established, there is often a continuing struggle over the meaning of that site between political parties and their respective sympathizers, as the case of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (discussed in detail in Chapter 6) makes clear. Third, museums and their exhibits are then experienced differently by people with different backgrounds and political allegiances (Chen Jiali 2007). Take, for example, museums dedicated to human rights abuses under the Nationalists, such as Green Island Human Rights Culture Park (see Chapter 4). For a visitor sympathetic to the green camp, such sites can confirm their harshest opinions of the horrors of KMT rule. For someone in the blue camp, however, they can highlight how the KMT has overcome its authoritarian past and contributed to the democratization of Taiwan and the promotion of human rights. Those many Taiwanese who align with neither the KMT nor the DPP might react to such sites in more nuanced ways.⁶

Memory in post-martial law Taiwan is subject to all sorts of forces, and to reduce it to the political is inadequate for a full understanding. The same neoliberal economic forces at play in China and around the world can, of course, also be felt in Taiwan (Harvey 2007). This means that economic imperatives have led, on the one hand, to the destruction of many sites of historical and cultural significance and, on the other, to the renovation and rebranding of historical sites for tourism and for urban cultural enhancement. In the past few decades, museums in Taiwan have proliferated as sites of cultural consumption in the neoliberal leisure economy. With the opening of Taiwan to mainland Chinese tourists, big money is potentially at stake. Between 2008 to 2015, the annual number of “overseas Chinese” tourists visiting Taiwan—most of them from the Mainland—rose from 882,000 to about 5.5 million.⁷ And those tourists tend to have an appetite for sites associated with Cold War-era politics, in particular the figure of Chiang Kai-shek, a phenomenon I discuss in Chapter 6.

The commercialization and commodification of Taiwan society has, as on the Mainland, also fueled nostalgia. As critics like Svetlana Boym (2001) have highlighted, nostalgia can take multiple forms and stances, including conservative and radical, both of which can be found in Taiwan. The nostalgia for particular eras—one thinks immediately of the Japanese colonial era—is certainly politically driven, a counter to KMT Sinocentric historical narratives.

6. There are other political parties in Taiwan, but none have controlled either the presidency or the Legislative Yuan, institutions that have the power and resources to reshape cultural and educational policy. In 2015, as an outgrowth of the Sunflower Movement, a new political party was established called the New Power Party (時代力量). Founded by Freddy Lim, head of the heavy metal band Chthonic (閃靈), it explicitly rejected the two-party monopoly of the KMT and DPP, though its politics steer closer to the DDP camp (Laskai 2015). In his music, Lim has gone so far as to associate the KMT with the Nazi Party (see his video “Supreme Pain for the Tyrant” (破夜斬): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jYsu5-TJQ8>). The party won five legislative seats in the 2016 election but is unlikely to ever break the two-party system.

7. See statistics from the Taiwan Tourism Bureau here: http://admin.taiwan.net.tw/statistics/year_en.aspx?no=15.

But it is perhaps just as valid to see this nostalgia as a reflection of general discontent with an alienating world in which familiar urban and rural spaces, and the communities associated with them, have been replaced with high-rise apartment complexes, looming skyscrapers, and elevated highways, not to mention all the noise and air pollution that attend such structures. Nostalgia for the Japanese colonial era can be seen in recent Taiwan films such as *Cape No. 7* (海角七號), *Kano*, and *Twa Tiu Tiann* (大稻埕), the latter a melodramatic comedy that reflects on the country's past through the story of a young man traveling back in time to 1920s Taiwan, when the country was under Japanese rule. But there is, at least in some social sectors, also much nostalgia for the KMT era, seen, for instance, in the preservation of military dependents' villages (眷村), which I discuss in Chapter 5, and in the Teresa Teng Memorial Hall (鄧麗君紀念館), a museum dedicated to the pop singer whose love songs were broadcast by shortwave radio to the Mainland during the Cold War as a form of KMT propaganda.⁸

Methodology

This book is a spin-off from an earlier study of museums of the postsocialist PRC (Denton 2014). In what follows, I occasionally make comparative reference to museums in China to suggest important parallels in the political uses and politicized representation of history in the PRC and Taiwan, but I also expose key differences in, for example, curatorial processes, funding, the definitions and interpretations of history, and the social and educational roles of museums. Although it is critically important to appreciate the different historical trajectories of the PRC and Taiwan and how museums and memorial spaces are products of and reactions to these trajectories, I also attempt to show how museums in these two contexts are subject to similar sorts of political, cultural, and economic influences. My motivation behind this comparative approach is intellectual, and I am not trying to weave together the historical experiences of China and Taiwan into some Sinocentric narrative.

For example, in the National Museum of China's Road to Revival exhibit—the exhibit on the history of modern China unveiled when the renovated museum opened in Beijing in 2011—we are presented with a view of the past in which the CCP's historical role is the main discursive thread; by contrast, the permanent exhibit in the National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH), opened in the same year, is more oriented toward social history, the experiences of average people, and the collective transformations of Taiwan throughout its history of multiple colonizations. Both representations are political: the former's exhibit serves to legitimize the CCP by emphasizing its role in modernizing China, bringing it into the world, and restoring its former glories; the latter stresses social history as a way of forging an identification between the museumgoer and an idea of Taiwan as a nation with

8. See <http://fangkc.cn/2010/05/media-as-a-weapon/>.

a coherent history, a cultural origin, and a recognizable identity. Museums like the NMTH, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, must be more responsive to their constituency—the various peoples of Taiwan—than the National Museum of China, but like the latter they also seek to forge a collective identity centered around shared, though plural, memories.⁹

In this book I focus on politics, in the narrow *and* broad senses of the word. In the narrow sense, I am concerned with the role of the state and/or of political parties in promoting museums and influencing and shaping their constructions of the past. In a broader sense, I analyze the historical narratives of museum exhibits and tease out from them political and ideological meanings that are intertwined with changing social, political, and economic conditions. I am primarily concerned with the political motivations behind the founding of museums and the political resonances behind narratives of the past told through their exhibits. Of course, not all museums seek to establish narratives; indeed, the postmodern museum has deliberately sought to disrupt coherent narratives and in the process to question notions of truthful representation. But most of the museums I discuss here are state-funded and need to reach out to as broad a spectatorship as possible; as such, they tend not to present memories that are terribly radical or alternative or in some sort of postmodern mode.¹⁰

Indeed, in Taiwan, where memories once suppressed by the Nationalists have now entered the mainstream, the very notion of “alternative” memories is less clear than it is perhaps in China, where memories of the Great Famine or the Cultural Revolution, for instance, are suppressed in public exhibitionary culture and to address them in the context of a museum exhibition can be seen as subversive. Of course, historical memories in Taiwan were not always given free reign as they are today. In the Nationalist era, public expression of memories of the 2–28 Incident, for instance, would have been a dangerous gesture of defiance against the state. In Taiwan today, however, the past is ripe for the pickings, and seemingly any topic is acceptable. Furthermore, in democratic Taiwan, although the KMT certainly downplays the memory of 2–28 in its own discourse, it cannot, for obvious political reasons, dismiss it altogether. Today’s KMT is not the KMT of Chiang Kai-shek, and the degree to which the new KMT has incorporated into its own discourse elements associated with DPP nativist thinking is quite apparent. Meanwhile, the DPP for its part must accommodate the views of people—for example, mainlanders with sympathies for the KMT—who may not be part of their voting base. But these overlaps do not mean that the contestation over the meaning of the past is any less passionate.

