UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Puppetry: A Performative Reenactment of Taiwan

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Drama and Theatre

by

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2022

DEDICATION

To

My parents, who have always been the light of my life and my greatest inspiration

Bryan, who trusts me and loves me

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would never have been completed without the collective efforts of many. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee chair and my mentor, Dr. Daphne Lei, who has been my greatest support with her tireless guidance throughout my doctoral journey. She inspired me to be a better thinker, scholar and writer. Without her brilliant insights and invaluable feedback, I would be lost in darkness.

I am grateful for the generous support and feedback from my committee members: Professor Anthony Kubiak inspired me to explore animism and other approaches that were rarely seen in the study of puppetry; Professor Tara Rodman propelled me to look into the larger context of East Asian postwar political influence on culture; Professor Jade Power-Sotomayor's insightful advice and reading suggestions pulled me out of the rabbit holes during the early stage of this work; and finally, Professor Bert Scruggs provided me with further knowledge about Taiwan Studies and gave me confidence in the direction of this work.

Doctoral study was by far the most overwhelming experience I have ever had. I cannot express how grateful I have been to receive immense support both physically and spiritually from my cohorts in UCI drama Ph.D. program: I owe many thanks to Deni Li, who has always been there since the beginning of this journey; the countless conversations Minu Park and I had set a strong foundation to my life and work; the heartwarming nature of Qianru Li's personality always give me strength through difficult times; without Stephanie Lim and Ricardo Rocha's guide as seniors, as well as Eva Huang and Talin Abadian's

company, this journey would have been more strenuous; and Yi-jen Yu, my UCSD cohort, understands my struggle the most and always patiently listens to my pointless rant.

I am also grateful to be accompanied by many other friends, especially those I met at UCI Taiwanese Graduate Students Association and worked with at the North American Taiwan Studies Association. They are my shelter and retreat. My life in the U.S. would have been much more difficult without the communities.

Besides support from peers, my family has given me every strength whenever I am on the edge of breaking down or giving up. My parents are the ones who trust me the most and provide unconditional love and support for whatever I choose to pursue. I have always wanted to be a professor like my dad, who dedicated the past thirty more years to research and teaching. My mom is the wittiest person, fun and wise. She always has ways to calm me down whenever panic takes over me. My fiancé, Bryan (Chung-Hsien) Chou is the loudest cheerleader I have ever got, who always convinces me that I am the best in the entire world.

Finally, this dissertation research was supported by generous funding from Taiwan's Ministry of Education Study Abroad Fellowship, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, UCI Graduate Dean's Dissertation Fellowship and other travel and research support from UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts and Center for Asian Studies.

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FIELD OF STUDY

Puppetry; Asian and Asian American performance; postcolonial theatre; performance of activism; Taiwan studies

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Puppetry: A Performative Reenactment of Taiwan

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

University of California, Irvine, 2022

Professor Daphne P. Lei, Chair

This dissertation examines Taiwan through puppetry. The unique philosophy and ontology of puppetry perfectly narrate the performative nature of Taiwan. My interests in puppets and research on puppetry can be divided into three major thematic concerns that underpin this dissertation: 1) puppets' association with life and death, existentiality and ontology; 2) their connections with our bodies and souls; and 3) how puppets preserve or smuggle knowledge and memories. I am especially interested in a puppet's ability to be and become any beings or states, which I refer to as a puppet's *becoming* and *unbecoming*. *Becoming* and *unbecoming* point to the dynamic and transformative processes through which puppets negotiate with time and space, as well as other existents, to transform themselves into distinct beings and further expand their lives to create relations with others. Such actions and dynamics are then adopted to the study of Taiwan, Taiwanese culture and identity, which are also performative and always in transformation.

The questions surrounding both puppetry and Taiwan are generally derived from a sense of inherent contradiction and uncertainty. For instance, are puppets humans or nonhumans, alive or lifeless? Are people on the island Taiwanese or Chinese? It is the goal of this research to contest these "either…or" questions, and suggest an unbound narrative of "neither…nor" or "both"—puppets are neither humans nor nonhumans, and can be both alive and lifeless. Puppetry and Taiwan, the two most critical targets of this study, are tied together empirically and theoretically to generate dialogues, including their interdependency. My attempt is to provide a fresh perspective to understanding what Taiwan/puppet is, can be, does and can do.

This dissertation consists of three main chapters. Chapter 1 traces the ongoing journey of *budaixi* from the eighteenth century as it parallels Taiwan's historical and sociopolitical development. I also examine how *budaixi* contributes to nation-building projects in the twenty-first century. Chapter 2 focuses on puppets' potential to serve as a medium to address, redress, or reimagine the national trauma of Taiwan's White Terror. While the first two chapters solely pertain to the Han Chinese or Taiwanese experience of puppetry, Chapter 3 turns to Taiwan's Indigenous peoples. I study how puppets, specifically giant puppets and shadow puppets, are adopted to convey and embody Indigenous mythologies and knowledges that have been orally passed down for centuries.

In sum, all three chapters exemplify the capacity of puppetry to be a vessel and repository of Taiwan's distinct social, political, and cultural journey as it has traveled collaterally with the evolution of Taiwanese subjectivities.

NOTES ON LANGUAGES

Romanization is not standardized in Taiwan, and the reasons are beyond the scope of this dissertation to unravel. In this dissertation, I use terms in Mandarin Chinese, Hokkien (Hoklo) and Japanese. Most Mandarin terms are romanized using Hanyu Pinyin, also known as the pinyin romanization system; however, I do at times use the Wade-Giles romanization system, which was used in Taiwan after the Second World War until the late 1990s, as well as the Tongyong Pinyin system, which was the official romanization system used between 2002 and 2008. Romanization of personal names follows each person's preference with some following the Western convention in publication; if not specified, most names in Mandarin and Japanese are in the order of surname and given name (as they are in their original languages). For Hokkien terms, I use the official romanization system promoted by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Tâi-uân Lô-má-jī Phing-im Hong-àn, or Tâi-lô for short. In some circumstances, I specify the language as Taiwanese Hokkien in order to distinguish it from the language used in Minnan region. For terms that are used frequently in both Hokkien and Mandarin, I provide both romanizations when first used and then generally employ Hanyu Pinyin thereafter. Chapter 3 includes terms in various Indigenous languages. Though the romanization of terms varies, most are according to the official romanization system proposed by the Council of Indigenous Peoples in 2005, which was later endorsed by the Ministry of Education. All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines Taiwan through puppetry. The unique philosophy and ontology of puppetry perfectly narrate the performative nature of *Taiwan*. I have always been fascinated with puppets for their ambiguous nature of having life and consciousness that differs from that of humans', and for being objects with their own subjectivity. It is, as Paul Piris described, "an object that appears in performance as a subject" (30) that resembles and shares life with humans while not being human. My interest lies not only in the aesthetic and artistic practices of puppetry, but also in its life, existence, and spirituality. What do puppets *do*? How do they engage with the act of *thinking*? What language do they use? How do they communicate? Puppets are artifacts, objects designed and crafted by people, and yet, they have power beyond human and earthly limitations. They are *alive* and with a life larger than their material form.

The human desire to play with the material world and the impulse to animate and personify objects play a prominent role in the art of puppetry. In an interview between Julie Taymor, director of the musical *The Lion King*, and performance theorist Richard Schechner, Taymor brought up the example of Disney's *Fantasia and The Sorcerer's Apprentice* when speaking about the idea of making something come alive (27). In this 1940 animated film, Mickey Mouse, a young apprentice of a sorcerer, attempts to bring objects, such as brooms and buckets, to life by using his master's magic tricks; however, he eventually loses control over the objects. Humans tend to define the livelihood of inanimate objects, like animals, by endowing them with personhood. Teri Silvio further describes animation as "the process of

projecting qualities perceived as human, such as life, soul, and personality, outside the self and into the sensory environment" (53). According to this view, projection, accompanied by the human imagination, contributes to or even produces a kind of vitality and *life* in objects.

What then are the differences between objects, things, and puppets, especially in a performative context? Frank Proschan is the first person to draw attention to the inherent agency and performativity of objects. In "The Semiotic Study of Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects," Proschan defines "performing objects" as material images of humans, animals, or spirits created, displayed, or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance. Bill Brown, Jane Bennett, and Robin Bernstein elaborate on the notion of an object's performativity by further clarifying the terminology of "things" to denote objects that participate in the life of humans. Brown argues that we begin to notice or "confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us" (4), whereas Bennett shifts the focus from the human experience of things to things themselves in her book, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010). My dissertation builds off of the work of these scholars, especially Bernstein's notion of "scriptive things," which he describes as objects that "manifest, respond to, or transmit meaning that originates in humans" (69). Berstein goes on to say that "[a] thing demands that people confront it on its own terms; thus a thing forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing" and "[a]n object becomes a thing when it invites a person to dance" (69-70). In my opinion, puppets encompass the features of objects and things, especially in maintaining a corporeal relationship with humans by receiving agency from and asserting agency on humans and other beings. Puppetry fosters unique conversations and expressions among and beyond distinct beings.

I began to realize the deep connection between puppetry and Taiwan's performative identities from my work with Taiwan's Puppet & Its Double Theater Company (*Wuduyou'ou gongzuoshi jutuan* 無獨有偶工作室劇團) as a project specialist for an international puppet arts festival hosted by the Company in 2016. During the months working there, I had the opportunity to connect with puppet artists around the world, observe their creative process, and sit in on their workshops. Furthermore, I took these artists on a tour to visit other puppet artists, companies, studios, and museums around the island of Taiwan. This experience was the first time I had extended and close engagement with such a robust network of puppetry artists, which afforded me the opportunity to further appreciate their amazing artworks, learn about what attracted these artists to puppetry, and witness how these artists used their magical hands to breathe life and vitality into their puppets.

My experience with puppetry became more profound after participating in two puppetry workshops, which were led respectively by Australian puppet company Snuff Puppets and German puppet artist Alice Gottschalk. I worked with both as an interpreter in the summer of 2017. Though their aesthetics and creative processes were very different, both emphasized the notion of community-building in the process of artmaking, which involves a collective effort on the part of every collaboration in a given production. These artists value the process of experimenting and playing with puppets-in-the-making as much as, if not more than, the finished product or the performance itself. Furthermore, these artists showed their respect and gratitude for the materials used for building puppets and the environments that cultivated these materials, a kind of veneration that resonates with the founder and artistic director of Sandglass Theatre, Eric Bass, when he writes:

> I do not doubt the need for art. We are in a time when so many need to speak out, and Puppetry has always had its roots in reflecting society, in its grotesqueness and its mystery, its devils and angels. And although some puppet artists may create in solitude, none of us can work in a vacuum. The state of the world impacts our work, as does the state of the field of puppetry itself. We are influenced by the materials that are available to us, and by the support systems we find, but we are also driven by the culture of our art form. [. . .] For many puppetry artists, the inspiration that drives creation is found in the process itself. A puppet is something we play with, similar perhaps to the way a musician plays his instrument, or to the way a child plays with a toy. The puppet itself, and the material from which the puppet is made, lead us and open up the world of our show.

Distinct from many other theatre traditions, no human being in the production team—not the playwright, the director, designers or actors—has paramount power over the *puppet itself*. People learn to feel and to listen to what the puppet tries to tell them—what movements it can do, where it wants to go, and how it communicates with others. Meanwhile, they also obtain creative energy from the puppet that welcomes them into a fantastical world beyond imagination. This unique feature of puppetry has prompted me to delve into the intersection of puppetry and animistic perspectives that perceive the world as relational and alive.

