TRAUMATIC MEMORY, COMMEMORATION & SUBJECTIVITY FORMATION

-- 2004 HAND-IN-HAND RALLY IN TAIWAN --

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INTRODUCTION

‘The Great Wall of China was finished at its northernmost location. The construction work moved up from the south-east and south-west and joined at this point. The system of building in sections was also followed on a small scale within the two great armies of workers, the eastern and western. It was carried out in the following manner: groups of about twenty workers were formed, each of which had to take on a section of the wall, about five hundred metres. A neighbouring group then built a wall of similar length to meet it. But afterwards, when the sections were fully joined, construction was not continued on any further at the end of this thousand-metre section. Instead the groups of workers were shipped off again to build the wall in completely different regions…’

The paragraph quoted above, which describes the peculiar way of building the Great Wall, the system of piecemeal building, is from Franz Kafka’s fictional short story, ‘The Great Wall of China’. In the story, the protagonist, a survivor of the construction of the Great Wall, played the role of narrator, enquiring into the reasoning for the piecemeal construction of the wall.

This peculiar method of construction, as Kafka describes, was not undertaken without mindful thought. Rather, the authorities deliberately chose this way of building. After five hundred metres had been completed, the workers were exhausted and had lost all faith in themselves and in the building, and they were then shipped far away. By being sent off to distant parts of the empire, the workers saw here and there finished sections of the wall rising up and met other subjects, feeling they were achieving something valuable at great sacrifice. This tuned the strings of their souls and calmed their impatience. They were reinvigorated. In addition, when the workers were sent up and down the wall they saw how great, rich and beautiful their country was. Their work became meaningful. As Kafka

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1. The paper that is given to the EATS 2007 annual conference is the introductory section of a chapter for my PhD thesis (the title of the thesis: The Birth of the “Taiwanese” – A Discursive Constitution of the “Taiwanese” as a National Identity). This introduction provides the theoretical framework, methodology, as well as the layout for the main arguments of the chapter. For those who are interested in reading the whole chapter, please contact Yih-jye Hwang: vyh04@aber.ac.uk.
illustrates,

‘Every countryman was a brother for whom they were building a protective wall and who would thank him with everything he had and was for all his life. Unity! Unity! Shoulder to shoulder, a coordinated movement of the people, their blood no longer confined in the limited circulation of the body but rolling sweetly and yet still returning through the infinite extent of China.’

They then left their homes and families to continue building the wall in order to protect their compatriots.

However, the major problem with this method is that many large gaps arose between sections. They were filled in only gradually and slowly. In fact, the readers are told that some gaps were never closed at all. The Wall, as generally believed, was built for protection from barbarian nomads to the north. Then, how can there be protection provided by a wall that is not built continuously? In fact, as Kafka argued, the wall would not have been able to provide a sound protection, even if it had been totally completed without gaps. The wall, left standing abandoned in remote areas, could easily be destroyed again and again by the nomads. The structure itself was in constant danger. Since there was no practical reason to build the wall, why was it built? For Kafka, this is the central issue in the whole construction of the wall. The answer he provides, implicitly, is that the Wall itself, through a large-scale effort of collective labor, was designed to bring people within the boundaries of the empire together. The fundamental purpose of the wall was to give the people a sense of unity, a common purpose. While human nature is fragmented, a collective labor – i.e. building a practically useless Great Wall – is the best way to unify people within a political community, and to maintain the existence of the empire itself. A sound and continuous construction of the wall was therefore unnecessary for the practical purposes of the authorities. Indeed, they deliberately chose piecemeal construction and wanted something inexpedient and impractical.

