

# 評介鄧騰克著《歷史記憶的景觀：戒嚴後的臺灣博物館和紀念文化的政治意義》

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書名：《歷史記憶的景觀：戒嚴後的臺灣博物館和紀念文化的政治意義》(*The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan*)

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出版單位：香港大學出版社 (Hong Kong University Press)

出版時間：2021 年

頁數：272 頁



*The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan* by Kirk A. Denton lays out a contemporary Taiwanese museum discourse in a politically driven representation of history, memories, and identities. This volume is a sequel to the author's previous work on post-socialist museum representations in China. It adopts a similar method of textual analysis by framing the museum representations in their overarching political and ideological governance. The author specializes in historical memory studies and modern Chinese literature. The thorough identification of delicate terminology alterations and their ideological implications in the naming and narratives in the Taiwanese cultural institutes demonstrate the book's focus on examining representations as texts based on the author's Chinese language proficiency and background in comparative studies. This volume also explicitly examines how

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memories are represented under the fluctuating political ideologies in the post-martial law era in Taiwan by illustrating its contemporary exhibitionary complex. Throughout the volume, explicit case studies testify how these representations created under institutionalized cultural governance have contributed to constructing Taiwanese society's history, memories, and identity.

The multifariousness of the representation of the past in discussion is composed of ten chapters, elaborating concepts including historical and archeological narratives of the nation, post-authoritarian multiculturalism, memories of martial law atrocity, the transformation of dictator worship, and the progress in aboriginal representations. Each themed chapter is composed of detailed descriptions of selected museum presentations, including their background of establishment, names, and exhibition narratives, along with the political ideology at work. This assemblage of examples creates an array of manifestations on how political governance has dominated the production of exhibitionary complexes about the past and identity intended for public presentation. While focusing on representations in political, cultural, and economic contexts, the author also observes similarities between Taiwan and China in their politically inflicted national identity construction. According to the discussion, Taiwan and China demonstrate resemblances in their cultural governing structures with essential nation-building purposes. Among such comparisons, the author argues governmentality in the top-down and politically driven mechanism in producing exhibitionary content in contemporary Taiwanese society.

Upon the volume's publication, reviews have credited its abundant and in-depth analytical findings that display how contemporary Taiwanese museums mediate the nation's construction of history and identity.<sup>1</sup> However, despite pioneering the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan by Kirk A. Denton," *Asian Ethnology*, 80.2 (2021): 457-459; Yan Ying, "The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan, Kirk A. Denton (2021)," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, 8.2 (2022): 320-322; Thomas B. "Kirk A. Gold. Denton, The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan," *International Journal of*

English-language publications in framing the Taiwanese museum discourse by focusing on history and memory representations through interweaving multiple agencies, including cultural governance, political forces, and subsequent ideological transitions in its nationwide observation, some aspects did not come to the fore and await to be addressed to better contextualize the cases examined in this book.

First and foremost, there is an alarming generalization of the multicultural museum narrative approach in the post-martial law era by attributing the cause to political wrestling between the pan-blue (KMT) and pan-green party (DPP). In the first two chapters, case studies focus on the entering of multiculturalism into museum exhibition narratives in the 1990s. The narrative emphasizes the changing governance embodied by policies and administrative tactics that altered the dominating Sinocentric museum representation. Accordingly, the author compares post-martial law Taiwan and post-socialist China on their similarity in the politically driven exhibition complexes. However, omitting the fundamental differences in historical developments and governance structure between the Chinese post-socialist cultural modernization and the Taiwanese post-authoritarian decolonization invalidates the comparison of their subsequent promotions of national ideologies through museum presentations.

Nonetheless, the pan-blue and pan-green political dynamic this book repeatedly refers to portrays an ideological conflict within contemporary Taiwanese society, which is a discrepancy embedded in the island nation's experience of multi-layered settler-colonialism, authoritarianism, and globalization. Discouraging the change in museum narrative after the nation's democratization due to party political conflicts thus oversimplifies the structure that caused such polarization.

