

The Invisible Turn to the Future: Commemorative Culture in Contemporary Shanghai

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Abstract

After decades of fierce political struggles in the Mao era, the People's Republic of China has strived economically under the open-door policy since the end of the 1970s. However, the still firm national monuments that weathered the social vicissitudes are left open to the question of how they could be incorporated into the new national ideology. In comparison to Beijing, Shanghai's overwhelmingly predominant image centers on its role as the economic dragonhead of China. This article argues that Shanghai, exactly because of this ostensibly apolitical profile, provides a rarely discussed but highly meaningful approach to examining the dynamics between contemporary Chinese commemorative culture and the post-socialist urban spatial order. Unlike the East European cases, the "critical juncture" of ideology in China is invisible in the official narratives of the monuments. In some circumstances, the renovation of old memorials seem to fulfill the task of glorifying a certain past but in effect, it leaves the place a self-enclosed venue that sheds the rest of the city from the ideological burden. In other cases, some monuments of the seemingly core nationalistic narratives are marginalized. What's more, new attentions are now drawn to the memorials for the history of "others" in the name of cosmopolitanism. The invisibility of the commemorative narratives speaks directly to the perplexity of assuming national identity in contemporary China. In the light of Prasenjit Duara's idea of "bifurcated history", national memory culture in Shanghai suggests the multiple possibilities of deciphering the city's past and its future.

Keywords: Commemorative culture, modernity, war memory, cosmopolitanism, post-socialist China

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.

-- George Orwell 1984 (1949)

Monumental Desires: City, Nation-state and Commemorative Space

Monuments dedicated to national memories in Shanghai illustrate some intriguing issues about (post)modern commemorative spaces. Having experienced the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and the student movement in 1989, the Chinese commemorative spaces and monuments are not straightforward in producing their meanings. The national agenda of the People's Republic of China has turned from fierce political struggle to an economy-oriented open-door policy since the late 1970s and has been experiencing a full-speed boom since the early 1990s. The influences of similar social transformations can also be found in the commemorative culture in Russia or the former Eastern European communist countries. Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, for example, researched how Soviet-era monuments were re-negotiated in post – Soviet present and have suggested three possible categories of the current treatment of monuments in Moscow: Co-opted/Glorified, Disavowed, or Contested.¹ However, the fate of the post-Soviet “disgraced monuments”, which refer to the numerous destroyed memorial artifacts of the Communist era such as the statues of Lenin and Stalin, has not befallen most of the Chinese monuments.² Due to the unshaken political rule of the Chinese Communist party, the question Chinese national monuments are confronted with is how they could be incorporated into a revised national ideology that is still deeply entangled in the continuities and discontinuities of its political vicissitudes.

At first glance, the association between monumental significance and the city of Shanghai may easily pass by unnoticed. When the most prominent national symbols of contemporary China – for example Tiananmen Square and the Monument to the People's Heroes – are located in Beijing, Shanghai's monuments represent a relatively less solid ideological discourse. The focus on Shanghai's urban history usually goes on two seemingly opposed tracks: on the one hand, endless nostalgia for the cosmopolitan prosperity, bourgeois culture and urban modernity during its golden age in the 1930s; on the other hand, recuperating the forgotten working class narrative of the pre-revolutionary years and now (Cai 2003; Zhang 2005). The passion to understand Shanghai's civil society (if there was one) always centers on the discourse of the city's popular culture. This research suggests that Shanghai, exactly because of this ostensibly apolitical profile, provides us with an interesting perspective on understanding the post-revolutionary Chinese nation-state that is embedded in an equivocal articulation of its subjectivity. Through a study of the city's commemorative spaces and their contested discourses of producing a Chinese national identity in the public memory, I will try to show how

urban spaces might work as alternative “cue-ins” for rethinking inconsistencies in the national historiography that might otherwise have been seamlessly integrated.

Monuments, as public spatial representations, are in this sense connected with the (re)interpretation and memory of a diverse public. As a crystallization and spatialization of the essence of the national myth, monuments and memorials are primarily erected by the nation-state’s main political powers to assert a national identity. As Eric Hobsbawm (1992) and Benedict Anderson (1991) influentially contend, the nation-state is a relatively recent invention in human history and is deeply connected with the discourse of modernity. In other words, nations are made up in part by the common imagination of the collective and the continuous existence of a modern territory. Architectural objects become concrete vehicles through which such collective imagination is materialized. “Certain artifacts and events – such as dead bodies, gravesites, and burial ceremonies – have unique symbolic power because they invoke a sense of timelessness, awe, fear, and uncertainty (Verdery 1999: 23-53). The power to transcend time, to bring historical events and personalities into the present, makes such objects especially effective in mobilizing national movements” (Forest & Johnson 2002: 526). In addition, as spatial representations in memory of a historical happening, monuments invoke the core contradiction between modernity and its temporality. According to Alois Riegl’s categorization, the modern monuments I refer to here belong to an “intentional commemorative value” (Riegl 1982: 38). While the other two, age-value and historical value let time work on spatial meaning, “(i)ntentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations, and therefore to remain alive and present in perpetuity. This third class of commemorative values forms the obvious transition to present-day values” (Ibid. 38). However, when most monuments endeavor to consolidate certain beliefs of the present by overtly commemorating a finished past, which is meant to be of timeless and sublime value, history and memory constantly challenge or negate such a desired stability. If monuments try to speak to the public with their symbolic power that suggests the immortality of a certain value, the question remains to what extent this value remains valid vis-à-vis the mortality of the nation-state, its culture and its related historical narrative. Meanwhile, monuments are always part of the discourse of public art and thus involve discussions on its aesthetic value and style, another realm of contestation concerning periodic perceptions.

However, discourses of different kinds of memory, as Marita Sturken indicates in her book on American cultural memory, “reveal the demand for a less monolithic, more inclusive image” of a nation-state (Sturken 1997: 13). Although political elites have power over the erection of monuments, a study on the making of monuments is impossible if we only account for this influence and not consider the “hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people” (Hobsbawm 1992: 10). In this regard, the study of commemorative spaces in the urban environment crystallizes the dynamics of various subjects of history and memory. Space is not

an empty, homogenous container of events but produces and reproduces meaning along with historical, mnemonic, political and ideological transformations. Thus, the process in which monuments are constructed, reconstructed, restored or removed embodies a constant questioning of how the discourse of modern nation-state is imagined or designed by both society and state.