In addition, for Kafka, the construction of the Great Wall also reveals the nature of the empire. The decision to construct the wall had long existed and it was unclear by whom an order was given. As Kafka illustrated, it was not ‘the admirable innocent emperor’ that gave orders for the construction. The decision had been made much earlier by a hidden and ambiguous ‘leadership’. Kafka does not develop this thought; instead, he turns to the discussion of the nature of the empire itself. To Kafka, the empire by its essence was
‘immortal’ and ‘ceaseless’. The individual emperors would definitely meet their death. Even the dynasties would finally collapse. The empire, however, stands forever. To Kafka, there is a higher authority that exists beyond emperors and dynasties, its power operating ceaselessly within the boundaries of the empire. What Kafka has described here is the notion of sovereignty, albeit in an implicit way.\(^2\) Kafka then goes on to argue that the empire itself was also a very vague institution. It was not able to make its presence sufficiently clear. This obscurity however helped it in the exercise of its power, immediately and ceaselessly, up to its most remote frontiers. Nevertheless, there is also weakness in this obscurity: it prevents the empire becoming something fully vital and present in the hearts of its subjects. The construction of the Great Wall could somehow remedy this weakness, since it could function as a physical reminder of the naturally obscure and ambiguous empire, helping the imperial subjects to discern the existence of the immortal empire. In other words, the Great Wall is the physical presence of sovereignty — the Chinese Empire.

Although Kafka’s story is invented, he poses some fascinating questions about the purposes of mass human laboring and the role of great architectural projects in the formation/consolidation of a political community (i.e. empire). While the story is about the Great Wall in Ancient China, it should be read in a more general sense in the contemporary world when the world is composed of sovereign/nation states. Notwithstanding the fact that there is only one Great Wall on Earth, which has now become a popular tourist spot, there are in effect numerous “Great Walls” being constructed, albeit in different forms. One example occurred recently in 21st century Taiwan, when over two million people were mobilized to form a human chain, a ‘Great Wall of Democracy’, on 28 February 2004. This ‘Great Wall’ was not something made of stone however, but of human beings.

A COMMEMORATION OF THE 2-28 INCIDENT IN 2004: 2-28 HAND-IN-HAND RALLY

On 28 February 2004, only three weeks before the fiercely-fought presidential election to be held on March 20, an estimated two million people formed a human chain that ran 486

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2. The modern concept of sovereignty was firstly elaborated by Jean Bodin (1530-1596) in his Six Books on the Republic. He described the concept as a ruler beyond human law and subject only to the divine or natural law. Sovereignty is absolute, thus indivisible. It is also perpetual, since it does not expire with its holder. Finally, sovereignty is no one’s property: by essence, it is inalienable.
kilometers from the island's northernmost point to its southernmost cape. The event is called the ‘228 Hand-in-Hand Rally’, which is the biggest mass demonstration ever held in Taiwan. The people were either mobilised or turned up independently to join the rally, holding hands together without necessarily knowing each other. At 2:28 p.m., the crowd said ‘yes’ to Taiwan in an attempt to claim democratic Taiwan’s sovereignty and said ‘no’ to China for its constant missile threat against Taiwan. The participants of the rally and its vast number of supporters were all immersed in a high-spirited peace protest against China and in a festive atmosphere of national unity. The incumbent president Chen Shui-bian urged protesters to oppose China’s military threats and create the ‘Great Wall of Taiwan’s Democracy.’ The event was timed to coincide with the 57th anniversary of the 2-28 Incident of 1947. After five decades of development following the incident, the day is now called ‘Peace Memorial Day,’ a national holiday in commemoration of those who lost their lives in the riots and the purges that followed. The demonstration was ostensibly organised to commemorate the 2-28 Incident.

The incident took place on February 28, 1947 when Taiwan had just returned to the Republic of China after the defeat of the Japanese Empire in the Second World War. The incident was triggered by the arrest of a native Taiwanese woman in a Taipei City street for selling contraband cigarettes. The Kuomintang’s (Chinese Nationalist Party, KMT) police shot at a crowd who were attempting to protect the woman. The story spread quickly and overnight the whole island was boiling with rage. Angry native Taiwanese stormed police stations and government agencies, seeking out and beating up the mainlanders. A few organized military revolts occurred across Taiwan. In response, the KMT governor in

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3. After the KMT took over Taiwan from the Japanese, on the economic front it continued the government-monopoly system of the Japanese. The two reigning economic institutions at the time were the Trade Bureau and the Monopoly Bureau. The former monopolized the procurement, sale and export of industrial and agricultural products, while the latter was given the full control over the sale of goods such as matches, cigarettes, liquor and camphor, as well as weights and measures.