Inspired by Bass's ideas, for the purposes of this dissertation, I refer to the *in-the-processness* of puppetry as a puppet's *becoming* and *unbecoming*. *Becoming* and *unbecoming* refer to the dynamic and transformative processes through which puppets negotiate with time and space, as well as other existents, to transform themselves into

distinct beings and further expand their lives to create relations with others. A puppet's life and being are elastic and flexible because of its ability to always *(un)become* the images or magical creatures that only exist in a person's imagination. Especially in the space of a puppet show, the creative energy of a puppet's life is constantly and interactively transmitted among the performer, the puppet, and the audience. Ancillary to the abovementioned, in theatrical performances, actors *play* the roles, whereas puppets *are* the characters. On account of this feature, puppets oftentimes seem more *real* to the audience, who eagerly await a genuine experience of the most exquisite and touching moments of life through the puppet's performance. Puppets can be just as authentic and alive, if not more, than human actors.

In the introduction, I start by introducing some features of puppets and puppetry, specifically puppets' lives and relationships with humans and other beings, which lay the foundation for this dissertation. I further contextualize this research by placing it in conversation with the historically intricate identity politics of Taiwan. Puppetry and Taiwan, the two most critical targets of this study, are later tied together to generate dialogues pertaining to their relationships, as well as how they sustain and support each other both empirically and theoretically in the following chapters. Like most people in Taiwan of my generation, I have always understood and experienced Taiwanese identity as ambiguous, if not unfathomable. The questions surrounding both puppetry and Taiwan are generally derived from a sense of inherent contradiction and uncertainty. For instance, are puppets humans or nonhumans? Are puppets alive or lifeless? Is Taiwan a state or a nation? Are people on the island Taiwanese or Chinese? It is the goal of this research to contest these "either…or" questions, and suggest an unbound narrative of "neither…nor" or

"both"—puppets are neither humans nor nonhumans, and can be both alive and lifeless. My attempt is to provide a fresh perspective to understanding what Taiwan is, can be, does and can do.

Additionally, I aim to challenge the official historiography or History, referencing Prasenjit Duara's theory, which essentially embraces the "either…or." According to Duara, the official historiography of History is singular, unitary, and imagines the nation as a linear progression; in contrast to History, *history* and *histories* involve different modes of configuring the past and embracing the divergence among and within multiple histories. This research attempts to offer alternative narratives of Taiwan's multiple histories through the means of puppetry. As embodied practices, puppetry and performance function as a praxis for this study, which seeks the unbecoming of the dominant narratives of Taiwan's History and foregrounds notions of practices and experiments that resist containment by institutional frameworks. In other words, I propose an approach to looking at Taiwan and its narrative through the insights of puppetry. The last part of this introduction provides a brief overview of all of the chapters of this dissertation while also revisiting central theories and ideologies in each chapter.

Why Puppets?—Encountering Death and Becoming Alive

My interests in puppets and research on puppetry can be divided into three major thematic concerns that underpin this dissertation: 1) their association with life and death, existentiality and ontology; 2) puppets' intimate connections with our bodies and souls; and 3) how puppets preserve or smuggle knowledge and memories. First of all, puppets never really *age.* They seem to belong to a distinct temporality from the temporality of us

humans. Despite the fact that their materials may wear off over time, the spirits or characters that puppets incarnate remain the same. Puppets never truly die either. Even if they are reduced to matter and are unable to be revived, their death is "a transition from one form of materiality to another" (Gross 21).[1] The seeming immortality of puppets relates closely to their origins in religious rituals and ancestral worship, as well as humans' fear and aversion to death, disease and other natural disasters which the puppets' longevity defies.

Ancillary to immortality, such features also make puppets incarnations of the dead that persist and live beyond the limits of human mortality. As Penny Francis puts it, "the first sight of a beloved's corpse brings with it the passionate desire to re-animate, to resurrect the lost person" (146). In many cultures and religions, humans demonstrate the desire to witness and participate in the *reversal of death*, the resurrection or the celebration of immortality, through the means of material objects, specifically dolls and puppets. Indeed, puppets or dolls are often crafted to commemorate lost loved ones or to represent the dead and accompany the living.

In some communities in Africa, such as the Bwende of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there are rituals involving a gigantic mortuary figure of fabric that contains the body of the deceased. These mortuary figures are made so that the dead may leave the village in peace. The Toraja in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, use puppets as the double of the deceased in interment ceremonies (*UNIMA* "Rites and Rituals"). Similarly, the concept of a puppet in Chinese (*yong* 俑 or *ou* 偶) is associated with funeral dolls and wooden figures in early Chinese history. The founder of the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.) and the first emperor

[1] Puppets' intimate and intricate relationship with death is elaborated on in Chapter 2.

who unified China, Qin Shihuang, built a city-sized mausoleum with a troupe of puppet-like terracotta soldiers to protect him in his afterlife.[2] Puppets surrogate and replace the dead and enact memories, resonating with Joseph Roach's concept of performance as an act of surrogation that reproduces cultural memory by inserting substitutes "into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure" (2).

The reason for using puppets to substitute for or accompany the dead lie in their resemblance to living humans. Chinese philosopher Mencius (372-289 BC) also revealed the problem of puppets' human likeness in his conversation with King Hui of Liang (Liang Huiwang 400-319 BC). Mencius argued that the substitution of human-like puppets for human was itself related to the concept of human sacrifice and hence should be condemned. He even quoted Confucius: "Isn't it true that the first fellow who made wooden images for burial with the dead had no posterity?" Mencius's criticism of the possible commemoration of King Hui of Liang directly points to the need to treat a puppet's life as a human's life and expresses an attitude against human-doubling and surrogation. When the puppets are created to symbolize humans, then they are no longer merely objects, but instead, grow closer to the realm of living beings. Puppets then depart from being regarded solely as substitutions of the dead to something potentially with life and agency.

In addition to using puppets to commemorate or represent the dead, puppets also work as physical manifestations of deities for their *atemporality*. Jayadeva Tilakasiri further explores puppets' life and their connection to rituals and the spiritual world: "[p]rimitive man first made images and idols for magical purposes and, especially for the sake of appeasing the gods and demons of the prevailing religion, whom they wished to represent

[2] Qin Shihuang unified China in 221 B.C.

in visible form" (1). Humanity tends to visualize the beliefs by the making of paintings and statues as effigies and by means of music, dance, and trance as ritual practices to commemorate the dead, comfort or expel the evils, and express gratitude to deities. Puppets and masks are often perceived as vehicles for representing the eternal truths of belief as their physical bodies remain unchanging, and can be handed down from generation to generation.

Puppets also provide a distance between the operator and the unknown powers that are being confronted, often expelling evil spirits that might seriously harm anyone unprotected. Moreover, puppets' immortality enables humans to counter the fading memory, experience vicariously the transcendence of life and death, and project further wishes onto objects. Despite humans beings being the ones who create the effigy that embodies the divine power, we trust the power and spirit of the effigy to lead us through difficulties. Puppets are believed to have *lives* and *spirits* that are more powerful and larger than us.

"More Than" Selves

Puppets are also the extensions of our *selves*, of our perceptions, sensibilities and subjectivities. In thinking through the expressivity of puppets and their capacity to *extend self*, I situate theories of animism at the center of my research. For instance, Eduardo Kohn and Melissa K. Nelson explain how humans are self-restricted and "colonized by certain ways of thinking about relationality" (Kohn 21); Graham Harvey and Nurit Bird-David, likewise, propose expanded notions of personhood which offer this research a crucial reconceptualization of human-puppet relationships. Puppets allow us to step outside of the

sense of ourselves as "a contained being" and connect to another "greater life force" (Nelson 230) embodied in animated objects made of dirt, soil, wood and various earthly materials. Puppetry invites us to "[extend] beyond the confines of one particular embodied locus of self" (Kohn 105). Puppets thus reconnect us with the telluric world of land and nature and allow us to experience/feel the world with a larger sense of self beyond the confines of our physical body.

The aforementioned features of puppetry are similar to the concept of shadows. In Chapter 3, I explore the notion of shadows as a manifestation of consciousness in contrast to its historical association, owing heavily to Plato's allegory of the cave, with illusions in Western culture. Shadows and shadow puppets transcend the boundary of a being or thing's physical body and extend beyond its contours. John Hollander writes that "[s]hadows are related to our eternal condition—to our contours, rather than to our more substantial mass. And yet their very insubstantiality has allowed shadows to be seen both as residues or traces of something palpable and more profoundly animated, and, more enigmatically, as emanations of something internal to us" (3). Shadows are the double or emanation of something usually imperceptible or concealed, an alternative to the visible and substantial, which hold more than their shades and contours. Additionally, the shadows go one step further to claim the subject roles in shadow theatre. Instead of being ancillary to material presences, shadows gesture toward the recognition of their subjecthood, co-presence and simultaneity with their double.

Other forms of puppetry share these features as well. Puppets are the *double* of us, our alterity, an embodiment of our soul within another, a mirror reflection enabling us to stand in front of and look into the eyes of an inner self that is familiar yet unseen.

Furthermore, encountering puppets entail an experience of the *uncanny*, the feeling of a secretive life lurking behind a familiar facade. Proposed by Freud in his renowned 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," the *uncanny* refers to the alien or strange within the familiar. Matthew Cohen draws on Freud, Erik Erikson, D.W. Winnicott and others to explain how children (or more specifically, infants) begin to assert their own subjectness (self) over the objectness of toys (other) through recognizing their uncanny affiliation with the latter. Cohen further makes connections between toys and puppets: "The uncanny thingness of the puppet, its potent con-fusion of intimate familiarity and alien otherness, grants it special purchase in coping with trauma and the vicissitudes of social relations, taking over a psychic function assumed in childhood by solitary object play" (124).

Another theory that also adopts the *uncanny* as a means to navigate one's emotional engagement with objects and puppets was proposed by Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970. Mori coins the term "uncanny valley" to describe the relationship between the human-like appearance of an object and the emotional response it evokes. In his research, he speculates that people found humanoids more appealing if they look more human, but this correlation only holds to a certain point as previously positive and empathetic emotional responses soon turn into intense feelings of abhorrence when human resemblance further increases. Where this emotional revulsion takes place is defined as the uncanny valley which lies between not-so-human-like appearance and full human resemblance. Mori lists certain examples, such as zombies and corpses being at the bottom of the valley, whereas bunraku puppets feature highly on the scale.

The uncanniness of puppets, their verisimilitude and proximity to humans, also reveal human boundaries. As Cohen writes, puppets "are 'not me' and also 'not not me'"

(124).[3] The undetermined and uncertain distance between puppets and humans disrupts the seemingly stable object-human relationship. Dispesh Chakrabarty defines proximity as a "mode [. . .] of relating to difference in which (historical and contingent) difference is neither reified nor erased but negotiated" (140). Chakrabarty's notion of proximity helps to distance our understanding of puppets away from their realness, authenticity, or legitimacy, and instead prompts us to consider the process through which one's humanness relates to a puppet's objectness, that is, the process of *becoming* and *unbecoming*.

Puppets as Repository of Knowledge

Puppets often serve as a repository or reservoir for what has been repressed or lost, such as memories and traditions. They not only provide a site of reenactment, but also respond to experiences of repression or loss by engaging with human life. This dissertation thus also looks at the potentiality of puppets to *reenact* cultural knowledge, traditions, memories, and experiences that have been lost or repressed during the journey of life and history. Puppets track and trace this journey.

The reenactment of cultural knowledge through puppetry can be understood through Richard Schechner's theorization of performance as restored behavior or twice-behaved behavior in which the performance is symbolic, reflexive, and "never for the first time" (36). As Schechner puts it, "restored behavior is 'out there,' distant from 'me.' It is separate and therefore can be 'worked on,' changed, even though it has 'already happened" (36). This distance is crucial, as it does not stay still but rather allows new perspectives to

[3] My use of the word uncanny here is slightly different from Masahiro Mori's hypothesis of the "uncanny valley" which describe the relationship between the human-like appearance of an object and the emotional response it evokes. Mori's "uncanny feeling" in relation to how different emotions are incited is discussed more in details in Chapter 2.

come in each time the performance takes place. In personal terms, by engaging in a performance (or restored behavior), one experiences the "me behaving as if I am someone else," while the "someone else" may also be regarded as "me in another state of feeling/being" (37). This dynamic resembles the practice of puppetry. In the case of this dissertation research, memories and histories are constantly performed and reperformed through diverse means and from distinct perspectives while engaging different people, which eventually leads to the emergence, transmission or transformation of new knowledge in relation to these memories and histories.