In this vein, the study of Chinese national monuments can also be conducted by observing the dynamics among various agents of history/memory writing. In *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (1995), Indian-American historian Prasenjit Duara asserts the “bifurcated history” paradigm in his studies of Chinese nationalism. He argues that a linear presentation of history from a singular perspective of the nation-state tends to exclude, forget and repress other narratives, which are simultaneously existent.³ Inspired by Duara’s idea of bifurcated history, I contend, therefore, that space rather than time and a temporal subject of history can become a lens to understand the nation-state, different forms of identities and the power relations they present. I argue that the city can provide an arena of the nation-state rather than the other way around. In the case of China, for a long period of time after 1949, urban history was largely seen as a marginal area of Chinese studies. The central topics of Chinese modern history, such as the countryside and revolution, both fit into the global imagination largely acquired through the atmosphere of the Cold War and were well utilized for domestic ideological control (Bergère 1997: 309-328). The marginalization of Shanghai in the Chinese national historical narrative has revealed the inadequacy of a temporally singular Subject of History, which is unified under a nation and excludes other histories in local – in this case Shanghai – spaces. As a result, the difficulty of placing Shanghai within a consistent narrative of Chinese national history has made Shanghai appear to be less significant in understanding Chinese identity. The recent revival of studying depoliticized Shanghai cultural behavior, in particular in the Republican Era, puts Chinese urban studies under the category of civil society, which appears to be antagonistic to the state in the Habermasian idea of “public sphere”. However, this idealized western dichotomy between civil society and state remains problematic not only because the experience of mass mobilization in Chinese society differs from that of the West but also because validity of this dichotomy is consequently questionable (Bergère 1997).

Moreover, with regard to actual urban space, as a space where the contested subjects encountered one another, the city provides a way of re-examining history vis-à-vis the nation-state, local variations and cosmopolitan desires. In the following elaboration on the discursive analysis of several important national monuments in today’s Shanghai, I will illustrate the historical experience and historical memories that are not just frozen in monumental representations with a conclusive spatial meaning. They also emerge as fluid marks in media, literature, academic research and living individual memories. The purpose of this research lies in understanding the historicized now-time of space and how meaning is constructed

by histories and memories. The spatial study on Shanghai focuses on the present though it doesn't try to de-historicize space merely by its face value. The spatial narratives in this article also reveal constant tension, appropriation, rewriting or repression. The relation between the signifier and the signified is not only lacking transparency but also constantly taken up with the alternation of ideological needs. The invisibility of the commemorative narrative speaks directly to the complexity of assuming national identity in the post-revolutionary China. National memory culture in Shanghai suggests the multiple possibilities of deciphering the past and future of the city and the nation.

As was previously mentioned, the ideological turn Shanghai experienced has left its commemorative culture contested visibly and invisibly. In the first decade after the Cultural Revolution, the major state-funded monuments in Shanghai, like in the other cities in China, were all constructed in the early to mid-1980s as a response to the healing period of national trauma. Since Deng's speech in his Southern Tour in Shanghai in 1992, the city and its adjacent Yangtze River Delta has become the "dragonhead" of the country's economic development. This situation makes the rupture between the collective memory of a highly politicized past and a predominantly market-oriented status quo particularly perceptible. Yet, national monuments and commemorative sites in Shanghai try to integrate themselves into a newly invented narrative of today, with a shift that tries not to contradict those of the past. In the following, I will firstly show how the Memorial House of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was appropriated into this contemporary narrative as a tourist spot, merged with the nearby Xintiandi Bar Quarter. Western scholars such as Kirk A. Denton and Elisabeth Perry have also mentioned the Shanghai Municipal History Museum as an example of a site that has put more emphasis on local history and Republican civil life as the main line of historical narration, demonstrating a radical departure from the approach of most history museums in the PRC (Denton 2005; Perry 2004). The balance is subtly kept between the still orthodox continuity with a past narrative and the silent adaptation to a new, self-contradictory and parallel one. As a result, this type of narrative conceals much of the contested collective memory present and latently foments a radical or cynical attitude of the public towards a not yet fully discussed past.

Secondly, discourses on nationalism as represented in the commemorative spaces in Shanghai also illustrate a deep dilemma between proclaiming a national subject and the restraints on so doing. The narrative that circulates around memorials in Shanghai has to remain consistent even though the ideological motif has reversed its intended meaning or has even subverted a previous ideological stand. One interesting phenomenon is that the discourse of nationalism with regard to significant sites of memory in Shanghai is understood in terms of patriotism and are called the "patriotic education bases" (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu jidi*). The replacement of nationalism by patriotism not only weakens any xenophobic overtone but

also constitutes a relatively less well-defined national subject in an inconsistent nationalist narrative, above all in a WWII discourse. It is more or less an institutional tool of domestic propaganda to divert the attention of the public from the national subject to the state/party subject. The marginalization of the WWII war memory of the Sihang Warehouse, for example, shows the embarrassment of the PRC in commemorating a highly symbolic nationalist space when visibility of Republican China and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) as national subject is unavoidable.

Finally, re-articulating the city's Jewish memory and the enormous investment in restoring the relics of the Korean Exile Government shows how the discourse of national modernity is understood in terms of mobilizing Shanghai's past cosmopolitanism. Boosting the city's cosmopolitan image becomes a means of garnering more global attention and resources for Shanghai's production of space with more symbolic and actual capital. It ironically sets off the abovementioned disregard of Shanghai's own war memory spaces, whose mainstream narratives orientate themselves towards the changing circumstances of China's official political and economic agenda.

The relations between the national discourse and Shanghai urbanity demonstrate a degree of complexity largely because both the forgetting and the affirmation of certain kinds of knowledge have been underscored in order to abandon the co-evalness of different histories. Monuments and memorials provide us with more concrete representations of this complexity. By examining the best preserved and restored national commemorative places, the forgotten sites of national memory and newly "re-invoked" memory of others' historic relics in Shanghai, the tensions between these categories will emerge.

Shanghai and Chinese National Discourse

Before I scrutinize the narratives to which the monuments in today's Shanghai give rise, I will situate the historical position of urban Shanghai within the discourse of modern China to demystify the popular view that Shanghai is less significant in understanding Chinese national culture than its civic culture. Firstly, in a more general sense, there exists an undeniable link between the rise of Chinese urban society and the appeal for a modern Chinese republican regime. The importance of Shanghai in the 1911 Xinhai Revolution was clear enough to help us understand why it has been conceived as a "bourgeois revolution" by the Chinese circle of post-1949 history studies, in order to differentiate it from the later "proletarian revolution"⁴. Not only was Shanghai a vital meeting point for different political forces but it also provided a huge amount of financial capital for the Revolution. Shanghai's capacity to mobilize the masses deeply influenced the city itself as well as the Yangtze River Delta. French scholar Marie-Claire Bergère argues in her *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity* that the deep structural change of

Chinese urban society (above all treaty port cities) was among one of the key reasons why the Qing Government failed to mobilize the urban elite class and the consequence of this failure can at least partly account for the demise of Qing Dynasty (Bergère 2005). Chinese urban elites living in the treaty ports were the first ones whose nationalistic consciousness was aroused by coming into contact with the West. This nationalistic emotion of urban society, however, was a complicated one. The idea of modernity and the nationalism of Chinese treaty ports, which differed radically from the xenophobia present in the vast interior area, was adaptive but still strongly resistant. The West was considered as a mode of development and a threatening power. Understandably, this realistic attitude was based on compromise and resistance and was first and foremost reflected in the world of commerce.⁵ This flexibility allowed Shanghai to possess multiple narratives and social class identities. Neither its “impurity” in nationalistic discourse nor its progressiveness in revolutionary discourse can be taken for granted as one single image of the sophisticated city.

