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Taiwan Through the Lens of its Museums
A Clear View?

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Taiwan Through the Lens of its Museums

A Clear View?

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Abstract

Since democracy arrived in Taiwan with the ending of the Martial Law in 1987, the people of Taiwan found themselves with the freedom to determine what constitutes Taiwanese-ness. With this freedom, the highly polarised nature of Taiwan society surfaced and characterised Taiwan politics. Central is the question whether Taiwan has a shared Chinese culture or a unique Taiwanese one. This is not an academic question. China bases its claim on Taiwan on a shared heritage. Despite this claim, Taiwan functions as an independent country aspiring to nationhood. An acknowledged nation-building institution is museums. These are venues where the “Authorised Heritage Discourse” is transmitted. It is through museums that a country’s identity is visualised, and the boom Taiwan has seen the establishment of museums reflects this.

With this museum boom, and given Taiwan’s polarised politics, the questions arise as to what is the Authorised Heritage Discourse expressed by Taiwan’s museums, to what extent are they controlled, by whom, and for what purpose? To address these, 19 museums spread across Taiwan were visited. At these visits, the context of the museums rather than the content of the exhibitions was object of study, so not the individual displays, but the overall narrative shining through. Emphasis was on publicly-operated museums, including nine national museums, but a number of privately-operated museums were also visited for alternative perspectives. The museums have been categorised and discussed by museum theme, including ethnography, ecomuseum, archaeology, literature, human rights, and fine arts. The discussion is then capped by an analysis of dedicated history museums.

When analysing the Authorised Heritage Discourse emerging from the museum exhibitions, it becomes apparent that it is the recent, post-World War II period for which there is the greatest disparity between museums. The deciding factor on the

chosen discourse is not what one might expect, whether a museum is a national museum or not. Rather, the museum themes are more relevant. In general, museums that put Taiwan history on a timeline and aim to give a comprehensive account are prone to be lighter on social issues. This is also the case with ethnic museums and ecomuseums that focus on a group or locality. It is the human rights museums and the national museum of literature where dark heritage, authoritarian rule, strained inter-ethnic relations and the struggle for democracy are clearly articulated. The analysis shows the wide range of heritage discourse in Taiwan. The Authorised Heritage Discourse shows little sign of effective control, even between governmentally controlled museums.

Research into the Authorised Heritage Discourse visualised at museums is especially relevant to Taiwan due to its history of rulers forcing identity onto its people. With democratisation, the people of Taiwan can now create heritage. Making the narrative of Taiwan museums explicit contributes to keeping this process transparent. The authority museums assume comes with accountability. Analysis such as in this thesis promotes this.

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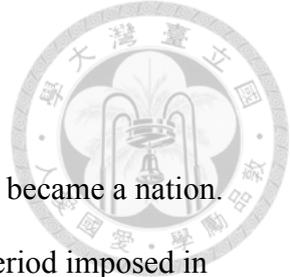
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1. Introduction

1987 was a defining year for Taiwan. In all material respects Taiwan became a nation. In that year democracy arrived. It marks the end of the martial law period imposed in 1949 by the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalists, the ruling party of the Republic of China (ROC), which retreated to Taiwan after the loss of Mainland China to the communist party. At that time, the KMT continued the ROC in Taiwan under the presumption of continued sovereignty over all territories held and claimed by China, the so-called “One China Policy”. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), founded in 1986, became the KMT’s main political adversary. While in the political spectrum the KMT leans towards the centre-right and the DPP towards the centre-left, differences in opinion of nationhood and Taiwan identity structure the main divide, a divide that runs deep in Taiwan society. Central is the question whether Taiwan has a shared Chinese culture or a unique Taiwanese one. This is not an academic question. China bases its claim on Taiwan on a shared heritage. The KMT navigates cautiously on the issue, holding on to the One China Policy but nuancing this by acknowledging two interpretations, which amounts to there being both an ROC claim and a People’s Republic of China (PRC) claim on a China including Taiwan. This rules out an independent Taiwan. The PRC can work with this. Contrary to the KMT, the DPP is openly pro-independence, although it moves cautiously on this. When in power however, both parties work toward retaining the current status quo.

Despite PRC pressure, Taiwan functions as an independent country. This without being recognized as such internationally. The lack of recognition does not deter nation-building and both the KMT and the DPP involve themselves actively in this, finding themselves on opposite sides on many issues. An acknowledged nation-building

institution is museums. It is through museums that a country's identity is visualised. These are venues where the Authorised Heritage Discourse is transmitted.

History is the most secure route to success. Events do not unfold into a narrative. Quite the opposite. Narratives select events and are made by an authority who has the prerogative of interpretation and determining significance, morality and message (White 1990: 19). In a nation state, the state claims this authority. The education system is a powerful tool to convey a chosen history and museums are a tool to verify these. In museums, an object becomes material culture not because of its intrinsic value but because it can contribute to a chosen narrative. Displayed events and portrayed lifestyles have a similar function.

History as 'raw material' does not hold authority. Here heritage comes into the equation. Heritage is about giving meaning to the past with an aspired future in mind, it structures history. Assigning meaning to history is highly political and changes as power shifts. It is this field of tension where national identity is formed and reshaped. So who chooses and why? On who's authority is this done? This is the domain of the Authorised Heritage Discourse. Politicians, supported by academics, heritage management and museum curators provide credibility and lead this discourse. Politicians in this respect refers to dominant voices in the public debate and discourse refers to the way of thinking, writing and talking about heritage management practices. This frames the heritage discourse (Smith 2006). So what do Taiwan's museums tell about Taiwan history and what meanings do they assign to it? When visiting Taiwan museums, does a clear Authorised Heritage Discourse become apparent at these museums? When looking at Taiwan through the lens of its museums, what image comes into focus? Research into the Authorised Heritage Discourse is especially relevant to Taiwan. It has a history of rulers forcing identity on its people. It is only very recently

that the people of Taiwan have the opportunity to create and control Taiwan heritage.

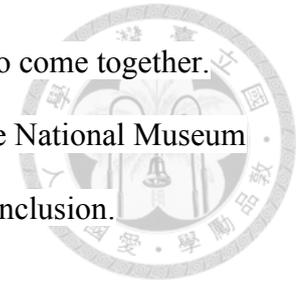
Based on this, the central research question in this thesis becomes: What is the Authorised Heritage Discourse at Taiwan museums and to what extent is there coordination between museums?



For my research, I visited 19 museums spread across Taiwan. Of these museums, nine are national museums, one is operated by a national university, one by a central government agency and four by city governments. The remaining four are privately operated. For my search for an Authorised Heritage Discourse, the emphasis is on publicly-operated museums. I visited privately-operated museums for possible other perspectives. When visiting the museums, my interest was the context of the exhibitions rather than the content. What is the overall narrative presented rather than what is individually displayed? In preparation for my visits, I studied the themes of the museums through literature study and lectures at the National Taiwan University in Taipei. The title of this essay, “Taiwan Through the Lens of its Museums,” is borrowed from a lecture course on Taiwan museums by Professor Chun-yi (Joyce) Tsai. These studies serve as a standard against which I compare the findings at the visits and form the basis of my analysis.

The following two chapters serve as introduction. Chapter 2 describes sources of cultural heritage. The link between culture and nationalism is explored as well as what serves as sources of identity for Taiwan. In Chapter 3, the development of museums as political institutions is discussed in general and for Taiwan in particular. The trend of localizing museums is touched on here as are commercial reasons for establishing museums. In chapters four through nine, museums are analysed by theme and commented on. These themes are ethnography, ecomuseums, archaeology, literature, human rights, and fine arts. In Chapter 10, history museums are the object of study. It is

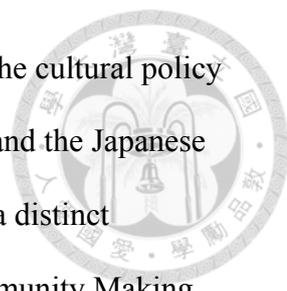
in history museums where one would expect the individual themes to come together. Three history museums are discussed here. The prime museum is the National Museum of Taiwan History. Chapter 11 serves as summary and provides a conclusion.



2. Sources of Cultural Heritage

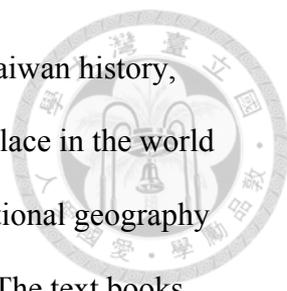
Culture is a term that brings people together, but also sets them apart. It was, and still is, an important element of nation building. Territorial claims motivated through shared cultural identity have led to wars, annexation, and continuing tensions. A detached way of looking at culture is seeing this as a set of programmed decisions on virtually all aspects of life, in order to avoid needing to deliberate on every issue every time a decision is called for. These can be simple things such as etiquettes to complexities such as social hierarchies and religions. Culture is not static; it adapts to change while at the same time giving direction to change. Culture is also not autonomous. It functions in relationship with other cultures and more so with cultures closer to it than those at more distance. Nationalism is an important element in the discussion on who has the right to claim cultural expressions as part of their heritage. Countries claim a national cultural heritage through a chosen tradition, thus carving themselves a niche in the globalised world. Cultural heritage provides a national identity to a country. With claims of a unique culture and history, objects and traditions recognised as typical to a society are closely connected to the chosen cultural heritage. Museums play an important role here. These institutes make these defining cultural characteristics explicit (Wang 2004: 789-90).

Turning to Taiwan, the KMT had imposed onto Taiwan the culture and history of China and with this a cultural imaginary of the island as representing the Chinese



nation, a China by proxy. After the martial law period, in the 1990s the cultural policy reoriented towards local communities. As in the martial law period, and the Japanese period before that, change of cultural and historical perspective was a distinct government policy. Especially the enactment of the ‘Integrated Community Making Program’ by the Council of Cultural Affairs, now the Ministry of Culture, became a catalyst for the promotion of Taiwanese popular culture, encouraging grass root projects for reviving local culture and history. Local cultural institutions were established and tasked with identifying and developing local culture (Lu 2002: 10). Cultural differentiation, setting Taiwan apart from China, is however not the sole motivator for localism. In a globalized world, cultures are moving towards each other. With converging architecture, franchises, transport solutions, and lifestyles, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish towns and cities from each other, feeding a nostalgia idealizing the time before cultural change brought on by modernisation. This is very much the search for a lost Eden (Lu 2002: 3, citing Hertzfeld). In Taiwan this is no different, and localism is therefore as much an autonomous phenomenon as it is a deliberate nation-building tool replacing the China-focused identity.

Where the local cultural institutions assist in providing a supply of cultural historical destinations, the education system stimulates a demand by encouraging an interest in these. A new social studies curriculum was issued in Taiwan in 1993. Because of the politics involved, implementation took the better part of the 1990s. The carefully stated curriculum goal for history became: “to guide students to understand the living environment, and the nation’s history, geography, and culture in order to nourish their affection and love of homeland” (Liu, Vicker and Hung 2005: 114). The devil here is in the details, or in this case in definitions. Which nation? What culture? The discussion on this came to head in 1997 when the *Knowing Taiwan* text books with the



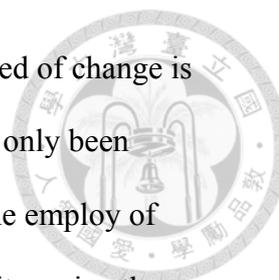
new curriculum were ready. National history now focused only on Taiwan history, social science inferred Taiwan being an emerging nation, taking its place in the world system of nations notwithstanding PRC's isolation politics, while national geography was limited to Taiwan and neighbouring Taiwan-controlled islands. The text books presented a radical new perspective on Taiwan's identity. The China-centrist narrative was replaced with the history of Taiwan as that of successive colonial rule, each period contributing to Taiwan's unique identity. Still, as mentioned above, it is not all politics. There is a grassroots basis for this change. There is a genuine interest in locality, fed by a postmodernist outlook countering grand narratives and individualizing peoples' perspective of the world they live in (Lu 2002: 49-54, 136).

3. Role of Museums

Museums have evolved from being merely collections towards becoming social cultural institutions. Changes were radical, giving reason to refer to these as revolutions. The first revolution recognised, at the end of the 19th century, was that of the modern museum introducing new museological practices for curatorship, conservation, documentation, and education. The second revolution took place in the 1960s, a period of social unrest, big changes to the social fabric of the Western world, and the entrance of postmodernism with its rejection of single narratives. The societal relevance of museums became central, linking them to development agendas. Museums however remained removed from daily life. They were object-driven and context was recreated in dedicated buildings or sites by experts using academically accepted techniques. In the 1980s, ecomuseums, also referred to as new museology, entered the international stage, building on a movement originating in France. The principle of ecomuseums is the

display of living heritage on its original site, run by the community represented. The ecomuseum allows locals to represent their way of life. It is not a next stage of museums. Ecomuseums do not replace traditional museums but they have influenced people's expectations of a museum visit. For visitors, attractive presentation of exhibits has become at least as important as the exhibits themselves (Denton 2014: 211-213).

When looking at the themes of Taiwan museums, the ethnological museums and ecomuseums highlight cultural and ethnic diversity. Where national history is presented the themes are mainly Chinese heritage, Taiwan colonial history, and social cultural developments. For insight into what is moving people today, temporary exhibitions at museums of fine art are an excellent source. The museums tell different stories. National museums are closely linked to the central government and most are prone to the effects of power switches. The National Palace Museum in particular, with its international profile as the world's premier museum for Chinese art and artefacts, is politically sensitive, apparent with curatorship being a cabinet level appointment. But all museums are rooted to an outlook on society and are, each in their own way, a conserving reaction to the onslaught of modernity. Things of the past, either material or immaterial, are preserved in the sanctuary of museums. Time has caught up with them and the museums show the extent and speed of developments. Taiwan museums are time capsules, highlighting that the island has undergone the same radical transformations as the rest of the developed and developing worlds in terms of democratisation, economic and cultural liberalisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and commercialisation. Interaction with these influence the museums' narratives. The authority of the museums' message is constantly challenged and as a result is continuously adapted to changing social and political demand (ibid 2014: 3-4).



For Taiwan change has come drastically and rapidly. The speed of change is reflected in its museums, of which most discussed in this thesis have only been established recently. With nationhood effectively arriving in 1987, the employ of museums was called upon to propagate a Taiwan unique cultural heritage, i.e. the Authorised Heritage Discourse. This table provides an overview of when Taiwan's national museums officially opened:

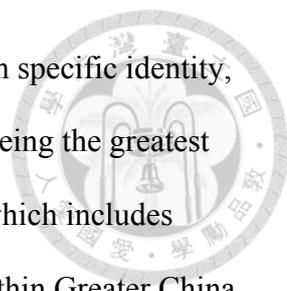
Table: Year of official opening of national museums

Museum	Opened
National Taiwan Museum ¹ – Taipei City	1908
National Museum of History – Taipei City	1955
National Palace Museum ¹ – Taipei City	1965
National Museum of Natural Science - Taichung	1986
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts ¹ - Taichung	1988
National Science and Technology Museum – Kaohsiung	1997
National Radio Museum – Chiayi County	1999
National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium – Pingtung County	2000
National Center for Traditional Arts – Yilan County	2002
National Museum of Prehistory ¹ – Taitung	2002
National Museum of Taiwan Literature ¹ - Tainan	2003
National Cheng Kung University Museum - Tainan	2007
National Museum of Taiwan History ¹ - Tainan	2011
National 228 Memorial Museum – Taipei ¹	2011
National Museum of Marine Science and Technology - Keelung	2014
National Palace Museum Southern Branch ¹ – Chiayi County	2015
National Human Rights Museum ¹ – New Taipei City	Preparatory ²

¹ Visited

² Since 2011

A study of Taiwan museums cannot ignore museological developments in China against which Taiwanese identity is contrasted. On face value, China's museum scene is going through a similar process as Taiwan. Interest is shifting to local identity, apparent in a proliferation of local cultural museums and ecomuseums, of which China is a pioneer. Obvious local differences are now being acknowledged. These not only reflect cultural differences, but also social and economic. Other than dividing people, differences in culture and heritage are celebrated and recognised as contributing factors

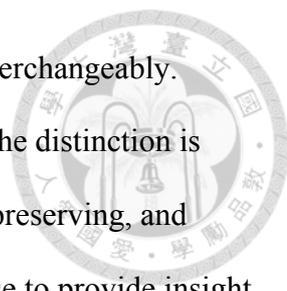


to Chineseness. So rather than a contrasting identity such as a Taiwan specific identity, the Chinese identity is expanding, based on the Han Chinese factor being the greatest common denominator on which not only the nation claim is based, which includes Taiwan, but also the inevitability of different forms of integration within Greater China (ibid.: 40). A counter argument to this broad approach to ethnicity could be that, with 1.3 billion of China's 1.4 billion population recognised as Han Chinese, equivalent to 17% of the world population, the high granularity of Han as an ethnic group does not render this a meaningful distinction (2018 World Population by Country).

With the reflection on the political role museums have in showcasing national identity, a more pragmatic reasoning should not be overlooked. There are strong commercial incentives for establishing museums. City branding and tourism are important factors. For the earlier described 'Integrated Community Making Program' enacted by the Taiwan Ministry of Culture, this is an important incentive to secure the cooperation of local communities and has certainly been a factor in Taiwan's museum boom. Through deliberate 'place making', sites with local cultural and historical relevance are identified and developed into tourist destinations. Not only amenities are developed, but also the narratives. These are generally based on stories or myths affirming positive characteristics while ignoring negative, dissenting ones (Lu 2002: 135-154).

4. Ethnographic Museums

Where ethnography is the academic activity of collecting cultural data about societies, ethnology, or cultural anthropology, pertains to the comparative study of societies in order to obtain a better understanding of cultural phenomena (Jacobs: 2016). The terms



‘ethnic museums’ and ‘ethnographic museums’ are however used interchangeably. Illustrative of this is that when looking up these terms in Wikipedia the distinction is reversed, limiting the object of ethnological museums to collecting, preserving, and displaying artifacts and artwork, while reserving contextualizing these to provide insight into peoples and their cultures for ethnographic museums. I will use the term ethnographic museums for museums dedicated to an individual ethnic group and reserve the term ethnological museums for museums showing different ethnic groups in relation to each other, so providing insight into multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. Such museums are rare and I have not identified one in Taiwan.