Like my earlier book on museums in postsocialist China, this book is organized by museum type: history museums, literature museums, ethnographic museums, memorial halls for important political figures, archaeological museums,

9. For an insightful comparison of the two museums that arrives at similar conclusions, see Vickers 2013.

10. For an overview, in Chinese, of the narrative turn in museums, see Zhang Wanzhen 2014.

environmental and ecomuseums, and so on. I have taken this approach to highlight their varied ideological and discursive functions: each type of museum tells a different kind of story and thus serves a different kind of political and ideological function. Ecomuseums forge a collective attachment to the land. History museums create a narrative about who the Taiwanese are in the present by telling the story of where they have come from. Archaeology museums create a link between the present and the ancient past. And literature museums contribute to defining a national cultural identity, centered on great writers, their insights into the collective psyche, and their representations of the nation. Because they are less narrative-driven and less interwoven with issues of historical memory, I do not treat fine arts museums in this book.

My approach is generally narratological in that I analyze the stories that museum exhibits construct of the past. I then tie those stories into political, cultural, and economic contexts and motivations, exploring not only the exhibits themselves and the various media that museum exhibits make use of but also the architectural style and symbolic implications of museum buildings in their urban contexts. In short, I read museums as texts. Of course, as with any text, the narratives recounted in the museums I address here are subject to the personalities, politics, and interpretive preferences of individual visitors, and there is always a give-and-take relationship between the intended meaning of the exhibit and the subjectivity of the visitor. Individual visitors do not, I fully recognize, necessarily interpret or interact with exhibits in the ways curators might want. Although I occasionally refer to visitorship—how actual visitors engage with and understand the museums—my methodology is not in the visitor studies mode. I would not go as far as some museologists (e.g., Hooper-Greenhill 2000) in seeing the museum as a postmodern text whose meaning is not intrinsic but rather is brought to it solely by visiting spectators. Exaggerating the willingness or desire of visitors to read against the grain or ignore intended narratives can lead to a false impression of the meanings of museum exhibits.

A Short History of Museums in Taiwan

As on the Mainland, whose first museums were established by Western missionaries, and in Hong Kong, where the British set up the colony's first museums, museums in Taiwan have their origins in colonialism and imperialism. The first museum in Taiwan was founded by George Leslie Mackay, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary, in the late Qing at his home in Tamsui (Danshui), not far from Taipei. Mackay's museum displayed mostly ethnographic artifacts he had collected on his proselytizing travels around the island, about which Mackay (1896: 48) wrote:

But the subject [natural history of Taiwan] was too important and too interesting to be neglected, and so in all our travels, establishing churches and exploring in

When the DPP came to power in 2000, it strongly promoted Taiwanese history and culture through the CCA, the Ministry of Education, and arts and cultural institutions.²³ With the rise of the Taiwanese consciousness movement and with the impetus of the DPP, museum development took at least four new directions in the post-martial law era.

Multiculturalism

In a strategic break with the cultural essentialism implicit in the Sinocentric model, museums in the post-martial law era have emphasized a new multicultural identity composed of Taiwan's heterogeneous cultures (aboriginal, "foreign," and various Chinese ethnic cultures). Edward Vickers (2007a; 2009) was perhaps the first to make such an observation about Taiwan museums, and I hope in this book to build on and expand his work. Museums take this route in order to distinguish Taiwan's cultural identity from KMT Sinocentrism, and also from an (imagined) essentialism of Chinese culture on the Mainland. Indeed, the very origins of Taiwan are now constructed as multicultural: the mingling of the Dutch, Spanish, Chinese, Manchu, and Japanese cultures that influenced Taiwan beginning in the seventeenth century gave birth to a particular Taiwan identity. These multicultural origins in turn became a foundation for today's pluralist and democratic society. Central to the construction of this multicultural identity has been the representation of aboriginal cultures. In a variety of exhibitionary spaces (e.g., Shung Ye Museum of Aborigines 順益台灣原住民博物館, Ketagalan Cultural Center 凱達格蘭文化館, Shihsanhang Museum of Archaeology 十三行博物館, and the National Museum of Prehistory 國立臺灣史前文化博物館), the display of aboriginal cultures (and the prehistoric cultures of ancient Taiwan thought to be their forebears) has been embraced and promoted as part of the forging of a new cultural identity for Taiwan, one that is diverse and heterogeneous. This discursive exploitation of aboriginal images for nation-building in Taiwan is akin to the way "ethnic minority" groups are used in the political discourse in the PRC.

This multiethnic orientation has been central to DDP identity politics. As Jens Damm (2012: 86) discusses, as early as 1989, the DDP adopted the term "ethnic group" (族群) for "Taiwan's four great ethnic groups" (台灣四大族群): the Hoklo, Hakka, Mainlanders, and Aborigines.²⁴ For Allen Chun (2007), these ethnic groups—as well as such "ethnic" categories as *bensheng* 本省 (this province) and

23. The Ministry of Education sponsored changes in textbooks and Taiwan content in middle school curricula to increase awareness of Taiwan history and culture. It also developed, with the National Central Library, the Window on Taiwan (走讀臺灣) website to promote the study of Taiwan history and culture (<http://readtw.ncl.edu.tw>).

24. As Michael Rudolf (2004) says, the term "ethnic group" was adopted because it reflected an emic anthropological perspective on ethnicity, whereas the more conventional term "ethnic nationality" (民族) was etically imposed. An approach to ethnicity that considers self-identity allows the Hoklo and Hakka, for instance, to be considered ethnic groups rather than part of a larger Han ethnicity.

post-martial law museums I discuss in this book, including the 2-28 Memorial Hall and the National Museum of Taiwan History.

Collective Memories of the Traumatic Past

Since the lifting of martial law, events such as 2-28 and the Formosa Incident of 1979 (when a group of dissidents protesting the lack of human rights in Taiwan were arrested), the memory of which had been repressed by the Nationalist regime, have been memorialized in museums and other spaces. In some exhibitionary spaces, this traumatic past is the defining feature of the national experience, a climactic chapter in the island's national narrative. In these narratives, the traumatic collective memories of the past constitute an affective foundation for the birth of a new kind of nation in the wake of KMT totalitarianism. The confronting of the traumatic past also serves to set Taiwan apart from the Mainland, which has refused, at least officially, to deal with the traumatic events of the Maoist past. In various chapters in this book, I investigate the emergence of history museums, such as the 2-28 Memorial Hall, Ching-mei Human Rights Culture Park, and Green Island Human Rights Culture Park, that exhibit the memory of Nationalist violence and human rights abuses in Taiwan. These sites were initiated and promoted by the green camp but have been accepted, to varying degrees, by members of the blue camp.