Secondly, Shanghai, though depreciated in the post-1949 national ideology as non-progressive because of its colonial and capitalistic characteristics, was the place where a series of influential left-wing political movements took place. The now official historical narrative of Shanghai’s “glorious revolutionary tradition” is consistently related to its numerous and influential labor movements, student protests and above all, the first congress meeting of the Communist Party of China. This tradition, however, also relates to its colonial status and capitalistic development. The most active early communist groups in China were in Shanghai largely because the foreign concessions provided a relatively safe place for secret gatherings and an interim site for freedom of speech (Bergère 2005: 156). In addition, as China’s biggest commercial and industrial base, Shanghai became the center of the labor movement, one of the core projects of Chinese Communism. Labor movements are inconceivable without a relatively developed industrial system, in which urban class struggles become a major social problem under capitalist conditions.⁶ In this sense, Shanghai’s urban condition largely determined its subtly crucial role in determining national political circumstances.

Moreover, the position of Shanghai as the center of mass media and film culture helped to spread strong nationalistic emotions and imagination. *Shun Pao* (literally Shanghai Newspaper), for example, was the most influential newspaper in modern China. Established in 1872 and closed down in 1949, the first Chinese language newspaper in Shanghai traversed the most turbulent years of the formation of the modern Chinese nation-state. More influentially, *Shun Pao* played an important role in forming public opinion by covering debates about public issues. During the May Fourth Movement, for example, *Shun Pao* refused to publish advertisements for Japanese products. Under the management of Shi Liangcai, *Shun Pao* provided a space for relatively free opinion and diverse information, which won the favor of a large audience. At the same time, the rapid de-

velopment of the film industry in Shanghai gave rise to a nationalism buoyed by cinematic experience. It is therefore not surprising to realize that even the national anthem of the PRC, “The March of the Volunteers”, was the theme song of a 1935 Shanghai film, *Children of Troubled Times*, which depicts the deep national crisis of China under Japanese occupation. As the only place temporarily out of the reach of the occupation, cinema in the Shanghai era of a “solitary island” (that is, 1937-1941, when the still autonomous foreign concessions in Shanghai were besieged by Japanese control), was the only place where the production of films with subtle nationalistic motifs was possible. Carefully dealing with the Japanese pressure at the door, films such as *Mulan Joins the Army* (1939) and *Confuses* (1940) sent strong symbolic messages calling for national resistance that featured less provocative yet well-known figures in Chinese traditional culture. In a word, Shanghai’s highly mature mass media culture brought the city to the forefront of national discourse in the 1930s.

Fourthly, in the post-1949 years Shanghai experienced an understandable sea change in its urbanity – a new national narrative emerged, eager to rewrite its past. In his *Shanghai Image: Critical Iconography, Minor Literature, and the Un-making of a Modern Chinese Mythology*, Zhang Xudong examines the self-imaging of Shanghai during the 10th anniversary of the National Day of the PRC by Zhang Chunqiao, a notorious member of the “Gang of Four”.⁷ In his narrative of Shanghai, the establishment of the new nation-state had transformed the city into a monument to a drastic break with the historical past (Zhang 2002, 149). In Zhang Chunqiao’s narrative, Shanghai had been converted from a hell for the working class which was ruthlessly exploited by capitalists and imperialists, to a center of industry and culture in the new nation of the people. Shanghai was seen as depraved; therefore it was satisfying to see the narrative shift and the city to overcome its past. Noticeably, Shanghai later became the “city of the highest virtue” in the Cultural Revolution and the center for action of this extreme leftist political turbulence with an enduring influence on contemporary China.

In this vein, Shanghai formed a site for a peculiar and dramatic juxtaposition between orthodox national ideology and a residual civil vibrancy. In his account of Chinese civil awareness, Shanghai scholar Zhu Xueqin mentioned what he calls the “sandwich” feature of



Shanghai. The Bund, Shanghai's famous riverside promenade with its large number of architectural legacies from the city's semi-colonial past, is explored by Zhu as an example to illustrate this feature. Until the 1990s, architecture on the Bund – the hotels, clubs, bank buildings and other spatial embodiments of colonial modernity – were functionally reformed for other uses. The Shanghai Municipal Government, or the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, for example, was located in the former HSBC building, the most magnificent architectural feature on the promenade. The Bund, however, remains a public space for Shanghai's everyday bourgeois life. At a time when public space for erotic encounters such as cafés, cinema, discos or pubs were not widely available in the socialist Shanghai, the famous “lovers' wall” on the Bund, a nickname given to the anti-flood wall by the Huangpu River, was where numerous young lovers and couples had their most romantic dates. By depicting the contrast between the stiff bodies of the guards in front of the government building and the kissing lovers along the wall of the river dyke, Zhu tries to draw our attention to “a very interesting feature” that Shanghai after 1949 manifested:

the ‘left-leaning’ style of the upper political dictatorship of the proletariat was so overwhelming that the most of the Chinese political movements after 1949 originated from the city. At the same time, the grassroots of the city was permeated with an equally strong ‘right-leaning’ atmosphere that was tenacious and visible in civic life. ... Solider and lover, the two oppositional colors could squeeze together, floating atop the life of the Chinese interior area like a giant urban sandwich... it's important to remember the ‘sandwich’ characteristic of the city, which may be still valid even till today.⁸

Today's predominant image of Shanghai as the economic dragonhead of China is not sufficient to understand the city itself or the city vis-à-vis the nation. The following analysis on commemorative culture in Shanghai tries to open up a new space in this regard.

Invisible Ideological turn: The Memorial House of the First National Congress of the CPC and the Memorial to the May Thirtieth Movement

In post-revolutionary China, the essential question for the historiography of the national myth is, as Kirk A. Denton poses, “how can revolutionary history, grounded in martyrdom and self-sacrifice, be made to relate to a globalizing market economy that has self-interest as its primary motivating force” (Denton 2005: 581). The memorial house renovation, where the first national congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was held in June 1921, provides a possible answer. Probably no other official memorial place in Shanghai is as important as this venue. Among the first list of Preserved Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China, which includes the national historical sites and cultural entities of the highest level, the previously ordinary residential house (of the typical Shanghai

Shikumen style, a form of local architecture) on Wantze Road (now Xingye Road) in the French Concession, became the sacred place of the city and the nation. It was not a coincidence that the secret gathering of the avant-garde and progressive political activists at that time could be held in the decadent but cosmopolitan Shanghai where a multiplicity of political thoughts thrived under the state during semi-colonization. Thirteen party delegates from all over China, including Mao Zedong and Chen Duxiu, attended the meeting in which the CPC was officially founded. It was not until 28 years later, when the PRC was established, that Chen Yi, the first mayor of post-1949 Shanghai proposed that this place should be restored into a monument for the new nation in a new regime. In 1952, the memorial house was open to the public.