Ethnographical museums in the West have their roots in colonialism, familiarizing people in the metropolis with ‘others’ with whom they now had a link. Not as part of the nation, which would imply a kinship, but as part of empire, which implies servitude. Shedding this image has been cumbersome and academic attacks on these institutes have been fierce. Perhaps the most effective attack was launched by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978), accusing the West of gazing at the East, studying the ‘other’ with the West as the norm. The organisational home of cultural anthropology at universities in countries with a colonising past is typically within human, social, and political sciences, reflecting careful positioning cognisant of sensitivities, while in countries without a colonising history, or not identifying themselves as such, cultural anthropology is typically linked to archaeology and history, such as in the USA. This is also the case in Taiwan, and the national museums which include ethnographic exhibitions reflect this approach. Exhibits are included in the National Taiwan Museum in Taipei, which combines indigenous ethnography with natural history, the National Museum of Prehistory in Taitung, and the National Museum of Taiwan History in Tainan, the only national museum which includes

interaction with other ethnic groups. The National Museum of Prehistory and the National Museum of Taiwan History are discussed in the chapters on archaeological museums and historical museums respectively. The National Taiwan Museum will be visited in this chapter.



Dividing Taiwan into ethnic groups statistically, which is inherently problematic due to the diffuse nature of differentiating essentials, the following groups are recognised: Hokla (69%), Hakka (14%), Taiwan indigenous peoples (2%), post 1945 Mainland Chinese (9%) and, the most recent group acknowledged, the new immigrants from Southeast Asia. This relates to migrant workers and foreign brides. Because of the patriarchal census system and censuring based on citizenship, this last group does not show up in the statistics. 2016 estimates shown by the National Museum of Taiwan History at its 2017 exhibition on ‘Southeast Asian Migrant Workers and Immigrants in Taiwan’ puts the number of migrant workers at 610,000 and that for foreign brides at 140,000. This amounts to 3% of Taiwan’s population, still relatively low compared to the influx of recent immigrants in other parts of the developed world (Muyard 2012: 303, 309; The New Tai-ker).

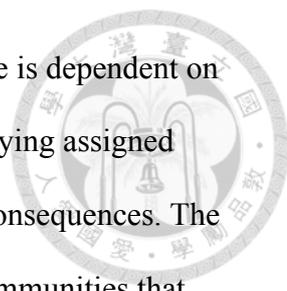
Indigenous population

There are a considerable number of local ethnological museums, ecomuseums, cultural parks, and theme parks in Taiwan run by government agencies, local government, private institutions, or commercially. The indigenous theme appeals most to tourists, both local and international. Although indigenous groups are the smallest population group these days, tourist promotion of Taiwan gives a very different impression. An argument can be made that the percentage of the total population does not fairly reflect the impact of indigenous culture on the island, as the sparsely populated indigenous

areas, which include the high mountains and the east coast, makes up 40% of the island. This area was only brought under Qing administration at the very end of their hold on Taiwan. In this area indigenes have a much more dominating presence. Another argument is that the Australian Indigenous Peoples, receiving considerable more international attention, also amount to appropriately 2% of that country's population (Ryan, Chang and Huan 2007: 189).

Indigenous museums and other venues cater to the tourists, providing them with what they came looking for and offering the image of exotic people continuing an archaic lifestyle, resistant to modernity. This feminises the indigenous population, ignoring their modern history. The indigenes of the plains, referred to as 'civilised' or more derogatively as 'cooked savages' in the Qing period, were confronted with mass immigration and integrated or were pushed into the margins of society since the 17th century. Their decedents are now referred to as a single ethnic group, with a nearly extinct culture, the Pingpu. The indigenes of the mountains and East coast, the 'uncivilised' or 'raw savages', remained outside of Qing control till the end of the 19th century, and maintained a 'savage boundary' running from north to south, quarantining these communities. Headhunting practices reinforced their savage stigma. There was no tribal organisation form at that time. They lived in village- and clan structures that needed to take care of themselves.

The recognition of tribes is a modern construct, introduced by the Japanese to the indigenous clans from the mountains and East coast that remained outside of Qing control until shortly before ceding the island to Japan. The tribe structure was based on essentialist characteristics, the main ones being physical characteristics, cultural traits, civilised status, language, and oral history. 'Civilised status', measured against the level of Sinification is particularly ambiguous. Language was the most persuasive trait used

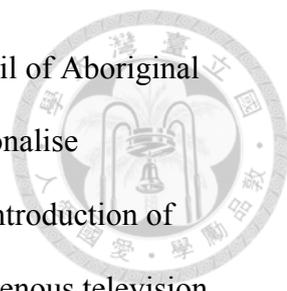


(Hu 2007; Teng 2006: 211-12). Today, survival of indigenous culture is dependent on this tribal system. Recognition as a tribe, and with this the accompanying assigned rights, is a bureaucratic process, with important legal and financial consequences. The Japanese recognised nine tribes. This number is now sixteen. The communities that make up these tribes are the ones that remained outside of Taiwan society till the end of the 19th century, when they were confronted by commercial infringement on their habitats and by military campaigns. The last big indigenous rebellion, the Musha jiken at what now is known as Wushe in Nantou County in central Taiwan, harshly crushed by the Japanese army, occurred as late as 1930 (Kobayashi 2009: 159-164). After pacification, Japanisation and later, after KMT takeover, Sinification further eroded indigenous culture. Added to this is the mass conversion to Christianity, especially after 1945, to the extent that 80% of the indigenous peoples are now considered Christian. Over 50% of the indigenes live in the big cities on the western plain (Ku 2012: 93). The situation the indigenous population live in today is, just as other population groups, the result of modernity.

Only until recently were the indigenous peoples a marginalised population, at the bottom of the social pyramid with a frowned-upon lifestyle. A turnaround came in the 1980s, when the lifting of martial law and democratisation of Taiwan coincided with mounting international concern for the plight of indigenous peoples worldwide. In 1984, the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was issued. It was adopted, after much discussion, in 2007. A key issue was that defining people by their ethnic group propels indigenous rights into the human rights discussion on cultural relativism contra universalism. Designating rights to groups, and so subordinating group members to culturally specific norms and values, conflicts with universalist ideals of individual human rights. Who decides? Related discussions on

group rights concern ownership of intellectual property of ethnic minorities and land rights, issues also debated on in Taiwan (Logan 2008: 126-130).

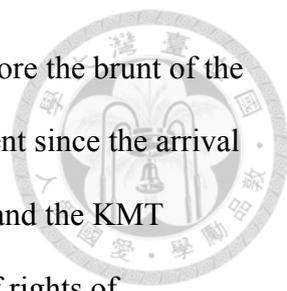
Also in 1984, the first indigenous rights organisation in Taiwan, the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA), was formed with support of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Through the international network of the Presbyterian church, ATA members participated in the ‘Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the United Nations’, linking the local indigenous movement to the international movement at the UN, a for Taiwan rare occasion (Ku 2009: 102-103). Discrimination issues combatted early were the myth of Wu Feng and names used to indicate indigenous peoples. Wu Feng, according to this Qing era myth, was a Han Chinese man who sacrificed himself to stop the Indigenous tradition of headhunting. The Japanese changed the crux of the story from a man protecting his own people from head hunters to a civilizer of savages. The KMT adopted this version, promoting Wu as a prime example of Chinese virtues at the expense of the indigenous population, which sat nicely with the KMT’s Sinification campaign. This story was included in elementary school textbooks. Indigenous protest, which included tearing down a statue of Wu Feng and replacing it with a 228 Incident memorial (Chapter 8) in 1988 in Chiayi in central Taiwan, led to the removal of this story from the textbooks (Cheung 2017). As for naming, Taiwan indigenous people were referred to as mountain people, or variations including the word ‘mountain’. The reference to mountain was linked to being primitive and backwards but also incorrect, as almost half of the ‘mountain people’ lived elsewhere. Through a vote organised by ATA, the name decided on was *yuanzhumin*, considered a neutral word, which translates into indigenous or aboriginal. Both translations are common (Mitsuda 2012: 157-58).



In 1996, the Taiwan KMT government established the Council of Aboriginal Affairs, renamed Council of Indigenous Peoples in 2001, to institutionalise governmental dealing with indigenous related issues. 2005 saw the introduction of Taiwan Indigenous Television, with the claim of being the first indigenous television station in Asia. News broadcasts on this channel are offered in 14 indigenous languages (Taiwan Indigenous Television 2014). This all contributed to the emancipation of the Indigenous population in Taiwan. Where originally discrimination, poverty, poor housing, labour rights, and access to education were the call to arms, the focus has shifted to recognition and collective identity of indigenous tribes (Ku 2012: 95). In 1997, indigenous rights were written into the Taiwan constitution.

In 2005, the Indigenous Peoples Basic Law (IPBL) was passed, enacted to address rights of indigenous peoples. The law includes, amongst others, articles on language, culture and protecting knowledge and intellectual property, on housing, health and employment and on land and resources and the right to a chosen lifestyle. Passing or amending acts to substantiate the IPBL has proven to be a drawn-out process. In 2007, the Indigenous Traditional Intellectual Creation Protection act was passed (amended 2015). In 2015 the 2001 Indigenous Peoples Employment Rights Protection act was amended. In 2017, the Indigenous Language act was passed (Zeldin 2017). A particularly contentious issue is that of land rights, included in the 2010 draft Indigenous Peoples Self-Government Act, conflicting with commercial interests (Reid 2012: 462; Simon 2017).

On 1 August 2016, the then newly elected DPP president Tsai Ing-wen issued a formal apology on behalf of the Taiwan government to the indigenous people for their treatment, an event broadcasted on television and the Internet. The apologies were directed to the recognised indigenous tribes, but she also acknowledged the Pingpu as

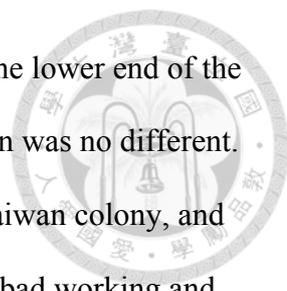


an ethnic group who, as she described, living on the western plains bore the brunt of the impact of the arrival of outsiders. The apologies cover all mistreatment since the arrival of the Dutch, so including Koxinga, the Qing Empire, the Japanese, and the KMT authoritarian rule. She also apologised for the delay of recognition of rights of indigenous people and the tediousness of putting legislation in place dealing with indigenous rights in this period of democracy. She also addressed the apology itself, the appropriateness of which was a political debate (Office of the President 2017).

The above signifies the long way the indigenous rights movement in Taiwan has come. International attention and activism have had tangible results, but an added push was given by the debate on Taiwanese-ness and the politically charged narrative of Taiwan's society born out of an indigenous past and formed by a succession of colonisation. Indigenous in Taiwan is a loaded word as China does not recognise having indigenous peoples within its borders, which in its view includes Taiwan. In China's view, all population groups contribute to a native Chinese culture of which they are a part (Ku 2012: 114-notes).

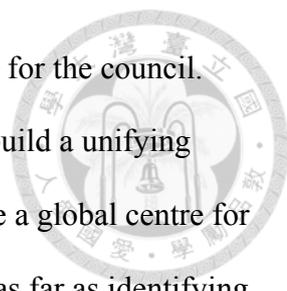
Hakka

Profiling the Hakka as a separate ethnic group within the Han goes back to the fall of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), when the Hakka migrated south from the Central Plains to flee war and famine. They largely remained together and settled as groups and in subsequent difficult times, the early Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and late Qing (1645-1911), migrated again as groups, reaching countries outside of China. In this diaspora, the Hakka retained their own language and culture, resisting integration and, euphemistically called guests, remained outsiders from the receiving population. Despite being attributed with positive characteristics such as entrepreneurial and hard



working, the Hakka, as for migrant workers of all times, came in at the lower end of the social hierarchy and were stigmatized by this. Their history in Taiwan was no different. The Dutch already resorted to recruiting Hakka labourers for their Taiwan colony, and Hakka later worked as cheap labour for Hoklo landlords under often bad working and living conditions. A botched joint Hoklo and Hakka uprising back in 1721 against Qing authorities in Taiwan brought a persistent rift between the communities which the Qing authorities exploited to their advantage. Hoklo rebellions against the Qing were put down with the help of Hakka. As agricultural land became scarcer in the 19th century, competition led to skirmishes that generally would be lost by the Hakka, pushing them further into the periphery. With the Japanese occupation of the island, the preoccupation with each other waned but did not lead to cooperation between the Hoklo and the Hakka. They fought and lost their own early battles against the new rulers. Living conditions of the Hakka did however improve considerably under the Japanese as infrastructural projects such as new roads, railway lines, and waterworks lifted Hakka terrain out of isolation (Wu 2012: 133-136).

The KMT martial-law period curtailed Hakka cultural freedom. A homogeneous Chinese culture was imposed on the population of Taiwan, quelling all Hakka-related matters and repressing the use of the Hakka language in public. With the lifting of martial law in 1987, true to its history of endurance, the Hakka culture came back to the public domain with a vengeance. With its working-class background, the emancipation of the Hakka community developed along the lines of labour activism and through organising labour unions and protest rallies, added vigour to their demands. This grassroots movement was important to Taiwan's democratisation process. As with the indigenous movement, a governmental council was formed. This was the Council of Hakka affairs established in 2001. It was renamed the Hakka Affairs Council in 2012



following the passing of the Hakka Basic Law providing a legal base for the council. The council's mission is to “revitalize Hakka language and culture, build a unifying Hakka identity full of happiness, confidence and dignity, and become a global centre for Hakka cultural research and exchange”. The Hakka Basic Law goes as far as identifying 69 townships with more than one-third Hakka population, pronouncing them Key Hakka Cultural Development Areas, on which focus will be directed towards strengthening the further development of Hakka language, culture, and cultural industries. With this a de-facto Hakka homeland is created. This was strengthened with an amendment to the Hakka Basic Act in December 2017, with which the Taiwan government became the first government to recognise Hakka as an official national language. In townships designated as Key Hakka Cultural Development Area with a Hakka population up to 50%, Hakka should be used as one of the main languages for communication. For townships where this is 50% or more, Hakka will be the primary language of communication. As is the case for the indigenous movement, there is dedicated Hakka television. Hakka TV - Channel 17, a public broadcasting channel (“Our History & Mission”; Cheng 2017).

There is no shortage in opportunities to view or experience Hakka culture. Hakka cultural parks and museums can be found throughout Taiwan. When comparing the Hakka movement with the indigenous movement, there is a striking difference in assertiveness. The Hakka movement operates from a position of power. This can be attributed to a much better starting point and their strong political clout, representing a substantial part of Taiwan voters. The indigenous movement started from a much weaker social position with minimum voting power. Where the Hakka movement is self-reliant, the indigenous movement is dependent on sympathisers. The relationship between the Hakka and the Hoklo remains ambivalent. The animosity of the past has

subsidised, but current politics still deal with the effect. With many Hakka associating the DPP with the Hokla population, the KMT, that reinvented itself as a Taiwanese political party rather than Chinese and is credited for leading Taiwan to economic success and democracy, is a viable alternative. Voting for the DPP is based on merits, not on sentiments.

Mainland Chinese

The Indigenous and the Hakka communities are well represented through cabinet-level representation by the Council for Hakka Affairs and the Council of Indigenous People, while the Mainlanders have no such representation for their cultural affairs. This ethnic group arrived in the wake of the handover of Taiwan to the ROC in 1945 and the loss of the Mainland by the KMT in 1949. In this short period approximately two million arrived at a time the original population was around five million (Reynaud 2002: 19). In the following martial law period, the Mainland Chinese had a dominant position and little need for individual representation but this dominance deteriorated with the ending of martial law and the subsequent democratisation process. With the discourse that emerged on what entails Taiwanese-ness, they found themselves on the defensive.

Searching for cultural heritage to relate to, the military dependents villages presented themselves. The grass roots Association of Mainlander Taiwanese (AMT) was formed and became involved with producing documentaries over vanishing villages. Legislative headway was made with a revision of the Act for Rebuilding Old Quarters for Military Dependents with a provision for cultural conservation (Gao 2012).

Museums dedicated to the indigenous population far outnumber those of other ethnicities. The museums below are selected for their exhibitions on indigenous

peoples. Chapter 5, on ecomuseums, includes a Hakka cultural park and a museum of a military dependence village, representing Mainland Chinese.



4.1 *National Taiwan Museum*

The National Taiwan Museum is hard to define. The museum started its life in 1908 with an exhibition that was already a mix of natural and industrial history. In 1915 it moved into what is now the main building of the museum, a monument by its own right. The character of the museum has remained hybrid. In colonial tradition, an anthropology section was added to the permanent exhibition by the Japanese curator early on, displaying the Taiwan aborigines as a rarity, an object of scientific study. Central in this study was the classification of the indigenous groups into, at that time, eight tribes following the essentialist criteria described earlier in this chapter. With criteria set, the museum collected artefacts providing content to these criteria. The indigenous section of the museum is object-focused, predominantly clothing and weapons. This is exhibited using traditional cabinet-style displays. Activities such as agriculture, hunting, and fishing are shown in mural and models and there is a video on indigenous festivities. The museum does not bring the people to life. The inclusion of a prehistoric section does not help in this respect. On the same floor, coming out of the anthropology section, the visitor walks into the section on animals and plants in Taiwan, associating indigenous people with the natural environment rather than with society. For visitors from countries with a colonising history, this combination of anthropology and natural history can be somewhat unsettling. Influences of the Japanese colonial heritage shine through here. More on Taiwan's indigenous people is shown in the new, modern, 'Discovering Taiwan' exhibition a floor higher. This from the perspective of Japanese researchers in the early 20th century, showing their collections. The photo material on

indigenous life at that time do bring in a human perspective. Again, at this exhibition anthropological research is combined with that of naturalists (Website National Taiwan Museum).

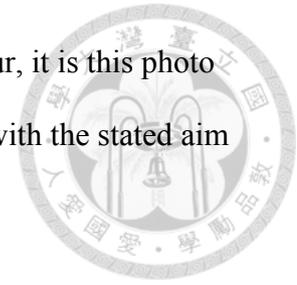


4.2 *Museum of Anthropology, National Taiwan University*

The origins of the Museum of Anthropology of the National Taiwan University in Taipei is the Institute of Ethnology founded in 1928 at the Taihoku Imperial University, the university's predecessor. The museum moved to its current site on the university campus in 2010. In its new location, the museum is more assessable to the public, in line with the Department of Anthropology's aim to share its collection and, as implied in its website, promote awareness of Taiwan's original culture and with this awareness of Taiwan's cultural diversity.