I am also thinking of Rebecca Schneider's insights on performative reenactment in her research on American Civil War reenactments which, through theatrical acts, allow the times of the past and the present to touch. She writes, "a reenactment both is and is not the acts of the Civil War. It is not not the Civil War. And, perhaps, through the cracks in the 'not not,' something cross-temporal, something affective, and something affirmative circulates. Something is touched" (43). This notion of "not not" particularly resonates with what I have identified as the complexity yet similarity between Taiwan and puppetry, which will be later elaborated upon: puppets are not beings like human beings, but also not not-a-being; puppets are "not me," and yet not "not me" (Cohen 124); Taiwan is not China, but also not not-*China*. The circumvention of "either…or" or "neither…nor" narrative demonstrates the performative nature of both Taiwan and puppetry.

Schneider's use of performative reenactment also denotes an engagement with the remains of an incomplete past. Taiwan's past is never completed, and in a sense, fractured and ongoing. Through puppetry and puppets' material presence, I argue that these histories are performatively reenacted, which allows audiences to participate in the collective

remaking and reimagining of the past. Schneider further explains that "[t]he past, replayed, was not necessarily given to be seen. Rather, it was given to be experienced, or 'felt,' by those who reenacted" (33). The notion of performative reenactment also responds to Taylor's repertoire and Roach's theory of performance as surrogation in which past experiences, memories and knowledge are embodied and (re)enacted, instead of merely presented or represented.

In the same spirit, puppetry is simultaneously archive and repertoire, in Diana Taylor's sense of these terms. If puppets themselves are archives that temporarily store knowledge and memories, performative reenactment through puppetry can be a kinetic encounter and active engagement with the past. I see this process through a meaning-making paradigm that allows for interactions between the past and present, the real and the illusional, ultimately creating a bridge in-between. Puppetry activates the archives and functions as "vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated" (Taylor *Performance* 2).

In the same vein, Annie Rollins called shadows and shadow puppetry "immaterial remains" that hold stories and transmittable community knowledge in her project on preserving Chinese shadow puppetry traditions. In Rollins's research, shadows and shadow theatre function as a kind of immaterial archive of community stories, and also serve as "cumulative repositor[ies] of shared experience" (2). Shadow puppetry, though intangible, works both as an archive and a performative repertoire, passing down stories and social knowledge of communities, in contrast to representing a kind of monolithic culture.

This departure from the logic of (re)presentation is crucial to the central paradigm of this research: I do not treat puppets as texts or analyze puppetry linguistically or

semiotically as an alternative to or substitution for words. I refer to puppetry as a language not literally but metaphorically and artistically as a means of expression and communication. For the same reason, when I discuss puppets' narratives, it is less relevant to consider the textuality of puppets or puppet shows; instead, I hope to illuminate puppets' potential and power to reenact traditions and memories, and further transmit cultural knowledge through performance as embodied practices. Hence, this dissertation research uses puppetry to explore the potential of narrating and communicating multifaceted Taiwan and Taiwanese identities.

Contextualizing Taiwan: Identities and Subjectivities

If puppetry offers a critical lens, a praxis and a method for this dissertation research, Taiwan is the narrative and the discourse to be explored. For centuries, immigrants and migrants, permanent or temporary, and their descendants have contributed to the social and cultural diversity of this island. However, Taiwanese culture and identity always connote a sense of marginality and localness.[4] Under colonization, history, language, culture, tradition and other aspects that contribute to the construction of a nation can easily be remade, replaced or manipulated by external forces. As a result, there is hardly an uncontested subjectivity or national identity that encompasses the influences and ideologies of distinct causes. Taiwan is a paradigmatic example of national identity *under*

[4] The word "Taiwanese" may refer to something from or related to Taiwan, Taiwanese Minnan (Hokkien) language, and residents of Taiwan or people of Taiwanese descent. When I use "Taiwanese" to refer to the people or culture in Taiwan in this dissertation, I try to involve everyone who identifies with Taiwan and/or Republic of China in the discussion, including not only Han Chinese population (pre-and post-1945), but also the Indigenous peoples, new immigrants arriving since the late twentieth century and more.

construction or *identity-in-progress*, so much so that French political scientist Stéphane Corcuff has called Taiwan "a laboratory of identities" (xi).

Certainly, Taiwan has long been conceptually positioned and labeled as a fluctuating state for many. In addition to democratic transition in the late twentieth century, five major historical moments contribute to the making of *Taiwan* and Taiwanese subjectivity. Taiwan was first made a prefecture of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) in 1683, and later became a province in 1885. In 1895, after the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Qing Empire ceded Taiwan to Japan *in perpetuity*. Before formal cession to the Empire of Japan, a short-lived republic called the Republic of Formosa (*Taiwan Minzhuguo*) was founded to resist Japanese colonization. The Republic soon collapsed, and then 50 years of Japanese rule began.[5]

The era of Japanese rule is critical to the formation of Taiwanese consciousness. In order to differentiate the people who already lived on the island and the Japanese who arrived after the cession, the officials classified the former as "islanders" (in Japanese: *hontojin*), which broadly included the earliest Han Chinese settlers, mostly immigrants of the Hoklo and Hakka communities who arrived before and during the Qing regime, and some Indigenous communities, whom the Japanese categorized as "plains Indigenous peoples" (*pingpuzu* 平埔族) despite the fact that there had been conflicts among different groups throughout the centuries.[6] Those who did not belong to any of the above groups

[5] Republic of Formosa (*Taiwan Minzhuguo*) existed on the island of Taiwan in 1895 between the formal cession of Taiwan by the Qing dynasty to the Empire of Japan by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The Republic was proclaimed on May 23, 1895 and ended on October 21, when the capital, Tainan, was taken over by the Japanese troops.

[6] The term *hontojin* was used in opposition to the ethnic Japanese, inland people (*naichijin*) during the Japanese colonial period. The Hoklo people are Han Chinese whose traditional ancestral homes are in southern Fujian, China. About 70% of the Taiwanese people descend from Hoklo immigrants who arrived on the island prior to the start of Japanese rule in 1895. Hakka people comprise about 15 to 20% of the

were then not regarded as islanders or Taiwanese during this time. Evan Dawley argues for the importance of this era regarding the formation of Taiwanese identity because "it inserted the people who became Taiwanese into new ideological and cultural contexts, provided them with a new, contrasting 'other' to define themselves against, and exposed them to the full power of the nation-state, a combination of factors that sparked a largely defensive process of identity formation" (4). It is worth noting that the idea of Taiwanese subjectivity is indeed based on an imaginary alliance between various diverse ethnic groups—what Benedict Anderson calls "an imagined community"—with a clear hierarchy and constant inter-group conflict. This imagined unity could be understood as a strategic act endorsed by the state and palpably acquiesced by the public as a means to sustain the nation.

The act of othering enabled, on the one hand, Japanese settlers to solidify their colonial regime; on the other hand, it allowed the people, especially those who had ancestral roots in China, to identify themselves as Taiwanese (by location) or Chinese (by ethnicity) through their interactions with these rulers and other settlers. Discourses of Taiwanese subjectivity first came to the fore in the 1920s when the New People Society (in Japanese: *Shinminkai*), formed by islander elites who studied abroad in Japan, petitioned and lobbied for the establishment of a Taiwanese Parliament and a presence in the Tokyo Diet, the center of political activity in Japan. The movement marked a transition in Taiwanese colonial politics from armed resistance to modern political movements, and reflected the politicization of Taiwanese identity.

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population of Taiwan and form the second-largest ethnic group on the island. They are descended largely from Hakka migrants from southern and northern Guangdong, China to Taiwan in the seventeenth century.

The Taiwanese Parliament Movement contributed to a sense of group membership that defined and categorized people based on their ancestral homeland and pre-colonial cultural heritage—namely China and Chinese culture, despite their divergent roots and trajectories. Therefore, this historical moment brought about a unique form of imagined Taiwanese identity that ideologically differs from that of later periods. The Taiwanese elites during this period advocated for a Taiwanese identity while holding an aspiration for the motherland (*zuguo* 祖國), China, by maintaining an imagined affiliation with and identification as Han *Chinese* in contrast to the ethnically distinct Japanese people. Especially after the official de-Sinicization enforced by Japanese colonial authorities during the *Kominka* period, which entailed the Japanization and imperialization of colonial subjects starting in 1941, an identification with ethnic Chinese nationalism became the impetus for colonial emancipation for many social elites in Taiwan (Ching 6-8). The semi-fictional historical novel, *Decoding Taiwan's Contemporary Artist Chen Cheng-Po*, which explores the first Taiwanese artist whose work was displayed at Japan's Imperial Art Exhibition, captures the intricate mentality and sentiment of a *Taiwanese* under Japanese rule. The triangulation between colonial Taiwan, imperial Japan, and nationalist China led to contradictory, conflicting and contesting identities, the tensions of which persist even to today.

Nevertheless, if Taiwanese subjectivity first arose during Japanese rule based on the colonial project of othering and the islanders' common feeling of sharing a similar cultural heritage, the end of the Second World War and the arrival of the Nationalist troops from Mainland China introduced another wave of conceptualizing Taiwanese identity. Though conflict between different waves of Chinese immigration was nothing new to the Taiwanese

people, these conflicts were undoubtedly intensified after the Second World War due to the impact of the Chinese Civil War (1945-1950), postcolonialism, and the Cold War. Christopher R. Hughes points out that "[a] cleavage of identity between these post-1945 'mainlanders' and pre-1945 'islanders' quickly developed when the new arrivals treated the native population more like traitors than compatriots" (*Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism* 154).[7] He refers to the fact that many Taiwanese elites studied at Japanese universities during the colonial period, and during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), over 200,000 Taiwanese, who were either forcefully drafted or voluntarily joined out of self-identification with the Japanese Empire, served as a part of the Japanese armed forces.[8] Shaped by the KMT's nation-building project and war against Japan, some of the new officials from Mainland China after 1945 bore contradictory sentiments toward the islanders for their previous association with the *enemy*.[9]

The islanders were disappointed with government corruption and overall poor administration of the mainlanders, which contrasted starkly with their experience under Japanese rule. On February 28, 1947, conflicts finally boiled over with the rise of protests around the island; however, the islanders' revolt was quickly crushed by military

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[7] The "islanders" here do not necessarily equal the islanders (*hontojin*) during the Japanese colonization despite the English translations of the terms are the same, and the two populations largely overlap. This "islander" is translated from *benshengren* 本省人, meaning someone who is from "inside the province of Taiwan," in contrast to the "mainlander", *waishengren* 外省人, referring to someone from "outside the province." Chinese immigrants that arrived in Taiwan before 1945 and their descendants are commonly considered islanders; while Chinese immigrants after 1945 and their decendents are mainlanders.The provincial issues (*shengji wenti* 省籍問題) had been prominent to the society especially shortly after the Second World War. Yet, in fact, like the imagined community of the islanders during the Japanse rule, mainlanders who came to Taiwan from different parts of the mainland, do not all come from the same province, or necessarily share the same language or customs. In addition to mainlanders' superior position over islanders, it was their history and personal trauma—combined with shared material and ideological interests—that bonded this diversified group of mainlanders from different provinces together.