Taiwan Connected to the World

Museums also emphasize in their exhibits Taiwan's place in global history—its role on the transnational circuit of cultural and economic exchange, and the interrelationship between Taiwan and foreign nations (obviously the Netherlands and Japan figure prominently)—as well as its connections to Austronesia. In a diplomatic climate in which its status as a nation is problematic, to say the least, Taiwan has sought to forge a key place for itself in the history of migration, global trade, and interactions among Western, Asian, and Oceanic cultures. In some museum contexts, Taiwan's culture, history, and identity have been refashioned as "oceanic"; unlike "continental" cultures, such as that of the Mainland, oceanic cultures are open to the world, tolerant of cultural diversity, and energized and transformed by interactions with other nations.²⁶ This embracing of the oceanic stands in stark contrast to earlier negative representations of Taiwan as an island "beyond the seas" (海外), a term that suggested both Taiwan's separation from China and its isolation, "far off on the edge of the ocean," as Emma Teng (2004: 36-38) has described Qing representations of the island.

26. See, for example, Ge Sining 2005; Shi Shouqian 2004.

Even the National Palace Museum, which was founded by the KMT to showcase Taiwan as the true propagator of the Chinese cultural tradition, has participated in this new oceanic orientation toward the world. Under Tu Cheng-sheng's tutelage, the museum has mounted exhibitions related to Taiwan history and culture.²⁷ From January to April 2003, the museum held an exhibition titled *Ilha Formosa: The Emergence of Taiwan on the World Scene in the 17th Century*.²⁸ The exhibition explored the Dutch colonial period as the beginning of Taiwan history, a view that certainly conflicts with standard Sinocentric approaches to Taiwan and also emphasizes the transnational forces at play in the birth of Taiwan as a nation. The introduction on the English website reads:

The magnitude of the changes that shook Taiwan in the 17th century has few precedents in world history. . . . One witnesses the vigor and global orientation of those rejected by the orthodox society of the Chinese. One realizes, too, that the presence of the Dutch on the island was not as exploitive as the overly simplistic historical account would have it. . . . Probing further, one would even learn of the “modernity” of the maritime kingdom of Cheng Chèng-kung [Zheng Chenggong] and his successors, and of the accidental and inevitable causes that had transformed Taiwan into a settlement of immigrants. These elements, to be sure, constitute the political, social, and cultural foundation upon which Taiwan was built.²⁹

The cover of the exhibition catalog shows a map of Taiwan from the Dutch era with Taiwan “on its side” (with the east at the top) and no mainland visible. The introduction puts Taiwan at the “center of the East Asian maritime traffic” and stresses the history of Taiwan’s “emergence on the world scene.” The exhibit expresses the global cultural attitude that is at the heart of Taiwan’s new self-identity in the post-martial law era and that contrasts sharply and ironically with Taiwan’s weakening political position in the world. This does not mean that the museum is projecting a fantasy in which Taiwan is a major player in global politics; rather, it stresses a new cultural attitude that looks boldly out to the world and not timidly over its shoulder at the Mainland.

Other museums emphasize Taiwan’s cultural and historical connections to Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, defining in the process Taiwan as an “oceanic” nation. In 2005 the National Museum of History, another bastion of the Sinocentric historical narrative, mounted its first permanent Taiwan-related exhibit, titled

27. The catalog foreword, written by Tu, who later became the DPP’s minister of education, puts it this way: “The National Palace Museum is home to one of the finest collections of Chinese art from archaic times to pre-modern days. While the holdings are Han Chinese in nature, not of any pertinence to Taiwan, the Museum as a national institution has as its unwavering goal of assuming a more active stance to introduce its audiences to the island’s historical and cultural past. The staging of exhibitions such as this one, to be sure, is an effective approach; yet, it should reach beyond the mere installation and presentation of artifacts to arrive at the realm of cultural and historical interpretation” (Shi Shouqian 2004: 3).

28. For a review, see Frazier 2003a. For an overview, see Shi Shouqian 2004 and the museum website: <http://www.npm.gov.tw/exhibition/formosa/english/index.htm>. Page has been removed from the site.

29. <http://www.npm.gov.tw/exhibition/formosa/english/01.htm>. Page has been removed from the site.

Oceanic Taiwan: A Dialogue between the People and the Island. Again, this exhibit emphasizes Taiwan's history of contact with the world beyond its shores.

These strategies are part of the larger de-sinification movement that seeks to pull Taiwan away from Chinese history and culture. They also assert a global importance to Taiwan that it lacks in the realm of diplomacy and geopolitics. For instance, the Museum of World Religions in Taipei, treated in Chapter 10, places Taiwan at the nexus of multiple religious influences from around the world: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, Sikhism, and Shinto. The museum also seems to assert, more grandly, Taiwan's role in fomenting peace among nations divided by religious intolerance. This kind of internationalist museum, the likes of which cannot be found on the Mainland, seeks to insert Taiwan into the world.

Archaeology and the Forging of a Prehistoric National Origins

The Nationalists suppressed interest in local Taiwan archaeology because its findings might have undermined the Sinocentric narrative. Since the end of martial law, a number of nation-level and local archaeology museums, which I discuss in Chapter 1, have explored the history of Taiwan before the arrival of Han Chinese from the Mainland. These museums have forged a narrative of the "prehistoric" origins of Taiwan history. Museums such as the Shihshanhang Museum and the National Museum of Prehistory serve to tie the people of Taiwan to the land that produced the archaeological artifacts on display in their exhibits, not to mention to the memory of the peoples that originally created the artifacts.

As I have stressed here, the museum field in Taiwan tends to be shaped by the interests of its two main political parties. When the DPP came to power and promoted, through museums and other cultural institutions, Taiwan consciousness and the forging of a Taiwan national identity, members of the KMT fired back. In 2003, Lien Chan, then chairman of the KMT, criticized the DPP for appropriating the cultural realm for political purposes, including by turning the National Museum of History into a Taiwan history museum and proposing that a branch of the National Palace Museum house only Taiwan things (Sandy Huang 2003). For the Nationalists, the *coup de grâce* came in May 2007, when the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, which I discuss in Chapter 5, was converted into the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall. Back in power in 2008, the Nationalists began to restore their own historical vision through museums and cultural institutions, though surveys suggest (as discussed earlier) that DPP efforts to instill Taiwanese consciousness have been largely successful and may have permanently changed the way the people of Taiwan see themselves.³⁰ We see in Taiwan museums today

30. A 2009 survey reveals that 67.1 percent of the people in Taiwan see themselves primarily as Taiwanese, 11.5 percent as Chinese, and 18.1 percent as dual. See <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2009/05/28/2003444751>. A 2016 survey puts the first figure at 73%: <http://www.thenewslens.com/article/38069>.

multiple tensions between (1) Taiwanese identity and Chinese identity; (2) a strong concern with local culture and Taiwan nationalism; and (3) Taiwan nationalism and an embrace of a transnational cosmopolitan ethos. Taiwan society is a highly polarized one, along both political and ethnic lines, but many Taiwanese and many Taiwan museum exhibitions manage to negotiate these tensions quite easily and fluidly. Indeed, in recent years some consensus seems to have emerged between the two political camps in terms of several of the themes discussed above—for example, multiculturalism, global Taiwan, and human rights. Those themes will be interwoven through the book.