The museum itself is a museum display by its own rights. The collection is complete in the sense that collecting activities, that started in the 1920s, ceased in the early 1980s. The museum exhibitions purposely, shows how indigenous culture was displayed by the Japanese in the 1930s. This is also carried through for the recognition of tribes. Of the 16 indigenous tribes recognised today, the museum only shows the 9 recognised by the Japanese at the end of their colonial period. Furnishing with 1930s-style display cabinets completes the outmoded image. The selection differs per tribe. Only with a video film showing footage of a tribal event does the museum fall out of its 1930s role. The objects are chosen for their 'differentness' in comparison with other tribes. Cultural features are the defining characteristics. The image the museum provides is that of a simpler life than that of the visitor. A break from this is a photo display in a side room of three periods in the 20th century, early, mid and late, painting a more realistic picture on how indigenous peoples lived and how they now live. While

the Japanese style display has a distinct ‘Japanese Orientalist’ flavour, it is this photo display that brings Taiwan’s Indigenes into Taiwan society, in line with the stated aim of the museum (Website NTU Museum of Anthropology).



4.3 *Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines*

The Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, opening to the public in 1994, is a privately established museum sponsored by the Shung Ye Group, a Taiwan corporation active in the automobile industry. A considerable part of the collection was donated by the chairman of the Group and founder of the museum Safe C.F. Lin. Located only a stone’s throw away from the National Palace Museum, the two museums’ messages cannot be further apart. At the Shung Ye Museum there is no hint at all of Chinese culture, starting with the building. It is a modern concrete and glass building, but as can be seen elsewhere in Taiwan with modern buildings associated with indigenous peoples, the architecture borrows from traditional indigenous dwellings and art, making for a quite distinctive architectural style, starkly contradicting the grand palace style of the nearby National Palace Museum. It is hard to believe this is a coincidence.

Visitors combining their visit to the Shung Ye Museum with a visit to the National Palace Museum may be somewhat underwhelmed. I would argue however that it is this contrast that puts you on the right footing. It slates a dominant Chinese culture against a marginalised indigenous culture which art the founder, on the museum’s website, describes as directly linked to the native soil and is “Taiwan itself”. The exhibition is a mix of models, indigenous-themed sculptures, and antiques and traditional style artefacts. Using multimedia, contemporary indigenous communities are shown and traditional manufacturing techniques demonstrated. There is a special section on animistic beliefs, ancestral spirit worship, and head-hunting customs, which

is a visitors' favourite. A feature of the museum is that the text at the displays are, for the greater part, written by tribe members, bringing a refreshing authenticity to the exhibition which, some may object, comes at the expense of cohesion. A more fundamental rebuke is that the museum fuses the past with the present, resulting in a romanticized image of modern day indigenous communities. To the museum's defence in this respect is that the Shung Ye Museum is a prime institute for the promotion and publishing of academic research on Taiwan's indigenous people, cooperating with universities and academic institutions around the world (Website Shung Ye Museum).

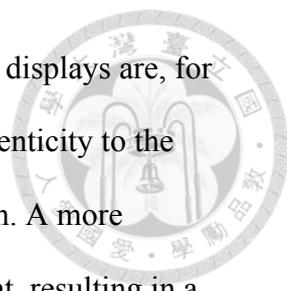


Figure 1: Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines (author's photo)

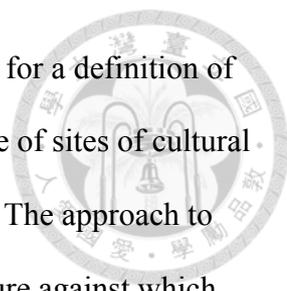
The history of today's indigenous peoples is about resistance, marginalisation, and emancipation. It is about their place in Taiwan society today and how they arrived there. Human rights is an important theme. None of the ethnological museums discussed above have this entry point. Differentness and the cultural diversity the indigenous bring to Taiwan identity are central to these museums. For a socio-cultural outlook, the National

Museum of Taiwan History, discussed in the chapter on history museum, is the museum to visit.



5. Ecomuseums

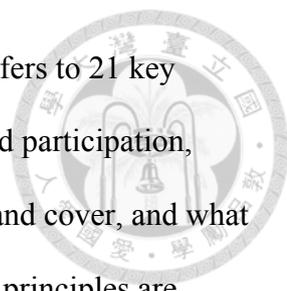
An alternative to traditional museums are ecomuseums. Where traditional museums are engaged in collecting, preserving and displaying artefacts in dedicated buildings by specialised staff, the principle of ecomuseums is exhibiting living heritage on its original site, run by the community represented. The ecomuseum allows locals to represent their way of life. The term ‘ecomuseum’ can give rise to confusion. ‘Eco’, short for ecology, here does not refer to its earth science meaning, but rather to the environment created by humans. There is no shortage of definitions for ecomuseums. A simplified version is: “a community-led heritage or museum project that supports sustainable development” (Davis, Huang and Liu 2010: 81). Key features are *in situ* conservation and interpretation done in cooperation with other than professional museum organisations, and management by local people. It is the local people who decide what aspects of the site are important to their identity. The overriding goal for the local community is that the ecomuseum contributes to the sustainable development of the community. Benefits are not necessarily economic but also, amongst others, the cohesion of the community. This is a cultural-orientated conservation philosophy. This was first introduced in the Australian Burra Charter, the common name for the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance of 1979 (revised 1999 and 2013), zooming in on the cultural value that a site may have for directly involved stakeholders (The Burra Charter 2013; Waterton, Smith and Campbell 2006: 340-341).



The Burra Charter left the museum community with the want for a definition of a place of cultural significance. However, due to the intangible nature of sites of cultural significance, there are no general attributes to constitute a definition. The approach to this became the Heritagescape, which is a method that offers a measure against which individual sites can be analysed for its own merits as a special place and in relation to other sites. The key attribute for the site is that it should be recognisable. It must comply with the principles of boundaries, cohesion and visibility. Within the parameters set by these principles, a site of cultural significance must be able to be envisioned. If this is possible, analysis of that envisioned against what is actually distinguishable determines the cultural significance of the site. Does it provide a sense of place? Do the tangible and intangible aspects come together to provide a heritage experience? Is it a place of the past (Garden 2006: 396-398)?

China is a pioneer of ecomuseums, establishing the ‘Liuzhi Principles’ in 2000. Nine principles are stated, starting with the principle that locals are the true owners of their culture and that they have the right to interpret and validate this themselves. The principles go on to declare that public participation is critical to ecomuseums and culture is a common and democratic asset that must be democratically managed. They conclude with social development being a prerequisite for establishing ecomuseums in living societies. These principles were widely adopted by the museum community in 2005 following publication in ICOM News, a magazine of the International Council of Museums (Liu and Lee 2015: 13251; Donghai 2005).

Davis, lecturing on ecomuseums, makes the principle concrete. He recognises the ‘3 main pillars of the ecomuseum ideal’. These are (1) sense and spirit of place, (2) community involvement, and (3) being malleable and responsive to unique context. Sense of spirit, for which *in situ* location is essential, is addressed with the

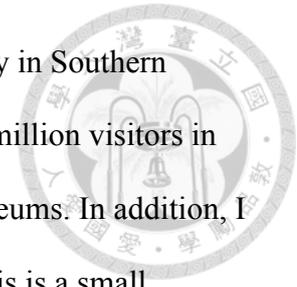


Heritagescape. For compliance to the remaining two pillars, Davis refers to 21 key indicators / principles for ecomuseums. These pertain to democratised participation, addressed in the second pillar, and what an ecomuseum can include and cover, and what it can do. The latter is covered in the third pillar. It is rare that all the principles are covered (2010 lecture). Liu and Lee in their article on ecomuseums in Taiwan conclude that none of Taiwan's 18 ecomuseums, recognised by the Ministry of Culture at time of publication, comply to all principles (2015: 13253).

Ecomuseums are not without issues, particularly when ethnic heritage is concerned. With the portrayal of heritage through lifestyles and customs, accusations of essentialism are easily made. With sustainable development being a key requisite, the democratic process on deciding what culture to exhibit will be influenced by economic motives. Confirming a preconceived notion of a culture frozen in time will appeal to visitors but reinforces an image of backwardness. Also, authenticity takes a back seat to cultural experience. To this effect artefacts and rites are adapted to meet the taste and available time of visitors. An issue for all successful ecomuseums is the impact on the environment due to the pressures of tourism and the effects of this on the social fabric and infrastructure of a community. The requirements for accommodating visitors, such as new roads, large parking areas, hotels, restaurants, shopping, and peripheral activities attracting a captive audience will change the nature of the community and affect the 'sense of place' that justified qualification as a cultural heritage site in the first place. The ecomuseum requirement of sustainable development therefore has a self-destructive element (Waterton and Smith 2010: 208-209; Ryan Chang and Huan: 198-210).

When looking at visitor numbers published to measure success, the New Taipei City Gold Museum and the Houtong Coal Mine Ecological Park, both in the Jiufeng area in North Taiwan, received upwards of 1.3 million (2013) and 800,000 (2014)

visitors annually. Liu Dui Hakka Cultural Center in Pingtung County in Southern Taiwan also reports a high number of visitors. There were over 2.1 million visitors in the first two years of operation. I visited these three popular ecomuseums. In addition, I visited the Kaohsiung Museum of Military Dependents Villages. This is a small museum, off the tourist route (Liu and Lee: 13253; “Luidui Hakka Cultural Park Celebrates...”: 2013).



5.1 New Taipei City Gold Museum

The New Taipei City Gold Museum at Jinguashi, opening in 2005, is Taiwan’s first ecomuseum. It is administered by the New Taipei City government, whose area covers a large part of Northern Taiwan. The setting is stunning, in the mountains rising steeply from the sea, but it has a mixed history. Gold mining in the area started around 1890, but it was under the Japanese that large-scale excavations started and gold was mined on an industrial scale at Jinguashi and nearby Jiufen. At Jinguashi mining was continued after World War II by the KMT government through the Taiwan Metal Mining Corporation (Taijin) and its predecessor. Taijin collapsed in 1987 under its debts and the price fall in copper, the secondary mining activity it increasingly relied on. The decline and eventual collapse of the company had a devastating effect on Jinguashi that saw its population fall from 20,000 at its peak to around 1,000 today.

1987 also marked another event. In that year the Taiwanese film “A City of Sadness” on the 228 Incident (which is detailed in the chapter on human rights museums), filmed in Jiufen and the area surrounding Jinguashi, and received international recognition, winning the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival (Lin 2007: 128). The attention the film received, and the amply shown beauty of the mountain setting of Jiufen, attracted a flow of tourists that continues to the current day.

Jiufen, which saw a similar drop in population as Jinguashi, is now one of Taiwan's top tourist attractions.

To allow Jinguashi to tap into the flow of tourists, the idea of transforming the extensive mining area with its industrial ruins into an ecomuseum with Jinguashi as its centre, took hold as early as 1995, only a few years after Taijin's bankruptcy. The plan was to first develop a core museum area that would attract visitors as the first phase and to have, as phase two, project developers move into town to build and operate tourist facilities such as hotels, restaurants, shops, and other amenities considered indispensable for attracting tourists. A consideration in this, however, was that the mine property had changed hands and was now held by the Taiwan Power Company and the Taisugar Company as a debt settlement, and these companies had an interest in the commercial exploitation of the land. With the first phase completed, the museum opened in 2005. The local community however was not happy with the planned commercial development, worried that they would be squeezed out of the action. This led to protests. The plans for commercial development fell through, but this was largely because the area proved unsuitable for large-scale development. Transforming on-site industrial buildings into commercial buildings was not viable and the construction of large modern buildings would distort the look and feel of the place. Also the cost of the infrastructure needed to cope with traffic and accommodate the surge of people into town proved to be prohibitive. The project was not economically feasible (Tsai 2016).

The museum itself had an encouraging start in 2005 with over 900,000 visitors, but the numbers gradually declined in the following years. A turnaround came when the New Taipei City Government decided to abolish all admission fees within its district. For Jinguashi this meant that the parameters set for the museum disappeared and the

museum area merged into the town. This had a healing effect on the relationship between the museum and the community. Locals moved in to provide visitors creature comforts and the area became a communal centre for the townspeople. I have been able to see this effect for myself, having visited the museum in its early days and coming back regularly over the years. After a rocky start, it now actually functions as a community ecomuseum, true to its mission statement. This mission statement states the museum's goals as the preservation of mining history and culture, promoting environmental awareness, and promoting the gold arts and metal crafts, all of which are recognisable at the site.

The highlights of the core museum area are, as far as visitors' interests are concerned, the 'Gold Building', the 'Crown Prince Chalet' built in preparation for the visit of the later war time Emperor Herohito (who never actually arrived) and which is now a very popular photo spot for wedding pictures, a walk-through mining tunnel for a mining experience, and a short hike up to the ruins of a Shinto shrine. The Gold Building is the main attraction, particularly the 99.9% pure, 220 kg gold brick on the first floor for which visitors line up to touch. The displays on the ground floor however are more penetrating. Next to a model of mining tunnels and the work environment in the tunnels, there is a display of the Kinkaseki WWII prisoner of war (POW) camp at Jinguashi. There were 14 Japanese POW camps in Taiwan. In the years 1942-45 more than 1,100 allied prisoners were held at Kinkaseki, where they lived in appalling conditions and were put to work as slaves in the mines. Many did not survive. In 1997 continuously adapted to changing social and political demand (ibid 2014: 3-4), on initiative of the Taiwan POW Camps Memorial Society, a society set up by the Canadian expatriate Michael Hurst, a memorial was erected at the site. The display over this dark episode and the involvement of Taiwanese in this at the Gold Building is a rare

example of exhibiting Taiwan's war history on the Japanese side of the war (Website Gold Museum, Hurst n.d.).



5.2 *Houtong Coal Mine Ecological Park*

The Houtong Coal Mine Ecological Park, opening to the public in 2010, is also administered by the New Taipei City government. Houtong was an important town during the heyday of the Taiwan coal mining industry, which was set up as a modern industry by the Japanese and continued up to 2001, when the last coal mine was shut. Taiwan annual coal production peaked at almost five million tonnes in 1968 but then went into steep decline. When coal mining came to Houtong in the 1890s, it was only a small village, but it grew to be a town of 6,000. Houtong has come full circle with a population now of around 500.

The ecological park is an initiative to breathe new life into the village. The main facilities on display originate from the Ruisan Mining Industry, in use from 1934 to 1990. The main facility—the coal preparation plant—however, is in ruins. For an idea on what the site looked like, the visitor is dependent on the scale model in the visitors' centre. There is also a short mining train ride providing visitors an experience on what it was like to be in a mine, and they are encouraged to try working with mining tools. To the museum's credit, the hardship, dangers, and environmental damage caused by mining are well explained. Other than taking advantage of hiking opportunities, the park has little to offer further. Still, it attracts large crowds. This is because the museum has become a sideshow. The villagers have taken advantage of the New Taipei City government's place-making efforts and promote themselves as 'cat village'. With a modern road, a railway station, and ample parking space, visitors are flocking to Houtong to see 100 plus stray cats leading a life of luxury provided by the villagers. It is

a stretch but there is a story line attaching cats to the mine, where they apparently made themselves useful keeping the mine free of rodents. According to an article in the *Taipei Times*, 90% of the visitors come for the cats. This is an extreme example of a community of an ecomuseum site claiming the narrative and giving shape to what sustainable development entails (Website Ruisan Coal Mine in Ruifang; Website Houtong Coal-Mine; Saunders 2018).

5.3 *Liudui Hakka Cultural Park*

The 8 hectare Liudui Hakka Cultural Center, located at Neipu Township, Pingtung, has as mission to promote and celebrate Hakka language and cultural heritage. The park is administered by the Council for Hakka Affairs of the Executive Yuan. It officially opened in 2011. The park is not an original location but a recreation aimed at providing a sense of Hakka life. This ecomuseum, which calls itself a cultural park, aims to showcase village life, with patches of farmland where rice, tobacco, and vegetables are planted in season, and with grasslands, bamboo forest, a lake, and running water which together represent the original natural environment. A floral park is an added attraction. It is a throwback to a romanticised past, which the museum's guide book readily admits. The guide laments the deteriorating environment, threatening the bond Hakka communities have with each other and with the land since the earliest settlers arrived 400 years ago. The most eye-catching feature of the park is a group of huge umbrella-like structures that provide shade and protected space for activities. Although not unattractive, these dominate the park rather than the recreated countryside. The guide explains the constructions through Hakka symbols, but this will be lost on most visitors. When I visited the park in November 2017, most of the visitors appeared to be Hakka families, whiling away a Saturday afternoon. The impression the park left me with was

that the intended purpose of the park is for the Hakka community to celebrate their culture rather than the showcasing of Hakka culture to others. There was no sign of mass visitors (Hakka Affairs Council; Website Liudui Park).

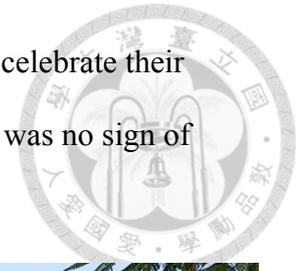
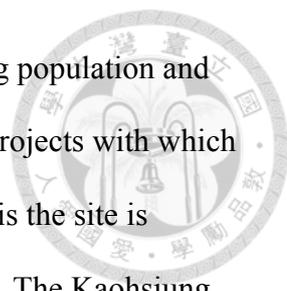


Figure 2: Liudui Hakka Cultural Park (author's photo)

5.4 Kaohsiung Museum of Military Dependents Villages

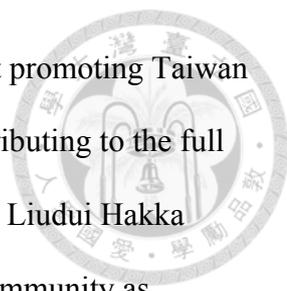
When in 1949 nearly 650,000 nationalist soldiers retreated from the Mainland to Taiwan following their defeat by the communist troops, many of them, with their families, were housed in military dependents villages. These 'villages' were intended to be temporary arrangements, in anticipation of an early return to 'retake the motherland'. In the villages, people from all parts of China lived together, introducing a medley of culture and customs into small communities, giving military dependents villages their own typical characteristics. What they did have in common was a strong patriotic sentiment for the Mainland and a fierce anti-communist persuasion, vividly expressed in the villages. The villages have a unique architecture. The temporary structures were replaced with one-level brick houses with a high degree of uniformity. These villages as



a cultural phenomenon unique to Taiwan are disappearing. An ageing population and rehousing projects attribute to this. This has prompted preservation projects with which villages are restored and given other uses to ensure viability. With this the site is preserved but not the culture, the reason for also setting up museums. The Kaohsiung Museum of Military Dependents Villages, also known as the Kaohsiung Veteran's Museum, is such a museum. Established in 2007, it is operated by the non-governmental Kaohsiung Military Dependents' Villages Culture Development Association.