[8] *Weishuierzhan? Weiheerzhan?* 為誰而戰？為何而戰？[Fought for Whom, for What?]. 25 May 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20050525054120/http://www.jimlee.idv.tw/art_03_03.htm.

[9] The Kuomintang (Guomindang) often referred to in English as the Nationalist Party or Chinese Nationalist Party (CNP), is a major political party in Taiwan. The Kuomingtang will be referred to as KMT thereafter.

reinforcement from the Mainland, resulting in brutal suppression and countless casualties. The event, known as the 228 Incident, was followed by a 40-year imposition of martial law in Taiwan, as well as political persecution and purging of dissidents in what is known as the White Terror. The influx of immigrants and refugees after the Chinese Civil War in 1949 further intensified the conflicts between the Han Chinese population on the island.[10] Both the 228 Incident and the White Terror have made an explicit impact on the subsequent discourse of Taiwanese subjectivity and marked a fundamental separation between Chinese nationalism, Chinese ethnonationalism, and Taiwanese nationalism.[11]

"We poor Taiwanese. We were once under the Japanese, and now we are under the Chinese," Lin Wen-heung, one of the major characters in Hou Hsiao-hsien's masterpiece, *City of Sadness*, laments. Released in 1989, the film portrays a period of transition after the Second World War and reflects the fluctuation of Taiwanese national identity. June Yip argues that *City of Sadness* was "a milestone in [the] process of decolonization" (91), a revisiting of conflicts and struggles resulting from the colonial past and postcolonial social reality. Likewise, most scholars agree that Taiwanese consciousness underwent a dramatic transformation in the 1980s and 90s when martial law was lifted. In Hsiau A-Ching's study of the development of Taiwanese cultural nationalism, research which concentrates on the

[10] Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang was one of the first scholars viewing mainlanders as refugees through the lens of trauma studies in *The Great Exodus from China: Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Modern Taiwan*.
[11] A 2019 survey found that over 95% of the population in Taiwan is Han Chinese, of which the majority includes descendants of early Han Chinese immigrants who arrived in Taiwan starting in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Alternatively, the ethnic groups of Taiwan may be roughly divided among the Hoklo from the coastal southern Fujian, China (70%), the Hakka from Guangdong and the surrounding area (14%), the Manlander who fled to Taiwan following the communist victory in Mainland China in 1949 (14%), and Indigenous peoples (2%). Taiwan's Chinese nationalism has distinct central doctrines based on different historical periods. For instance, it referred to the Republic of China as the authentic and orthodox China, in contrast to Communist China, both culturally and historically during the post-Chinese Civil War; and it has later developed a divergent political ideology that does not support the acknowledgement of Taiwan as a nation independent from ROC. Nevertheless, it is essentially different from PRC's Chinese nationalism or ethnonationalism that claims the ethnic Chinese people (*huaren*) as a nation and promotes the cultural and national unity of all Chinese people.

"role played by such humanist intellectuals as writers, artists, historians, [and] linguists" (14), the 1980s marked the separation of Taiwanese subjectivity from the hegemony of Chinese nationalism promoting the cultural and national unity of all Chinese people (24). It was also the time when the imagined unity of an authentic Chinese identity was contested.

Much of the scholarship on Taiwanese identities has invariably focused on the role in which Chinese nationalism, Taiwanese nationalism, and ethnonationalism play in changing and shaping people's personal identification in different historical periods. Wakabayashi Masahiro, Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, Wu Rwei-ren, among other renowned scholars, have provided detailed analyses of how identities are socially and politically constructed both before and after 1945 in the field of history, politics, sociology, and more. Critical theorists such as Chen Chao-Ying, Chao-yang Liao, Kuei-fen Chiu, Hsien-hao Sebastian Liao, and Fang-Ming Chen were involved in a series of literary debates in the 90s positioning Taiwan's identity politics and ethnic conflicts within a postcolonial framework.[12]

By and large, Taiwanese subjectivities, identities or notions of *Taiwanren* are, to make use of Stephen Corcuff's metaphor of lab work, constantly experimenting and being experimented with, or in my own words, are constantly in the process of *(un)becoming*. They are contestable and contested, and oftentimes generalized and simplified especially pertaining to the issues of mainlanders and islanders. Consider when residents of Taiwan

[12] Colonialism and postcolonialism are central to the discourse of identity formation in Taiwan. While the former is generally referred to as the influence of multiple colonizations Taiwan went through since the sixteenth century, there have been debates over Taiwan's postcoloniality pertaining to what is and how to contextualize postcolonialism in Taiwan. Postcolonialism was not officially introduced to academia and deployed as the scholarly framework of studying Taiwan's colonial experience until the 1990s. Many scholars point out the *belatedness* of Taiwan's postcolonial project which makes the end of this unfinished project yet-to-come. The issues of the belated postcolonial project led to a series of literary debates featuring multiple scholars and critical theorists over Taiwan's identity formation, nationalism and nativism in the journal *Chun-Wai Literary Monthly* in 1995. While I acknowledge the important influence of postcoloniality on Taiwan's identity formation and nation-building, I do not intend to engage the full postcolonial discourse on Taiwan due to the scope of my dissertation.

speak of islanders, they are usually referring to Hoklo and Hakka speakers; yet, the two are not identical groups with indistinguishable cultural practices, nor do they even share the same language. Although the two groups are put in the same category of islanders, the language of Taiwanese, *Taiwanhua* or *Taiyu*, refers exclusively to Hoklo. Though the diversity of Taiwanese identities is more accepted and welcomed in the twenty-first century, inter-ethnic conflicts are never completely resolved, especially since colonial and settler colonial legacies persist. As a result, Taiwanese identities continue to be simultaneously inclusive and exclusive.

For instance, Taiwan's Indigenous Austronesian peoples have also been relegated to a status that is neither islander nor mainlander despite that they are the *actual* native inhabitants of this island. The recognition of Indigeneity is oftentimes based on the premise of its efficacy. Taiwan's Japanese colonialism and Han-settler colonialism continue to marginalize Indigenous cultures and narratives while capitalizing on their *nativeness* to instrumentally generate a multiethnic and multicultural Taiwanese national consciousness that is distinct from its mainland Chinese counterparts. The discussions of Taiwan's native discourse are further elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

In addition to the historical exclusion of the Indigenous population from Taiwanese discourse, another challenge of studying Taiwan's identity formation is that, as mentioned earlier, Taiwanese identities have always been and are still *under construction* or (de)construction. Many of the theories in regard to identity formation in Taiwan referenced above were published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Though they are highly relevant and crucial to setting the foundation for this research, they are unable to fully capture the spatiotemporal panorama of Taiwan's history because collective identities

are the result of sociopolitical negotiations that are each tied to a unique time and space. For example, Christopher Hughes, while reflecting on his 1997 book *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism*, explains that his choice of theory was very much "a product of the immediate post-Cold War period" ("Revisiting Taiwan" 69). Melissa J. Brown also revisited her book *Is Taiwan Chinese?* in 2018, and suggested new approaches, such as transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, for studying Taiwan's identities, which were not as relevant when the book was originally published in 2004. She writes, "Taiwan's identities have moved in amazing directions during the twenty-first century—moving away from nationalism and toward a simultaneously locally rooted and globally reaching cosmopolitanism" ("Tigers on the Mountain" 112).

Indeed, immigration, migration, intermarriage and other forms of international exchange continue to shape the composition of Taiwan and the formation of Taiwanese identities in the twenty-first century. Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an overview or address every factor in forging the multiplicity of Taiwanese identities, I hope to offer some perspectives on the performative nature of Taiwan in the following chapters through my study of puppetry. Supported by historical evidence, this research is situated specifically and uniquely in the second decade of the twenty-first century in Taiwan as the majority of the puppet art pieces discussed in the following chapters were brought into being during this decade. Thus, the international and transnational dimensions of puppetry are salient in each case study.

Puppets, Taiwan, and *Becoming*

Nation, society, ethnicity and other broader ideological concepts can be felt, experienced and practiced through corporeality and kinesthetics. For instance, people may feel a nation's authoritative power through their interactions with police officers, which sometimes involve physical or even lethal interactions; and community members feel connected through larger religious ceremonies.[13] Both Ian Craib and Melissa J. Brown argue that the notion of identification arises from social practices and interactions (Craib 1998; Brown 2004). Paul Connerton also discussed how bodily practices could enact the past in *How Societies Remember* (72-104). Puppetry, as well as all distinct genres of performance, can illustrate their contribution to identity formation as a public presentation, a living experience, as well as a social and cultural practice. These characteristics are especially pertinent to the case of Taiwan and are closely connected to performance in religious events.

It is the goal of this dissertation to weave the discourses of Taiwan and puppetry in the hope that unprecedented patterns will emerge and further offer a new vision for mapping and navigating the two. One of the most critical approaches to this research is the idea of *becoming*. In this dissertation, *becoming* generally refers to a process of coming into a (different) being, state, and/or condition in diverse contexts. Helene Vosters uses becoming in her book about Canada's settler-colonial nationalism to "gesture toward the

[13] The idea is also similar to what Louis Althusser called "interpellation." Althusser gave an example of a police officer shouting out "Hey, you there!" in public. Upon hearing this exclamation, an individual turns around, and becomes a *subject* as one experiences the interpellation. Ideologies will then be produced and reproduced through state machines such as government, military, legal system, school, media and more.
Louis Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, pp. 142–7, 166–76. Translated by Ben Brewster. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

way nationalist performances work to become—or construct—the imagined Canadian nation" in such a way where national identity is essentially idealized (9). While this dissertation does not focus on Taiwanese nationalism, it nevertheless investigates how a sense of collective Taiwaneseness, an imagined cultural or national community, is generated through different forms of puppetry and embodied practices.

Scholars of Taiwan studies also adopt the term *becoming* to articulate the process of Taiwan's identity formation and transition. Leo Ching published *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* in 2001, and almost two decades later, Evan N. Dawley published his book *Becoming Taiwanese Ethnogenesis in a Colonial City, 1880s to 1950s.* Both books examine the formation and construction of identity in Taiwan with different approaches and in various historical periods. They draw attention to how the struggles, negotiations, collaborations, and interactions between Taiwanese people and the governing state result in a shift from a collective political horizon into a personal and inner narrative of *becoming* some new identities. The notion of *becoming* emphasizes the process of identity formation and transformation instead of focusing on identities as origins or final products. Moreover, for Ching and Dawley, *becoming* implies a response to colonialism, an anti-colonial act and a reflection of postcolonial Taiwan. The process additionally suggests a way of examining the gap, void, and discursive space of these various identities that have yet to be filled.

The life of a puppet is itself a process of *becoming*. Puppets do not imitate or attempt to live the life of humans; instead, puppets have the transformative power to potentially *be* and *become* anything. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari examine different modes of *becoming* in "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…." This

article opens with a discussion of *Willard*, a story in which the main character has "a becoming-animal not content to proceed by resemblance" (233). Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming-animal is neither a dream nor fantasy but perfectly *real*—and so is a puppet's life. Matthew Cohen describes a puppet as "by nature silent, and can be magically destroyed and magically re-constructed in performance" (126). Puppets, Cohen goes on to say, are "made to be destroyed in performance and return magically to life" (127). Puppets are often perceived as artifacts and thus *unreal*. Yet, if theatre is made of representations of reality and hence illusional, then puppets are in fact more *real* than other theatrical representations because they always stay the same and their life does not depend on theatrical illusions. Actors play characters; puppets *become* and *are* the characters. Like identity, their life is transformative but inherently real. Also, a puppet's ability to resurrect itself and become *alive again* is often considered magical and powerful, and thus gives people hope.