Museums, Urban Development, and Creative Capital

Seeing exhibitionary culture and museums in post-martial law Taiwan purely through a political lens misses much. Funding is, of course, an abiding issue for museum directors in Taiwan and around the world. Museums have to adjust their collections and exhibitions, and sometimes even their primary mandate, to survive in an era of declining state support. In response to the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, state and private funding for museums in Taiwan decreased, forcing them to find innovative ways to survive (Rita Fang 2002). In 2002, the National Museum of History in Taipei hosted the Fourth Forum of Museum Directors, a conference dedicated to the topic of the relationships among culture, tourism, and museums (Lin Boyou 2002*b*). The conference centered on the economic role of museums, recognizing that museums not only preserve cultural artifacts but “also enhance the quality of tourism and the development of many local cultural industries” (6). This reflects a reorientation for the museum world in Taiwan toward an enhanced recognition of the commercial and economic role of museums.

A striking development in museum culture in Taiwan in recent years has been the linking of museums to urban development and the enhancement of creative capital, seen perhaps most visibly in the case of the National Taiwan Museum (NTM) and its effort to revitalize itself.³¹ I discuss recent transformations at that museum in some detail because they are representative of changes more broadly in the museological landscape in Taiwan and because I do not discuss this important museum elsewhere in the book. As noted earlier, it was founded in 1908 by the Japanese colonial administration.³² Grand and elegant though it was, by the early 2000s the building was showing its age and had become too small for the museum’s extensive collection. In 2006 the museum began a radical transformation: in its effort to become a “world class natural history museum” and with the support of the Council for Cultural Affairs/Ministry of Culture, the museum launched the

31. For more on the linking of museums and creative industries, see June Chu 2004, who discusses an effort initiated in the early 2000s by the Executive Yuan to support culture industries as an important stimulus to economic growth.

32. For more on this museum, see also Li Zining and Ouyang Shengzhi 2015.

exhibitionary culture. The strategy is part of the broader distancing from the hegemony of “Chineseness” in the construction of Taiwan’s identity, but it is also, viewed in less negative terms, a forthright attempt to reconcile with the past in an effort to create a sense of home and belonging that was lacking under Nationalist rule, during which the fantasy of returning to the Mainland dominated state ideology—what Allen Chun (1994: 67) has called the “politics of the unreal.”

Directly north of the museum, the Land Bank building, which was renovated and opened to the public in 2010, vastly increased the exhibition and storage space of the original museum. The two buildings, which are connected underground, house displays of Taiwan’s natural history. South of the museum on the site of the former Taipei Nanmen Factory, which processed camphor and opium during the colonial era, is a third site called the South Gate Park. It consists of three main buildings and a surrounding park. South Gate opened in 2013 and is home to exhibitions on Taiwan’s industrial history, in particular on the importance of camphor to that history.

The fourth and final piece of the museum system is the old Taiwan Railways administrative (鐵道部) building, just west of the main railway station. As of 2019, its renovation had yet to be completed; when it is, it will house exhibits on “Taiwan Modernity.” The railroad system, first developed during the Japanese colonial era, has long been a source of pride in Taiwan and a symbol of its modernity. As a museum publication puts it, the railroad is “a microcosm of modern state bureaucratic organization; the railroad system also links together different places, groups, products, and information, and enhances the unification of a system of space and the standardization of time measurement; in transcending the speed of travel beyond that of man power and animal power, the railroad is thus an important representative of the modern time-space order.”³⁴ In changing the spatial connections among people and their relationship to time, the railroad is an apt symbol of the nation and the various ties (pun intended) that hold it together. This new museum will not only link present conceptions of Taiwan’s identity to the colonial past but also help symbolically cement the notion that although it may be comprised of various ethnic groups speaking different languages and dialects, it is unified around a shared experience of modernity.³⁵

Investing a city with a cultural aura is, of course, an important strategy in marketing its global image and developing its economic potential. If Taiwan is not a nation in the eyes of the world community, at least Taipei can become a “global city” with a cultural infrastructure rivaling those of metropolitan centers around the world. This connection between the museum system and the urban infrastructure was highlighted in a 2015–2016 special exhibition on the 100th anniversary of the

34. See Wang Zhihong 2010: 8. For this idea of the compression of space and time in modernity, see Schivelbusch 1986.

35. Another railway museum is in the planning stages for a different site, on the grounds of the former Taipei Railway Workshop (臺北機廠). See <https://trw.moc.gov.tw>.

museum called *Musemble City: A Modern Dream Plan* (夢幻博物城：現代性的尋夢計畫). As the museum website puts it:

The exhibition concept of *musemble* is to use National Taiwan Museum as a matrix and old town Taipei as exhibition ground. By integrating places of memory in the vicinity—museums, quasi-museums, historical buildings, etc.—it aims to establish spaces of movement for experiential activities. The matrix expands from the central museum and linked by “check-ins” of smart-phone app and establishes a spatial system of interconnections. The virtual system inspires cross-disciplinary dialogue among citizens about literature, arts, and music, and constructs a city dialect (*glossolaliadella citta*) and narratives of collective memories.³⁶

The special exhibition included an introductory exhibit within the museum itself (Guo Zhaoli 2015: 17), but the spectator was mainly expected to stroll the streets of downtown Taipei discovering both its surviving “lieux de mémoire” (記憶地點) and those that had been demolished. Centered on “six mazes of modernity” (六個現代性迷宮)—utopia, modern street, urban nomad, knowledge and rationality, symbol of authority, and industrial production—*Musemble City* breaks down the boundaries of the museum building and the city and problematizes historical memory. The accompanying smartphone app, called *Dream Project*, allowed the spectator to navigate the downtown core from site to site and “check in” at and gain information about each (Guo Zhaoli 2015: 9–13). This interface between the real physical urban infrastructure and the virtual world was key to the exhibition’s conceptual design. The catalog adopts Foucault’s term “heterotopia” to describe the real/virtual sites, which exist “somewhere between reality and fictional space” (9). But “dream” is the discursive core of what the curators envisioned, the goal of which was not only to retrieve “collective memories” and “collective dreams” but also for the spectator to “rediscover their dreams and subjectivity” (13). Overall, the *Musemble* exhibition was an innovative attempt to extend the boundaries of the museum into urban and virtual spaces.