The museum is categorized as an ecomuseum but is housed in a purpose-built building. In contrast with the ecomuseums mentioned above, this is not a major tourist destination. The museum exhibits life in military dependent villages around the Zouying naval base in Kaohsiung and displays objects from the time they functioned as such. A travel itinerary on the internet suggest 30 minutes for a visit, illustrating its modesty. There are plans however to revitalise one or more of the villages still standing through restoration and to replace the villagers that have moved away with artists in need of workshops, and to provide cafes, restaurants, and home-stay operators for visitors (Lu 2012: 109; Gao 2012; Website Kaohsiung Veteran's Museum).

There is a thin line between ecomuseums and theme parks, open air museums, and permanent exhibitions. None of the museums listed by Liu and Lee as ecomuseums fully meet all characteristics of this museum type and only four of the 18 listed facilities are actually run by local communities according to their research. They therefore suggest using the term 'ecomuseum-like facilities' instead (2015: 13253). These include none of the ones discussed above. Of the museums I visited, the Gold Museum is the most authentic ecomuseum experience. The dramatic setting of this museum provides

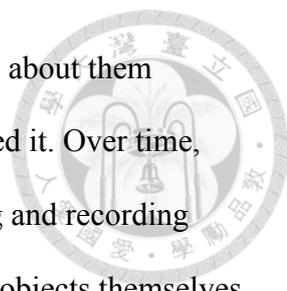


strong support for the museum's narrative. This museum is not about promoting Taiwan but telling a very specific part of Taiwan history frankly and so contributing to the full picture. The Houtong Coal Mine mainly has recreational value while Liudui Hakka Cultural Park, as already mentioned, seems focussed on their own community as audience. The Kaohsiung Museum of Military Dependents Villages is in most aspects a traditional museum and lacks an ecomuseum experience. It shows attributes but the story does not come to life. But what all four museums do is provide insight into different aspects of Taiwan society. In this respect a tour of ecomuseums will be helpful to get a feel of Taiwan if not a coherent historic narrative.

6. Archaeological Museums

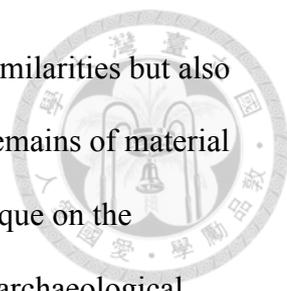
Traditionally, archaeology starts where written history ends, covering the periods of time before written records, called prehistory. But archaeology from its earliest years also served to validate written history. Different schools of archaeology evolved. Culture-historical archaeology, early functional-processual archaeology, processualism, and post-processualism developed successively in the 20th century, based on critique of previous schools of thought, without displacing them.

Archaeology's roots in 19th century social evolutionism tied archaeology to the study of the deeper roots and evolution of human societies. Unilinear social evolution based in colonial encounters categorized groups in stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, and archaeology was employed to understand evolutionary developments. Cultural-historical archaeology, based in the classification of material culture, soon was used to recognise supposed ethnic groups in the past and tie them to groups in the present. Archaeology was also employed to understand how these past groups lived.



The function objects found had for the users and what this teaches us about them became important, including how it was made and used, and who used it. Over time, archaeologists also recognized the great importance of understanding and recording context of the find, which took precedent over recovering individual objects themselves and then studying them. A negative of culture-historical archaeology was that it proved prone to nationalistic interests. The fracturing of a common human development into a multitude of ethnic cultures, assigning different levels of status to cultures and linking these to modern societies, a problematic exercise, enriches national history and boosts nationalistic sentiments (Trigger 2006: 235-248).

Next to the critique above, a fundamental objection emerging against the culture-historical approach was that while building up an image of a prehistoric site, it provided little information on how these sites functioned as a society. It paints the picture but does not tell the story. This story is the focus of early functional processual archaeology. Functional refers to understanding how societies functioned in daily life while processual refers to agents of change. Why and how did change happen (ibid: 314)? Out of the early functional-processual approaches, processualism and post-processualism emerged as mainstream approaches. The processual approach, also known as the New Archaeology, was a movement of archaeology away from an historical perspective towards that of a social science. The historical particulars of past societies were no longer the objective, but rather the uncovering of general rules of human behaviour and the development of societies, and this was to be done using a deductive, scientific approach. This put archaeology on par with sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and economics with their search for explaining human behaviour. Post-processualism, which began in the 1980s, is a reaction to the processual approach. In the chapter on “Contextual Archaeology” in his book *Reading the Past*

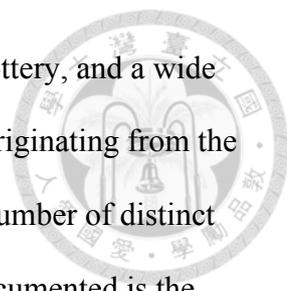


(1986), Hodder argues that archaeologists should not only look for similarities but also for differences when analysing finds. To appreciate the function of remains of material culture found, this should be put into the context of the site. The critique on the processual approach is that deriving generalist rules from individual archaeological findings may result in assigning meaning to objects they did not have for the society researched, so undermining the basis of rules determined (127-128).

The approaches are with us today and have all been important to archaeological research. An open mind however should be kept for the fact that people living in ancient societies will not have recognised their world described in modern concepts. Thought cannot be reconstructed (ibid: 148). Also archaeologists acknowledge that both the questions they ask and the answers they accept are influenced by their socio-political and other research contexts (Trigger: 456). This is something to realise when visiting archaeological museums and exhibitions and in understanding Taiwan prehistory.

Taiwan's prehistory

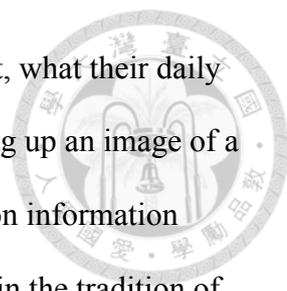
Archaeology is especially important to Taiwan for bringing depth to national history, both in time and diversity. In the effort to link the present to the distant past, the relation between ethnography (anthropology) and archaeology is central. There are around 2,300 prehistoric sites in Taiwan, 150 of which are listed as important archaeological sites (Chen 2011; Liu 2009: 321). The earliest archaeological objects found date from the late Pleistocene at the Baxiandong Cave site on the East Coast in the form of stone tools. The earliest are dated to approximately 25,000 BCE. After a chronological gap from the few Paleolithic sites known, the earliest Neolithic culture appears in Taiwan, called the Tapenkeng Culture, for which artefacts have been found in many sites around the coastal regions of Taiwan (Bellwood 2009: 347). This is a Early Neolithic culture



(6000 to 4700 BCE) of hunter-gatherers who also had agriculture, pottery, and a wide variety of tools. They were a newly arriving population to Taiwan, originating from the Mainland. The Middle Neolithic period (4700 to 3500 BCE) saw a number of distinct cultures emerge in the coastal regions around the island. The best documented is the Yuanshan culture, of which the archaeological type site is in modern day Taipei City. Whether this culture is connected to the much earlier Tapenkeng culture is a matter of academic debate. No archaeological connection has been made between these two cultures, which would imply that the Yuanshan culture is the result of a new wave of immigration from the Mainland, but no Mainland source has been identified yet to substantiate this. This debate is important to the narrative linking present day indigenous peoples to prehistoric cultures. Is the period of continuous indigenous presence 8,000 years or 6,700 years? The end of Taiwan prehistory is set at the end of the Iron Age at 400 BCE. This is an arbitrary date. The earliest written historical records are of a much later date. In the 17th century, the Dutch colonisers were the first to document life in Taiwan (Chen 2011: 60-61).

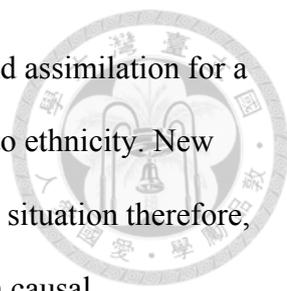
Archaeology was introduced to Taiwan by the Japanese. Their research led them to accept the hypothesis that there was a relationship between the archaeological materials found and present day indigenous cultures and that the origins of the Taiwan indigenous people lay to the south, in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Japanese archaeologists arrived at their conclusion using a cultural historical approach. They set out to reconstruct prehistoric settlements and compared these to present day indigenous societies looking for similarities to prove a direct historical relationship (Nobayashi 2009: 324).

The Taiwanese archaeologists who took over the research from their Japanese colleagues initially continued the Japanese mode of research, but, around 1965,



introduced considering how people interacted with their environment, what their daily life looked like, and what induced cultural change. Not only building up an image of a settlement but also how it functioned and changed over time, based on information distilled from archaeological finds, became goals of archaeology, as in the tradition of the early functional-processual approach. Around 1975, the processual approach, or New Archaeology, was introduced to Taiwan archaeology, focussing on analysing archaeological finds in order to detect general laws of human behaviour seen in prehistoric peoples. This blends in with the ethno-archaeological research method introduced a few years later in which anthropological research on material culture of present day societies is used to form an understanding of material culture unearthed through archaeological research. This method starts with the assumption of an unbroken line between the past and the present (Liu 2009: 366-67). New insights gained through archaeology, but also through linguistic and DNA research, have changed the understanding of the roots of Taiwan indigenous peoples. They are not the result of migration from the south as originally supposed, but rather the source of migration south into the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The common ancestral language, Proto Austronesian, was spoken in Taiwan and ever-evolving DNA research continuously links various Austronesian groups to Taiwan, an item that resurfaces as news item regularly (Bellwood 2009: 339-40, Newby and Smith: 2003).

The linking of Taiwan's prehistoric cultures as ancestors of today's indigenous cultures is an important issue for the reconstruction of Taiwan history and the search as to what constitutes the Taiwan identity. But it is also important to the indigenous population who lack early historical records. Although inclined to accommodate, archaeologists have advised that caution is necessary. The further back in time, the more problematic the link becomes. Societies are fluid. Cultural development and



change need to be reckoned with. Societies are prone to migration and assimilation for a wide variety of reasons. Also cultures are not by definition attached to ethnicity. New arrivals to an area are known to adopt existing culture. In the Taiwan situation therefore, linking tribes to ancient archaeological cultures is based on unproven causal relationships. As mentioned earlier, the recognition of indigenous tribes is a modernism introduced by the Japanese colonisers based on essentialist criteria determined by them, as outsiders, such as language, customs, and physical and cultural characteristics. Still, while it is problematic to link tribes to specific prehistoric societies, archaeological research reveals that prehistoric cultures in Taiwan maintained a continuous, unbroken line of development, not disturbed by the introduction of external cultures until modern times. This does provide the circumstances for cultural and ethnical continuity (Liu 2009: 381).

6.1 National Museum of Prehistory

The location of the National Museum of Prehistory (NMP) in Taitung in southeast Taiwan is due to the nearby Peinan prehistoric site. This site, already noted by the Japanese in a survey report in 1914, was excavated by teams of professors and students of the National Taiwan University (NTU) between 1980 and 1988 as a salvage operation, brought on by railway. What makes the Peinan site stand out is that through archaeological research an image of a Neolithic settlement, dating back 2,500 to 5,000 years, emerges. At the site, remains of houses, household items, and human burial sites with coffins, funerary objects, and human bones were found. This site has been turned into a museum to provide visitors with a view of an operational archaeological site.

Returning to the NMP, this museum officially opened in 2002. Although it is situated on a 10 ha landscaped garden, the museum building does not radiate the



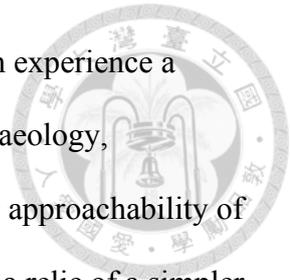
Figure 3: National Museum of Prehistory
(author's photo)

grandeur of other national museums visited. The use of local materials, blending colours and reference to indigenous culture in the exterior design reflects a modesty not typical to the island's national museums. The reference to prehistory in the NMP's name does not cover the full scope of the exhibitions. Taiwan's indigenes and their Austronesian identity and Taiwan's natural history also feature prominently. The NMP states that part of its mission is to put Taiwan's prehistory and indigenous cultures in an international perspective. This provides a counter-message to a Sino-centred characterization of the island. The

importance of indigenous history for Taiwan's identity is illustrated with the display of a poem at the entrance area of the museum of which the English translation is "Facing the future, we treasure the past. For without history, we have no roots. And without roots, we have no future" (Website National Museum of Prehistory).

As for the exhibitions in the museum, the website explicitly states that the museum steps away from an overly academic presentation to make the museum more accessible to the general public. Visiting the museum, this becomes apparent. Prehistoric artefacts do not take centre stage. Life-like models of people and animals set in time, a reconstruction of a pre-historic settlement, film, interactive media and more,

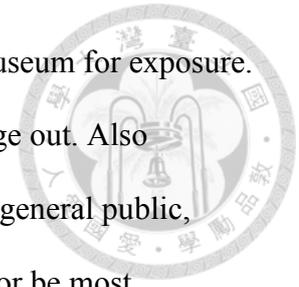
together with a clear storyline makes the museum entertaining and an experience a younger audience will also appreciate. What the combination of archaeology, anthropology and natural history does do in a sense, amplified by *the* approachability of exhibitions, is provide a romanticised image of indigenous people as a relic of a simpler and purer past detached from modern society, something that we also noted at ethnological museums. This said, attention is given to the indigenous rights movement in a short series of textual displays.



7. Literature Museums

The concept of national literature stems from the Romantic period in Europe and is tied to the the rise of modern nation states and associated national identities. A definition of national literature is: “the body of canonised texts in which a nation’s collective sense of imagined history is believed to be inscribed in images that evoke historical continuity and social unity. [It] provides [.....] the cultural tradition which is ideally shared by all members of the imagined community.” (Denton 2014: 191, citing Hinrich C. Seeba). Literature museums, and especially national literature museums, are innately political. Classification and deciding on relevant authors guide the narrative. Added to this is interpreting the author. The French literary critic Roland Barthes takes this to its extreme in his essay, ‘The Death of the Author’, in which he completely detaches the author from his writing (1967). Later in life Barthes backtracked, but his statement is leading a life of its own, so unintentionally providing an example for the statement (Haas 2015). Generally, literature museums do not go down this route. Explaining the author’s intent and bibliographic context are important elements of the exhibits. This is no less subjective than ignoring the author. The museum’s leverage however is limited.

An author, contrary to an exhibited artist, is not dependent on the museum for exposure. Through bookstores, libraries, and journals he or she gets the message out. Also literature museums do not have the appeal an art museum has to the general public, which affects their influence. The politics of the museum will therefore be most influential in its promotion of national literature through journals, translations and research sponsored.



7.1 *National Museum of Taiwan Literature*

As with most national museums in Taiwan, the National Museum of Taiwan Literature (NMTL) in Tainan is a recent museum, formally established in 2007 but opened to the public in 2003. Located in the meticulously renovated previous Tainan Prefecture Hall, later Tainan's City Hall, this impressive 1916 building is an unlikely host to a literature museum. At its entrance, the casual visitor wandering in may be underwhelmed. The exhibit area is relatively small but there are reading rooms with free newspapers, popular with senior citizens, and a children's section for which children line up before opening time. The larger part of the building is used for other functions. Until recently, the NMTL was the only literature museum in Taiwan. In 2016 it got company with the opening of the Taichung Literature Museum.

In contrast to other national museums visited, the museum's academic activities receive more attention on the museum's website than the collection does. The museum publishes the *Journal of Taiwan Literary Studies*, which also includes English language articles, provides grants for masters and PhD students researching topics related to Taiwan literature, and organises a forum for these students to present results at a seminar organised annually. Focussing on the collection, the display texts are quite comprehensive on where the museum stands in the Taiwan history narrative. The

NMTL has tasked itself to record a Taiwan-specific development through its literature and “convey depth, richness and complexities involved at each stage of Taiwan’s development and growth” and to share this with the world and so “to help Taiwan literature ‘go global’ and take place aside other great national traditions”. With this Taiwan literature has an ambassador function for Taiwan. Taiwan culture, this introductory text continues, is the result of subsequent colonisation and immigration waves bringing a broad spectrum of experiences and ethnic and national influences. This continues to the present day with new immigrants, particularly women the display mentions from Southeast Asia arriving and finding a place in Taiwanese society. As for Taiwan’s contribution to Chinese literature, this literature is referred to as ‘world Chinese literature’, analogous to international contributions to English language literature.

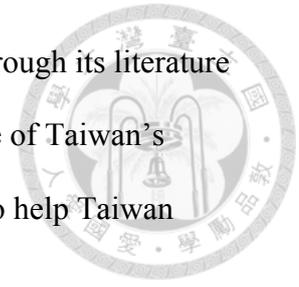
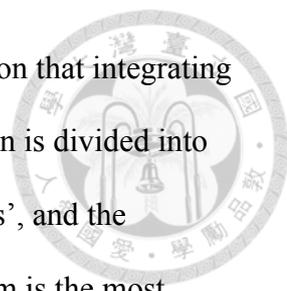


Figure 4: National Museum of Taiwan Literature (author's photo)

The display texts do not avoid sensitive subjects. Tension between ethnic groups is brought to attention, as is the suffering and hardship brought on by authoritarian rule. These are issues that have found their way into Taiwan literature. The literary historian Huang Teh-shi is quoted who, as early as 1943, noted that Taiwan literature could be distinguished by two archetypal genres, being “nostalgic” and “inter-ethnic integration, subjugation and resistance”. With the former he refers to emigrants longing



for a romanticized homeland, with the latter the difficulties and tension that integrating into Taiwan society brings. Building on this, the permanent exhibition is divided into three sections: ‘Call of the Mountains and Sea’, ‘Disparate Dialogues’, and the ‘Literature Victorious’. The first addresses nostalgia. Taiwan nativism is the most prominent exponent of nostalgia, reason for the extra attention below. The second deals with tension through issues such as interethnic competition and troubled co-existence. Self-destructing internal conflicts, resistance to government oppression, anti-colonialism and battles for linguistic rights have left their mark on Taiwan history. The third tackles issues that, through liberalisation of Taiwan society, can now be freely discussed. Here is room for feminist and LGBT writers, and writers who have detached themselves from Taiwanese themes, writing postmodern and avant-garde fiction. For all the understated appearance of the museum’s exhibitions, the NMTL has the most explicit and clearest position on Taiwan society and recent history of the museums I have visited (Website National Museum of Taiwan Literature)

Nativism

The developments in Taiwan nativism closely follow Taiwan recent history. When looking into Taiwaneseeness, nativism is a rich source. Taiwan nativism has its roots in the Japanese Colonial period. It was a reaction to the stigma of ‘otherness’ applied by the coloniser, implying inferiority. To put a timeframe on this literary movement, the early 1920s is taken as a starting point. In the mid 1930s, with the push towards further Japanisation of the Taiwanese, embodied in the *kōminka* assimilation policy, the movement withered. This early nativist movement was a reaction to the inferred superiority of the Japanese culture, promoting a repressed Taiwanese culture. A distinct characteristic of nativism is writing on subjects close to the heart of ordinary people in

vernacular language, the language of the people in which they think and express themselves. The nativist movement sought to define Taiwanese-ness and so construct a Taiwanese national identity. Already in those early days, there was discussion on what this meant. There were those who linked the Taiwan identity to China and others who recognised a unique Taiwan identity grown out of a very different own history.