4. The population of Taiwan, as it is often pointed out since the 1990s, is a mixture of so-called native Taiwanese and the Mainlanders. The former are composed of three ethnic groups including Minnan, Hakka and indigenous people. All of them settled in Taiwan before 1945 and experienced Japanese colonial rule. The latter came from various parts of China and immigrated to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek after 1945. The Minnan, Hakka and Mainlander are all Han Chinese while the ancestors of indigenous people probably came from Austronesia long before the arrival of any Han Chinese. Minnan people are the majority, which occupied more than 73 percent of the population.
Taiwan asked Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing to send troops to Taiwan. When Chiang’s troops arrived in Keelung (a port in Northern Taiwan) in early March, they entered Taipei and then headed south, cracking down on riots and rebellions across the whole island. During this period, individuals who had participated in the riots and rebellions were arrested and killed. Privately owned newspapers and magazines were shut down. The crackdown was followed by the so-called ‘Ching-hsiang’ (meaning literally ‘to clean up hometowns’) campaign. They asked people to hand over weapons or face prosecution. People were jailed and executed without due legal process, accused of ‘conspiring with Chinese communists’. The generally accepted causes of the incident are not only the cultural and political alienation of the native Taiwanese people from their “motherland” after fifty years of Japanese colonial rule, but the extreme dissatisfaction with the corrupt KMT regime, which was subjecting people in Taiwan to even more difficult political, social and economic conditions than they had experienced under pre-war Japanese colonial rule.

Many Taiwanese people died during the incident, though there is no accurate count of the total number of people killed or injured. The most frequently mentioned number is between 10,000 and 20,000. Although the incident was officially declared to be over on 15 May 1947, its aftermath seems to have lasted a long time. The brutal suppression not only enabled the KMT regime to establish an authoritarian rule of unchallenged power based on martial law (lasting until the late 1980s); but it also produced a collectively traumatic memory for many Taiwanese. Indeed, it has often been pointed out that the Incident has had implications for Taiwan beyond the tragic break-up of families and the huge death toll. Beyond being a traumatic memory for those who directly experienced the catastrophic event and their descendants, it has had a psychological impact on the contemporary Taiwanese as a whole. Indeed, the 2-28 Incident is seen as a collectively traumatic memory for many Taiwanese, whose affects and effects seem to be influential even today.

5. For instance, the pro-independence writer Li chiao (1998) suggests that certain patterns of behavior that the Taiwanese have had, i.e. a tendency not to become involved in political affairs, and tendencies towards self-enslavement as well as self-demeaning and self-regarding (selfish) behaviour, mark the traumatic affects and effects of the incident on the collective psyche of the Taiwanese. Another well-known psycho-impact of the event on the Taiwanese, elaborated by a psychiatrist Lin Yi-fu (2004), is the so-called ‘Stockholm syndrome’, which refers to an ironic situation that the victims of a traumatic event sympathize with, rely on, or even totally adopt the worldview of the perpetrator. This explains why the native Taiwanese as victims/masochists who suffered greatly from the KMT’s massacre during the 228 Incident have been supporting and going alone with its
RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY AND OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTER

The aim of this chapter is to explore how, in the context of an election campaign, the commemoration of the 2-28 incident in 2004 – the 228 Hand-in-Hand Rally - produced a specific collective memory of a traumatic historical event, and how this commemoration (memory production) as a social practice discursively constituted people’s self-identification in Taiwan, and what characterised this self-identification. In other words, it wishes to contribute to an understanding of the particular ways in which subjectivity is constituted in the contemporary Taiwanese society, through a study of the commemoration of the 2-28 Incident as a traumatic event. The chapter proposes a series of questions as follows:

1. How has the 2-28 Incident in 1947 been represented as a traumatic event and what kinds of traumatic memories have been constructed in contemporary Taiwanese society in the process of the commemoration of the Incident?

2. What has been remembered and forgotten, or remembered but forgotten again during this process? How do these recollections and oblivions impact upon contemporary Taiwanese people’s identities and subjectivities?

3. If coupling the 2-28 commemoration with the presidential election was done primarily for reasons related to electoral strategy, how do political calculations – the concerns of present needs – get involved in the process of commemorating the Incident? And more importantly, what is the role of sovereign power in memorializing the 228 Incident as a traumatic event?