In 1996, Shanghai Municipal Government decided to expand and renovate the Memorial House. Though part of the larger urban renewal project of Taipingqiao Area, the important national historical relics and basic structure of its adjacent area of Shikumen houses were under state protection. The Taipingqiao renewal project, however, was essentially a real-estate development project largely supported by the investment of foreign capital. This made the whole project a mixture of political and economic significance. In China, urban renewal projects such as this one were motivated not just by the need of urban regeneration per se but also by opportunities of the nation's (re-)claiming of self-identity in the global arena through international events: the APEC Conference in 2001 in Shanghai was such a motivation. The first large-scale downtown renovation project, which included

the site of the Memorial house, the well-known leisure quarter “Xintiandi” and other commercial housing projects, constitutes a showcase of Shanghai’s image ten years after Shanghai was “allowed” to retrieve its leading position in the national economy (thanks to Deng Xiaoping’s Southern Tour). The joint plan involving global capital and local governmental support changed the symbolic meaning of this site steeped in the memory of revolution. Reemerging as part of a chic bar quarter in central Shanghai, the Memorial House was transformed into one of the most popular tourist attractions associated with the city’s modern history. Like other sites of China’s so-called “red tourism”, this memorial in Shanghai well exemplifies how ideological pedagogy and leisure consumption can be fused into one project. Red tourism, which refers to trips (usually guided on group basis) to historical locations that are of significance in the history of the CPC, speaks to the nation’s consciousness of rescuing and re-inventing its withering Communist myths. Inevitably, the sacredness of the Memorial House is re-enhanced at the cost of going against its original ideal. The memorial now becomes a proof of the legitimacy of CPC’s continuation in power. The new narrative of Shanghai under the leadership of the CPC can be seen in the Party’s capacity to modernize the country and the city through the mass media:

Shanghai was the birthplace of the Communist Party of China. The indomitable revolutionary spirit of the CPC inherited by the Shanghai people is being carried forward. A series of early reforms initiated the great development of Shanghai... Since more than ten years, the development of Pudong has been driving that of Shanghai, which moved its position from “the rear” to “the forward” in the national opening-up...Shanghai, previously a remote sea village living on fishing industry, is striding forward to a prosperous international metropolis. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, Shanghai is becoming the focus of the world. (Liu 2004: 6)

Here one notices what Zhu Xueqin calls the city’s “sandwich” feature, the interplay between an orthodox ideological representation and the actual practice of a “designed” ideology with new (Chinese) characters (Zhu 2006: 336). The communist ideal that focuses on class struggle and collectivization of property is weakened, and the more abstract spirit of the revolutionary avant-garde is stressed. This spirit is not a total break with the past but more of a moderate “design” (Latour 2008). The communist project hasn’t been diminished by its cooperation with capitalism but is further strengthened. At the same time, the narrative of Shanghai vis-à-vis the national development glides over key historical ruptures. The metaphor of “from the rear to the forward” addresses Shanghai’s position in national developmental by obscuring a more complicated political history. This change is naturalized simply as a strategic shift in the progression of time. By skipping over more controversial historical narratives around the semi-colonial era and the post-1949 Shanghai, the myth of a sea village turning into metropolis celebrates modernity in its most conservative sense of “progress”. The Party has grown out of its past uncertainty, naivety and mistakes, which are not explicitly expressed here. In the new spatial order, therefore, the memorial site naturally

converted itself into a tourist attraction that blends into the surrounding area as a distraction that blurs its original significance. In this sense, the glamorous commercial zone and the memorial site take advantage of each other, making both the break and the continuation of the historical subject possible.

With the growing ambiguity of the ideological focus of Chinese modernity after 1949, the Memorial House and the historical memory it embodies not only fail to represent the abundant layers of the space and their connection to the past and present situation of the city. The discourse of this revised anamnesis that tries to unify the historical narratives of Shanghai also conceals the parallel destiny of some less prominent monuments from the same revolutionary period. Ruptures of public memory towards monuments and the values they incarnate proliferate as the city undergoes a drastic change in appearance and self-identity. In 2006, a program on China Central Television aroused controversy about the demolition of the monument to Gu Zhenghong, a martyr of the May Thirtieth Movement (1925), which is considered as a symbolic event in the history of the Chinese labor movement and anti-imperialist resistance. While the memorial to the Movement is located in Shanghai's busiest commercial center, Nanjing Road, the statue of Gu, which was erected on the original site of the factory he worked, was demolished for a real estate project. While public opinion unanimously criticized the act of pursuing economic interest at the cost of forgetting the nation's history, the developer explained that the local cultural bureau gave their permission to demolish the monument since it was not protected as a cultural relic (Zhou 2006). The comment of an internet user (or "netizen") on the issue even associates the demolition with the reform of Shanghai's school history textbooks, in which early interpretations of leftist historical happenings were largely weakened. Criticism aimed at Shanghai city was also intense, focusing on the city's long-term image of being snobbish to non-Shanghai Chinese culture, a money-oriented mentality and lack of nationalist sentiment.⁹

The polemics present in this example reflect the embarrassment of Chinese commemorative culture in which monuments have more or less lost the validity of permanence but their face value still resists such an erosion of their symbolism. They reveal the ironical situation of China's post-revolutionary memory crisis: when capitalist urbanity is blamed for the betrayal of past beliefs, which constitute a socialist memory, the public refuses to admit the fact that it is the nation's current ideology that underpins this betrayal. In this sense, resistance to the those things which seem to undermine common national values also stems from the instability of those values themselves, especially as national history had previously been understood in one single version, becomes more complex. Thus whilst Shanghai's urbanity, in the above example, again became the target of condemnation for being oblivious to the nation's past sufferings (as after 1949) other texts and stories – though with more limited channels to the public – do circulate. Multiple narratives on the May Thirtieth Movement, for example, are seen in academ-

ic readings such as Elisabeth Perry's *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (1993), which was translated into Chinese in 2001. Perry contends that the success of the labor movement was based on a series of other equally, if not more, significant reasons than the leadership of the CPC, as in the narrative of PRC historiography. Among these reasons are the opposition aroused by the prevailing racism in the foreign factories, the support of the CPC by the secret societies, and solidarity guaranteed not by ideology but by geopolitical relations and other pragmatisms.