The intertwining of NTM with creative capital can also be seen in the Good Time Public Arts Festival (好時光公共藝術節). Held in 2010, the festival comprised displays of public art as well as artist workshops, performances, creative collaborations, art markets, and so on. The displays were held on sites that were part of the NTM system and in other parts of the urban landscape, such as the February 28 Peace Park. Although NTM’s mandate has traditionally been anthropology and natural history, it promoted this festival as a way of increasing a sense of the interconnections among the museum, art, culture, public space, and urban development. As the curator of the festival put it, “the initiation of this art festival began with the issues of urban planning and cultural preservation under the main focus of ‘space renewal and restoration’” (GLTWBWG 2011: 9). As Emile Sheng (聖治仁), then

36. See https://www.ntm.gov.tw/en/exhibition_160_356.html. A special website has been created for the exhibition, see <http://www.musemble.org>, which has both Chinese and English versions.

the hip image of artists to enhance the city's cultural aura. That museums are, or hope to be, an important part of this new creative economy is suggested by the theme of the 2019 International Museum Day: "Museums as Cultural Hubs, The Future of Tradition."

The National Museum of History is planning its own large renovation project, which I discuss in Chapter 1, that will entail an expansion of its exhibition space and a design overhaul of the Nanhai area surrounding the museum. Large-scale museums and performing arts centers are in the works throughout Taiwan. The National Palace Museum, for example, has built an immense Southern Branch, which I discuss in Chapter 10, outside of Chia-yi; it opened in 2016. The project was vigorously backed by the Nationalist government under Ma Ying-jeou. Other recently built or in-progress large-scale projects include the Kaohsiung Center for the Performing Arts, the New Taipei Museum of Art, the Taipei Performing Arts Center, and many more. Clearly, the Taiwan government places much emphasis on forging a global image of Taiwan as culturally sophisticated, design-savvy, and invested in the arts, but as June Chu (2004) argues, the role of museums in fomenting economic development may not be as effective as the politically driven rhetoric suggests.

This enhancement of cultural and creative capital in the political/economic sphere has been reflected in a change in the Taiwan government's cultural bureaucracy. In 2012, the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) was raised to ministerial level and renamed the Ministry of Culture. Lung Ying-tai (龍應台), a writer and scholar who had headed the CCA leading up to the change, became Taiwan's first minister of culture. Now with its own ministry, the cultural realm took on greater political and public significance than before. At the same time, the ministry's founding was an attempt to bureaucratize culture, depoliticize the state's support for it, and make it more responsive to all the various constituencies in Taiwan. The ministry website puts it this way: "The Ministry is working to create an environment in which cultural activities thrive, where our cultural heritage is preserved, and all people—regardless of background or status—are given opportunities to express themselves culturally and become more culturally refined."³⁸

Let this overview of the general development of museums and memorial spaces in Taiwan serve as historical context for appreciating the museums I discuss in the ten generically organized chapters that follow. Each chapter converges around a theme—the forging of national origins from the prehistoric past, multiculturalism and the modern multiethnic nation, historical trauma and atrocity, human rights and democracy, KMT war memory, Chiang Kai-shek's place in Taiwan history, literature as the root of national culture, aboriginal cultures and de-sinification, local identity and place-making, and Taiwan's insertion into the world—that in totality are at the core of Taiwan identity and historical memory in the post-martial law era.

38. See https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/content_84.html.

White Terror and the Discourse of Peace and Reconciliation

Human Rights Museums

On March 2, 2012, then president Ma Ying-jeou presided over the official opening of the Lei Zhen Memorial Hall (雷震紀念館) at National Cheng-chi University in Taipei. During the ceremony, Ma bowed toward the Lei family and apologized.¹ A political adviser to Chiang Kai-shek in the 1950s, Lei Zhen became increasingly outspoken in the pages of his journal *Free China* (自由中國) in support of human rights and directed attention to the KMT's failure to implement them in Taiwan. In 1960, the journal was closed and Lei was arrested on charges of treason and imprisoned for ten years. Released in 1969, he continued to be subject to surveillance until his death in 1979. In 1988, the only copy of the manuscript of his memoir, which he had written while in prison, was burned, apparently on orders of the Minister of Defense, Cheng Weiyuan (鄭為元), who had been pressured to make that order by the powerful National Security Bureau.² Although the Nationalists had long promoted Taiwan as the “free China,” an alternative to the repressive Communist regime on the Mainland, it too suppressed dissent, first among leftists after the 2–28 Incident, then among liberals like Lei Chen in the 1950s and 1960s, and, in later years, among those who promoted Taiwan independence. That Ma Ying-jeou was now apologizing for actions his party had taken years earlier shows how far the KMT (and Taiwan more generally) had come in making public the issue of past human rights abuses and the need to take a stand for human rights in the present. Ma Ying-jeou's apology marked a dramatic shift in KMT attitudes toward its oppressive past and toward the ideal of human rights that Lei Zhen embodied.

Since the lifting of martial law, the discourse of human rights and the exhibition of past human rights abuses have become central to Taiwan identity. The self-image promoted in Taiwan today is that of a “bastion” of human rights protection in Asia (Horton and Ramzy 2018). The island's struggle to transcend its oppressive past and embrace democracy and human rights is at the core of the idea of Taiwan that emerges in the permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Taiwan History (see Chapter 2). In 2019 the museum mounted a special exhibit called *Oppression*

1. On the opening ceremony, see Tsai 2012. On the memorial hall, see the official website: <http://leichen.nccu.edu.tw:1688/index-museum.html>.

2. See *Taiwan Communiqué* 36 (September 1988): 2. URL: <http://www.taiwandc.org/twcom/tc36-int.pdf>.

and Overcoming: Social Movements in Post-War Taiwan (迫力破力：戰後臺灣社會運動), which shows how the “Taiwan people built up and established ties, took to the streets . . . struggled for individual and collective rights, and destroyed injustice and unfairness,” as a museum Facebook posting puts it.³

“Human rights” (人權) entered mainstream public discourse in Taiwan after the lifting of martial law, at which time it became integral to the political platform of the *dangwai* movement and its descendant the DPP as well as a key trope in grassroots activist discourse. Indeed, the Formosa Incident (aka Kaohsiung Incident), a pro-democracy protest movement often viewed as having launched the *dangwai* movement, was sparked by an illegal demonstration on December 10, 1979, International Human Rights Day, which commemorates the signing, in 1948, of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which the Republic of China was a signatory—in fact, the republic’s UN representative, Peng Chun Chang (張彭春), had been a member of that declaration’s drafting committee. In the post-martial law era, all political parties have come to define Taiwan as a nation that upholds and promotes human rights. They do this in part to distinguish Taiwan from the PRC, which continues to be a single-party state with a poor human rights record, but also to insert Taiwan, a nation that struggles to gain recognition abroad, into the world of human rights-respecting nations. Although the KMT has now embraced this identity, it did so slowly, hesitantly, and reluctantly, and only after the DPP prodded it to do so. The limits of KMT tolerance regarding this issue became apparent in the 2007 presidential campaign, when Ma Ying-jeou began to counter the DPP’s obsession with exposing the White Terror with his own accusation that the DPP was engaging in “green terror.”⁴ The two parties have competed with each other to be the party of human rights in Taiwan.