The life of a puppet is fluid stemming from the notion of *becoming*, and so is the conceptualization of what it means to be *Taiwanese*. Melissa J. Brown makes several bold theoretical claims in the book *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, which analyzes Taiwanese identity and the future between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. Brown's book starts with a definition of identity:

> identity is based on social experience, not cultural ideas or ancestry; cultural meanings and social power constitute two distinct, though interacting, systems that affect human behavior and societies differently; demographic forces such as migration affect human behaviors in yet another way; and human cognition—both

> cognitive structure and decision-making processes—mediate the influences of culture, power, and demographic condition (xi).

What is crucial to the study of Taiwanese identity and subjectivity is not the fact that the notion of "Taiwan" has been in flux, but rather a recognition of the kinetic movements that shape and reshape people's knowledge and perception of how "Taiwan" is, both conceptually and realistically, negotiated and *narrated,* to allude to Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*. Berger, Eriksonas and Mycock also argue that the nation is an ever-changing narration composed of *stories* intersecting or competing with each other. Identity is a negotiation between "a matter of locale" (a place where people live), "network" (the ways in which people interact), and "memory" (the thoughts and understandings which are sustained and recreated over time), as P.W. Preston argues (167). It is the interrelations and interactions between the three elements that make the notion of identity an active process. The notion of identity as the reconfigurations and interactions between various factors means that identity-making is an active and kinetic process. According to Richard Jenkins, identity is not "just there," but "must always be established" (4). People make their own identities, and are simultaneously made by their identities. This process is never complete, which explains what both Ching and Dawley attempt to interrogate in their books—not the question of *what Taiwanese is*, but what makes people become Taiwanese. This process of *becoming* is not only *real*, but also transformative and most importantly, performative.

In addition, the process of identity formation and a puppet's *becoming* intersect with a conceptual understanding of the experience and material presence. Identity is tightly bound to the body and (re)presentation of the body; furthermore, people bear memories and experiences on their bodies. For instance, gender is a social role ideologically grounded

in the physical body, and race can also be understood as "a mode of placing cultural meaning on the body" (R. G. Lee 2). The body can be regarded as a theorization of identity that is corporeal, individual, as well as social. Likewise, despite the fact that puppets have the ability to *become* the things that live in our memories or imaginations and bring what is substantially absent to the present, no matter how powerful the transformation is, a puppet remains grounded in its bodily and material tangibility. When performing or practicing with a puppet, a puppet's ability to *be* or *become* something is determined by its physical, material, and temporal boundaries, along with the performer's energy and physical engagement with the process. The performer feels the dimension, the weight and the gravity of the puppet, and experiences the limit of one's capability to move or interact with the puppet. To further complicate a puppet's *becoming*, the audience's introjection and projection of oneself onto the puppet's body also influence the perception and understanding of the story presented on stage.

Mutual interactions take place in the process of *becoming*—when concepts collide with materiality, past blends with present, absence encounters presence, and reality interweaves with dreams and imaginations. It is in this contact zone, using Mary Louise Pratt's term, that different elements "meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (34); moreover, "[b]odies may become orientated in this responsiveness to the world around them, given this capacity to be affected" (Ahmed 9). A borderland is also a contested space defined and surrounded by borders. Gloria Anzaldúa performatively writes about the experience of being by borders and inhabiting borderlands both geographically and conceptually: " [b]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A

borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (3). A borderland is where border-crossings have already happened, and a place where identities and subjectivities clash. It is also very much a *third space*, a space that is "interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative" (*Location* 2) in engendering new possibilities, to use Homi Bhabha's term. It is a location in-between cultures, a site of encounter, or a contact zone, which enables representation, negotiation, and hybridity. Josette Feral further argues that borderland is "not a hybrid space but a space of hybridity" (61). A puppet's *becoming* resembles the experience of borderlands and the action of border crossing as they are constantly in a state of transitioning into different beings through negotiations with space, human audiences, and puppeteers. Sometimes puppets are stuck in-between transformations, leaving them not fully dead yet not fully alive, as if they fail to cross the borders between the real and the theatrical.

A puppet's life, along with its material boundedness, also makes it a "portable borderland," to borrow Ila Nicole Sheren's term. A puppet is a portable borderland because it is, first of all, portable; secondly, a site in which people who have performed with it insert different cultures or engrave memories on it; and thirdly, something with the capacity to shelter and sometimes *smuggle* knowledge. Puppets offer a space for negotiation between the performers and the audience, who project their thoughts and imagination onto the puppet's body, waiting for what is in their minds to be embodied and actualized on stage. Likewise, Taiwan is a borderland, bordered physically by the ocean, but more importantly, bordered politically and historically by multiple external forces that launch Taiwanese

cultures and identities into a kinetic process of perpetual making, remaking, and sometimes unmaking. These processes lead me to the idea of *unbecoming*.

From *Becoming* to *Unbecoming*

Daphne P. Lei explains in her book that "[t]he border is enacted with power and significance only if an attempt to cross is made [. . .] very often it is not the action, but rather the non-action of border crossing, the *uncrossing*, that can truly apotheosize the borders and preach what they stand for" (6). The notions of border crossing and uncrossing parallel my use of the terms *becoming* and *unbecoming*. If *becoming* is a forward-facing act of transformation and hybridization through actively crossing the borders, then *unbecoming*, though not necessarily a non-action like uncrossing, is a gesture toward dismantling, questioning or even undoing previous conditions and preconceptions in an attempt to uncover and construct alternative narratives fundamentally. The concept of unbecoming also resonates with Carl Lavery's reconfiguration of theatre and ecology, in which he deciphers the undoing of theatre as "a coming to terms with weakness and inadequacy" (233), and an embracement of such fragility.

Some queer and disability studies scholars take inspiration from unbecoming human and becoming objecthood as a refusal to conform to social theoretical norms that are premised on the degradation of objecthood. As Jack Halberstam declares, "[t]he anti-social dictates an unbecoming, a cleaving to that which seems to shame or annihilate; and a radical passivity allows for the inhabiting of femininity with a difference" (151). Eunjung Kim sheds light on the idea of unbecoming and interrogates the ways in which the human-object distinction is made on the grounds of ability; she also cites Simone de

Beauvoir's idea of how women exercise power by being objects, which de Beauvoir calls "the comedy of being passive"(684). Kim explores moments of "unbecoming human as a form of power and the reorganization of power relations" (301), all of which challenge the value of normality. Likewise, a puppet's uncanniness, as a kind of anti-normality, and its ability to (un)become human pose a challenge to the stability and authority of History, a challenge which manifests the power of objecthood. The blurred space between human and nonhuman, which puppets occupy, reorient the power relations between objects, materiality, and beings.

Similarly, conceptualizing Taiwan as blurred or liminal space opens up an opportunity for releasing Taiwan from its bounded historical narratives and connotative marginality. Li Yu-lin proposes the idea of using *frontier* as a keyword in Taiwan studies. Conceptually, the notion of frontier shares a similar undertone with the above-discussed borderlands. Li begins with an explanation of how Taiwan has been geographically marginalized and yet, since the Age of Discovery, has occupied a desirable strategic location for business people and settlers. Facing the Pacific Ocean with the Asian continent at its back, Taiwan has been a crucial transpacific connecting point; at the same time, Taiwan has been overlooked due to its liminal position on the edge of both continent and ocean. The most commonly used term for China, *zhongguo* 中國, literally means "central state." According to Daphne P. Lei, this centrality is often defined through contrast with the neighboring barbaric Other (*Uncrossing* 13). Chinese historical discourse embraces Sinocentrism and imposes a negative valuation on Taiwan as a peripheral borderland at the edge of the Pacific and outside of the mainland, which accentuates Taiwan's marginality and even challenges its legitimacy.

Yet, Li Yu-lin argues that the notion of frontier refers not only to marginality but also to a "forward" sense of "front-ness," which implies a space without clear boundaries and beyond regulation, what Li calls "primal chaos" (146). A frontier is outside of any defined space, just like borderlands. It is neither here nor there, and yet it is interdependently defined by its neighbors. This unique liminal space that puppets occupy, is embedded with the potential for resistance and creation and points toward a not-yet-embodied future. The liminality of Taiwan as a frontier goes in line with my previous theorization of puppets as portable borderlands. Both are grounded in a certain material limitation but hold the potential to challenge preexisting discourses and narratives by occupying critical space. Last but most importantly, embracing the frontier suggests a refusal of the center, a move resonating with Lei's notion of uncrossing and my use of the term *unbecoming*. It denotes the ways in which preconceptions can be dismantled and alternative narratives can be constructed.

Puppetry as a World-making Praxis

As abovementioned, in *Keywords of Taiwan Theory*, Li Yu-lin uses *frontier* to discuss the intersection between "theory" and "Taiwan" and how one might study Taiwan epistemologically (146-55). In addition to Li's use of *frontier* to propose an alternative approach to Taiwan's geopolitical status, the *Keywords* book itself as a whole proposes that we might consider the action of "keywording" as a mode of "key-worlding." Put differently, "key-worlding" denotes a process in which theorizing Taiwan engages in a broader world of knowledge. In the same spirit, in this dissertation, I conceive of puppets as keywords and the practice of puppetry as worlding or world-making. This conceptualization allows me to

unlock the worlds that puppets represent. In popular belief, a puppet's origin is often associated with animism and religious practices; however, modernist scholarship often narrates puppets through the ontological status of a mere tool that is controlled by and expresses human intention, an interpretive move which reinforces the human-puppet dichotomy and power hierarchy.

In order to depart from this human-centered narrative of puppetry, scholars such as Paul Piris and Stephen Kaplin attempt to redefine the human-puppet relationship through new epistemologies and ontologies of puppetry. For example, Piris theorizes the co-presence of humans and puppets on the stage; Kaplin proposes a new kind of puppetry classification system which focuses on the puppet/performer dynamic. The two quantifiable aspects of Kaplin's system are first, the distance between the performer and the object being manipulated and second, the ratio of the number of performers in comparison with the number of objects (32). Kaplin uses the X-axis for the latter and the Y-axis for the former to plot the various permutations of the object/performer relationship. This system allows a redefinition of the relationship between humans and puppets that departs from the traditional dichotomy of subjecthood and objecthood.

Worlding provides a lens through which the process of human-nonhuman enmeshment can be considered and the role of nonhuman agency can be made legible. It is important to note that this research is not necessarily against anthropocentrism; instead, it aims to disclose the inherent relationality of the world, locating human subjects in a broader landscape or assemblage of networks, systems, and flows along with other objects, puppets, and existents. The idea of (key)worlding enables us to use puppets as a key to expanding apprehensions surrounding Taiwan. This opening up provides a different lens

that allows us to revisit puppetry and Taiwan not only from within, defining what they are, but from what is around and beyond.

Chapters Overview

This dissertation looks at the intimate and intricate cultural, historical, and political relationships between puppetry and Taiwan. The research draws inspiration from Nancy Guy's comment on the lack of scholarly attention paid to Taiwan's music. Guy writes: "Music is a vital player in various aspects of life in Taiwan. Nevertheless, Taiwan studies scholars from other disciplines have been slow to take notice of this body of scholarship" (*Resounding Taiwan* 1). Similarly, puppetry has also played a critical role in Taiwanese cultural life; however, related scholarship, especially Anglophone scholarship, is relatively scarce. The most recently published English-language books on puppetry in Taiwan are Kaori Fushiki and Robin Ruizendaal's co-edited volume, *Potehi: Glove Puppet Theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan* (2016), and Teri Silvio's monograph, *Puppets, Gods, and Brands: Theorizing the Age of Animation from Taiwan* (2019). The former traces the development of glove puppetry in China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore from the eighteenth century on through archival and ethnographic research, while the latter uses animation as its framework to investigate the relationships and interactions between people, cartoonized characters, objects and concepts in contemporary Taiwan. In addition to the monograph, Teri Silvio has also written extensively on puppetry in globalized contexts through the lens of animation and remediation.