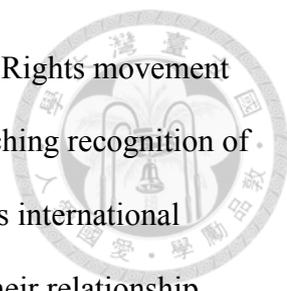
Nativism as a literary movement resurfaced in the 1970s as a reaction to the KMT's Sinification policies, made possible by a loosening of the constraints of the martial-law period. As in the 1920s, the movement was born out of defiance, reinforcing the value of a repressed local culture. With the martial-law period ending in the 1980s, nativism receded. The ideology however has found its way into the political debate on Chineseness or Taiwanese-ness in which Taiwan is submerged since. Taiwan Nativism as a literature movement has served the emancipation of Taiwan. The movement is a part of Taiwan modern history and has been formative for recognising a Taiwan identity feeding into Taiwan nationalism. Nativism is not exclusive to Taiwan and is linked, as neo-nativism, to the wider discourse of globalism versus localism. As with the imposed culture of the coloniser, globalism too represses local culture. Neo-nativism is a reaction to globalism, essentialising local cultural features, set against unwanted 'outside' influences. The rise of populism worldwide is an ominous exponent of this (Lee 2003: 1-7).

8. Human Rights Museums

Human rights is an important political topic in Taiwan a reason to elaborate on this. The DPP emerged out of Taiwan's human rights movement, which had its pivotal moment on 10 December 1979, International Human Rights Day. A rally organised in

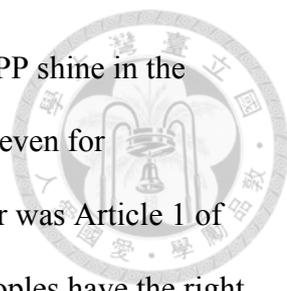
Kaohsiung by Meilidao, also known as *Formosa Magazine*, a magazine critical of the government, was violently broken up. The organisers, who became known as the Kaohsiung Eight, were arrested, severely maltreated, forced to sign confessions, and subsequently sentenced to long prison terms. Other arrests of activists followed. The Kaohsiung Eight included Annette Lu, whose defence lawyer was Chen Shui-bian. Annette Lu went on to become vice president when Chen Shui-bian was elected as Taiwan's first DPP president in 2000.

Democracy and human rights are bedfellows. To be able to claim democratic rights, this must be able to be done without repercussions. Minorities need protection against the dictatorship of the majority. Promoting human rights and acting on these have proven not to be a given. In 1967 the KMT government ratified the United Nations International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both drafted in 1966 and eventually endorsed in the UN in 1976. These covenants, together with the Declaration of Human Rights (1948), form the International Bill of Rights (Office of the High Commissioner 1948). It was not until International Human Rights Day 2009, forty-two years after ratification, that the act implementing the ICCPR and ICESCR came into effect in Taiwan. What happened in the mean time? It was apparent that the authoritarian KMT government of 1967 had international politics as driver. The government not only signed but was, as a member of the UN Security Council at that time, an active participant in moving the human rights agenda forward. This to enhance the image of a free and civilised ROC set against a despotic PRC, but without the sense of obligation to act accordingly. When in 1971 the ROC was replaced by the PRC in the UN and Taiwan lost its international podium, human rights went on a backburner.



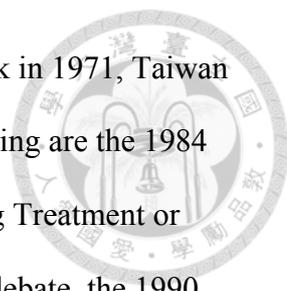
What may have been the biggest boost to the Taiwan Human Rights movement was another major incident in 1979. This was the United States switching recognition of the government of China from the ROC to the PRC, sealing Taiwan's international isolation. To address Taiwan's security concerns, the US regulated their relationship with Taiwan with the unilateral Taiwan Relations Act (1979), with which the US committed itself to the defence of Taiwan. For continued domestic support in the US, issues such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law were important. The Kaohsiung crackdown and harsh treatment of the arrested activists later that year proved counter-productive. Ultimately, the aftermath of the Kaohsiung Incident led to the KMT's recognising that justification of Taiwan's existence as a nation was to be sought in a favourable comparison against the PRC, and its repressive politics were hurting its image. Democratisation was unavoidable. The Kaohsiung Incident proved to be a double-edged sword for the KMT. Being forced to initiate the democratisation process provided the KMT with the credible claim that it was this party that led Taiwan to democracy, a factor in the continued prominence of the KMT in Taiwan politics. (Bowman 2012: 485-93).

When the DPP took over the presidency in 2000, President Chen Shui-bian set off to make good on his human rights agenda but his attempt of ratification of the ICCPR and ICESCR got held up in party politics. With ratification, Taiwan would distance itself from its authoritarian past and consolidate Taiwan democracy, demonstrating to the international community that Taiwan was on par with other developed countries. Taking this a step further, President Chen wanted Taiwan to be in the forefront of the human rights movement. This amongst others by addressing LGBT rights such as the right to marry and form a family, which would make Taiwan the first Asian country to do so, a topic still very much on the agenda today. President Chen was



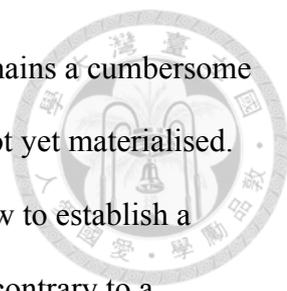
up against a KMT-dominated Legislative Yuan reluctant to let the DPP shine in the international arena, and inclusion of LGBT rights was a step too far, even for representatives of his own party. The most contentious issue however was Article 1 of both the ICCPR and ICESCR, which are identical in stating: “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”. Working this statement into Taiwanese legislation would feed, KMT legislators believed, into the DPP’s pro-independence bias. This would provide the DPP the opportunity to interpret this as a legal right to independence, as opposed to the KMT’s One-China stance, upsetting the delicate relationship with the PRC. Consequently, when submitted for ratification to the Legislative Yuan in 2003, the UN covenants did not pass (ibid.: 496-98).

When the ICCPR and ICESCR eventually were ratified in 2009, this was under KMT President Ma Ying-jiou’s tenure. This for much the same reasons as President Chen had, but with the Legislative Yuan firmly in hand of the KMT, matching the standards set in the covenants with existing Taiwan law was a controlled process. Critics were sceptical about this. The ROC constitution, adopted on 25 December 1946 and coming into effect a year later, contained rights and guarantees such as the impartiality of law, personal freedom, freedom of speech, religion and assembly, but ample circumstances allowing restriction of these are also written into the constitution, plainly demonstrated by the martial law period (Bowman citing Tan: 467). The Ma administration went on to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2011, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2014. With these, and including the International Convention on the Elimination of



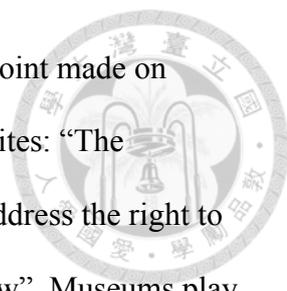
All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) which was ratified back in 1971, Taiwan has ratified six of the nine core international rights instruments. Missing are the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which is ensnarled in the Taiwan death penalty debate, the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICMW) because of political sensitivities and the 2006 International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CRPD) due to priorities set (“Shadow Report 2016”; Office of the High Commissioner accessed 2018; International Review Committee).

Independent control over enforcement of human rights is an issue worldwide. The method of choice is the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Next to investigating human rights violations by government agencies or others, responsibilities include human rights promotion, education and awareness (Bowman 2012: 501). President Chen was a strong advocate for a Taiwan NHRC and included this in his proposal. He wanted to organise the NHRC under the Office of the President. This did not sit well with the Control Yuan with its broad investigative role within the government but Chen was wary of political influence of the Legislative Yuan on the functioning of the Control Yuan, not unjustly as proven by the shut-down of the Control Yuan from February 2005 to July 2008 because the KMT dominated Legislative Yuan did not approve Chen’s nominations. It only opened again after the 2008 presidential elections when the President’s Office was re-won by the KMT (Cadwell 2017: 31-32). For President Ma, independent check on human rights enforcement did not have a high priority and he was content this being a responsibility of the Control Yuan. The establishment of an NHRC was not taken on. The issue reappeared on the agenda when the President’s Office reverted to the DPP in 2016 and



President Tsai Ing-wen took over. The establishment of a NHRC remains a cumbersome process. Two years into Tsai's presidency, such a commission has not yet materialised. An issue remains where this should be organised. The thinking is now to establish a National Human Rights Institute (NHRI), the distinction being that, contrary to a commission, such an institute would be positioned completely outside of the government structure, maximising independence ("National Human Rights Institution..." 2017).

Not having a NHRC or NHRI does not mean that Taiwan's human rights progress is not independently monitored. The KMT government instituted an 'International Review Committee' consisting of a panel of independent foreign experts, who reported on review results in 2013 and 2017. There is also a Taiwan NGO, 'Covenants Watch' monitoring the government's human rights obligations and taking on other NHRC(I) tasks such as enabling human rights education and training and awareness-raising activities. A recent addition to human rights monitoring is the annual Human Rights Consultation between Taiwan and the European Union. The first was held in March 2018. Common issues coming out of reviews are the need to introduce a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, corporate responsibility in regards to human rights, the rights of foreign workers in Taiwan and foreign fishers on Taiwanese fishing vessels, and Taiwan's position on the death penalty. The report of the International Review Committee is the more comprehensive one. The 2017 report includes an issue that the Supreme Administrative Court, in 2014, effectively ruled out the applicability of the ICESCR as basis for economic, social and cultural rights for consideration before domestic courts, ruling that national law prevails. Another issue brought up and close at heart to many in Taiwan is that of the lack of affordable housing due to speculation with housing, property and land. The right to property prevails over the right to adequate

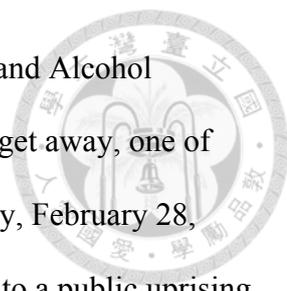


housing and land. An issue of particular interest to this thesis is the point made on transitional justice, addressing past wrongdoings. The Committee writes: “The government’s legislative proposals need to effectively and directly address the right to truth and the restoration of access to justice after the lift of martial law”. Museums play a role in this (International Review Committee 2017; “Shadow Report 2016”; "Taiwan and the European Union..." 2018).

228 Incident

The two most traumatic occurrences in modern Taiwan history are the 228 Incident in 1947 and the ‘White Terror’ during the 1949-1987 martial law period. The perpetrators stayed in power and memory of these occurrences were erased from collective memory, only to be recreated when democracy set in. The 228 Incident was an incident waiting to happen. At the time of the Japanese handover of Taiwan to the ROC in 1945, there was a sense of euphoria with the Taiwanese who were looking forward to be treated as equals by the Chinese ‘motherland’, what the Japanese certainly did not do. This euphoria lasted only a short while. The KMT leadership of the ROC was suspicious about the Japanisation of the population and resentful of Taiwan’s participation in the war effort on the side of the Japanese. There was no sense of equality from their side. The ROC military commander of Taiwan, Governor General Chen Yi, came down on the population hardhandedly and Japanese bureaucrats and Taiwanese executives were replaced by Mainland Chinese.

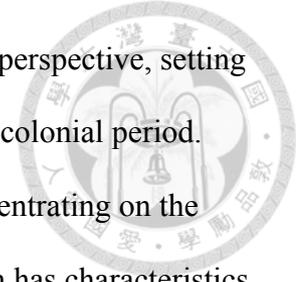
The situation deteriorated quickly. Corruption was rampant and tension built up due to the economic exploitation of the island leading to shortages and inflation. An influx of Mainland Chinese migrants added to the tension. It only took a minor incident to light up this tinderbox. This happened on the night of February 27, 1947, only a year and a half into KMT nationalist rule. A female tobacco seller who sold contraband



tobacco on the side was harassed by agents of the state run Tobacco and Alcohol Monopoly Bureau. An angry crowd formed at the site. Struggling to get away, one of the agents fired his gun, accidentally killing a bystander. The next day, February 28, when the news of the incident spread, riots started which escalated into a public uprising targeting Mainland Chinese migrants. The KMT government on the island lost control. Prominent Taiwanese stepped forward to negotiate with Chen-Yi, who, to defuse the uprising, agreed to demands for a form of autonomy with free elections, re-instatement of dismissed county and city mayors, and an explicit promise not to call in troops from the Mainland. Later, when regaining control, Chen-Yi had the negotiators arrested and executed. On March 8, a week after violence erupted, a large detachment of KMT nationalist troops arrived in Taiwan and immediately started a random massacre which was allowed to go unchecked till March 11. By the end of March order had been restored but because of the suppression and absence of recordings of the incident at that time, an accurate number of casualties has not been determined. Taiwan's elite were especially targeted. Only as late as 1992, a report by the Executive Yuan estimated the number of casualties of native-born Taiwanese between 18,000 and 28,000 (Reynaud 2002; 48).

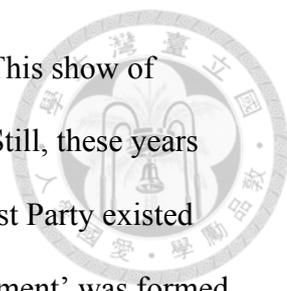
There are a considerable number of 228 memorial sites in Taiwan. All major cities and also many townships commemorate the 228 incident one way or the other. Two major museums are in Taipei: The Taipei 228 Memorial Museum and the National 228 Memorial Museum. The first is situated in the 228 Peace Park near Taipei Main Station. This museum was inaugurated on February 28, 1997, Peace Memorial Day commemorating 228, 50 years after the incident. The second, within walking distance from the 228 Peace Park, opened in 2011. While both museums are based on the sequence of events sketched above, they both have a very different focus. The Taipei

228 Memorial Museum puts the 288 incident in a broader historical perspective, setting the seed for the incident in the autonomy movement in the Japanese colonial period. The National 228 Memorial Museum is more forward looking, concentrating on the unhealed wounds of the incident. The Taipei 228 Memorial Museum has characteristics of a history museum, while the National 228 Memorial Museum that of a dedicated human rights museum.



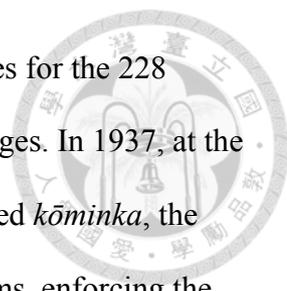
8.1 Taipei 228 Memorial Museum

The Taipei 228 Memorial Museum is established by the Taipei City government. The building in which the museum is housed, could not have been more aptly chosen. It is the building of the ‘Taiwan Radio Broadcasting Station’ at the time of the incident, which was taken over by the protestors and was central in spreading the news of the incident, and with this, inciting the uprising. As a museum, the building keeps the spirit of that time alive. The museum, as set out in its publication ‘The Permanent Exhibition of Taipei 228 Memorial Museum’ that can be picked up at the museum bookstore, starts its narrative in 1920 when the ‘New People Association of Taiwan’ was established, objecting against the absolute authority of the Japanese governor of Taiwan. Around that same time, the ‘Taiwan Cultural Association’ was established, instrumental in building up a civil society in Taiwan through grass root activities such as organising summer schools, seminars, and reading clubs, contributing to the emancipation of its population, and providing an environment for peasant and labour movements to form. In 1927, the Taiwanese People’s Party was established, Taiwan’s first recognised political party. The party promoted regional autonomy and demanded free elections of local officials. The Taiwanese People’s Party showed its clout when it filed a complaint at the League of Nations in 1930 for the use of nerve gas by the Japanese authorities



during the Wushe Incident against the revolting indigenous Seediq. This show of solidarity became the party's undoing. It was banned in early 1931. Still, these years were a time of political activism. A short-lived Taiwanese Communist Party existed (1928-1931) and, in 1930, the 'League of Taiwan Local Self Government' was formed, which the Japanese authorities tolerated. The League's lobbying led to Taiwan's first election for local government in 1935, with which the Taiwanese population could elect half of the representatives, with the other half appointed by the Japanese authority. So Taiwan has a history of political activism and it is this persistent striving for democratic reform that made Taiwan's political elite a target for the KMT nationalists during the 228 Incident.

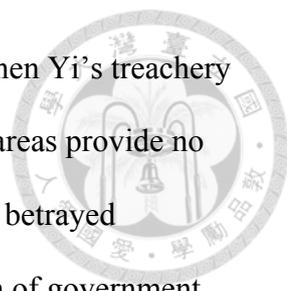
The Taipei 228 Memorial Museum touches briefly on a suppressed area of Taiwan history. This is Taiwan being drawn into World War II. Taiwan was the target for Allied bombing throughout the war but the deadliest was on Taipei on 31 May 1945, killing approximately 3,000 civilians, over half of the total air raid casualties during the war, and causing large-scale destruction of the city. This raid is mentioned by the museum. Not mentioned is that of the over 200,000 conscripts who were enlisted into the Japanese army of which approximately 30,000 were killed or missing in action. At least 26,000 are enshrined at Japan's Yasukuni war shrine in Tokyo, far removed from Taiwan (Chen 2018). Another contentious issue of that period is that of the comfort woman: women and girls forced to serve the Japanese army as prostitutes. Very recently a private museum dedicated to this episode opened in Taipei (Website Ama Museum Taipei). Relief that the horrors of war were over added to the warm welcome the KMT nationalist government received in 1945. Failed expectations however led to mounting tensions.