The discourse of human rights in Taiwan has also been promoted strongly by private associations, most prominently the Taiwan Association of Truth and Reconciliation (台灣民間真相與和解促進會), the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (台灣人權促進會), and the Human Rights Education Foundation (人權教育基金會). Established in 2008, the first of these organizations focuses on issues of “transitional justice” (轉型正義)⁵—in particular, on compensation for those who have suffered injustice, the legal and ethical investigation of those who committed crimes, and the bringing to light of historical truth.⁶ The second was established in

3. Posting dated 5/26/19. See <https://www.facebook.com/NMTH100/posts/10157294551542065>. See also Crook 2019.

4. The term “green terror” has entered the political lexicon on Taiwan and refers to alleged actions by the DPP to suppress Taiwan/China unification efforts (Cooper 2010: 137). Not surprisingly, the term has been picked up by the Mainland media to denigrate the DPP (Liu Xin 2017).

5. The International Center for Transitional Justice offers this explanation of the term: “Finding legitimate responses to massive violations under these real constraints of scale and societal fragility is what defines transitional justice and distinguishes it from human rights promotion and defense in general.” See <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>. Transitional justice means confronting historical injustices so that a society can “transition” to a new era of respect for human rights and human dignity.

6. A *New York Times* report suggests that the organization is also planning a museum (Mozur 2016).

Memory of the Chiang Dynasty

The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and The Two Chiangs Culture Park

Interpretations of Chiang Kai-shek's role in twentieth-century history have been sharply divided. On the Mainland, Chiang was public enemy number one, the most villainous of all villains. The conventional narrative goes something like this. Chiang betrayed his communist allies at the end of the anti-warlord Northern Expedition, launching a coup that resulted in the slaughter of thousands of communist activists in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other cities. His participation in the War of Resistance against Japan was reluctant, and he agreed to it only after his hand had been forced during the Xi'an Incident of 1936. During the war itself, he paid more attention to the communists than to fighting the Japanese. After the war, he failed to negotiate in good faith with the communists, thus causing another civil war, this one resulting in the division between Taiwan and the PRC that exists to this day. Even worse, from his bastion in Taiwan, Chiang planned, with the help of his American allies, a military assault on the Mainland, which included sending spies to infiltrate mainland society and undermine the process of socialist construction.

Meanwhile, on Taiwan, Chiang was heralded as a sagacious leader who heroically fought the Japanese and sought to save China from the scourge of communism. A "Chiang Kai-shek personality cult," not unlike the cult of Mao in China, deified the leader through "the manufacture and distribution of images of Chiang; the naming of streets in his honour; the celebration of his life through textbooks and public events; and, in some cases, the attribution to Chiang of superhuman power and wisdom" (J. Taylor 2006: 97). When he died, a grand monument (which I discuss in detail below) was built to commemorate him. Memorialization of Chiang had long depicted the Nationalist leader in a Confucian mode, emphasizing in explicit Confucian terms his loyalism and attention to duty, but also his devotion to nation. Chiang was a Christian, converted by his wife Song Meiling, but his Confucian identity was usually given priority over his Christian one.

Memory of Chiang has shifted both in postsocialist China and in post-martial law Taiwan. In China, a public fascination with this historical figure has arisen in the past few decades—as seen in the plethora of books about him and in the popularity of Chiang-related tourist sites. The state, moreover, has tempered its Mao-era vilification and recognized that Chiang made important contributions to China

through a modernization program in the Nanjing Decade and that the Nationalist Army under his command fought heroically against the Japanese. These changes in the Mainland's memory of Chiang reflect, of course, a conscious effort on the part of the CCP to enhance the image of the KMT in its ongoing political battles with the independence-leaning DDP. Chiang-related memorial sites long closed to the public have now been opened, and, perhaps propelled by a sense of curiosity for the once-forbidden, the mainland public is enthralled. Since 2000, domestic tourists in China have been able to visit, for example, Chiang Kai-shek's ancestral home in Xikou (Zhejiang), the Nationalist-era Presidential Palace in Nanjing, and a villa in Chongqing that Chiang used during the war.

A great irony surrounding the figure of Chiang is that he may now be remembered more fondly on the Mainland than he is in Taiwan (at least in some quarters). As suggested in previous chapters, since the lifting of martial law, the cult of Chiang has been desecrated and Chiang's role in Taiwan has come under serious scrutiny. Jeremy Taylor (2010) describes the "de-Chiang Kai-shek-ification" (去蔣化, or de-Chiangification) that took place most noticeably from 2000 to 2008, when the DDP was in power. In some DPP circles, Chiang is little more than a "dictator" (獨裁者) who used his power to suppress dissent. His reign is associated with the White Terror, not with the economic successes of land reform, the development of light industry, or the expansion of the middle class.

Chiang Kai-shek is a polarizing figure in Taiwan today, and there is a political struggle over his memory that reflects the oppositional cultural politics of the KMT and the DPP. Into that already acerbic mix enters the fascination on the Mainland with this once reviled figure who has now come to embody a shared ideal of reunification with the motherland. Chiang-related memory sites in Taiwan are deliberately appealing to the Mainland tourist market, to which Taiwan opened its borders in 2008, and that is an important factor in the renewed attention these sites are gaining in the media.

The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall

As the CCP did with Mao Zedong on the Mainland, the Nationalists constructed a "personality cult" around the figure of Chiang Kai-shek (J. Taylor 2006). This personality cult continued after Chiang's death in 1975, just a few months before the death of Mao, through mourning, a public funeral, and commemoration activities (Wakeman 1985). And as with Mao on the Mainland, Taiwan commemorated its great leader with a grand and dramatic memorial hall. The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (see Figure 6.1 on p. 145), which opened in 1980, is one of the most significant and imposing of the many memorial sites established in Taipei under Nationalist rule.¹ The building was described at the time as "the crystallization of

1. The Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國立國父紀念館) opened in 1972. It continues to have a small exhibition on

The Memorial Hall is built upon three stories of broad and solid foundations that symbolize “Zhong Zheng” (impartial and righteous).³ The octagonal roof design creates many “ren” (Man) motifs on the very top, symbolizing the “unification of Man and Heaven.” The roof is fashioned in the form of the Altar to Heaven and covered with blue glazed tiles, reflecting the sunlight. The apex of the roof is gold in color and culminates in a glorious upsurge. None of the other materials, such as the white marble, red cypress ceiling, and light red granite floor, have been tinted with artificial colors, thereby imparting a feeling of sacredness, solemnity, hospitality, and peace.⁴

Although “fashioned in the form of the Altar of Heaven,” with its ponderous square white base and octagonal roof, the hall looks little like the Altar of Heaven in Beijing and certainly lacks its architectural delicacy. Still, the reference to an important imperial site, where rituals were performed to mark the lunar calendar, is telling: it both suggests the Nationalists’ allegiance to Chinese culture and enshrouds the image of Chiang in an imperial and cosmological aura. The architecture’s Confucian symbolism—impartiality, righteousness, and unity of man and heaven—converges with a Nationalist political symbolism. The three-tiered staircase that leads to the statue inside the hall is said to symbolize the Three Principles of the People. The hall’s color scheme is emphatically blue and white, and its white base and blue-tiled roofs are very different from the more subdued colors of the Altar of Heaven. Blue and white are, of course, the colors of the Nationalist flag, but they also point to the colors of Ming dynasty porcelain, a quintessentially Chinese art form. A concert hall and theater were added to the site in 1987, injecting a cultural dimension to this highly politicized site and softening the image of Chiang as a political leader. They also serve to frame an entranceway to the site and in this way lend it an even grander visual symmetry that enhances Chiang’s image.