While many recent publications offer critical analyses of puppetry from a global and transnational perspective, most focus mainly on *budaixi* 布袋戲, the most popular glove

puppet tradition in Taiwan. This dissertation goes beyond *budaixi* by including analyses of diverse forms and genres of puppet performance in both traditional and contemporary practices. In this introduction, I have provided an overview of the theoretical issues that are foundational to this project, explored how puppetry engages with the discourse of Taiwan, and defined the key terms and central ideas that underpin this dissertation. As for historical scope, Chapter 1 traces the ongoing journey of *budaixi* from the eighteenth century to the present as it parallels Taiwan's historical progression and sociopolitical development. As a local cultural practice and form of art, *budaixi* always reflects and promptly responds to the surrounding environment, functioning both as an archive and a repertoire that documents people's lives and experiences. This chapter also examines how *budaixi* was made into a national cultural symbol and focuses specifically on how *budaixi* contributes to Taiwanese nation-building in the twenty-first century.

Rooted in the discussions of the previous chapter, Chapter 2 focuses on puppets' potential to serve as a medium to address, redress, or reimagine the national trauma of the White Terror of the twentieth century. I focus specifically on two contemporary case studies from two distinct mediums—two puppet shows by Flip Flops Theatre and the videogame *Detention*—that were specifically made for younger generations who have inherited the national trauma of the White Terror but did not personally live through this period. Chapter 2 argues against the problem of trauma representation and instead, drawing from Rebecca Schneider's performative reenactment, proposes that puppets reenact the past rather than merely represent it. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how the two cases examined relate to the notion of postmemory and offer a way to navigate history in the present.

While the first two chapters solely pertain to the Han Chinese or Han Taiwanese experience of puppetry, Chapter 3 turns to a discussion of puppetry and Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, the original inhabitants of the island. I study how puppets, specifically giant puppets and shadow puppets, are adopted to convey and embody Indigenous mythologies and knowledges that have been orally passed down for centuries. Parallels between Indigenous peoples' animistic beliefs and my exploration of puppetry through animism are also drawn in Chapter 3.

In the conclusion, I first provide a reflexive discussion of my own personal journey and engagement with puppetry, which is central to this research. I then recapitulate the theoretical arguments and case studies presented in this dissertation. Furthermore, I explore some important theoretical approaches that were not adequately addressed in this dissertation. It is my goal to expand the ideas and arguments made in this dissertation, and potentially engage them with further discussions within the larger network of puppet and object performance in the future. In closing, I propose additional research topics that build off of this research.

This dissertation intends to offer a scholarly and personal approach to various aspects of Taiwan, and yet, it is far from a complete overview of Taiwan or Taiwan's histories, politics, cultures, and arts. Similarly, this dissertation is by no means a comprehensive representation or survey of puppet arts in Taiwan. Though essentially interdisciplinary, it is largely situated within theatre and performance studies. The notion of *performativity* lies at the center of every discussion, reverberating and resonating throughout the dissertation. Drawing from Diana Taylor and Elin Diamond's arguments that performance should be conceived of in the broadest sense of what performance does or has

done instead of what it is (*Performance* 6; Diamond 5), I have attempted to foreground what puppetry and/or Taiwan does and can do, as well as how puppets serve as vital agents for transmitting knowledge and memories. In this dissertation, puppetry simultaneously takes on the roles of ontology, methodology, theory, and praxis. Through the means of puppetry, I hope to tell *meaningful* stories about Taiwan.

Julie Taymor said, "[t]he meaning [of a puppet show] comes in the telling, not the story itself" (qtd. in Schechner "An Interview" 41), which echoes Eric Bass's theatrical approach discussed earlier. The puppets do their own thinking and further invite us to navigate life and death, as well as our relationships with the environment and other beings, through their material bodies. This observation is core to what I mean by the *ontology* of puppets, which I consider as imagining and enacting relationships with (multiple) worlds in such a way that discloses the constitutive relationality between oneself, other beings, and the worlds in which we exist. In this sense, the ontology of puppets is centrally concerned with the "stories" we tell ourselves about what exists and how these things exist in relationship to each other (Blaser 877). What, then, do puppets tell us about Taiwan and its journey?

This introductory discussion leads us to the first chapter, which delves into the stories that *budaixi* tells. The commonalities shared by puppetry and Taiwanese consciousness inspire me to explore their intersections, which are manifested through *budaixi*. What caught my attention is not only the historical trajectory of *budaixi* in Taiwan and its role as a symbol of distinctive Taiwanese identity, but why and how *budaixi* contributes to the (re)shaping of Taiwanese consciousness and further becomes essentially *Taiwanese*. On the one hand, I am intrigued by the ability of *budaixi* to *live* in the present

and among the people of Taiwan by engaging with people's religious practices and community life; on the other hand, I am also intrigued by the ability of *budaixi* to further demonstrate the zeitgeist of different historical and sociopolitical moments and becomes a performance of identity. There is an uncanny similarity between Taiwan and puppetry in the sense that Taiwanese subjectivity and identity seem to depend upon the "manipulation" of a powerful *puppeteer* throughout history—be it China, Japan, the U.S., or others. As strong external forces—the *puppeteers*—continue to shape the borderland of Taiwan, locating Taiwanese subjectivity within such a power-grabbing intercultural mess is a herculean but necessary task. Nevertheless, a puppet's immortality depends on its malleability and transformability. If Taiwan, a puppet, stays agile in constantly adapting its subjectivity and identity according to the *puppeteers'* manipulation while sustaining its spirit, the island lives on, just like puppets.

CHAPTER 1

(Re)making of Taiwanese Subjectivity through *Budaixi* Puppetry

Worn like a glove and fitted to hand, a *budaixi* puppet (glove puppet) always draws people's attention through its exquisite designs and vivid movements, which are accompanied by uplifting music, compelling narration, and dazzling stage effects. Though small, mostly from 11 to 27 inches tall, the puppet appears on the stage as if it is a *real* human being; yet, it does more than a real human being—it flies, it tumbles, it does acrobatics and martial arts fights, and can do basically everything that is beyond imagination. Accompanied by brilliant narration, intriguing story plots, and live music, *budaixi* stands out whether it is performed outdoors in front of a temple or inside the national theatre. In 2006, the Government Information Office of Taiwan held a national opinion poll to have the public decide on an icon that could best represent Taiwan. *Budaixi*, surprisingly, surpassed the highest mountain on the island, Mount Jade (*Yu Shan*), and the tallest building in the world at the time, Taipei 101, and was chosen as the nation's symbol.[14]

Ever since Austronesian islanders first came to settle eight thousand years ago, Taiwan has been an island with a long history of immigration and colonization. For the past four hundred years, Taiwan has been settled, colonized, and governed by external forces starting with Portuguese sailors passing by and Spanish and Dutch occupying parts of the island in the sixteenth century, followed by early waves of Han Chinese migrants from Southeast China from the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, then Japanese colonization (1895-1945), and finally, the settlement of the Republic of China in 1945 and subsequent great exodus from China at the end of the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950). The

[14] Epoch Times, February 17, 2006.

multiple waves of immigration and colonization resulted in the fact that Taiwan's national identity is constantly under construction.

This chapter asks: why, at this particular moment in the history of Taiwan, does the seemingly lowly folk culture practice of *budaixi* surpass Mount Jade and Taipei 101, the natural wonder and architectural miracle, to become the nation's chosen symbol? I argue that *budaixi*, as a cultural symbol, has the potential to reflect and embody Taiwanese consciousness, which Jason Guo defines as "an awareness of the unique character of the way of life in Taiwan and self-confidence on the part of the artists in the possibility of creating an art that embodies that way of life" (38).[15] This chapter examines the intersections between Taiwanese consciousness and historical memories through puppet performance and explores the potentiality of *budaixi* to historicize, materialize, and further reenact the historical bygone memories of Taiwan. The survival of *budaixi* can be argued as a microcosm of the Taiwanese people's survival under different colonial rules in this chapter.

I contend that *budaixi* provides a narrating medium that articulates a national Taiwanese subjectivity. In *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha provides an analysis of how different narrations frame nationhood and stresses that national identity is always hybrid, unstable, and ambivalent as it is constantly negotiated between the private experience and the public sphere. In the same spirit, Berger, Eriksonas and Mycock perceive the nation as an ever-changing narration composed of stories that intersect or compete with each other in *Narrating the Nation*.

[15] I interrogate the notion of Taiwanese consciousness in the introduction of this dissertation.

This research is, to some extent, a response to what Chao-yang Liao calls the "subject as void," referring to the lacuna of discourse around the deconstruction/reconstruction of subjectivity.[16] The void does not necessarily refer to absence or emptiness, but can be understood spatially; to borrow Michel de Certeau's conceptualization, the void is a space "composed of intersections of mobile elements" that await their actualization through practice (117). The space, or void, is then defined not by its inherent function, but by the activities and interactions that occur within and around it. Though definable, the space or void is never determined. It is by no means the intention of this chapter to *fill the void*, but rather to suggest potential engagements within and surrounding the void. I argue that *budaixi*, as a cultural heritage, religious effigy, folk art, and form of popular entertainment makes a substantial contribution to the (re)making of Taiwanese subjectivity. Brought in by early Chinese settlers and businessmen from mainland China in the eighteenth century, *budaixi*, like people in Taiwan, has experienced multiple historical transitions and has managed to circumvent obstacles such as political censorship and surveillance. *Budaixi* has since been localized, hybridized, and modernized. On the one hand, *budaixi* has indeed become decidedly *Taiwanese* through its societal interactions; at the same time, it has also helped to (re)shape what Taiwan is and what it means to be Taiwanese. This chapter interrogates *budaixi* as a means for and beyond the consolidation of an imagined national identity vis a vis the project of nation-building.

[16] "Subject as void" was proposed by Chao-yang Liao as a response to and criticism against Chen Chao-Ying's argument in regard to the limitation of defining Taiwan's subjectivity solely as anti-China in the journal Chungwai Literary Monthly (now known as Chungwai Literary Quarterly). The arguments and counter-arguments were then turned into a series of literary debates taking place in the journal, involving scholars such as Kuei-fen Chiu, Hsien-hao Sebastian Liao and more. Chiu pointed out the possible flaws of Liao's "subject as void" as it may fall into the postmodernist trap of neglecting the nuances of how identities are generated and eventually abandoning all identities. Despite the disparate thoughts, the centre of the debates lay in the belatedness of Taiwan's postcolonial project, which was briefly addressed in the footnotes in the Introduction.

Budaixi takes on three distinct roles in this chapter: as a cultural and religious folk practice, as a political and educational tool, and as an art form. In regard to this chapter's structure, I begin with the history of *budaixi* in Taiwan as a folk practice and form of popular entertainment. I then position *budaixi* on a national level through an analysis of how *budaixi* has been incorporated in projects of nation-branding, and how politicians use *budaixi* in political campaigns as a way to fashion themselves as *Taiwanese* and connect with their constituency. Finally, I turn to the transnational and international *budaixi* by examining the ways it functions as a performance of cultural diplomacy. In closing, the alternative performance of *budaixi* in Taiwan's contemporary theatre scene is discussed.

Literary Review, Terminology and Origin of *Budaixi*

Scholars such as Chiang Wu-Tsang, Chu Kun-liang, and Wu Ming-Te, among others, have written extensively on the culture and history of traditional performing arts in Taiwan from the seventeenth century till today, including *budaixi*. Their research is largely based on fieldwork observations and takes note of the contribution of *budaixi* to the discourse of Taiwanese consciousness and subjectivity across Japanese rule, the imposition of martial law, and the liberation and democratization of Taiwan. Chen Long-Ting also offers a critical study of the development of *budaixi* in relation to Taiwan's historical and political trajectory, arguing that *budaixi* is localized and evolves with Taiwanese society as a cultural heritage as well as a form of popular entertainment.