The book's generalization of the authoritarian-led museum narrative since 1949

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*Taiwan Studies*, 1.aop (2022): 1-3; Ann Heylen, "Book Review: The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan by Kirk A. Denton," *China Information*, 36.2 (2022): 294-296; Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang, "The Landscape of Historical Memory: The Politics of Museums and Memorial Culture in Post-Martial Law Taiwan," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 82.3 (2023): 438-440.

into a “Sinocentric” concept without addressing its supporting structure of settler-colonialism and the subsequent oppression and marginalization of the nation’s indigenous majority is thus misleading. Taiwanese democratization is a process of shedding its authoritarian governance and rectifying the settler colonial governance structure, specifically serving the post-war Chinese settlers, who only comprised roughly twenty percent of the nation’s population.<sup>2</sup> The promotion of pluralism and multiculturalism and the reorientation toward an Oceanic ontology in post-martial law Taiwan represent the society’s paradigm shift in cultural narrative toward decentralization, decolonization, and antiauthoritarianism.<sup>3</sup> It also reflects the nation’s intricate colonial and authoritarian pasts. The change of cultural narrative from Sinocentric to multiculturalism that overlaps with the nation’s political dynamic change after democratization is a project that aims to better incorporate a population with diverted origins and memories. It signifies respect toward the presence of all citizens in the country and proposes rectifying the neglect of the nation’s majority in the authoritarian period.<sup>4</sup>

The marginalized majority in Taiwan under the KMT settler colonialist authoritarian regime led to the emergence of the pan-green (DPP) during the nation’s

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<sup>2</sup> On the number of post war Chinese settlers, see Masahiro Wakabayashi, “Waishengren in Post-war Taiwan’s Settler State: A Preliminary Study on the Restructuring Process of Taiwan’s Multi-ethnic Society,” *Journal of Asian cultures*, 5 (2003): 121-139.

<sup>3</sup> Maukuei Chang, “The Movement to Indigenize the Social Sciences in Taiwan: Origin and Predicaments.” In Arif Dirlik, Guannan Li and Hsiao-pei Yen edited, *Sociology and Anthropology in Twentieth-Century China: Between Universalism and Indigenism* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2012), 221-260; Lung-chih Chang, “Discourse in Contemporary Taiwan.” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 2.3 (2014): 229-244; Stephen J. Hartnett, Patrick Shaou-Whea Dodge & Lisa B. Keränen, “Postcolonial remembering in Taiwan: 228 and transitional justice as ‘The end of fear’,” *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 13.3 (2020): 238-256.

<sup>4</sup> Li-jung Wang, “Multiculturalism in Taiwan,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10.3 (2004): 301-318.

democratization.<sup>5</sup> The coming to power of the DPP in the government and the subsequent alteration of exhibitionary narratives demonstrates a decolonizing quality rather than mere political rivalry against the previous leading party. A significant aspect of the nation's indigenous intention is to resist monolithic cultural assimilation imposed by the authoritarian settlers. On the contrary, post-socialist Chinese museum representations operate toward constructing a unified national narrative by defending its governing authority and promoting its success in modernization.<sup>6</sup> The political influences are evident in both the case of China and Taiwan, but the politics bear diverted historical and social structures. It is thus risky to compare the promotion and a broader implementation of multiculturalism by the DPP in Taiwan to the post-socialist museum practices in China.

Another aspect worth considering is the professional museological development and the functioning of mid-level cultural bureaucrats. Although affiliated with the government administration system, museums in Taiwan have been in contact with international museological practices even during the martial law period. The authoritarian governance deviated from the nation's museum practices from the mainstream post-modern discipline. Regardless, it did not prevent the introduction of new museological concepts in general to the nation's museum discourse. A professional community of museum scholars and practitioners subsequently emerged and took on the nation's cultural governance responsibilities. These museum professionals, nurtured in Taiwanese society and affected by local and international museological developments, played indispensable roles in designing and producing exhibitionary content throughout the nation's course of democratization. The illustration of the nation's contemporary cultural representation became insufficient because it overlooked mid-level museum practitioners and their agencies in producing the Taiwanese exhibition scenarios.

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<sup>5</sup> Masahiro Wakabayashi, *The "Republic of China" and the Politics of Taiwanization: The Changing Identity of Taiwan in Postwar East Asia*, Translated by Ko iku-jo et al. (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Kirk A. Denton, "Museums, Memorial Sites and Exhibitionary Culture in the People's Republic of China.," *The China Quarterly*, 183.9 (2005): 565-586.

Therefore, the two issues identified above could redirect the arguments significantly on the political influences identified in this book. Chapters one, two, eight, and nine discuss nationally promoted multiracialism, archeological and aboriginal presentations, and introductions of new museological practices. The political intentions identified by the author also represent civic-driven attempts to decolonize the nation culturally. It is worth mentioning that the nation's indigenization-led democratization has altered its cultural governance model, which has undergone a structural transformation from the authoritarian top-down model. The population, in general, is given their voice. Through their participation in the democratized governing system, policy-directed cultural developments are, to an extent, demonstrations of a collective intention despite the remaining discrepancy in its national identity.

