



## Session Summary: 13 November 2017

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This year's "Taiwan and its memory spaces: the question of the national narrative" seminar builds on the discussions from last year's seminar (2016-2017) called "Taiwan and its memory spaces: an investigation of the dynamics of identity and memory in contemporary Taiwanese society."

Touching on the fields of anthropology, sociology, political science and history, the seminar's purpose was to examine Taiwanese society through the question of memory. To this end, the concept of "memory space" developed by the historian Pierre Nora in his collective work *Les Lieux de Mémoire*<sup>1</sup> (trans.: Realms of Memory) was central to the seminar, and will be revisited this year as well.

This book is based on the observation that, at the end of the '80s, French society suffered a rapid disappearance of its national memory. Nora saw an awareness of a break with the past, a paradoxical era in which France struggled to keep coherence and continuity in its national past. Nora thus wished to shed light on the link between different objects of memory in order to identify and analyze representations of French society, and "establish a history of France through memory" by putting the spotlight on those spaces significant in terms of memory.

The 2016-2017 seminar's purpose was to see in what way Pierre Nora's concept could be applied to the Taiwanese context, to what extent his method could help study tangible and widespread embodiments of memory, as well as representations, symbols and markers of Taiwanese national identity: basically, how memory could become a tool for understanding Taiwan's history and society.

For Taiwan, the question of a break in memory is asked during the '70s, with people questioning identification to the Republic of China and reassessing the Chinese cultural reference in favour of another: Taiwanese/Formosan. We therefore witness a conflict between two chronologies: Taiwan and its history, on the one hand, and the great millennia-spanning China, on the other.

The seminar thus explores several memory spaces:

- Symbols that act as markers of collective identity (especially the cherry tree flower, a symbol of national identity since the '60s, but nowadays seen less and less in public).
- The question of island attachment and the relationship with one's land of origin (through genealogy, for example).
- Chronological caesuras, meaning historical moments considered significant, if not foundational.
- Historical figures (such as Wang Jinwei, who embodies the figure of the traitor).

This year's seminar will focus on the theme of national narrative in particular, with a more

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Nora (dir.), *Les Lieux de mémoire*, (République, Nation, Les France), collection « Quarto », Gallimard, 1997. Translation: Nora, Pierre, and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997



specific examination of the manner in which memories from different communities, whether traumatic or not, are assimilated into the national historical narrative. This examination will then allow a more in depth discussion on the links these communities maintain with the land of Taiwan, on the one hand, and the Republic of China as the legitimate centre of national identity, on the other.

The first session will welcome Skaya Siku, doctor of Arts and Visual Anthropology (Arts et anthropologie visuelle, EHESS-CRAL). This session lets us bring up the question of indigenous peoples from the very start, who, thanks to the apologies given by President Tsai Ing-wen on 1st August 2016, now find themselves at the heart of a transitional justice policy hitherto intended only for dealing with the violence and atrocities linked to the events of the 2.28 incident and the White Terror. Skaya Siku's presentation, entitled « Histoire, mémoire et identité dans le documentaire aborigène taïwanais : enquête sur trois réalisateurs de la première génération » (History, memory and identity in Taiwanese aborigine documentaries: an investigation of three first-generation directors), is divided into two parts. The first deals with the Indigenous Ketagalan Boulevard protest, which sparked in response to the apology speech given by the President of the Republic.

The second part provides an opportunity to view the documentary « Ceux qui volent contre le vent » (Those who fly against the winds) directed by Skaya Siku and released in 2013. The screening will be followed by a discussion of the film.

These protests were led by three indigenous leaders: Panai, a Puyuma-Amis singer, activist and ecologist; her husband, Nabu Husungan Istanda, a Bunun singer; and Bibo, director of several documentaries about the Amis. These protests raise the question of indigenous memory/memories and identity/identities, topics of consideration which will be discussed thanks to the viewing of Skaya Siku's film and destined to be tackled from many angles throughout the sessions of this year's seminar.