Chun-pai Hsieh's 1991 doctoral dissertation is the most comprehensive research on Taiwan's *budaixi* in English. This dissertation encompasses a historical overview of *budaixi*

in China, as well as the aesthetics and economics of *budaixi* theatre in Taiwan.[17] Chapter 4 of Hsieh's dissertation, "The Vicissitudes of the Taiwanese Hand-puppet Theatre in the Context of Taiwan's Socio-cultural History" offers valuable information for this chapter, which seeks to explore the changing configurations of the island's socio-cultural history from the nineteenth century to 1990.[18]

Sue-mei Wu has been contributing to the study of *budaixi* in English through writings and public lectures. Robin Ruizendaal has also published articles about *budaixi* in various languages. Both Wu's and Ruizendaal's works depart from the historical and ethnographic approach to studying *budaixi* and instead explore further connections between the development of *budaixi* and the resurgence of Taiwanese identity in the contemporary.

Meanwhile, the evolution of *budaixi* in Taiwan continues. An extensive amount of research focuses on Pili Puppetry's innovation of TV *budaixi* and its international reception. Teri Silvio's research on Pili Puppetry positions *budaixi* in a transnational space; she writes: "[b]udaixi presents a 'Taiwan-centered globalization'" that is "grounded in just such a history, constructed through specific forms of remediation" ("Remediation" 287). Stephanie Huffman, in her thesis, further demonstrates how *budaixi* can be utilized as a tool of cultural diplomacy due to its unique evolution, historical ties, and ability to attract audiences from multiple cultures, classes, and age groups. Ancillary to scholarly works,

[17] Chun-pai Hsieh's doctoral dissertation was the only work that focuses on *budaixi* among the myriads of scholarly articles she published. Though never published, it is the earliest scholarly work in the English language that focuses on Taiwan's *budaixi*.

[18] Though the main themes that both Hsieh's and my chapter touch upon largely coincide, the approaches and contextualizations are distinct, and reflect unique and nuanced sociopolitical atmospheres of the time when the dissertations were drafted. For instance, when delineating the evolution of *budaixi* between the 1950s and 70s, while Hsieh centers more on the influence of the U.S. aid (1951-1965) after the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Cold War, I draw attention to the impact caused by the implementation of martial law and state-sanctioned policies.

biographies, autobiographies, as well as biographical films and documentaries about puppetmasters in Taiwan such as Hou Hsiao-Hsien's film *The Puppetmaster* (1993) and Yang Li-Chou's documentary *Father* (2018), offer a peek into the careers and life experiences of puppetmasters from non-scholarly perspectives.

Puppetmaster Li Tien-lu (1910-1998) described in his autobiography the adaptability and flexibility of *budaixi*, which he argued, had been able to survive throughout different periods of surveillance and censorship by transforming its style and catering to the taste of the public and state officials. This adaptability and flexibility ultimately allow *budaixi* to persist and navigate the power triangulation of imperialist and colonialist Japan, nationalist China, and contemporary "Taiwan," resonating with my central argument of this chapter. The totality of scholarly research, biographical work, and artist productions surrounding *budaixi* serves as the foundation for my research on this topic.

Lastly, though not directly related to *budaixi* in Taiwan, the works of Kathy Foley, Matthew Cohen, and Jennifer Goodlander on how distinctive puppet traditions in Southeast Asian countries become representatives of their nations and articulate unique cultural identities are also thematically relevant to my work. Through reviewing this scholarly research, I have explored the intersections between *budaixi* and its journey to becoming a national icon by invoking discussions on a local, national, and transnational level.

Terminology: *Budaixi* or *Potehi*

The terminology employed to refer to Taiwanese glove puppetry shares a similar ambiguity and in-betweenness with the notion of Taiwanese consciousness and the puppet as a being. In *A Puppetry Handbook*, Anita Sinclair defines "hand puppet" as a type of

puppet that is controlled by the hand or hands, which occupy the interior of the puppet (15). Sinclair further specifies that glove puppets are a variation of hand puppets. The two terms are often used interchangeably depending on the context in English as well as in Mandarin. In Taiwan, glove puppetry (*budaixi* 布袋戲) and hand puppetry (*zhangzhongxi* 掌中戲) are used interchangeably to refer to the exact same form of traditional puppet performance: *budai* means cloth sack, *xi* means drama, and the name *budaixi* is derived from the costume of puppets and the cloth bag that carries them, while *zhangzhong* means "in the palm." Since the origin of Taiwanese glove puppetry can be traced back to Quanzhou, China, where Hokkien is the prominent language used by the people and in glove puppet performances, *potehi*, glove puppetry in Hokkien, is also extensively used when referring to Taiwanese glove puppetry. Unlike English and Mandarin, which have different terms for glove puppetry, *potehi* is the singular term consistently used in Hokkien. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the various terms for Taiwanese hand puppetry in Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, and Japanese in order to culturally and historically contextualize the development of puppet arts in Taiwan.

I intentionally stay away from the use of adjectives such as "traditional" or "Chinese" in this research for the following reasons: first, "traditional" is an invented concept, a fluid and relative term. As *budaixi* master Ko Shih-hung explains in a radio interview, "The traditional glove puppetry we have now might be an extremely innovative means for theatrical expression then." Indeed, much of glove puppetry nowadays has departed from so-called traditional performing styles and formalities. Second, the term "Chinese" is contentious since it covers an umbrella term for the Sinophone language, the people of China, and/or the residents of nations that are "inseparable because of the historical and

cultural ties in the past as well as the economic interdependence and political entanglement in the present" (Lei, *Uncrossing* 3). I have therefore chosen to use *budaixi* in this research instead of traditional Chinese glove puppetry, which is more commonly used in popular media and scholarly research in English, in hopes of providing a sense of continuation and contextualization of this unique form of puppet arts *in Taiwan*. Moreover, as Daphne Lei explains in *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization*, "China" as a concept could be treated as a "zero institution" that is bestowed meaning by peripheral "non-Chinese" nations (6). Avoiding the essentialization of *budaixi* as Chinese further allows a redefinition of both Taiwan and China.

A Universe in A Palm—*Budaixi* and Its Journey to Taiwan

Zhangzhong Qiankun is often used to describe the infinite potentialities of *budaixi*. The phrase roughly means that puppeteers create a magical universe through their hands, or more literally translated, that puppeteers hold a universe in their hands. It is difficult to track the origin of puppet performance in China. The most well-documented and elaborate puppet theatre performances date back to the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), but it is a common belief that puppets have been present on stages much earlier. In fact, the concept of puppetry appears in documents from the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 BCE-256 BCE). In Liezi's *The Questions of Tang* (*Tang Wen* 湯問), there is a passage about King Mu of Zhou's encounter with a person called Yenshi, who was handy with crafts. Yenshi created a doll that was able to sing and dance for the King. The King was amazed by the doll's human resemblance and even mistook the figure for a real human. Then, he got infuriated when seeing the figure flirting with his concubines and issued a command to execute Yenshi.

Yenshi quickly disassembled the dancing figure and showed the King what was inside — leather, wood pieces, glue, and paint. This passage is an allegory about how scientific advancement can make fake and artificial things so real that people might be deceived. Though the word for puppets, *ou*, does not exist anywhere in the story, we can say that similar concepts did exist as early as the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.

In addition to the allegory by Liezi, the concept of a puppet also appears in Chinese philosopher Mencius's "King Hui of Liang" ("Liang Hui Wang" 梁惠王) when he condemned *shizuoyongzhe* 始作俑者, literally translated as the first person who made *yong*, a wooden figure buried with the dead, as seen in the introduction of my dissertation.[19] The Confucian *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), compiled during the Han Dynasty (106 BC-220 AD), also addressed the idea of *yong*, and the editor, Zheng Xuan, footnoted *yong* as *ou ren* 偶人 (puppet-persons), a term that Patricia Berger translates as "body double" (46-63). Though the idea of puppets is associated more with funeral dolls and wooden figures than theatrical performances in these pieces, they all present the initial conceptions of puppets in early Chinese civilization.

According to puppet scholar Sun Kaidi, the roots of puppet theatre in China have been traced to the early Han dynasty (209-27). In *Book of Customs* (*Fengsu Tongyi* 風俗通義), an almanac about the Han era by Ying Shao, *kuilei* entertainment was said to often take place at funerals (Sun 20). *Kuilei* not only refers to performance with puppets, but also is used to indicate puppet entertainment in general. It was not until the Song dynasty that people started to use specific terms for different genres or forms of puppet theatre, including water puppets (*shui kuilei* 水傀儡), rod puppets (*zhangtou kuilei* 杖頭傀儡), and

[19] The term *shizuoyongzhe* is now commonly used to refer to the initiator of an evil practice.

string puppets (*xuansi kuilei* 懸絲傀儡), among others. However, glove puppets (*budaixi*) cannot be found in this Song dynasty lexicon.

Elaborate puppet theatre of various forms can be dated back to the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). Robin Ruizendaal argues that *budaixi* also emerged during a similar period as Liu Kezhuang (1187-1269), a poet from Putian (close to present-day Quanzhou, one of the origins of *budaixi*). Liu described a special kind of performance tradition that appears to be very similar to *budaixi* in his poems. The first two lines of the poem, "The First Day of 1259" (*Yiwei Yuanri* 已未元日), read:

> The opera costumes have long since been taken off
>
> There are also no cloth bags or rod baskets[20]

Ruizendaal interprets the "cloth bag" (*budai*) and "rod" (*zhangtou*) as glove and rod puppet theatres. Based on this interpretation, the poem indeed rhetorically delineates certain kinds of puppet shows. Yet, other than this poem, there is no formal documentation of glove puppet theatre until the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). As a result, it is more commonly believed that *budaixi* first appeared in the sixteenth or seventeenth century in Southeast China, especially in Fujian province, where the glove puppet theatre tradition had developed into a more sophisticated level than anywhere else in China (Chen *Taiwan budaixi* 183).

Despite migration from China to other parts of Asia always happening throughout history, during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), an unprecedented amount of migration from China to Southeast Asia and Taiwan occurred due to the invasion of foreign forces and subsequent Opium Wars. *Budaixi* was hence first brought to Taiwan by early Chinese

[20] 久向優場脫戲衫 亦無布袋杖頭擔 Translation is provided by Robin Ruizendaal in *Potehi: Glove Puppet Theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan*, pp. 8-9.

settlers and businesspeople, mainly from coastal regions.[21] At this time, the island now known as Taiwan was called the "land of diseases" (*zhanglizhidi* 瘴癘之地) due to the prevalence of tropical malarial parasites and other endemic agents. In response to the foreboding public health situation on the island, temples became important religious centers for early migrants to pray for health, safety, harvest, and prosperous business. *Budaixi* was oftentimes staged in front of these temples to show gratitude to the gods. As a gratis open-air performance, *budaixi* was also common entertainment for the migrants on the island, just as it was in Southeast China. Puppetmasters from China brought disciples to perform and teach *budaixi* to the local population; these teachings would later become the foundation of *budaixi* in Taiwan. During the mid to late Qing dynasty, *budaixi* remained a form of folk entertainment that was organized on a local level, and was favored solely by Han Chinese Hoklo immigrants from the Minnan region.

Since the late Qing period, *budaixi* has experienced tumultuous historical and political transitions, including the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, Japanese colonization (1895-1945), implementation and lifting of martial law (1949-1987), and the resumption of cross-strait exchange (1987), among other critical sociohistorical moments. The puppet shows have been widely popular in Taiwan ever since they debuted on the island, despite their popularity being exclusively within a specific community in the beginning. Later on, this form of performance has been further localized and simultaneously modernized, integrating and interacting with different communities and diverse cultures. In the following sections, I investigate the flexibility of *budaixi* and its ability to adapt itself to different audience's taste, societal change, and government policies. I then explore *budaixi*

[21] The First Opium War was fought in 1839-42 between the Qing dynasty and Great Britain; the Second Opium War was fought between the Qing dynasty, and Britain and France from 1856 to 1860.

as a carrier or reservoir of tradition that mirrors, responds to, and complements people's anxiety about being rootless and their hopes for a collective identity.