Nonetheless, the textual analysis structure adopted in the case studies could incorporate the Taiwanese cultural decolonizing aspect. Chapters three to six focus on the nation's authoritarian past, including the Chinese Civil War, the authoritarian period, and the Chiang family, in which several historical information mentioned could point directly to multiple colonization histories in Taiwan. For example, the martyr shrines in chapter three are converted from Japanese shrines by the KMT Sinification movements in the martial law period. In chapter seven, the National Museum of Taiwan Literature project, led by the DPP, chose a previous Japanese colonial government building as its permanent home—these choices of sites made apparent that multiple colonized histories coexist in contemporary Taiwanese exhibitionary culture.

Observations considering only the dueling party politics would limit discussions in the transformative appropriations of sites and objects that could highlight a democratization-generated process of decolonization.

Likewise, the decolonizing aspect could have brought insight into the chapter ten discussion regarding the issues in constructing a southern branch for the National Palace Museum (NPM). In this case study, the chapter emphasizes the dueling of political parties for prominence in cultural governance. It omits the dichotomy's representation of crucial ideological discrepancies between a decolonizing ideology and the Sinocentric construct that coexists in the nation. This chapter rounds up the

case of the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum (SBNPM) as an attempt to approach an international audience and pursue regional balance domestically. Unfortunately, it overlooks the decolonizing purpose of the original design and how it perished during the ruling party alteration process.

Some facts revealing such a decolonization struggle should be in place for further discussion. First, the director of the NPM has been a member of the Executive Yuan of the Republic of China (ROC) since its establishment and is bound to alter after every presidential election.<sup>7</sup> Second, the SBNPM underwent a turmoil of design changes after the DPP stepped down from government authority. The original project underwent a two-stage international architectural competition, and the winning design adhered to the localized national imagination with an abstract representation of Jade Mountain.<sup>8</sup> However, a different team was “brought in” to complete the project after KMT retrieved governing power.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the building diverged from the initial winning design, which took a drastic ideological turn from adopting local geographical inspiration to emphasizing an inheritance of Chinese literati culture.<sup>10</sup> Such a swing back to the Sinocentric ideology on an iconic national construction project after chapters of discussions on the DPP’s national identity construction denoted precisely the arduousness of decolonizing the cultural governance in Taiwan.

It has been two years since the book’s publishing. The limited reference number indicates that this overview of politics in contemporary Taiwanese museum representation attracts little attention. The complexity of post-authoritarian culture and memory representation in Taiwan will need a more comprehensive examination

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<sup>7</sup> Executive Yuan, “Heads of Ministries and Agencies,” accessed July 5, 2023 (<https://english.ey.gov.tw/Page/540C919953029C52>).

<sup>8</sup> Yi-Chih Huang, “National Glory and Traumatism: National/cultural identity construction of National Palace Museum in Taiwan,” *National Identities*, 14.3 (2012): 211-225; Antoine Predock, “NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM,” accessed July 5, 2023, <http://www.predock.com/NPM/NPM.html>.

<sup>9</sup> As cited in Huang 2012: 225.

<sup>10</sup> Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum, “Introduction,” accessed July 5, 2023 (<https://south.npm.gov.tw/english/AboutUsEn/InfoEn.htm>).

to make sense of this topic within various disciplines. The primary observation in this review is that instead of comparing cultural representation cases in Taiwan to cases in China, their diverted structure of governance and half a century of segregation have impeded the validity of meaningful comparative analysis without fully addressing the historical context. This volume's neglect of the structural development that foregrounds the political dichotomy also reminds us that any discussion on exhibition complexes in post-authoritarian Taiwan needs to incorporate aspects of the nation's decolonization of its authoritarian supported settler colonial regime to make sense of the apparent politically driven representations.

Overall, while the nation's decolonizing efforts against previous Chinese settler colonial constructs could have further contextualized the discussion, this is a volume that provides insightful observations toward a politically inflicted Taiwanese museum discipline framed in the post-martial law era. It reminds us of the delicacy and importance of institutionalized cultural representations, which are becoming more relevant to the democratized Taiwanese society than ever, for it closely represent the governing ideology and continues to orchestrate the national imagination. However, its lack of attention to Taiwan's underlying post-colonial and post-authoritarian structure limits its potential to contribute to further studies of contemporary Taiwanese cultural representations.

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