City without War? – Shanghai War Memorials and the Sihang Warehouse

War memory sites, as another sub-category of modern national commemoration, follows a narrative that massive violence and conflict between human beings are to be regarded as part of the founding myth of a nation-state. Nuala Johnson points out that “(w)ar memorials are of special significance because they offer insights into the ways in which national cultures conceive of their pasts and mourn the large-scale destruction of life” (Johnson 1995: 51 – 65). In Shanghai, war memory and its spatial representation are almost invisible. It is astonishing to realize this fact when we think of how drastically the battles of WWII in Asia changed the city's form, still apparent today. Secondly, for people who would consider patriotism as the core ideological project of the People's Republic of China, the neglect of that war commemoration so evocative for high nationalistic sentiment may also be difficult to understand. In fact, Shanghai has no historic relics related to any war experience that are listed under the Conservation Unit of Cultural Relics, the highest level in China's preservation system for protecting the nation's important cultural legacies.

The marginalization of the WWII Sihang Warehouse, shows the PRC's embarrassment in commemorating a highly symbolic nationalist space from a moment when the legitimate Chinese national subject has to be Republican China and the KMT. Its condition reveals some core contradictions and dilemmas in modern Chinese national



myth making. Sitting on the northern bank of Suzhou Creek, the site is a huge six-

storey reinforced concrete building of 20 thousand square meters. It was designed by the Hungarian architect Ladislav Edward Hudec (1893-1958), whose other works, such as the Art-Deco Park Hotel and The Grand Theatre, fundamentally transformed modern architecture in Shanghai.¹⁰ Being the only European style warehouse in Shanghai, it was built in 1931 and served as the warehouse for five Chinese-owned private banks. Its value however is not just architectural but because it was an important fortress during one of the most famous battles in the Sino-Japanese War. The Anti-Japanese War broke out in Shanghai in 1937 after total war between Japan and China had begun just one month earlier in the north. The disparity between the two military strengths was notable, with highly modernized armament and a larger number of soldiers on the Japanese side and weaker equipment on the Chinese side. When Shanghai was finally on the verge of being occupied by the Japanese, for four days and nights, the famous patriotic general Xie Jinyuan led around 480 Chinese Republican soldiers (claiming to be eight hundred to deceive the enemy) in numerous counter-attacks against the Japanese. They successfully secured the area, causing the principal Japanese force to withdraw westwards. The Sihang Warehouse was a key site of the battle due to its solid structure and its strategic location between the southern bank of Suzhou Creek and the International Settlement, which remained under the protection of Western powers and temporarily free from Japanese sway. The location of the Warehouse brought the battle to the world's attention and largely changed China's international image into war victim. More importantly, the strong resistance destroyed Japan's claim to be able to conquer China in a three month *blitzkrieg*. The young girl scout Yang Huimin also became famous, risking her life to transport a national flag to the warehouse to boost the morale of the troops and city. Under successive pressure from Japan, the International Settlement finally forced the resistant division to disarm. The soldiers were detained for four years in an isolated labor camp controlled by the Japanese. In 1941, four traitorous soldiers assassinated General Xia in the camp. The rest of the surviving soldiers were sent to labor camps in China and later to Papua New Guinea as coolies. Although the Chinese eventually lost the battle, the warehouse became the symbol of the tenacious spirit of national resistance in the enemy-occupied Shanghai. Later, it emerged as a highly mythologized narrative in the whole Sino-Japanese War propaganda effort. As early as 1938, a silent movie "Eight Hundred Heroes" won huge acclaim within the KMT area in China, Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora in South East Asia. In KMT-ruled Taiwan, where General Chiang Kai-shek and his followers fled after the defeat by the Communists during the Chinese Civil War, the memory of the battle was kept alive in popular media as part of the patriotic constitution of a Chinese identity.¹¹ In 1977, Taiwanese director Ding Shanxi made his own version of *Eight Hundred Heroes*, to high acclaim amongst the Chinese nationalist film critics and audiences in the ROC.

Taking into consideration the key role of the battle and its influence on the discourse of Chinese nationalism, one might be shocked by the current condition of Sihang Warehouse. Despite the fact that this historic relic was listed as a memorial site of the Anti-Japanese War by the Shanghai Cultural Relics Preservation Committee in 1985, different work units have used parts of the bulky building as offices. Now the Sihang Warehouse is run a namesake logistics enterprise and a large part of the surrounding area makes up Shanghai's biggest stationery wholesale market. Flows of various commercial activities have pushed the site of memory into visual and mental oblivion. The only space that can remind visitors of its war history is an exhibition room no larger than 100 square meters. It was set up by the Sihang Warehouse Company for the public and is located on the seventh floor in a temporary structure. The room contains a small number of exhibits: a statue of the General Xie Jinyuan, a limited amount of visual materials and an inaccurate model of the Warehouse. Unlike museums that feature the historical significance of the CPC's contribution to the nation and the war, this semi-official commemorative space is only open to the public for a few hours on Friday afternoons. As a result, many Chinese do not recognize or are not aware of its historical significance. Visitors are also of small number. Most of the people who know and visit to the Warehouse are Taiwanese tourists and KMT veterans from Taiwan and overseas. A small number of local students who are researching "educational bases for patriotism" are also occasional visitors.



Media coverage of the battle at Sihang Warehouse and the life of the veterans who fought there have been rare and only began to emerge in 2005 on the 60th anniversary of China's victory over Japan in WWII. Chinese media outlets such as the Beijing TV Station, Shanghai Xin Min Evening News made reports and a feature documentary about the few soldiers of the 800 heroes who were still alive (Zhao et al. 2007).¹² Members of the local committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) also strongly called for the establishment of a historical museum in Sihang Warehouse in memory of the war (Jiang 2005: 3). In the same year, Li Jingfen, the then president of the Alliance for Preserving the Truth of Sino-Japanese War submitted an open letter to Shanghai mayor Han Zheng during his visit to San Francisco. She appealed for the conser-

vation of the Sihang Warehouse relics and for the construction of a large-scale memorial hall. The letter earnestly requested the Shanghai government to take up the mission and duty of safeguarding the authenticity of its war history despite political conflicts. The other significance of restoring the memorial, according to Li, included the strengthening national cohesion by promoting cross-strait relations, educational meaning to future generations and the benefit for the economic development of Shanghai as an investment to the “spiritual returns” of the city (Xin Hua Net 2005). No further official responses to the proposals have yet been heard. The Sihang Warehouse now boasts a new fashionable label as one of the numerous “creative industry bases” in Shanghai.

The current status of Sihang Warehouse is representative of many other anti-Japanese war relics in Shanghai and other Chinese cities. Sites of wartime memory in Shanghai are hardly known to the public largely due to the lack of memorial space and objects. Among these are Tiantongan Road, originally the site of Tiantongan Station and the place where the first Battle of Shanghai in 1932 broke out; nine original Assembly Centers sites, Asia’s “concentration camps” where westerners in Shanghai were detained during Japanese occupation; more than 140 “comfort stations” (military brothels) all over Shanghai; the original venue of the Oriental Library affiliated with the Commercial Press, where a large number of precious Chinese book collections were destroyed during the Japanese air raid of 1932 (where a modern vocational school now sits). None of these sites of war trauma are properly commemorated. The only large-scale commemorative venue of the Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai is Songhu Anti-Japanese War Museum, which was not completed until 2000 in a remote Linjiang Park in Baoshan District.