A second circumstance the Taipei 228 Memorial Museum raises for the 228 Incident is the friction caused by two successive forced cultural changes. In 1937, at the start of the second Sino-Japanese war, the Japanese colonisers initiated *kōminka*, the Japanisation campaign mentioned in the chapter on literature museums, enforcing the use of Japanese, and prohibiting Chinese newspapers. In 1945, only eight years later, the KMT nationalist government did the same, this time forcing Mandarin on the population, prohibiting Japanese language newspapers within a year after takeover, and requiring Mandarin fluency for all government positions, disqualifying the vast majority of Taiwanese who, as the museum describes expressively, became illiterate overnight. They remained second class citizens. The government took erasing Taiwan's heritage a step further than the Japanese, criminalising association with the Japanese and introducing a "Reporting of Traitors" movement to enforce this (Hsieh and Lin, eds 2011)

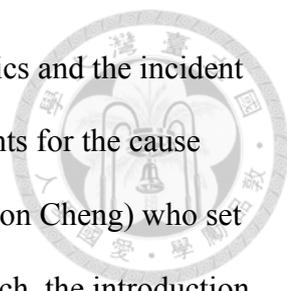
8.2 *National 228 Memorial Museum*

While the Taipei 228 Memorial Museum also covers the resulting suffering of the 228 Incident and human rights issues, its focus remains on factual information. It does this through a decisively modern approach with attractive and effective displays, but does not aspire to give the dramatic effect the National 228 Memorial Museums does. This museum is about emotion. Located in an elegant Japanese period building providing a serene atmosphere, strengthened by design, lighting, and special effects, this emotion is effectively transmitted to the visitor. Going up the stately staircase, the visitor arrives at the permanent exhibition and is guided through 'areas' following a trail. The first three areas provide the background of the incident and the incident itself with vivid displays, but soon the visitor arrives at areas with human rights themes. The first of these has



“Broken Promises” as its theme referring to the Governor General Chen Yi’s treachery leading to repression and the crackdown. The titles of the following areas provide no room for misinterpretation. “The Martyred Souls” is dedicated to the betrayed negotiators and other Taiwan autonomy activists killed on instigation of government. “The Wall of the Martyred” commemorates the death and injuries inflicted on the population by the troops called in from the Mainland. Its is a long wall with photo frames, but many without a photo representing the unknown victims. The “Wall of Shi Ju-Chen” depicts the hardships of a communist activist who hid from the secret police at his brother’s house for 17 years behind an erected inner wall. This wall is replicated at the museum. His ordeal ended with his death due to illness. This story was brought to the lime light by a Taiwan award-winning motion picture “The Wall” (2007), directed Lin Chih-ju. The film is fiction but is inspired by the ordeal of Shi Ju-Chen (Ho 2008). The area “Memories of the Scars” is about recreating memories of the 228 Incident through the accounts of families of victims. The final area is the “Tower of the Martyred Archives”. Governmental documents on the fate of victims became available starting 1995, giving closure to what happened to them. These documents are archived here (Museum website Memorial Foundation of 228).

At the time I visited the museum in March 2018, there was a special exhibition on 228 redress and transitional justice. This was an exhibition on the civil activism that broke the government enforced taboo on memories of the incident. The earliest activism, during the martial law period, was that of overseas Taiwanese, including writers living abroad, keeping the incident vivid. Domestic activism started in earnest in the 1980s, with 1987 as the year in which remembrance of the 228 Incident received decisive momentum when the ‘228 Peace Day Promotion Association’, established by overseas and domestic activists, organised marches and seminars across the island.



From that year on, the 228 Incident became a fixture in Taiwan politics and the incident has evolved into a defining episode in Taiwan history. Dramatic events for the cause were the self-inflicted death of leading activist Cheng Nan-jung (Nylon Cheng) who set himself on fire in 1989 as protest against the impairment of free speech, the introduction of the 228 Memorial Day in 1995 together with the apologies for the incident by the then president Lee Teng-hui on the KMT's behalf and offering compensation, and 228 Memorial Day 2004 when over two million people held hands forming a human line from north to south, expressing their determination to protect their island. This show of solidarity was prompted by concerns over the arsenal of missiles aimed at Taiwan. The KMT has come to terms with the party's responsibility for the 228 Incident, but it has been a tedious process. Illustrative is the debate on 'compensation' or 'reparation'. Reparation is human rights jargon, which implies admitting guilt for human rights violations while compensation is limited to recognising a responsibility to address inflicted injustice without necessarily having caused it. So it could happen that in 1995 the 'February 28 Incident Disposition and Compensation Act' was passed by the KMT-controlled government and in 2007 the act was amended by presidential decree by the DPP to mention 'Reparation' instead with consequential additional remuneration (Civic Power 2017).

When visiting the National 228 Memorial Museum, the appeal to emotions was driven home with a chance meeting I had with an elderly lady whose companion was taking a picture of her next to a photo of a man in his prime. She explained to me that the man in the photo was her father, who, as a civic leader in Tainan, negotiated with the authorities during the 228 Incident and did not survive. As I moved into the special exhibition I saw her again. This time at an enlarged photo with a group of people throwing flowers into a river. She pointed herself out in the photo, which she told me

was taken in 1995, 48 years after the 228 Incident at an event commemorating the incident. And now, 23 years later, she was at the museum for her father, proving the longevity of emotions and the value of the museum as a place of remembrance.



When reflecting on both museums, which between them show the background of the 228 Incident, the incident itself, and its aftermath up to the present time, one facet stands out as not addressed. This is the future. The 228 Incident was the catastrophic result of the takeover of the island by Mainland China. This incident has become pivotal to Taiwan modern history and is a reminder what can happen at external takeover of power. It relates to serious concerns the people have on the PRC's claim to the island and the consequences of losing control. This was particularly apparent with the mentioned show of solidarity at the 228 Memorial Day 2004. It was about protecting Taiwan. The incident therefore lies at the core of the political discourse on the future status of Taiwan.

White Terror

The White Terror of the martial law period receives distinctly less attention than the 228 Incident, but, since 2011 there is the National Human Rights Museum (NHRM) which is still in its preparatory stage and operates two sites, the Jing-Mei Human Rights Memorial and Cultural Park and the Green Island Human Rights Memorial Cultural Park, both former prison sites. Curiously, on the English language website of the museum, 'Human Rights' is substituted by 'White Terror'. This more aptly signifies the dark heritage of the sites. The term "White Terror" stands for right wing or counter-revolutionary terror. The KMT was already associated with White Terror before relocating to Taiwan. In April 1927, KMT nationalist forces attacked members of the

Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai, the start of years of anti-communist violence. In the early years of martial law in Taiwan the repression was aimed at perceived Communist subversion. In the 1970s, focus shifted towards local opposition against the KMT rule, from which the KMT's main adversary, the DPP emerged (Lin 2007: 176).

8.3 *National Human Rights Museum*

On 28 November 2017, an act officially establishing the National Human Rights Museum (NHRM) was passed (“National Human Rights Museum to be established” 2017). The museum has set for itself the goal of recreating the suppressed memories of the White Terror period through interviews with victims and families and so obtain an oral record of the period, supplementing preserved historical and cultural archives. It also aims to reinstate related historical sites to instil human rights awareness and education. I visited the Jing-Mei site in New Taipei City in March 2018. This former military law detention centre is off the regular tourist route but a visit is an impressive experience. The site was known as the Taiwan Garrison Command Martial Law Section Detention Center, commanding the whole process of incarceration, indictment, and trial of the accused, and served as a prison and execution area. The detention centre served its purpose from 1967 to 1992, when the centre was vacated by the Taiwan Garrison Command. In 2007, the centre was listed as a historical building and opened to the public (Website National Human Rights Museum).

An audio tour leads the visitor through the compound, explaining the sites visited and extensive bi-lingual Chinese and English display text tells the story of the detention centre and the human rights abuses. On 24 May 1949 the Legislative Yuan passed the ‘Statutes for Punishment of Rebellion’, laying down the judiciary basis for the abuse. According to these statutes, anyone under suspicion of ‘rebellion’ would be

tried under martial law. The martial law act listed this, amongst other crimes, as treason, interference with the public order and offences against public safety which, in its ambiguousness, casted a wide net. The intent of political prisoners to commit these ‘crimes’ would usually be cited as “Intended to overturn the government by unlawful methods and carried-out action”. The attitude towards human rights of the KMT government at that time is captured with a phrase attributed to Chiang Kai-shek: “better wrong in arresting a hundred of innocent persons rather than letting go one of the guilty persons”. Incentives in the form of promotions and bonuses for the Secret Service encouraged unscrupulously arresting people on trumped-up charges. Towards the outside world, the KMT government denied that there were political prisoners in Taiwan, but from the 1960s onward international observers started to pay attention to the human rights situation in Taiwan.

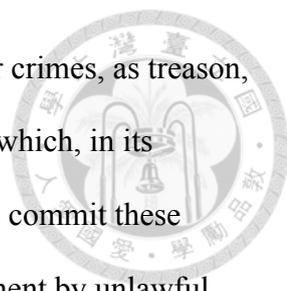
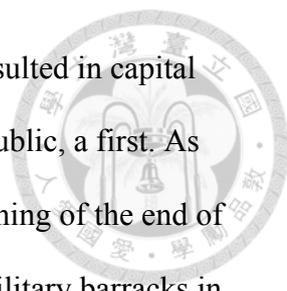


Figure 5: Jing-Mei Human Rights Memorial and Cultural Park (author's photo)

A number of the more well-known cases are displayed and explained, most prominently that of the activist leaders of the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident. The high profile of these activists also ignited attention for their court martial in the United States and at



international human rights organisation. Pressure applied by them resulted in capital punishment being ruled out beforehand and the military trial being public, a first. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is this trial that marked the beginning of the end of martial law. The museum tour leads the visitor through courts and military barracks in which exhibition material is displayed, but it is when entering the prison that the reality of the abomination sets in. There were between 200 and 400 prisoners at any one time, causing overcrowding. Living conditions were poor. Many of the prisoners not sentenced to death were serving long terms. Their prospects were bleak.

In general, public dealing with the White Terror period does not meet the level of the 228 Incident. No public apologies have been made or comprehensive reports drafted documenting the period's human rights abuses. The fact that there is a wide disparity on the estimated number of casualties of the White Terror, ranging from around 10,000 (Bowman 2012: 490] to up to 45,000 (Lin 2007: 10), underscores the lack of research. The International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes (ICMEMO), a committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), publicised a general list of questions that need to be addressed that go beyond remembrance to start the healing process. Core questions are: How could it happen? What are lessons learnt? What is the relation of these past events with modern social, political and democratic developments? This goes further than what a national human rights museum can provide. In other countries dealing with a history of human rights abuse, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have been established to deal with the transitional justice addressing this (Tsao 2006: 3-6, Stijne 2017: 29-31).



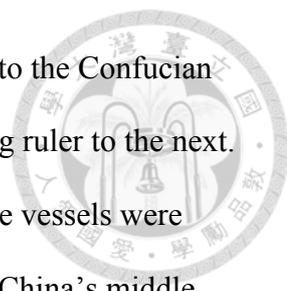
9. Fine Arts Museums

The category fine arts museums covers a wide spectrum. The narrative of such museums is implicit rather than a story told. The choices of the objects presented, how they are shown and described in displays, and, not to be underestimated, explanations provided by guides and audio all work towards influencing the visitor's interpretation. In this chapter three widely different museums are discussed. The National Palace Museum, focussing specifically on the new Southern Branch in Chaiyi, Chung Tai World Museum in Puli, Nantou County in Central Taiwan, and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung. The National Palace Museum exhibits antique art and artefacts while Chung Tai exhibits Buddhist religious art. The National Museum of Fine Arts focusses on contemporary art.

9.1 National Palace Museum

Until recently historical fine art in Taiwan was automatically associated with Chinese art. The dominating position of the National Palace Museum (NPM), which opened to the public in 1965, makes the case for Taiwan's Chinese heritage. The politics surrounding the museum has produced a library of articles. China's imperial treasures displayed here have always been associated with power. Dynasties derived their legitimacy to rule on possession of the treasures of the preceding dynasty. This is no different in modern times. The division of the Qing dynasty treasures between Taiwan and the PRC is a highly sensitive issue.

Imperial treasures have a long history in China, dating back to the Shang dynasty (1500 – 1000 BCE). In those times bronze ritual vessels, in a later period



legend of the Nine Tripods used in legitimating political rule related to the Confucian concept of the Mandate of Heaven, were handed over from one Shang ruler to the next. When the Zhou dynasty (1000 – 221 BCE) displaced the Shang, these vessels were taken over by the new dynasty, continuing the tradition. . Starting in China’s middle ages (202 BCE – 960 CE), court-sponsored art, used to glorify the state, was added to the treasures. The treasures were also expanded by the tribute system with which surrounding countries acknowledged China’s hegemony. The main body of the treasures, in particular art and calligraphy, originates from the collecting spree of the Qing Emperor Qianlong (1736 – 1796), but this has not disturbed its association with power and subservience. The Chinese revolution of 1911 marks the end of dynastic rule, but did not end the symbolic value of the imperial treasures. The length the KMT nationalists went to first keep the treasures out of the hands of the invading Japanese and later, in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), stresses the importance of the treasure as symbol of the right to rule.

The NPM collection is around 20% of the imperial treasures but includes many of the most prized ones. The major part of the collection remains in the Palace Museum in Beijing (Shambaugh and Elliot Shambaugh 2005: 94-7). The PRC considers the treasures in Taipei looted, their home being the Palace Museum in Beijing. However, given that according to the PRC Taiwan is within China, aggressively pursuing return will send a contrary message. For this same reason, hard-line pro Taiwan independent activists suggest to return the treasures to China, as an independent Taiwan has no relationship with Chinese treasures (Wang 2004: 805-807).

As for the NPM museum itself, the most obvious reference to Chinese nationalism is the building itself and its approach, which is in grandiose northern Chinese style. The interior is however, albeit stylish, surprisingly sober. There is very little that can be

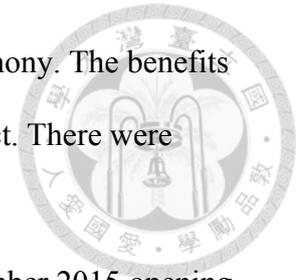
termed typically ‘Chinese’. Also, descriptions of the objects are restrained. There is appreciation for the artists and artisans but very little, if any, explicit claiming of the objects as the product of the Chinese as a people. The only lapse in underplaying the connotation with power is the display of the most famous tripod bronze vessel, the Mao-Gong Ding, conspicuously in the centre of the exhibition with crowd control measures enforced.

Again—some conclusion? Why leave off at the Mao Gong ding? [it is famous for its long inscription]. Also, you make it sound like there is only one exhibition and the Mao Gong ding is at its center—plus, the jade cabbage and pork are certainly the most popular objects

9.2 Southern Branch of the NPM

The politics of the NPM have shifted to its Southern Branch. In December 2015, the Branch in Chiayi opened to the public. This was exactly 11 years after the museum project was initiated under DPP presidential rule in 2004. The economic motive of attracting tourists to Central and Southern Taiwan and the impulse the museum would provide for the cultural, educational, and social development of the region were important selling points. No argument there. The crux of the problem of the project was the type of museum it was going to be, which was an ‘Asian Art and Culture Museum’. The KMT, justly, saw the emphasis on Asian art and culture as a move away from acknowledging Taiwan’s Chinese-centred heritage towards Taiwan taking its place in a broader Asian culture, fitting into the DPP ambition to promote a Taiwaneseeness embedded in a multi-cultural environment. Still, when the presidency moved back to the KMT in 2008, the project was continued and it was president Ma Ying-jeou who in

2013, in his second term then, performed the ground-breaking ceremony. The benefits of the Southern Branch for the region precluded annulling the project. There were electoral concerns to reckon with (Website Southern Branch).



The DPP re-took the presidency in January 2016. The December 2015 opening of the museum was at the very end of the KMT rule and controversy erupted immediately. At the centre of this was the conspicuous display of replicas of the twelve Zodiac heads, of which the originals had been looted from the gardens of the Imperial Summer Palace outside Beijing in 1860 by British troops. Repatriation of the still existing heads is an issue for the PRC. It reflects the resilience of China. Reuniting all twelve heads together in Taiwan, be it as replicas, was seen by activists in Taiwan as a covert symbol of ultimate reunification of Taiwan with China. Donation of the heads was explained as a PRC provocation. This was fuelled by the donator being the Hong Kong movie star Jack Chen who is a member of the Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference, a political advisory body in the PRC and who is vocal on his contempt of Taiwan democracy. An attack on the heads with red paint and leaving the words “war of cultural unification” illustrates the sentiments the heads prompted (Chen 2016)

When I visited the Southern Branch for the first time in March 2016, the new DPP president Tsai Ing-wen had not yet taken office. The KMT appointed museum director Fung Ming-chu was still in charge. The replicas of the Zodiac heads stood prominently in front of the main entrance, and at that time there was very little apparent of the mission to exhibit Asian art and culture and Taiwan’s place in these. The exhibits were mainly about Chinese influence on other cultures. When I revisited the museum in November 2017, things had changed. For starters, the Zodiac heads had disappeared. In September 2016, the newly appointed NPM director Lin Jeng-yi, a DPP appointee,

made public that the NPM Southern Branch would remove the heads. He cited artistic motives as the main reason, but he also mentioned concerns voiced by legislators about the social and political implications of displaying the heads. Two months later the heads were indeed removed from their pedestals on the plaza in front of the entrance of the museum (Cheng and Chen 2016).



Figure 6: Southern Branch of the NPM (author's photo)

Entering the museum, I noticed there is somewhat of a disconnect between the introduction on the museum's website I visited in preparation of my second visit, and the introduction in the museum's English language Guide Map handed out at the museum reception. Where the website cites the museum to be an "Asian Art and Culture Museum" underlining that the discussion on the type of museum had been settled in favour of the DPPs ambition, the Guide Map states its main purpose as "based on Chinese culture [.....] equally distribute the cultural capital between [...] South and North Taiwan". It continues with the museum "further epitomises as prime representative of Chinese culture the exchange and integration of divers Asian

cultures”. As for the symbolism of the building’s architecture, the website explains that the design connects three great Asian cultures, the Chinese, Indian and Persian, using Chinese calligraphy principles to create optical effects. The Guide Map however only mentions the symbolism of the brush strokes expressed and not the connecting of Asian cultures. The text in the Guide Map has quite probably been overlooked when directorship of the museum changed. It provides an interesting insight into the effect of shifting politics (Southern Branch-guide).