The interior of the memorial has two main levels. From outside, the visitor climbs three sets of stairs leading up to the interior hall, a cavernous room that houses a huge statue of Chiang. Chiang is seated and dressed in a traditional Chinese long gown; his arms lay on armrests to the sides, in a position that strikingly resembles that of Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., though Chiang has a slight smile on his face that makes him appear more benevolent than Lincoln, with his stern countenance. If his Chinese gown suggests tradition, the Lincolnesque pose aligns Chiang with human emancipation—with saving Taiwan’s people from the servitude they would have suffered under communism—and with the values of democracy and equality (see Figure 6.2 on p. 147).

Behind the statue are the words “science” (to the left), “democracy” (directly above), and “ethics” (to the right), under each of which is a related quotation from Chiang’s writings. “Science” and “democracy” were, of course, buzzwords of the May Fourth movement (1915–25), and associating Chiang with these values serves

3. The characters *zhong* (中) and *zheng* (正) make up Chiang Kai-shek’s name (名).

4. <http://www.cksmh.gov.tw/eng/index.php?code=list&ids=5>

Aboriginal Museums and the Construction of a Taiwanese Identity

As touched on in previous chapters, exhibitionary attention to Taiwan's "ethnic" cultures is a relatively recent phenomenon, a product of the Taiwan consciousness movement that arose in the 1980s. Taiwanese nativists, some of whom promote political independence from the Mainland, have appropriated aboriginal cultures as one way of "de-sinicizing" Taiwan cultural identity. The aboriginal peoples of Taiwan are Austronesian, and tying Taiwanese culture and ethnic identity to these peoples helps forge a sense of cultural uniqueness, one that stands apart from the Han-dominated culture on the Mainland and from the Sinocentric view of Taiwan's identity that dominated the Nationalist era. In this chapter, I focus on the role played by Taiwan museums in the state/political appropriation of non-Han peoples. In China, these groups are usually referred to as "ethnic minorities" (少數民族), and in Taiwan as "aborigines" (原住民族). Both terms imply a relationship to the Han: the former are constructed in opposition to the majority and dominant Han, whereas the latter suggests that the Han are latecomers to the land. There are huge differences in the ways ethnic groups are represented in these two places; that said, the appropriation of ethnicities for political purposes—whether to legitimize the socialist nation-state, feed exotic and romanticized desires for "other" cultures, or affirm a non-Sinocentric Taiwanese identity—is common to both. Museums have played important roles in these kinds of representations.

The aborigines in Taiwan—as is the case with the ethnic minorities on the Mainland and with First Nations in the Americas and Australia and New Zealand—have had a difficult history since the arrival of outsiders. From the beginnings of Han immigration in the Ming (early sixteenth century), to the arrival of the Dutch (1624–1662), Zheng Chenggong (1662–1683), the Manchus (1683–1895), the Japanese (1895–1945), and finally to the Nationalists (1945–1987), all outside rulers over Taiwan have viewed the aborigines as barbaric inferiors in need of civilizing. Some of the early colonial powers also used representations of aboriginals for their political programs. For instance, such representations figured strongly in the Qing "colonialist" and "imperialist" perception that Taiwan was a frontier for an expanding multiethnic empire comprised of various non-Han ethnic groups (Teng 2004).

The Japanese occupiers were particularly interested in Taiwan's aboriginal peoples; perhaps they hoped to discover cultural and ethnic links with the people of the Ryukyu Islands, the archipelago that on a map appears to link Taiwan to southern Japan, and thus to justify their colonial rule. They undertook extensive field research for the sake of documenting and recording this facet of their colonial possession (Wang Fuchang 2003: 102), and they were the first to systematically categorize the various aboriginal groups. Meanwhile, Japanese linguists compiled, recorded, and transcribed oral literature from various indigenous communities.¹ Leo Ching (2000a) writes that in the first two decades of its rule in Taiwan, the colonial authorities viewed the aborigines as barbarians in need of the softening force of Japanese civilization. After the Wushe Incident of 1930, when Japanese forces violently suppressed an aboriginal uprising, the policy shifted to one of assimilation: indigenous groups were now to be treated as imperial subjects whose loyalty to the emperor was expected, though the earlier dichotomy between Japanese refinement and aboriginal "savagery" was upheld.

The Japanese colonial authorities also sought to collect and display aboriginal culture in exhibitionary contexts. Established in 1908 as a natural history museum, the Museum of the Colonial Administration prominently displayed Taiwan's indigenous cultures. The museum's collection of aboriginal artifacts was assembled principally by Mori Ushinosuke (森丑之助; 1877–1926), an officer in the Japanese military who traveled extensively throughout Taiwan photographing its ethnic cultures and gathering artifacts and natural specimens. The museum, which Joseph Allen (2005) has described as a reflection of Japan's "scientific colonialism," and a way of documenting the diversity of its colonial possession, had at least one hall devoted to Taiwan's aborigines (GLTWBVG 2008: 20–25). The 1935 Taiwan Exposition prominently displayed the cultures of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples as a way of celebrating Japan's colonial rule.² Aboriginal artifacts also found their way to Japan, and some were added to the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology (Osaka) when it opened in 1977. In 2009 the Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines in Taipei put on an exhibition of these artifacts, returned for the first time to their land of origin.

However imperialistically motivated it was, Japan's colonial-era research on and collecting of aboriginal artifacts provided an important foundation for a post-martial law rediscovery of aboriginal history and identity. After the emergence of the "outside the Party" opposition movement in the mid-1970s and its radicalization following the Formosa Incident (aka Kaohsiung Incident) of 1979, new constructions of Taiwan history emerged (Q. Wang 2002b), and aboriginal cultures have

1. In the early 1930s, linguistics professors Ogawa Hisayoshi and Asai Erin at Taihoku Imperial University gathered together 284 aboriginal stories and legends, which they recorded in Japanese and Romanized versions of the original languages, into a volume titled *Gengo ni yoru Taiwan Takasago-zoku densetsu shu* (A collection of Taiwan native tribes' myths and stories in the original languages), published in 1935 by Toko Shoin.