In comparison to the monuments in the city center previously mentioned, the memory of Sino-Japanese War is far less than conspicuous in spatial representation. The Chinese historian Su Zhiliang expresses his worries over the serious deficiency in Sino-Japanese war research and commemoration in China. In an article “Tomorrow, What’s still Left for us to Remember the War?” he outlines four main problems in present-day war memory preservation. Firstly, there is a very limited number of WWII memorials around China. Most resources for the war monuments go to either the “Liberation War” (that is, the Civil War) for the commemoration of the Red Army’s victories. Secondly, in comparison with the memorial for the Holocaust or even the bombing of Hiroshima, China still doesn’t have any memorial of warning (*Mahnmal*) to remind the future generation of historical lessons. War memory in China is only a paean to the victory of a “just war” against foreign violation or evil internal powers. Reflection on the disasters and trauma all wars leave on the individual human psyche is noticeable by its absence. Thirdly, rapid urban renewal in China has also destroyed a considerable number of relics in everyday urban spaces. Fourthly, China, though having had the largest number of victims taken as “comfort women”, is yet still reluctant to conserve any

previous site of a comfort station, let alone as any formal kind of commemorative venue (Su 2006: 88).

Cosmopolitan Memory: World history in Shanghai Commemorative Culture

In an ironical contrast with the amnesia around the war experience in Shanghai, war memories from other national histories have been well preserved and memorialized as part of the cosmopolitan image of Shanghai. Two cases illustrate the situation. Most widely known is the protection of the relics of the exiled Jewish refugees who fled to Shanghai from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The establishment of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, the erection of a monument and the renovation of the two synagogues in Shanghai have had more media exposure and social recognition than any of the abovementioned Sino-Japanese War memorials. Another interesting case is the Museum of the Former Korean Provisional Government, which was constructed on the original site of the exiled government of the 1920s and 1930s in an otherwise unnoticeable Shanghai Shikumen housing site. Adjacent to Xintiandi and the site of the first National Congress of the CPC, this museum has not only received a large number of key political figures from South Korea, but also became a popular tourist attraction for Korean visitors in Shanghai. The reverse passion for the preservation of non-Chinese national sites of historical memory prompts reflection on how the spaces of Shanghai modernity are conceived and imagined in the current political and economic context of China.

Museum of the Former Korean Provisional Government

A more globally oriented historical mapping of Shanghai urban spaces has occurred with sometimes impressive effect. The rediscovery of the historical site of the former Korean Exile Government again shows Shanghai's close links with the modern history of Asian nationalism. The museum resides in a Shikumen



house on Madang Road. The Korean government in exile – active between 1926 and 1932 – was organized in April 1919 in Shanghai by Korean patriots in reac-

tion to Japanese suppression of the March 1st Movement, the struggle for Korean independence from Japanese rule. Leading members of the Korean Provisional Government included the national leaders such as Syngman Rhee, An Ch'ang-ho, and Kim Ku (Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2010). The Government was well known for successfully carrying out assassination missions on Japanese political and military personnel in Shanghai in 1932. The bombing attack in Hongkou Park by Korean independence activist Yoon Bong-Gil was aimed at the important attendees who had gathered for Japanese Emperor Hirohito's birthday celebration. The military success in the First Shanghai Incident left two killed and three severely injured; the attack became a symbolic in the Korean narrative of national freedom and independence. Even Chiang Kai-shek spoke highly of Yoon's bravery and nationalist undertaking. Yoon is still remembered by South Korea as a national hero and a monument was also dedicated to him in the Hongkou Park, today Luxun Park. He was executed in Kanazawa, Japan and his remains were transported back to Seoul in 1946 and buried in the Korean National Cemetery. Since 1994, as part of a more systematic preservation of the memory of Korean national resistance, a large amount of capital was put into the renovation of a two-story Shikumen house to produce a well-maintained memorial site for paying homage to this memory. The Museum now receives more than 600 Korean visitors per day and has been visited by three Korean presidents and other high-level politicians, as well as Korean celebrities such as movie stars. It is gloriously called "the Holy Palace of Korean Nationalist Independence Movement".

To compare the list of the expenses used on the renovation project of the museum and a list of Chinese-South Korean diplomatic development chronicles, it is not difficult to understand the relations between the two. In 1992, China finally established diplomatic relations with South Korea after more than forty years of ideological antagonism during the Cold War Era; in 1994, the first 1 million RMB (approximately 125,000 USD) was released to launch the renovation. The successive three years saw on average 600,000 RMB put into further maintenance each year. In 1998, the Korean president at that time, Kim Dae-jung, made a state visit to China. Two years later, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji visited South Korea. The largest expenditure in the restoration of the Museum in 2001-2002 coincided with the occasion of Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's state visit to China in 2003, costing a total of 65 million RMB. Furthermore, those two years also witnessed urban renewal in the nearby area, including the large-scale renovation of the relics of the first national congress site and the development of the Taipingqiao project. These memorials are therefore speaking more willingly to the cosmopolitan aspirations of Shanghai rather than China's own national discourse – not only the building a new global image of the city by selectively exploring its cultural and historical legacies but also a marginalization of other narratives of Chinese resistance to the Japanese aggression during the same period of time, e.g. the anti-Japanese Salvation Movement in 1931-1932. Again, in the explanatory

texts shown in the museum, the ambiguous term “Chinese Government” instead of Nationalist or Republican Government appears all the way through the narrative.

The Jewish Refugees Museum



If the cosmopolitan modernity of Shanghai is for the Shanghai local a matter of suturing the ruptures of time, then from a global perspective it is a matter of suturing the ruptures of space. Shanghai was not simply involved with the modern political movements of East Asia; it was also an indispensable part of inhuman battlefield of the world war. The north Bund area in the Hongkou District is now proud of its history of being a safe shelter for exiled Jews. As the rest of the world closed its doors to the refugees, Shanghai as well as several Northeastern Chinese cities, provided a place of free entry. In a country where anti-Semitism was hardly known, the Tilanqiao area in the old Shanghai Hongkew (now Hongkou) became the only place in the world that offered haven for the Jews all the way from central Europe to East Asia. The total number of Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II is estimated to be around 30,000. A difficult but somehow harmonious picture of the life of Shanghai Jews within their own community and their warm friendship with local Shanghai residents has been emerging in books written by Shanghai local scholars and in memoirs written by the refugees. Nostalgic trips back to Hongkou are organized annually by local institutions such as the Shanghai Jewish Center. The Center also conducts research on Sino-Jewish history and rela-