Compared to my first visit, the central focus on Chinese culture had subsided and both the permanent and the temporary exhibition had a diversity that did justice to the museums claim as being ‘The Hub of Asian Diversity’. This to the point that there is little cohesion in the five permanent exhibitions which include Asian textiles, the Art of Tea in Asia and Buddhist Art other than that all three exhibitions show regional interaction. The other exhibitions are on the History of Chiayi, where the museum is located and a multi-media exhibition on ‘Understanding Asian Art’. This last exhibition provides a clear insight on the intent of the museum, explaining in a display label that the Asian continent is home to more than a thousand ethnic groups with a wide variety of cultures and that these cultures developed through interaction and fusion, which is an ongoing process. The take away here is that this is a process Taiwan is also a part of and the resulting culture is unique to Taiwan.

As for the museum building itself, this is state of the art and designed to impress. The beautifully landscaped area of the museum is large, approximately 70 ha. Walking up to the museum the visitor gets a feeling of space which, deliberate or not, does give an association with the vastness of Asia. This grandeur of the building does not match the exhibitions. Although beautifully presented, tastefully using light, sound, colour, space and different display techniques, the size of the exhibition area and the quantity of

art displayed falls short of expectations raised by the grand architecture and landscape which, as its website explained, are integrated components of the museum's presentation.

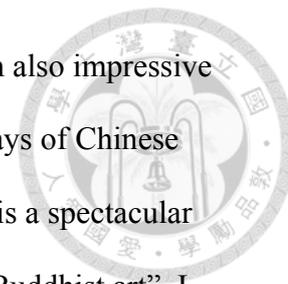


9.3 *Chung Tai World Museum*

In Taiwan, religious practices hold a prominent places in society, no matter where one is. There always seems to be a shrine, temple, statue or, in the mountains, a church in sight. According to Taiwan Yearbook 2016 there are more than 12,000 temples and 3,000 churches in Taiwan, equating to density of a place of worship for each 1,500 people. Taoism and Buddhism each have a following of about a third of the population. Most temples are Taoist, almost 9,500, blending in with Popular Religion. Popular Religion is the undogmatic religion of common people, a socio-culturally complex religion bringing comfort and averting dangers of daily life into which it is incorporated (Schipper 2009: 16).

Religion is very much a part of Taiwan heritage, receiving increased attention from museologists. This attention is mainly focussed on Buddhist art. The exhibition on Buddhist art at the NPM Southern Branch is an example of this. A new museum on Buddhist art is the Chung Tai World Museum, attached to the Chung Tai Chan Monastery in Puli. This modern monastery, housed in an extravagant newly built landmark building, only opened its doors in 2001. This monastery is an exponent of a Taiwan Buddhist renaissance, based on a worldlier Japanese Buddhism and, on an operative level, Protestant Christianity. A focus on religious ethics and social responsibilities are important elements of this renaissance, which has spread to other countries, amongst others, the USA and in Europe, making Taiwan an international religious centre (Madson 2008: 320-321). The Chung Tai World Museum is a recent

addition to the Chung Tai Chan Monastery's activities. Housed in an also impressive custom built building resembling a Tang city, symbolising the heydays of Chinese Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, the museum opened in 2016. It is a spectacular museum, dubbed by the Lonely Planet travel site as the "Louvre of Buddhist art". I visited the museum shortly after its opening in 2016 (Eaves: 2016).



The museum location on the premises of the monastery makes visiting it an ecomuseum like in-situ experience. The presentation is state of the art. Next to approximately 300 statues shown, which is around 10 % of the collection, there is a vast collection of brass rubbings of sutras, and calligraphy and paintings. The exhibits are displayed in a modern, understated style. Lighting and use of space are an important part of the display. Text at each display is minimal. More information is provided on aisle level, but this too is not exaggerated. With audio guides visitors are led through the museum, giving more information on selected items. There is no pretext of neutrality. The museum supports the Buddhist message of the monastery. All guides are associated with the monastery.

During my visit, I had the opportunity to interview the director of the museum, Jian Chen Fa-shi. He explained that the museum's audience is the general public but acknowledged that the museum has no aim to be neutral. It is directed towards propagating dharma and the teaching and doctrines of Buddhism. The exhibits are shown in the context of time and space central to Buddhism. This is interwoven in the architecture with the round form of time and the square for space, symbolising the north, south, east and west. Curating is done by the leaders of the monastery. Ultimate decisions are made by the Dharma master. The museum is China centred. It sends a message of a common Chinese history, promoting Chan Buddhism in Taiwan. The art displayed goes back to to the early years of Buddhism. It includes Indian sculptures but

these are appropriated to the history and message of Chan Buddhism (Website Chung Tai World Museum).



9.4 *National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts*

Fine arts are a form of heritage and as such are subject to political interference and interpretation. The National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMoFA), which opened in 1988, states in its website and in its museum brochure that it is dedicated to Taiwanese art, and that through its collection it explores and exhibits the unique characteristics of modern and contemporary Taiwan art. With this the NTMoFA is explicitly contributing to a Taiwan identity. Its more recent expansion into the field of photography, multimedia arts and film, which includes documentaries, lends itself even more effectively for this. Following through on its mission, the NTMoFA describes in its brochure that in its presentations the link to society is made by putting the art in historical context and showing the genealogy of artists and their work, so emphasising the place of artists in society (Website National Museum of Fine Arts; idem-brochure)

At the time of my visit to the museum, in November 2017, a new temporary exhibition, *Aggregation & Blooming*, October 2017 to December 2019, just opened. This exhibition explores the role of artist groups in the development of fine arts in Taiwan and provides insight into the political vulnerability of fine arts. In Taiwan the beginning of modern art development, referred to as New Art, is set at the arrival of the ‘Seven Star Painting Society’, the first modern times art group of a series of over 400 that formed in the period 1920s to 1990s. This timeframe spans three distinct art periods: The Japanese Colonial Period, the Early Post-war Period which spans the martial law period, and the 1980s – 1990s. This periodization provides a window on changing ideas and convictions, and changes to the social and cultural environment over

time. The art groups were platforms for sharing and transmitting new ideas and modern techniques and the introduction of new genres, making them an important vehicle for art development. The period of art groups was a period of direct political involvement in art. Both the Japanese and the Mainland Chinese newcomers taking over control of the island considered Taiwan a provincial backwater, in need of being educated in the culture of the coloniser. With the liberalisation and individualisation of society, the phenomena of artist groups with their shared characteristics faded (Aggregation & Blooming).

Comparing the first two periods in terms of cultural liberties, the Japanese were more accommodating, up to 1937, when the *kōminka* assimilation policy was introduced. They encouraged a Taiwan flavour to Japanese art styles, and promoted Western art styles in their drive for modernisation (Kuo 2000: 33). There was little social critique expressed. Important was to improve the quality of art, measured against exposition norms set by the coloniser, to a level that would gain entrance to the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition, important for recognition as an artist. For social critique of those times one needs to turn to writers (ibid 58).

As for art in the martial law period, in particular in the early years, Japanese influences were ridiculed by the KMT nationalists. Authorities decreed that artists should subject themselves to ‘Orthodox Chinese Paintings’. An official went as far as describing Taiwanese artists reluctant to comply as ‘worshippers of other ancestors’ (ibid: 74). Still, there was diversity in art groups. In the early years there were groups continuing the Japanese style while, encouraged by the government, new groups formed conforming to official cultural policies. Another group was artists arriving from the Mainland, inspired by nostalgia for the home land. In the 1960s, a new genre of art groups formed around the avant-garde Modern Painting Movement, which is the most



influential art movement in post-war Taiwan. The sanctuary these art groups provided against political interference in the work of artists were platforms for sharing and transmitting modern techniques, making them important vehicles for art development. In the 1970s, there was an easing of pressure on writers and artists and a strong ‘nativist’ movement, with its roots in the Japanese period, re-emerged in literature and art. Nativism has been discussed in more detail in the chapter on literature museums. Notable is that this movement draws upon the Japanese styles of the Japanese colonial period as one of the foundations of a new Taiwan identity (ibid: 59). This is an early example of considering Taiwan’s colonial history as source of Taiwanese identity.

The third and last period, 1980-1990, heralds the decline of art groups. As democratisation set in with its civil liberties, combined with Taiwan’s economic success and exposure to globalism, the Taiwan art scene and art market matured and artists no longer needed the solidarity of peers to function. With the demise of the art groups, Taiwan’s art environment moved towards resemblance with the international scene. Kuo describes this as: “the same instability, fragmentation, blurring of genres, and loss of a grand narrative as many of the post-industrial, late-capitalistic and post-modernist societies”. (175). Consequently, he questions the role of art museums. He does not elaborate on this but the suggestion made is that interest in marginality, otherness, and differences does sit not well with categorisation and interpretation that is inherent to art museums.

The three art museums do not lend themselves for comparison of content. Still they do each have a political message. The political chicanery of the opening of the Southern branch of the NPM provides a window into Taiwan party politics. The Chung Tai World Museum reaches back to the time when one person could unapologetically

determine the narrative, while the exhibition on art groups at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts tells a history of coping with suppression, which is a common thread in Taiwan history. Together they provide a cross-section of issues pertaining to Taiwan identity.



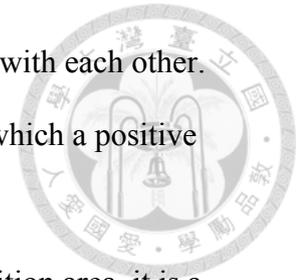
10. History Museums

It is at history museums where one would expect the story of Taiwan to come together. The museums in the previous chapters occupied a niche, providing a timeline from prehistory to modern times, with historic events and social and cultural consequences passed in review. The prime history museum in Taiwan is the National Museum of Taiwan History in Tainan, which I visited in May 2018 as the last in the course of this thesis. Earlier, I visited two other, much smaller history museums, the private Taiwan Times Village, which commercialises Taiwan history, and the regional Kaohsiung Museum of History, for a localised perspective

10.1 National Museum of Taiwan History

As with most national museums in Taiwan, the National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH) is a young museum, having opened in 2011. The permanent exhibition is named “Our Land, Our People: The Story of Taiwan”, establishing its ambition to tell the defining story. As the museum’s guidebook explains, the ideology of the museum is to tell Taiwan’s history from the perspective of the common people and step away from history based in the actions of those in power — a history based in consequences rather than on the events bringing these on. Carrying this through, the museum zooms in on contact with the outside world through trade, colonisation, and immigration, and how

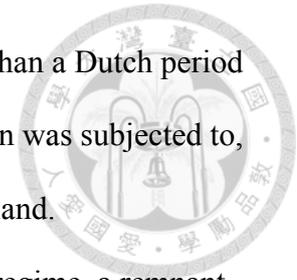
different ethnic groups got their footing on the island and interacted with each other. This is done from the perspective of the different ethnic groups for which a positive development for one was a negative for the other.



How does this work out in practice? To begin with the exhibition area, it is a huge central hall of a modern purpose-built building located in an expansive park. The symbolism of the architecture is extensively explained in the guidebook. The open space symbolises that history is continual — there is no clear beginning and end of historical periods from where the people stand. Life continues, and culture and way of life is passed down. Taiwan's prehistory is presented quite academically, and restraint is shown in speculating on lineage between prehistoric peoples and today's indigenous tribes based on archaeological research. However, a cultural link is put forward. The origins of myths and legends of Taiwan's indigenous peoples are suggested to originate from events occurring in prehistory and passed down through history.

Trade put Taiwan on the world map in the 16th century. First as a free haven for Japanese and Chinese merchants avoiding Ming government trade restrictions with Japan. Shortly afterwards, the Dutch and the Spanish arrived, opening up trade routes with Europe and Spanish colonies in the Americas and transforming Taiwan into a key trading site. The Japanese, the Dutch, and the Spanish all showed interest in colonising the island. The Dutch and the Spanish established settlements and extended their hostilities in Europe to Taiwan. It is especially the Dutch, settling in the present day Tainan area in 1624 and holding on to their settlement to 1662, who have received a prominent position in Taiwan history. They introduced an administration and the production of sugar and rice for trade and encouraged emigration from the mainland to labour the fields. The lasting effect of the Dutch colonisation is debatable, but their meticulously held annals gives them a prominent place in Taiwan history. The

presentation at the NMTH puts this period in a broader perspective than a Dutch period and focusses on the conflicting interests of the foreign parties Taiwan was subjected to, and the effect of this on the demographics and social fabric of the island.



The first period of Taiwan-based rule was that of the Zheng regime, a remnant of the collapsed Ming dynasty. Zheng Cheng-gong, better known in the West as Koxinga, ran the Dutch out of Taiwan in 1662, and the Zheng family held onto power till 1683 when their rule was ended by Qing troops. As with the Dutch, their rule was mainly based on trade. The museum does not overly elaborate on this period which is remarkable considering the cult status Zhen Cheng-gong has in Taiwan. The Qing period is approached from the angle of Chinese immigration into Taiwan. The Qing administration tried to regulate this to avoid the danger of an accumulation of Han Chinese in a weakly controlled area. This led to widespread illegal immigration. The exhibition goes in depth into the interaction between indigenous people and immigrants, explaining how the immigrants increasingly encroached on indigenous land on the plains and in the foothills, forcing the indigenes to cope or move away. This led the Qing administration, in their drive to legislate, to categorize the indigenes as ‘civilised’ or ‘uncivilised’ depending, amongst others, on the level of adoption of Chinese culture. With the ‘savage boundary’ running over the length of the island, the administration limited its control of indigenous people to the civilised. The NMTH is the only museum I visited that displays the indigenes in a socio-cultural context rather than based on ethnic characteristics. The exhibition on the Qing period continues with developing industries and societies developing around these industries, the rise of commercial cities and towns, and the importance of Popular Religion for the immigrant society. The Qing period receives ample attention in this museum, considerably more than in other

museums visited. The museum's choice for focusing on society and culture proves to reveal a much richer source than the politics of that time.

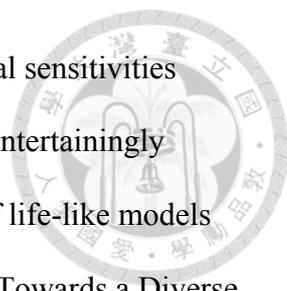
The Japanese period is presented in much the same way as the Qing period. The attention to the events at the time of ceding Taiwan to Japan in 1895 sticks out. In the vacuum between the retreat of the Qing and occupation by the Japanese, a group of Taiwan elite declared the independent Republic of Formosa. This was immediately squashed when the Japanese arrived but guerrilla warfare continued for another six months. By highlighting this episode, the image of a submissive Taiwan population is checked.

As also for the Qing period, the exhibition expands on

the lot of the indigenes, this time on the forced assimilation of the indigenes living in the mountains and the tension this caused, erupting in occasional violence. This prompted even more extreme measures by the Japanese colonial government to disrupt the indigenous lifestyle. As for the development of Taiwan as a whole, the Japanese modernisation program is positively exhibited. Attention however is also given to the political and social movements of that time. This too underscores that the Taiwanese did not passively subject to colonial rule. This section ends with the war years, a period that is underexposed in Taiwan. Reserving judgement, an account of Taiwanese volunteering or being conscripted into the Japanese army and of the many Taiwanese casualties is given. The bombing of Taiwan by allied troops is also displayed.



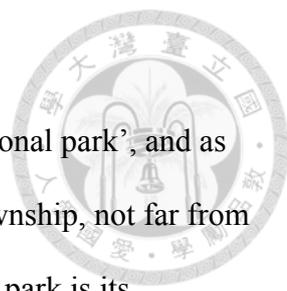
Figure 6: National Museum of Taiwan History (author's photo)



The post-war period receives decidedly less attention. Political sensitivities shine through in the display. While the periods described above are entertainingly presented with an arsenal of display techniques with extensive use of life-like models and replicas of buildings, ships, and more, in the last period, called “Towards a Diverse Democratic Society”, this is considerably less. The 228 Incident is explained, but with none of the emotions the human rights museums demonstrate. There is no mention of the White Terror, and the marshal law period is referred to as the ‘anti-communist era’. This reads as a euphemism. When considering communism as negative, the term anti-communist has a positive twist. The museum’s narrative is that Sinification had a positive effect on the education level of the people and together with effective social economic measures taken, starting with land reform, resulted in Taiwan’s economic miracle in the 1970s. It was the increased standard of living this economic success brought that led to Taiwan’s democratisation. Activism is shown in the context of a controlled democratisation process. There is no mention of the human rights movement.

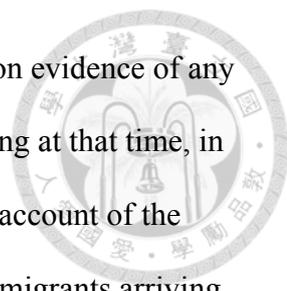
Looking back at the NMTH’s permanent exhibition, the history up to the end of WWII lives up to the museum’s mission of telling history from a people’s perspective. It follows the narrative of Taiwan as a succession of colonisations and maintains an aura of impartiality. The period after WWII however is a distinct departure from this trend. The martial law period is not equated to colonisation, an important element of the discourse of successive colonisations. This period is approached through government achievements rather than how the people experienced it (Lu 2012; Website National Museum of Taiwan History)

10.2 *Taiwan Times Village*



This commercial venue describes itself as an ‘indoor vintage recreational park’, and as such the largest in Asia. It is located in Nantou County’s Caotun Township, not far from Taichung, and opened in 2012. The reason I include this recreational park is its intriguing slogan which, citing the English language guide, runs as: “A paradise that shines with the love of this land’s heritage, a world that concentrates [on] a century’s customs and culture of the four primary ethnic groups in Taiwan”. These four ethnic groups are Mainland Chinese, Indigenous peoples, Hakka and Hoklo, the latter of which is puzzlingly referred to as “Taiwanese”. For two groups there are replicas of villages. There is a nondescriptive indigenous village and for the Mainland Chinese a military dependents village. For the Hakka the representation is not quite clear, but they are probably associated with the exhibit on farm life. The ‘Taiwanese’ are represented by a host of nostalgic displays all set in the 1950s, which include general amenities such as a police station, school, temple, railway station, and shops, but also more curious choices such as a police and military lookout, a Japanese street, and a retro brothel alley. These displays are brought to life with staff dressed in period clothing.