In terms of methodology, this chapter aims to provide a thick description of the demonstration. ‘Thick description’ employed here refers to a methodology that sets the Hand-in-Hand Rally within its historical and political contexts, as well as providing a meticulous description of the actual performance of the event. The term is first spelled out by a philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976) and is later elaborated, most famously, by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973). It describes a methodology in which it is assumed that human behaviour cannot just be explained by the behaviour itself, but by its context.

perpetrator/sadist – the authoritarian KMT regime/party.
within a society as well. By doing so, the behaviour then becomes meaningful to an outsider (i.e. anthropologist). David Cannadine (1983) employs this approach in his studies of the British Monarchy. In the article ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition”’, Cannadine argues that every kind of political ritual ‘cannot be interpreted merely in terms of their internal structure.’ In order to rediscover the “meaning” of ritual, ‘it is necessary to relate it to the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu within which it was actually performed.’ As Cannadine asserts, locating an event in a context is ‘not merely to provide the historical background, but actually to begin the process of interpretation (p. 105).’ To read this assertion in a more radical way, one can argue that locating an event within different contexts would lead to a variety of differing interpretations of the event. Contextualizing an event becomes political.

6. Geertz uses Gilbert Ryle’s discussion of a ‘wink of a eye’ as an example to clarify this point. As Geertz illustrated, when boys rapidly contracting the eyelids, it might means ‘an involuntary twitch’, ‘a conspiratorial signal to a friend’, a ‘malicious amusement to his cronies’, or anything else (p.7). Therefore, Geertz pointed out that without a context we do not know what the people’s behaviour mean to us. And as the context changes, the meaning of the behaviour changes. In discussing the role of the ethnographer. Geertz claims that the ethnographer’s aim is to observe, record, analyze, and interpreted a culture. More specifically, he or she must interpret human behaviour to gain their meaning within the culture itself. Only through this ‘thick description’, one can see all the possible meanings of human behaviour, which would facilitate, as Geertz hopes, opening and/or increasing the dialogue among different cultures. Geertz’s elaborations is closely associated with the contextualism in philosophy, which describes a collection of views in the philosophy of language which emphasize the context in which an action, utterance, or expression occurs, and argues that, in some important respect, the action, utterance, or expression can only be understood relative to that context.

7. Similar kinds of arguments are made in some empirical studies concerning the case of 2-28 Incident in Taiwan. Some studies devoted themselves to investigate the changing meaning of the 2-28 Incident in different historical contexts/periods: for instance, Robert Edmondson’s ‘The February 28 Incident and National Identity’ (2002); Steve Phillips’ ‘Fighting over Peace Memorial Day: Politicians and February 28 Commemoration’ (2006); Stefen Fleischauer’s ‘Interpretations on 228: The 28th February 1947 Incident on Taiwan and the Taiwan Independent Movement’ (2006).

8. In contrast to the conventional use of the term ‘politics’, which refers to ‘politics’ taking place in parliaments, political parties and governments, political from the post-structuralism point of view, as Laclau (1990) elaborated, signifies a ‘power to definition’. To Laclau, society as is discursively constituted is an unstable system of differences. Meanings of words/things in general are never closed and finalized; instead, they are open, unstable, and contingent, always in a process of being articulated in one form or another and always negotiable. The political turns out to be possible, unavoidable, and necessary in this process. Any choice of definition involves the issue of power in so far as they require the repression of alternatives with the consequence that these alternatives then became more difficult to emerge. There is politics wherever there is the repression. However, the possibility of the resistance also emerged in the domain of the political, since it involves opening up the possibilities that are repressed in the constitution of any taken-for-granted way of thinking (p.31-6).
Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that our understanding of an event is also shaped by the political, historical or cultural context in which we are situated when we recall that event. Maurice Halbwachs, a French Durkheimian sociologist (1877-1945), while studying human memory, provided an instructive theoretical insight that highlights how the social context – social frameworks, as Halbwachs terms it – construct the memory of the individual. In his ‘Social Frameworks of Memory’ (1992), Halbwachs first dismisses the idea that the past is in itself preserved within individual memories. Every individual memory instead is always socially constructed and results from collective and social frameworks. According to Halbwachs, people appeal to their memories only when they try to answer questions that are asked, or that are supposed to be asked by others. People place themselves in others’ perception and consider themselves as being part of the same group or groups as others. It is in this sense, Halbwachs asserts, that ‘there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory (p.38)’. In order to elucidate the socially constructed nature of the memories, Halbwachs compares and contrasts the memories and dreams. The dream is merely composed of mutilated and mixed-up fragments of memory thereby lacking of any complete sense of events that occurred in the past. Memories, in contrast, require ‘the support of society’ – contact with other people. ‘In order to remember, one must be capable of reasoning and comparing and of feeling in contact with a human society that can guarantee the integrity of our memory (p. 41)’. In other words, the dream is based only upon itself, whereas memories depend on those of our fellows, and on wider social frameworks of memory. Memory thus depends on the social environment. As he states, ‘it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memory (p. 38)’. Thus, a social framework is the instrument with which an individual’s memories are (re)constructed.