tions, is equipped with a library of several thousand books and archives of the Jews of China, provides classes in Hebrew and produces films and television programs (Shanghai Jewish Center 2008). A local TV station has also made the documentary film “Fleeing to Shanghai” to inform the Shanghai people of their absent memory of the friendship with the Jews, “thereby introducing this history and the themes of their cosmopolitan humanitarianism to the local population” (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). This renewed interest in this period of Shanghai’s history reached its culmination with the decision by the municipal government of Shanghai in 1998 that the former Ohel Rachel synagogue, still the largest remaining synagogue in the Far East, would be extensively renovated and reopened. While Ohel Rachel has received important politicians such as the former Chancellor of Germany and Hillary Clinton, the other Synagogue in Shanghai, the Ohel Moishe Synagogue, has been turned into The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. In 1994, a memorial dedicated to the Jewish refugees was erected in Huoshan Park where they often gathered (Dai & Zhou 2006: 178-84). The Jewish Museum has been fully repaired since 2007 and is open to the public. More than 1 million USD was allocated to the renovation. The exhibition is modern and well equipped, featuring around 140 picture materials, a multimedia installation and a rich collection of artistic works relevant to the Jewish experience in Shanghai.

Again, the motivation to re-discover the cosmopolitanism of Shanghai does not entirely reveal an interest in understanding the city’s multi-layered past as such. The memory of the city is articulated always in reaction to the immediate needs of the political or economic situation. China and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992, and “in the mid-1990s, the Shanghai authorities began to notice increasing pressure to recognize the Jewish history of the city” (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). The salvation of urban memory has become a tool in international diplomacy rather than a mode of public participation by the people of Shanghai. Like many other religious relics in China, the restoration of the physical structure doesn’t result in the restoration of the events that once took place in the space. “Despite the narrative of an *ab initio* humanitarian impulse in China, being Jewish is not an acceptable ongoing identity for Chinese nationals. Judaism is not a recognized religion in China” (Jakubowicz 2009: 165). Even for those local residents who have an interest in visiting the site, the 50 RMB (around 5 Euro) entrance fee of the Museum, is expensive for many Chinese visiting a museum that is of limited scale and may thwart a good many of them. The staff at the ticket office frankly suggested that the majority of the visitors were western tourists, and only during peak tourist season. Administrated by the Foreign Affairs Office in Hongkou District, the museum is obviously not intended for a local audience. As the scholars of Shanghai Social Science Academy argue, this part of Shanghai history can be served as “a unique ‘cultural name card’ for Shanghai in foreign communication and exchange”, suggesting its nature of showcase for a global audience (Dai & Zhou 2006: 181). At the same time, other endeavors to explore

the contested meanings of the terrain have not been very successful. For example, the efforts of the Shanghai-Toronto based corporation Living Bridge were intended to re-establish a communal environment, instead of simply the “gentrification” of individual architecture, and to create several other historic sites and cultural facilities in the Tilanqiao area as a part of the North Bund Project (Jakubowicz 2009: 167-170). These and other projects between 2004 and 2005 remained on paper. The official management of the space aims only to make use of the site of memory within its own pragmatic framework. The neglect of Shanghai’s own war memories contrasts sharply with the application to make the Tilanqiao Area, as the historic site of Jewish refugees in China, a UNESCO heritage site. The urban memory that celebrates the war memory of others is ironically treated with more passion and attention than that of its own. The yearning for a connection to the global community seems to go beyond the loyalty to the nation-state and assumes a kind of cosmopolitanism. However, as I have tried to illustrate, this cosmopolitanism serves as a façade that tends to reduce the complexity of Shanghai and its relation to plural national histories and memory discourses.

Shanghai in Bifurcated History: City, Multiple Narrative and National Memory

As Duara argues “new meanings are not simply exchanged for old meanings; they are also justified or understood in terms of old meanings” (Duara 1995: 234), I have endeavored to illustrate three situations in which the national subject of history is transformed through different narratives of monuments and commemorative rituals. To begin with, the subject of the political party (here the CPC) is emphasized and actually takes the place of the national subject in the historical narrative of nation building. In the case of The Memorial House of the First National Congress of the CPC, the consistency of the representation of national history is achieved firstly by an articulation of the leading position of the CPC even before the establishment of the new nation-state. As a result, the histories and memories of the other practices in the space are largely repressed and appropriated. Particularly after the “critical juncture” at the end of the Cultural Revolution (1978), an alteration of the meaning of the space that may contradict that of its original has been smoothed over in the renewed narrative.

Secondly, the multiplicity of the national subject of history is denied, marginalized and forgotten in the service of current political agendas. The amnesia of the Sino-Japanese War experience and the downplaying of sites of memory suggests that the national subject of history can be internally antagonistic. The repression of war memories is realized by marginalizing or blurring other historical subjects of the nation such as the Nationalist Government. The absence of WWII memorials allows the glossing over of the more complicated aspects of local history and the eagerness of today’s China to be recognized in the global gaze. Ideological

shifts and pragmatic accommodations are all blurred under the name of the national subject.

Thirdly, cosmopolitanism and universal humanitarianism are utilized as a means of blurring other national subjects as well as strengthening China's current political agenda of prioritizing economic development. The image making of Shanghai's cosmopolitanism in the commemoration of the Korean nationalist movement and the exile of Jewish refugees seems to go beyond the national subject in its articulation of local history. But the top-down unilateral and politically motivated process of creating memorials that excludes local people and other, multiple voice from participation in commemorative initiatives ends in the impoverishment memory itself.

These case studies of Shanghai's memorial sites reveal how difficult it is to neatly categorize them in a linear development of progressive modernity. They exemplify the tension between the different temporalities of Chinese national memories. Since the economic rise of Shanghai in the 1990s, the enthusiasm for new rounds of urban design and development for the most modern city in China has re-invoked the nostalgia for individual memories of the everyday bourgeois life style of old Shanghai. Nostalgia for old Shanghai seems to overshadow the memory of urban society's role in national ideology and its transformations. The once rigid party line against urban capitalism, the demonization of the city's decadence, and above all Shanghai's (and city's) long-term peripheral position in Chinese historical discourse appears to have been replaced by a new central position for the urban in post-reform economic development. Nevertheless, commemorative spaces in Shanghai still hold strong sway over the city's major memory narrative, one that maintains its legitimacy based on a continuation of socialist orthodoxy. The narrative of the rapid modernization of the Shanghai cityscape leading to a bright future renders invisible the tension-ridden and still unraveled discourse of the relations between Chinese modernity and its national identity. The constant shift in its ideological discourse is therefore at constant play with the actual production of commemorative spaces vis-à-vis the construction of national identity and awareness. Monumental desires are caught in modernity's dilemma of being for and against the search for origins.