There is also a Taiwan history museum with a telling version of history shown. Going against common insight, the Indigenous peoples are depicted as a homogeneous group of settlers of Malay-Polynesian decent, settling in the low-lying coastal planes but forced into the mountains by a mass wave of settlers arriving from China after the arrival of the Dutch. A contentious issue, race change, is brought in at this point. The display on this states that the early settlers came as migrant workers for the Dutch to work on sugar plantations and in rice fields, usually coming alone in the expectation they would return after a few years. Many ended up taking indigenous wives and, citing, “... a new race was born: The Taiwanese”.



Emphasis is given to the fact that Dutch reports do not mention evidence of any administrative structure of the Chinese Imperial Government, the Ming at that time, in place. The narrative in the display continues with a notably negative account of the Qing period. The museum's version is that the continuing flow of immigrants arriving were refugees, fleeing wars and famines on the mainland and attracted to Taiwan because of the Qing's lack of control over the island. Efforts of the Qing to change this led to numerous incidents explaining the expression of that time of "Every three years an uprising, every five years a rebellion". It was only in 1887 that the Qing gained full control of the island and made Taiwan a province of China, but they only did this to ward off Japanese interest, but, "the play did not work".

The description of Japanese rule is decidedly more positive: "The Japanese occupation was harsh, but at least the Japanese were not corrupt". It further mentions the great improvement to the island's infrastructure and industry that the Japanese brought. Taiwan's most recent history receives slant attention. It is more about what is not told that is revealing. It tells of how in 1945, the allies agreed to the occupation of Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek's troops and, with no explanation for the dates used, then describes 1952 to 1972 as when the KMT built up Taiwan economically. The only other date mentioned is 1971, when Nixon and Kissinger made their "opening" to China. The display ends on a positive note: "Through the years, Taiwan has developed into a true democracy with different parties competing". There is no mention of the tension over the handling of the KMT nationalist takeover and the 228 Incident and the unrelenting crack-down that followed of which remembrance has become a focal point around Taiwan. Although there is a replica of a military dependents village on display in the recreation park section, no mention is given to the influx of around two million Mainland Chinese arriving in the wake of the communist take-over of the Mainland and

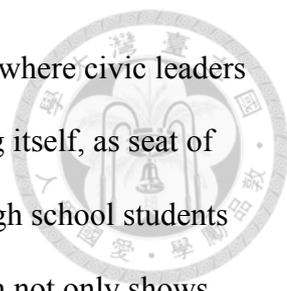
the effects on Taiwan's demographics. Nor is there any mention of the martial law period.

Amplified by a nowadays rare bust of Chiang Kai-shek at the entrance, the message the Taiwan Time Village portrays is a nostalgic yearning for the 1950s, ignoring the repression of that time, and idealising a regime that, taking example from the Japanese colonial period, got things done. Multi-ethnicity is only used as decorum (Habecker 2015; Website Baodao Times Village).

10.3 Kaohsiung Museum of History

The Kaohsiung Museum of History (KMoH) is a regional museum concentrating on the history of the Kaohsiung area in southern Taiwan. This museum, operated by the Kaohsiung City government, opened in 1998. As also the National Taiwan Literature Museum in nearby Tainan, the KMH is housed in a former city hall. This too is a renovated Japanese colonial period building and so contributes to conserving the heritage of that period. The museum's mission, stated in its English language museum guide, could be clearer. It mentions a number of generalities such as local historical research and preservation, maintenance of cultural assets, and creating a knowledge base of regional history and culture. More specific is "promoting the connection between cultural creativity and industry", but with no mention of how. A visit to the museum in December 2017 shed light on this.

The museum has chosen not to show a timeline providing a chronological history of the Kaohsiung area, but to focus on certain topics. The permanent exhibition concentrates on the impact of the 228 Incident on Kaohsiung. Where the National Museum of Taiwan History breezes through the incident, the incident takes central stage at the KMoH. The incident is localized. The museum display text tells that Kaohsiung



suffered the most deaths and casualties as well as being the first city where civic leaders negotiating with the authorities were executed. The museum building itself, as seat of authority at that time, was the stage of intensive fighting in which high school students were involved. With a model this fighting is re-enacted. The museum not only shows but also reflects on the 228 Incident. It puts it in a human rights context and states that for closure it is important that perpetrators of the violence owe up to this and apologise— a push for transitional justice. The dynamics of the museum is in the temporary exhibitions. At the time I visited, there was an exhibition on textiles worn for decorative purposes by immigrants from Fujian, the Min, which was put into the context of women's emancipation. Another exhibition was on distant water fishery by Kaohsiung fishermen where, next to accomplishments, also issues on marine conservation are displayed, together with the poor scores Taiwan receives on this. The KMoH is a small museum and the quality of the presentations does not come near that of national museums. The museum however grows on you. The topics are put in larger social historical context and the museum does not shy away from taking a stand, a characteristic that deserves mentioning in the mission statement (Website Kaohsiung Museum of History; idem-English pamphlet).

Although quality-wise there is no comparison, the narratives of the the NMTH and that of the Taiwan Times Village follow the same line. They both portray a Taiwan history of successive colonisations as taught in the *Knowing Taiwan* textbooks and exclude the repression of the martial law period. It is apparent that the martial law period is a contentious period and has not yet crystallised in the story of Taiwan. Where the human rights museums, but also the National Museum of Taiwan Literature and the National

Museum of Fine Arts confront the repression, as does the KMoH, the NMTM is apologetic and the Taiwan Times Village even triumphant.



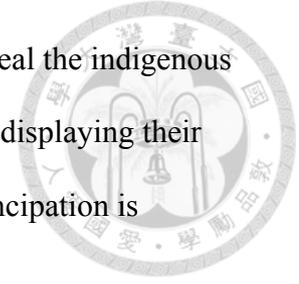
11. Summary and Conclusion

Taiwan has been subjected to radical changes in the authorised heritage discourse in a relatively short period: Japanisation in the 1930s, Sinification in the 1950s and the narrative of successive colonisation of the Knowing Taiwan textbooks in the 1990s. In its continuing search for what constitutes Taiwan identity, the gaze turned inwards, towards local communities and ethnic groups. This interest in local history and heritage is not merely politically induced, but connects to the pushback against globalism seen elsewhere, fed by a postmodernist outlook countering grand narratives and the need to individualise the world we live in.

Museums are nation-building instruments, substantiating characteristics deemed essential to national identity. The vast majority of Taiwan's museums are recent. With democracy arriving in 1987, a public debate on Taiwan identity started in which Taiwan politics has been immersed since. Taiwan's museums are participants in the debate. They show different views and perspectives and the authority of their messages is constantly challenged and adapted to changing social and political demand or, typical to the Taiwan situation, countered by new museums.

In countries without a colonising history, ethnography, or social anthropology, is typically linked to archaeology and history. This provides for an approach to ethnic groups in ethnographic exhibitions that is often detached from the society they now belong to. This is also the case in Taiwan. Although the smallest ethnicity, only 2% of Taiwan's population, Taiwan indigenes receive the most attention. Their history

provides depth to Taiwan's history but an alternate reason is the appeal the indigenous theme has on local and international tourists. With emphasis laid on displaying their culture, their modern history of resistance, marginalisation and emancipation is underexposed.



Ecomuseums are alternatives to traditional museums. In principle, an ecomuseum exhibits living heritage on its original site, run by the community represented, allowing them to present their way of life. This proves to be hard to match. Ecomuseum-like facilities is therefore a better term to use here. Ecomuseums are not without issues, particularly those with ethnic heritage as theme. Confirming a preconceived notion of a culture frozen in time reinforces an image of backwardness. Visitor experience takes precedence over authenticity and the necessary infrastructure and accompanying tourist industry impacts the environment and the sense of a place. This is a consequence of the requirement that an ecomuseum should bring sustainable development, which often needs the commercial activity to survive.

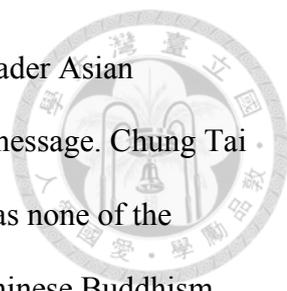
As with ethnology, archaeology contributes to a localised Taiwan history. Research by the Japanese led them to conclude that the indigenous tribes' Austronesian background was due to prehistoric migration from the Pacific and Indian Oceans. New insights, supported by DNA and language research, have changed the understanding of the roots of Taiwan indigenous peoples. They are not the result of migration from the south, but rather the source. The Austronesian migration now goes through Taiwan. An issue is the assumption of a causal relationship connecting Taiwan's prehistoric cultures to today's tribes — recognition of Taiwan indigenous tribes is a modern construct. Societies are fluid and cultures are not by definition attached to ethnicity.

The National Museum of Taiwan Literature describes its mission as conveying the depth, richness, and complexities involved at each stage of Taiwan's development

and growth, stressing an autonomous development. The museum's political ambition is obvious with stating that it is looking at attracting international interest for Taiwan literature so this can serve as an ambassador for the country. It does this without veiling social cultural issues. Issues such as interethnic competition and troubled co-existence, spurring self-destructive internal conflicts and resistance to government oppression are included in the canon.

The DPP evolved out of the human rights movements and human rights have a central role in Taiwan politics since the lifting of marshal law. Dealings with human rights issues by the party in power, which alternates between the KMT and the DPP, are approached with suspicion by the opposition. This has led to considerable delay in ratifying UN conventions on human rights which Taiwan, although not a member, has vowed to honour. Human rights also involves looking back, acknowledging past abuse and acting on it. Important issues to deal with are the 228 Incident in 1947 and the White Terror of the marshal law period. Providing transitional justice proves to be cumbersome, complicated by the KMT's historic association with the perpetrators. Nowadays the 228 Incident receives ample considerations and there are excellent museums covering this. The dark heritage of the White Terror period remains sensitive. There is the preparatory National Human Rights Museum with two museums on prison sites but the episode remains underexposed in other Taiwan museums.

The message of fine arts museums is implicit and more than other museums dependent on interpretation by the visitor. For such a museum to get its own message through, they rely on subtle forms of communication. The National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei and its Southern Branch in Chiayi, the museum of Buddhist art, the Chung Tai World Museum in Puli, Nantou County and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Taichung are examples of this category. With the establishment of the Southern



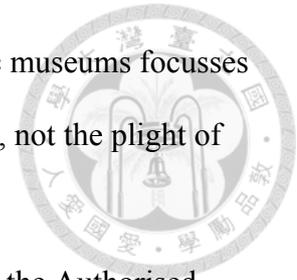
Branch, opening in 2016, the NPM wades into the discourse of a broader Asian influence on Taiwan culture, challenging its original China-centred message. Chung Tai World Museum highlights the importance of religion in Taiwan. It has none of the ambiguousness of the NPM. It is clear in its mission of promoting Chinese Buddhism embedded in a China-centred culture. At the National Museum of Fine Arts an exhibition on art groups, in which artists found shelter from the cultural politics of the Japanese colonial period and of the martial law period also conveys a political message. Comparing these periods with each other implicitly assigns colonial features to the marshal law period.

For a comprehensive view of Taiwan history, one would expect history museums to be the place to go. The prime history museum in Taiwan is the National Museum of Taiwan History which opened in 2012. The heritage discourse here is that Taiwan is a multi-ethnic country with a multicultural society formed by successive colonisation and immigration waves. This narrative however stops abruptly after 1945. Political sensitivities prevail here. The post-war period is described in terms of the positive effects of Sinification and the spectacular economic development of Taiwan. Democratisation is described as a result of these developments. The terms martial law and White Terror are avoided.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis is to find an answer as to what the Authorised Heritage Discourse at Taiwan museums encompasses, whether this is coordinated. An answer calls for a review of the Authorised Heritage Discourse per museum theme.

The Authorised Heritage Discourse reflected in ethnographic museums focusses on the uniqueness indigenous communities bring to Taiwan heritage, not the plight of the people. The indigenes are segregated from mainstream society.

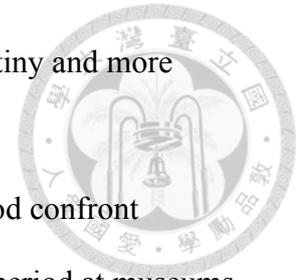


One would expect Ecomuseums to be furthest removed from the Authorised Heritage Discourse. Community control over both management and interpretation of the site ensure a local perspective detached from the narrative of power. In practice, in Taiwan, this is rarely the case. Assuming the museums visited as being representative, three of the four museums visited exist because of the involvement of government institutions and local government. With this a link is maintained with national politics, where localism serves constructing the narrative of a unique Taiwan cultural heritage. With professional involvement in ecomuseums by academics and heritage management, a measure of coordination is ensured.

The Authorised Heritage Discourse visualised in the National Museum of Prehistory is one that through identifying with Taiwan indigenes, Taiwan's history is linked to a different geography and distant past outside of a Chinese influence sphere. Stressing the ancientness of indigenous culture serves as a deterrent against the authority assigned to a continuous Chinese culture passed on from antiquity.

At the National Museum of Taiwan Literature, Taiwan's unique cultural heritage, stemming from colonialism and subsequent waves of immigration, is propagated internationally through its literature — a discourse in line with the *Knowing Taiwan* textbooks. The museum does not deny the impact of Chinese culture on Taiwan but internationalizes Chinese heritage, detaching this from China's nation claim. The museum also discusses internal tension and resulting problems and afflictions along the lines of Human Rights museums. This display of social realism may be attributed to its

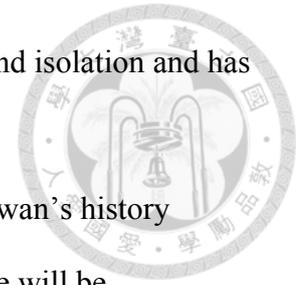
lesser function as a tourist attraction, coming with less political scrutiny and more academic leeway.



The museums on the 228 Incident and the White Terror period confront Taiwan's dark heritage. The Authorised Heritage Discourse on this period at museums remains sensitive. It is at dedicated human rights museums that the human rights abuses are extensively visualised. What is striking is that the national museums, the National 228 Memorial Museum and the National Human Rights Museum, focus is on emotions and personal suffering, attaching names to victims and are open ended in their quest for closure, while the municipal Taipei 228 Memorial Museum has more of the characteristics of a history museum. The national museums are participants in the discourse while the municipal museum is a narrator.

The discourse though art proves to be powerful in Taiwan. The National Palace Museum stands in the centre of the PRC-Taiwan stand-off and was established to claim Chinese heritage. Although this motive has waned, the Chinese arts and artefacts in this museum do not lend themselves to alternative interpretation. The museum remains the embodiment of Taiwan's Chinese heritage. The discourse on Taiwan heritage is therefore deflected towards the museum's Southern Branch to a point that there are alternative Authorised Heritage Discourses within one museum organization. This illustrates that the closer a museum is to national politics, the more versatile the narrative becomes. The Chung Tai World Museum is another China-centric museum but at the same time it also emphasises the dominant position of religion in Taiwan society setting it apart from China. This sends a mixed message. The National Museum of Fine Arts shows another aspect of Taiwan cultural identity, which is dealing with adversity. The temporary exhibition "Aggregation & Blooming" shows how Authorised Heritage Discourses caused restrictions on artistic freedom with which artists had to cope. Taiwanese

resilience today to authoritarian is directed towards external threat and isolation and has become an integral part of Taiwan identity.



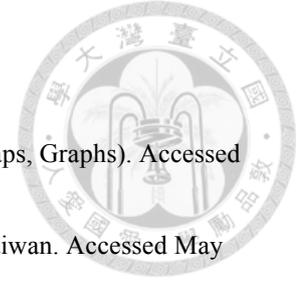
When expecting the museum themes to come together at Taiwan's history museums, especially at the National Museum of Taiwan History, one will be disappointed. The choices of subjects and events, the emphasis laid, and the interpretation made are as diverse as as at other museums. While the National Museum follows the narrative of the *Knowing Taiwan* textbooks, it stops short of taking a stance when arriving in modern times, shying away from politics. Here achievements become central while the circumstances of how these were reached are largely ignored. The museum at the Taiwan Times Village, although with questionable veracity, is at least consistent in their Han-Taiwanese approach, considering this enough distinction with Han-Chinese for claims to a unique Taiwan identity. The Kaohsiung Museum of History on the other hand makes no attempt for a comprehensive national or regional history. Its focus is on selected social issues. Through community engagement the museum provides depth to its heritage discourse.

Recapping the emerging Authorised Heritage Discourse at the museums, it is the post-war period for which there is the greatest disparity between museums. The deciding factor is not whether a museum is a national museum or not. Museum themes are more relevant. In general, museums that put Taiwan history on a timeline and aim to give a comprehensive account are prone to be lighter on social issues. This is also the case with ethnic museums and ecomuseums that focus on a group or locality. It is the human rights museums and the national museum of literature where dark heritage, authoritarian rule, strained interethnic relations, and the struggle for democracy are clearly articulated. The National Museum of Fine Arts also does this to an extent with illustrating restraints put on artist. Although the discussion on what entails Taiwan

identity shines through in all museums, the standoff with the PRC is seldom mentioned. The National Palace Museum is most closely associated with this standoff.

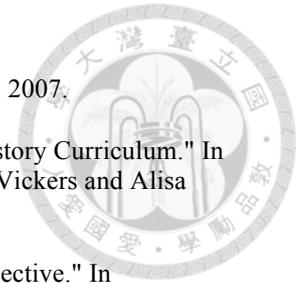
As mentioned in the introduction, museums are nation-building institutes and it is telling that almost all museums discussed were established after 1987. With democracy arriving the people found themselves with the freedom to determine what constitutes Taiwanese-ness, and determining this has been a pivotal issue since. With this freedom, the highly polarised nature of Taiwan society surfaced, what characterises politics. The explosive proliferation of museums shows that there are many sides of Taiwan's story to tell. Coordination of the Authorised Heritage Discourse between museums shows little sign of effective control, even between governmental controlled museums. The opinions on pre-1945 are settling, but the history of post-war Taiwan is still fluid. When looking at recent history through the lens of Taiwan's museums, this shows a kaleidoscope of versions. It is only when looking deeper into the past that the picture comes into focus.

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