Moreover, it is noted that any and every individual is located in numerous and various groups – social frameworks. Halbwachs does not suggest that it is groups which remember; it is of course individuals who remember. Yet, these individuals, being located in a specific group, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past. Accordingly, there are as many collective memories as there are groups, institutions, or communities in a society. Different families, ethnic groups, social classes, etc. all construct different memories. The recollections are richer when they reappear at the junction of a greater number of those frameworks. Those great numbers of social frameworks in effect compete, interact and
intersect each other, overlapping in part. More importantly, frameworks of memory are not static but always being transformed. They exist both within and outside the passage of time.\(^9\) Forgetting is then explained by the disappearance of those frameworks or of part of them, or the transformation of those frameworks from one period to another.\(^10\)

Furthermore, it is crucially noted in Halbwachs’ argument that one’s memories of the past are in effect affected by the mental images one employs to solve present problems, so that the memories are essentially reconstructions of the past in the light of, mainly, if not wholly, the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present. Halbwachs in his ‘The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land’ elaborates this presentist approach in more detail. Through his studies of modification of the story of Jesus, of converting the meaning of the Gospel and of changing images of Jerusalem in the course of history, Halbwachs asserted that ‘collective memory (of Christianity) is always ‘selectively’ ‘reconstructed’ in accordance with a social group’s ‘present needs’, thereby distorting the original features of the past. As he argues,

‘… in each period the collective Christian memory adapts its recollections of the details of Christ’s life and of the places where they occurred to the contemporary exigencies of Christianity, to its needs and aspirations (p. 234).’

These ‘present needs’ are generally determined by the ‘predominant thoughts of society’ produced and disseminated by various dominant groups and hegemonic discursive powers. As a result, social frameworks are always in accord with the predominant thoughts of the society. There is no continuity between the past and the present: the past is always silent, totally open to presentist appropriation and manipulation. Once ‘present needs’ have changed, ‘collective memory’ will be transformed accordingly. In other words, the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present. And the social thought is essentially ‘a memory and…its entire content consists only of collective recollections or

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\(^9\) As Halbwachs elaborates, ‘External to the passage of time, they communicate to the images and concrete recollections of which they are made a bit of their stability and generality. But these frameworks are in part captivated by the course of time (p.182).’

\(^10\) As Halbwachs states, ‘Depending on its circumstances and point in time, society represents the past to itself in different ways; it modifies its conventions. As every one of its members accepts these conventions, they inflect their recollections in the same direction in which collective memory evolves (p.172-3).’
rememberances (p.189).’ It follows that only those recollections which are in accordance with present needs can be re/constructed.

Halbwachs’ elaborations of the social construction of collective memories in the light of present needs offer insightful and provocative thoughts when considering the various forms of remembering the past – a social “reality”. Drawing from Halbswach’s thought, this chapter intends to argue that the beliefs, interests, and aspirations that entered into political calculations during the election campaign shaped the various views of the past as they are manifested, conditioning the political possibility for the remembrance of the 2-28 Incident. The memory of 2-28 Incident hence must be regarded as a constructed process as opposed to a retrieved process.

Contextualization in this regard functions in two ways: it not only serves, methodologically, as a tool to begin a political interpretation of the event; it (as a social framework) also produces and shapes the very features of the demonstration and the memory of the incident.

In addition, this chapter also wishes to suggest that the memory of the 2-28 Incident is in effect selectively constituted in favor of sovereign power. The 2-28 Hand-in-Hand Rally as a mass mobilization is designed to remember the 2-28 Incident as a historical trauma in order to be forgotten, thereby constituting people’s self identification as Taiwanese. The contemporary political theorist Jenny Edkins’s discussions of the memorialization of traumatic events are borrowed here.