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Notes

- ¹ See more in Forest and Johnson, “The first category, Co-opted/Glorified, contains those sites which Russian political leaders have chosen to expend considerable resources on redefining and reincorporating into prominent public view since 1991. (530)... The second category, Contested, contains Soviet-era monuments that continued to be a source of major conflict among the various political groups in Moscow espousing contrasting ideas of national identity. (532)... The third category, Disavowed, encompasses those monuments that were removed, closed, or so changed that their original symbolism was eradicated. (534)”
- ² *Disgraced Monuments* (1996) is a documentary film co-directed by Laura Mulvey and Mark Lewis. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the monuments that were dedicated to the Communist ideological propaganda were largely demolished in the then widespread anti-communist commotion.
- ³ In the first place, Duara’s approach to understanding history challenges the Hegelian Subject of history that privileges the self-awakening of the modern nation-state. For Duara, the Subject of history includes the nation but transverses it. The Historical Subject, which unifies race, nation and History, constitutes itself as “a homogenous community (race) within a territorial state (nation) that had evolved into the present so that it was now poised to launch into a modern future (History) of rationality and self-consciousness in which contingency or history itself would be eliminated (end of History)” (Duara 1995: 48-49). To focus history merely on the national Subject enormously simplifies the internal differences of a nationalism discourse. Duara suggests that national identity is one of the other social identities that simultaneously exist in the process of constituting historical experience. Secondly, as far as historical development is concerned, Duara argues an evolutionary concept of linear history progress poises a paradox in the claiming of nationalism as characteristic of modernity. While the nation is characterized as “representing a radical discontinuity with the past” (Duara 1995: 51), “national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time. This reified history derives from the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment History ...It allows the nation-state to see itself as a unique form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between tradition and modernity, hierarchy and equality, empire and nation” (Duara 1995: 4). The paradox thus lies in nation-state’s claim of its novelty and its legitimacy originating from an earlier tradition. The myth of eternal progression is realized by the narrative “The subject of History is a metaphysical unity devised to address the aporias in the experience of linear time: the disjuncture between past and present as well as the non-meeting between time as flux and time as eternal” (Duara 1995: 29). Historical periodization, for example, is easily manipulated by certain ideology in its own invented rhetoric to create objectivity. Time Concept of History is for Duara multi-layered rather than linear. In this sense, thirdly, Duara rejects the causal relation in historical logic and reasoning. In his conceptualization of the bifurcation of history, and he argues, “(B)ifurcated history not only substitutes multiplicity for the evolution of the same, it denies that the movement of history is causally linear, that only antecedent causes produce effects within a cause-effect chain. It views history as transactional, where the present, by appropriating, repressing, and reconstituting dispersed meanings of the past, also reproduces the past. At the same time, in investigating the process of appropriation, bifurcated history seeks not only to evoke the dispersed meaning but to disclose the ways in which this past may have provided the cause, the conditions, or the affinities which enabled the transformation” (Duara 1995: 233-234). The repression of other pasts is achieved by writing the historical narrative to produce the sense of a stable relation between the past and the present. Therefore the fourth argument centers on the discourse and narrative analysis of the hegemonic version of history. To deconstruct the process, in which “(a)n appropriation of the past often reveals traces or influences of this past for a while, but occasionally, a trace may be entirely erased or rewritten within an astonishingly short period of time for reasons that still need to be fully explored” (Duara 1995: 234), is important in that it helps us to know more about human experience (Wei 2006: 75-80). Duara calls the tensions and dynamics between narratives of the past and

the present the “transaction” of history. By exploring the transactions, one can “acquire the power of rhetorical persuasion even though they conceal, repress, and abstract from dispersed histories” (235). In other words, he tries to understand history by exposing the cleavage between signifier and signified in discourse analysis and thus his focus is “less on the falsehoods of nationalist historical writing than on the narrative structure of this historiography shares several assumptions of a linear history with evolving subject or a causal model” (Dura 1995: 233).

4 The Xinhai Revolution refers to the series of Chinese nation-wide revolutions which overthrew the Qing Monarchy. As a result, the Chinese Republican regime was established in 1912. Sun Yan-sen was the first president of the provisional central government of the Republic of China.

5 Fights for court laws, right to the administration of the concession, right to control railway, mine resources and customs duty were matters of no triviality that were directly connected to national interest and sovereignty. From 1905 to 1911, each year had witnessed large-scale mass protests of such kind in Shanghai. Urban elites, especially the bourgeois influence on Chinese politics soared in the early twentieth century. However, the gulf between Chinese coastal cities and the interior areas, which always play a decisive role in the country’s fate, didn’t keep China’s efforts to modernize the regional areas (Bergère 1994, 52-53; 2005, 114). The process of revolution in Shanghai reveals its uniqueness as a modern city ahead of the rest of China. The short-lived modernization and local political autonomy set a role model for other parts of China. But the central authority had to be restored when this local revolution became hopeless in face of the reality of China. Being different from the more outgoing southern Canton, Shanghai’s fate has always been in pace with the nation (Bergère 2005, 124).

6 While the official rendition of major labor movement such as the May Thirtieth Movement underlines the mobilization by the CCP as a leading figure who possessed earlier awareness of the need to stage a struggle for more rights and equality, other research findings, such as those by American historian Elisabeth Perry, showed, in contrast, that the success to mobilize the workers was more geopolitically dependent and regionally culture-based (Perry 2001). This research unfolds a more diverse picture of labor movement in Shanghai, which pays more attention to its metropolitan condition. Like other rapidly growing big cities, Shanghai at that time consisted of migrant workers from different parts of the country. Mass solidarity thus involves not only the matter of class but also issues of negotiating among strong regional identities, distinctive cultural differences and conflicts. Other challenges to CCP’s capacity to mobilize workers came from the Nationalist Party and the secret societies, another influential political force in Shanghai (Bergère 2005, 156-157).

7 The “Gang of Four” refers to four Chinese Communist Party officials that formed the leading political group during the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-1976). With enormous power wielded through the latter stages of this turbulent political movement, they are seen as the major culprits who caused huge national political and human right disasters. They were subsequently charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The members consisted of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

8 Zhu 336, my own translation

9 Netizens’ comments on the demolition of Gu Zhengong Monument,
<http://view.home.news.cn/comment?newsid=5190393&page=3>

10 Si Hang, meaning “Four Banks” in Chinese, refers to Jincheng, Dalu, Yanye and Zhongnan banks in the 1930s. The warehouse was in the south of Zhabei District and was once the biggest and tallest piece of modern architecture in the nearby area.

11 The construction of Chinese identity in Taiwan in the postwar years has its own controversial discourse especially when it is related to the dictatorship of KMT government in Taiwan and the conflicts between the postwar migrants from Mainland and the original residents in Taiwan (including the Aborigines). Today’s national identity in Taiwan is still problematically divided into ambivalent categories among Chinese, Taiwanese, neither or both.

12 Also see Hu Ed. (2006), 66-67

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