2. For a detailed description, with numerous photographs, of the exhibition, see Cheng Jiahui 2004.

been celebrated since then as integral to a new Taiwanese identity (Hsiao 2000: 161). As Michael Rudolf (2004: 91) puts it, “Aborigines were given a key position in the process of the construction of an overarching Taiwanese identity and the construction of alternative cultural memory in Taiwan after 1990” and became a “new cultural centre” in discussions of Taiwanese history and identity (107). Integral to this new identity was a process of “nativization” that went hand in hand with “de-sinicization.” This process was politically charged because central to the KMT’s martial law-era ideology was the idea that Taiwan was a province of China and indisputably Chinese in its identity. Drawing aborigines into new conceptions of a Taiwanese identity was sometimes racial: there were those who propounded the idea that the Han in Taiwan had long intermarried with the local aborigines, thus creating a different race and necessitating a re-evaluation of “whether we are really sons and grandsons of the Yellow Emperor” (Rudolf 2004: 101). But the construction of the new identity was more often than not cultural rather than racial: aboriginal culture was a “nutrient” (養分) to be used for cooking up a new identity that differed from the one on the Mainland and from the Sinocentric vision of Taiwan propagated by the KMT. The most visible manifestation of this realignment was the 1996 renaming of Chiang Kai-shek Road, which crosses in front of the Presidential Office, “Ketagalan Road” after the ethnic group that once prospered in the Taipei basin.

Aborigines figured strongly in Taiwanese nativist revisionist historiography and were vital to the “indigenizing” of Taiwan history (Hsiao 2000: 162–64). Wen-chi Kung (2000: 63) writes that the Nationalists’ aboriginal policy in Taiwan was rooted in “assimilation through modernization,” a policy that “corresponds to the particular Chinese racial ideology that celebrates the cultural superiority of Han Chinese and denigrates non-Han minorities’ cultures as primitive, backward, and uncivilized.” Sympathetic to their plight, Taiwanese nativist historians began to trace the violent conquest of the aborigines that accompanied Han Chinese expansionism. The suffering of the aborigines came to serve as an emblem of Taiwan’s traumatic history of imperialist humiliation and domination. Indeed, Taiwanese nativists invested in the aborigines their own feelings of humiliation as an ethnic group (Hoklo) dominated by outsiders (Mainlanders who had come to Taiwan with the KMT). By the 1980s, aborigines and aboriginal history had begun to appear in works of fiction by Han Chinese writers such as Wuhe (舞鶴) and Li Qiao (李喬).³

All of this fostered a new attitude toward aborigines and led to new political and cultural policies concerning them, including the official adoption of the term “aborigine/indigenous people” (原住民) in 1994 (then “aboriginal peoples” 原住民族 in 1997) to replace the more derogatory “mountain people” (山胞), which had dominated in earlier times. In 1996 a state ministry was established to oversee aboriginal affairs (Council of Aboriginal Affairs 原住民族委員會, later referred to in

3. For more on this subject, see Payne 2008; and Hillenbrand 2005.

Epilogue

As I have shown in this book, historical memory and cultural identity in the post-martial law museum world in Taiwan have been hotly contested by the camps that dominate the political scene there. Some readers might object to the political/state lens through which I have viewed Taiwan exhibitionary culture, pointing instead to the complex and multiple ways in which individual visitors interact with and derive meaning from museums. Such criticism would be valid: clearly, individual visitors do not passively absorb what they experience in museums; they actively engage with the artifacts before them and interpret them in ways that draw from their own personal experiences and forms of identity, which do not necessarily align with the intentions of museum curators or the political forces influencing them. But I have vigorously applied a political/statist approach because of what it reveals about the extent to which the blue and green camps have spent political capital, time and effort, and funding on museums and their exhibits. In the context of an emerging democracy still grappling with its past and its identity, the past is not some distant “foreign country”; it is alive with relevances and resonances that are critical to the present and the future of Taiwan as a nation, and the passion with which history and memory are debated shows how much it matters at both a deeply emotional and personal level and at a political level.

Contrary to the political contestation over historical memory that has been the central focus of this book, my analysis has also shown that in some respects there has been a gradual convergence between the two political camps in their positions on history and identity. Both parties now embrace, for example, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism as central to Taiwan’s identity (Dupre 2017). Although they differ in how they interpret and represent it, both parties also see support for human rights—and a recognition of Taiwan’s historical abuse of human rights—as critical components of the identity that Taiwan projects to its own people and to the world. The KMT has, if grudgingly, come to accept responsibility for its violent totalitarian past and issued apologies to the families of victims of 2–28 persecution. To a certain degree, many of the key elements of Taiwan identity discussed in this book—oceanic culture, aborigines and the Austronesization of Taiwan’s prehistory, multiculturalism, de-sinicization, de-Chiangification, human rights, cosmopolitanism, and so

on—have gradually become less politicized, in the narrow sense of party politics, and more accepted ingredients in the construction of a national identity. It was perhaps a natural product of the contestation itself that some overlap, some consensus, would be reached about Taiwan's history, culture, and national identity, even if the two political parties might not necessarily acknowledge that consensus. This consensus is reflected in the *Our Land, Our People* exhibit at the National Museum of Taiwan History, discussed in Chapter 2, and the National 2–28 Memorial Museum in Taipei, discussed in Chapter 3.

As Mainland China regresses into a more authoritarian and repressive rule under Xi Jinping and protesters on the streets of Hong Kong express their fears of totalitarianism and desires for democracy, Taiwan watches warily. In this evolving context, the KMT goal of reunification with the Mainland and the “one China, two systems” policy, even if it might offer economic benefits to Taiwan, no longer resonates with the vast majority of Taiwanese. Indeed, in 2017, the KMT itself removed reunification as a plank in its official party platform (Chung 2017). With the threat from the Mainland looming ever large over Taiwan, the two political parties will perhaps find further common ground in their representations of history and identity in the formation of Taiwan as a nation. Their views will converge, one can imagine, around what one scholar calls “civic nationalism,” which emphasizes the primacy of preserving liberal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights as a counter to the Mainland's authoritarianism (Kwan 2016). In other words, the blue and green camps may merge even more than they already have in their construction of a Taiwan national identity against the reality of an increasingly repressive regime on the Mainland.

That said, “to think that we have reached a post-identity moment in Taiwan is,” as Jonathan Sullivan (2014) says and as quoted at the beginning of this book, “misguided. . . . Taiwan's status is too fragile and too contested for that.” The contestation over the past, both within the museum world and more broadly, will continue as long as a multiparty democracy exists in Taiwan; it is endemic to a polarized political system. But it is also a reflection of Taiwan's complex history of multiple colonizations, dramatic political transformations, and its precarious position in Cold War and post-Cold War global politics. Taiwan, a small island nation in a state of diplomatic limbo, outstrips its political insignificance and exemplifies why historical memory matters so much in a world that, despite the rise of globalization and transnational forces, continues to be defined by nation-states and the political parties that govern them.

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