In her book, Trauma and the Memory of Politics, Edkins brings the role of sovereign power into the studies of traumatic memories. She investigates how the memorialization of the traumatic events often constitutes a form of forgetting. Simply put, she argues that since memories of traumatic events ruin the legitimacy of sovereign power and threaten the existence of contemporary forms of political community – state/sovereign state, they in the end have to be forgotten. According to Edkins, the modern sovereign nation-states have an ironic and intricate connection with the traumatic events. As she asserts, ‘sovereign power produces and is itself produced by trauma (p.xv)’. In order to comprehend what Edkins means by this assertion, first of all, it is necessary to elaborate what she means by ‘trauma’.
The notion of trauma for Edkins should be understood in three dimensions. Firstly, events that we today categorize as ‘trauma’ generally involve ‘violence’. This is a threat to people’s lives and integrity. Secondly, it refers to those situations in which a threat of violence comes from the one which/who are supposed to protect the victims, give them security, and to be the most trusted, such as the political community towards its citizens or the family towards its children. The trauma occurs when they are ‘no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger’. Thirdly, in a more profound sense, it also refers to the sudden change of a social order that previously gave ‘meaning’ and ‘dignity’ to our existence in relation to the outside world, but which no longer provides this. This is a menace to one’s self-identification. Human beings produce a group, say, a political community, and at the same time become members of it. They situate themselves as citizens of this political community, assuming their own identity as part of it. The traumatic takes place when this community betrays them. They are not and cannot be who they were. Above all, a traumatic event has to involve ‘a betrayal of trust’; it is a suspension of ‘safety’ and ‘security’ (p.3-4).

The aforementioned three dimensions of ‘trauma’ all indicate that the state as sovereign power is the key, if not only, source of human suffering. While states are on the one hand ‘a promise of safety, security and meaning’, they are also sources of ‘abuse, control and coercion (p.6)’. People need states to have a sense of security and belonging. Nevertheless, states also murder their own citizens, as in the case of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany, and send their citizens to the battlefields in the cases of the World Wars and Vietnam.

Moreover, sovereign power does not only produce but, more importantly, it is and has to be produced and reproduced through the traumatic. It is first of all importantly noted that Edkins differentiates the linear time from the trauma time. While the latter refers to ineffable experiences of horror, repeatedly re-experienced by the victims, which are often incoherent, fragmented, and purposeless; the first, favoured by the sovereign power, gives/produces a meaning to the suffering of the victims as part of its own “continuous” and “grand” narrative. As Edkins argues, the sovereign power encapsulates those incoherent, fragmented, and purposeless traumatic memories in a “coherent”, “integrated” and “meaningful” narrative. The modern state remembers its lost lives in the traumatic events as accounts of heroism, sacrifice and redemption, in order to tell the story of the founding of the state, a linear narrative of glorious origin, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the state itself and
preserving its power. The cases of the Holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel clearly demonstrated this. In this vein, the sovereign power not only writes its history as a linear narrative, justifies itself through this linear narrative, it, in effect, exists and survives in linear notion of time frame. Therefore, the forms of statehood, as Edkins contends ‘are themselves produced and reproduced through practices of trauma and memory (p.11)’. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the trauma is produced by the sovereign power. The sovereign power as a result has to both reveal the trauma that it produces, but also conceals it. In this way, intense remembering often turns to intentional forgetting.\(^\text{11}\)

While the memorialization process is a search for meaning and the state has a propensity to use this process as a method for establishing meaning, Edkins accordingly pays great attention to different forms of memorialization through her studies on the Great Wars, Vietnam War, the Holocaust, the NATO intervention in Kosovo and September 11. Her study demonstrates that various practices of memorialization, conducted by the sovereign power, aim to insert meaning into traumatic events by providing a specific narrative of the past in the light of a linear notion of time. Many of these practices seek to contain and appropriate traumatic experience for the purposes of reproducing sovereign power. Sovereign power intends to both expose and conceal the trauma that it produces, so as to legitimize itself. Edkins therefore questions the role of commemorations, arguing that they simply reinforce sovereign power – the nation-states. Yet, for Edkins, resistance is always possible.\(^\text{12}\) The book in short is an exposition of the competence (domination) and incompetence (resistance) of the sovereign state’s efforts to fix the collective memories of traumatic events. She clearly exhibits deep skepticism towards the role of sovereign power in

\(^{11}\) Similar to Edkins’ argument, Chen Hsiang-chun in her Ph.D. thesis (2005) also investigates the collective forgetting of the traumatic. In her empirical work, she asks, why people in Taiwan so easily remember to forget the 2-28 Incident. She examines the commemorative art exhibitions in Taiwan since the 1990s, in particular, an exhibition in 1997 – ‘Sadness Transformed: 2-28 Commemorative Art Exhibition’, and the materials related to these exhibitions, such as some artists’ aesthetic works, curatorial statements, category essays, and so on. Chen argues that this way of commemoration – a collective oblivion – cannot resolve the long-term affects and effects of the historical trauma. As she suggested, only through witnessing to and listening to the wound can this collective sadness in Taiwan be transformed.

\(^{12}\) Edkins contemplates ‘how those state/sovereignty-dominant memories of traumatic events can be challenged, by whom and in what context?’ She pays attention in her book to various forms of the counterforce that challenges those state/sovereignty-dominant memories of traumatic events, such as remembrance, memorialization, and testimony. For her, all these practices are ‘the site of struggle’.
memorializing the traumatic events of human beings. Her works on the memories of trauma should themselves be perceived as resistance to the power of sovereign states.

To summarize, this chapter aims to investigate how and in which forms a collective memory of trauma in Taiwan is produced in the commemoration of 2-28 Incident in 2004 – the Hand-in-Hand Rally – in the context of the election campaign, and how this traumatic memory production – remembering and forgetting – leads to the formation of Taiwanese national identity in the process of nation-building in Taiwan. To this end, two aspects of the event will be stressed: the political context of the mass-rally and the precise manner of the performance. The former refers to the political competition during the election campaign in 2004 against the background of identity politics in Taiwan since the 1990s, while the latter deals with the actual performance in the campaign, including a series of press conferences and rehearsals in the run-up to the demonstration, the itinerary of the demonstration on 28 February 2004, the location of the assemblage, the design of the geographical route of the human chain, the decoration of the venue, the activities of the campaign and the list of the invitees. The raw materials that are used in this chapter are as follows: various forms of domestic document (i.e. the original proposal for the campaign, the press release), my interview notes, politicians’ public statements, media reports, flyers designed by the organizers, advertisements for the campaign in the newspapers, the circuit of the campaign, the lyrics of theme songs for the campaign, documentations of the event released by the organizers and so on.

13. This method of meticulous description was employed in Bernard S. Cohn’s ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’ (1983). In this article, Cohn explores how the British governor after the uprising of 1857, through a series of adoption and revision of ceremonies adopted by the Mughal Empire, established its authority over India. Cohn in particular focuses on the Imperial Assemblage in 1877. He contended that the assemblage, as a symbolic ritual or ceremonial performance, constructed the British colonial authority in India. Cohn provided a meticulous description of the assemblage, including the intention of the planners of the imperial assemblage, the list of the invitees and their dresses, the location of the assemblage, the physical planning of the camps, the design and decoration of the amphitheater, and so on. Cohn concluded that although many people treated this assemblage was ‘a kind of folly, a great tamaibha, or show (p. 207),’ the assemblage, to a great degree, successfully constructed British authority over India and its representations of the British culture and Indian culture and among the British itself and the Indian. Through his meticulous description, Cohn’s study demonstrates how a political ritual or ceremonial performance facilitates the colonizer to govern its colonized, and helps to construct the people's self-identification, for both the colonizer and the colonized.
This chapter firstly contextualizes the demonstration. The analysis of the political calculations of the organizers in the 2004 presidential election campaign, and more broadly, the political environment of identity politics since the 1990s is briefly provided here. Next, it portrays the actual performance of the demonstration, including a series of activities in the run-up to the demonstration and the precise performance of the human chain on the date of 28 February 2004. The final part of the chapter discusses the role of sovereign power in commemorating the traumatic event in the case of Taiwan.

Reference:

• Kafka, Fraz ‘Great Wall of China’, translated by Ian Johnston of Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, BC (http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/kafka/kafkatofc.htm)