Making of a Taiwanese Local Culture: *Budaixi* as a Local Cultural Practice

Cultural anthropologist Julian Steward coined the term cultural ecology as a methodology for understanding how humans adapt to a wide variety of environments. In his *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*, Steward uses the term cultural ecology to refer to the ways in which cultural change is induced by adaptation to the environment. This idea draws attention to the fact that any particular human adaptation is in part historically inherited and involves specific practices and knowledge that allow them to survive in a given environment. Yet, the impact is not solely unidirectional, but mutual. In his foreword to Jacques Attali's 1985 book, Fredric Jameson gives a brief overview of theories of the relationship between cultural forms and social systems. He praises Attali for being the first to "have drawn the other possible logical consequence of the 'reciprocal interaction' model – namely, the possibility of a superstructure to anticipate historical developments, to foreshadow new social formations in a prophetic and annunciatory way" (Jameson xi). Cultural form is always shaped by the environment while constantly shaping it at the same time.

The origin of *budaixi* can indeed be understood through Steward's notion of cultural ecology and its mutual contact with the environment as theorized by Attali. *Budaixi* came to Taiwan from Southeast China, mainly the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou prefectures of Fujian Province more than two hundred years ago. The form of early performances followed original conventions similar to other Han cultural traditions from China. Despite the

prevalence of Han Chinese traditions, customs, and populations in Taiwanese society, the demographics and dominant culture of Taiwan have experienced huge changes as migrants and immigrants from other parts of the world have come to the island in the past century.

Since *budaixi* is intimately associated with religious ceremonies from specific regions, the form of *budaixi* can be examined as an index of changing lifestyles, family and community composition, industrial restructuring, as well as political transition. From the perspective of its origin, *budaixi* is indeed culturally *Chinese*, specifically Han Chinese; and yet, from Steward's cultural ecological perspective, *budaixi* also demonstrates its adaptability to the environment as it has been localized within a relatively short period of time. The cultures and traditions of Taiwan are heavily hybridized, making it difficult now to distinguish one from another.

Sue-mei Wu provides further explanations for *budaixi*'s openness to being adapted to changing lifestyles:

> Traditionally, hand puppet theater troupes were sponsored and organized by folk organizations. Troupes were invited to perform at temple festivals held in honor of local deities and at auspicious occasions such as weddings, births, and promotions. The main purpose of hand puppet theater performance was to thank and entertain local deities. However, due to the lack of entertainment options in Taiwan's traditional agricultural economy, hand puppet theater also served as a popular means of folk entertainment (101).

Budaixi was more commonly seen in early religious events as it was more portable and able to travel across regions compared to other forms of art. Especially during its early years,

budaixi was one of the very few entertainment options for local populations; and thus, a strong tie was built between the two.

Similar to many puppet theatre traditions around the world, *budaixi* is often regarded as a form of folk or popular culture rather than high art. In *A History of Taiwanese Glove Puppet Theatre*, Chen Long-Ting talks about the potentiality and flexibility of *budaixi* as a "*su*" (vulgar/popular) instead of "*ya*" (elegant/refined) culture (20). Early Chinese settlers traveling to Taiwan were mostly in pursuit of economic benefits. Since the journey was extremely perilous, people who risked their lives to cross the Strait were often from the lower class. Hence, the cultures and customs brought by them are considered more *su*; for instance, drinking, folk beliefs, and superstitions are in opposition to the refined culture of the literati and elite class, which includes poetry, painting, and literature. The practitioners of *budaixi* were believed to belong mostly to the lower classes of society, and the performance content was considered inadequate by scholars of imperial China.

Chen argues that it was the advocacy for *su* culture in the early migrant society that provided a space for the development and cultivation of a unique localized culture. *Budaixi* indeed can be regarded as the best example of unrefined yet popular *su* culture. *Budaixi* evolves with Taiwanese society, incorporating and adapting to other local cultural and religious practices. As mentioned earlier, the localization of *budaixi* marked the beginning of its transformation from an art form by and for a specific Hoklo immigrant population to an art form encompassing more communities in Taiwan. Moreover, unlike Peking opera and many other forms of traditional Chinese theatre which have more rigid formats and structures, *budaixi* is more flexible in terms of its theatrical representation, especially its stories, designs, music, and performance space set-up. The transformation and

metamorphosis of *budaixi* in different historical periods of Taiwan will be discussed later in this chapter.

Additionally, similar to popular puppet theatre in other countries and cultures, such as the Punch and Judy show and Vietnamese water puppetry, *budaixi* is also a kind of open-air street performance that interacts with people directly and is hence considered to be a societal mirror reflecting people's lives and interests. As Paul Dimaggio, influenced by Bourdieu's notion of the political economy of culture, asserts: cultures are consumed largely for "what they say about their consumers to themselves and to others" (38). *Budaixi* is indisputably created and performed by, for, and about the community.

The localization of *budaixi* during the Qing Dynasty indicates that artistic practices in China and in Taiwan started to take divergent routes, though this divergence was more due to regional cultural differences at the time. It was during the period of Japanese colonization that, in order to hold on to an identity distinct from the Japanese colonizers, *budaixi* essentially became part of the broader concept of *Taiwanese culture.* I argue that the Japanese colonial period was the first time that *budaixi* was elevated from a local folk practice to an art form that generated a sense of Taiwanese national identity.

From Chinese to Becoming Japanese: Pre-1945

The flexibility of *budaixi* can be exemplified by its musical styles and subject matters. Music is, like narrative, an essential part of *budaixi* performance. When *budaixi* first came to the island of Taiwan during the Qing dynasty, puppeteers mostly followed Chinese traditions and performed classical texts that were passed down for generations. The plays at this time were referred to as *luolongxi* 落籠戲 or *longdixi* 籠底戲. *Luolongxi* can further

be divided into three different types of performances: *baizi budaixi* 白字布袋戲, *chaodiao budaixi* 潮調布袋戲, and *nanguan budaixi* 南管布袋戲. *Baizi budaixi* used local dialects and colloquial language and therefore were popular among local communities. *Chaodiao budaixi* was influenced by the tone and melody of music from the Chaozhou Province of Guangdong. Many performances during this period were accompanied by music of the "south pipe" (*nanguan* 南管) variety, which was produced by a band of string instruments that accompanied the soft and elegant singing and movements of this style of performance. The stories of *nanguan budaixi* were mostly romantic love stories accompanied by literary dialogues and soft singing. Puppeteers of *nanguan budaixi* were usually more prestigious than other puppeteers, and the audience of such performances was primarily local literati. Some plays include *Tansan and Goniu* 陳三五娘 (*Chen San Wuniang*), *Zhu Maichen* 朱買臣, and more.

It is important to note here that most *budaixi* is accompanied by a live orchestra that matches the characters' emotions and movements, as well as the pace and mood of the play. The orchestra usually consists of at least four to five musicians, playing the instruments such as different types of drums, cymbals, Chinese double-reeded horns (*suona* 嗩吶*)*, and string instruments like the *huqin* 胡琴 and *erhu* 二胡. Another important feature of *budaixi* is the narration (*koubai* 口白). Though it is more flexible and varied nowadays, traditionally, the master puppeteer is the only puppeteer who has a "voice" and hence is in charge of all characters' lines regardless of gender and role types. The mastery of narration is an important puppeteering skill. There is a saying that a successful *budaixi* show relies "30 percent on the front stage and 70 percent on the backstage" (*sanfen qianchang, qifen houchang* 三分前場，七分後場), which draws attention to the importance of music and

narration. Interestingly, unlike many other forms of traditional Chinese theatre, *budaixi* initially did not involve any singing but just orchestra as accompaniment. It was not until the 1950s when *budaixi* began to be revitalized after the war that many troupes started to invite female singers to deliver songs representing the female characters to attract audiences (Chen "Popular Music" 45).

During the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth century, there were several huge bloody conflicts among various Chinese settler communities and civil uprisings against the Qing dynasty's governance of the island. The unsettling and tumultuous atmosphere of the society could be seen in *budaixi* performances at that time, not to mention the impact of the Opium Wars and Sino-Japanese Wars. Stories based on Chinese popular serial novels and historical fictions, which replaced romantic stories, gained popularity during this time. These tales, focusing on the depiction of the martial world, were characterized by fast-paced and frequent combat scenes, and even adopted a different style of music called the "north pipe" (*beiguan* 北管) variety. Many plays were adapted from Chinese historical or fictional novels, such as *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* (*Qixia Wuyi* 七俠五義), *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三國演義 *Sanguo Yanyi*) and *Investiture of the Gods* (封神演義 *Fengshen Yanyi*).

Replacing the string instruments of the *nanguan* style, the *beiguan* music style primarily makes use of percussion instruments that accentuate the fast-paced storytelling and frequent combat scenes. The stories also often involved depictions of chivalry. This style of puppet theatre became extremely popular even during the era of Japanese colonization (Liu 56-61 and Chen 55-64). Many popular master puppeteers became renowned for their *beiguan budaixi*, such as Li Tien-lu (1910-1998) and Huang Hai-tai

(1901-2007).[22] Their puppet troupes and disciples have been and are still influential in the development and innovation of *budaixi* in Taiwan.

In addition to the ability and potentiality of *budaixi* performance to reflect and respond to social reality, the adaptability and elasticity of *budaixi* culture also enable it to sustain itself even under political censorship and government surveillance. There is a legend, often understood as the origin of *budaixi*, about a literati who failed the imperial examination in the Ming Dynasty.[23] Feeling unsatisfied and unwilling, he started to tell allegorical stories taunting the political establishment; in order to circumvent the charge of treachery, the stories were told using glove puppets and through the mouths of puppets via ventriloquism. This legend, fictional or not, demonstrates the unique quality of *budaixi* to speak for others and get away from any accusation as it is just an object, a thing and not *real*. People often perceive *budaixi* as folk culture, religious practice, or entertainment that has little to no ability to address political issues that would provoke the masses and cause a threat to the regime. The preconception of *budaixi* as seemingly apolitical and neutral because of its non-humanness and object-ness is certainly what makes *budaixi* fun, multifarious, and transformative; and most importantly, this preconception is also what has

[22] Li Tien-lu was a Taiwanese puppeteer. Li founded the puppet troupe Iwanjan in 1932. After retirement in the 1970s, Li continued to teach puppetry. His disciples came from Japan, Korea, France, Australia, and the United States. Many of them established their own puppet troupes after returning to home countries, and the names of the troupes often adopted the same last two words (*wanjan*) to pay tribute to their puppetmaster. Li is best known to the international audience for playing characters in several Taiwanese films directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien.
Huang Hai-tai learned the art of puppetry from his father. He later renamed his father's troupe to Wuzhouyuan, and developed his own stories and characters. At the beginning of his career, Taiwan was under Japanese rule, and Huang was limited to public performances that used Japanese language and portrayed Japanese customs. However, Huang secretly held private shows that told traditional and historic Chinese tales. Huang's family is one of the most renowned *budaixi* families in Taiwan. Based mostly in Yunlin, Taiwan, many of Huang's offspring, including his second son Huang Chun-Hsiung, the key figure of TV *budaixi*, have established their own puppet troupes and career in puppetry with various styles and forms. Huang's fifth son, Huang Feng-Shih, was an elected legislator in 2004.
[23] A civil service exam system in Imperial China for selecting candidates for the state bureaucracy.

allowed *budaixi* to live and survive. On the other hand, *budaixi* can also be considered a *survivor's art*—it was brought by and performed for migrants who survived the tempestuous ocean crossing and landed on the island centuries ago. Its flexibility is a result of the need to survive.

In 1895, Japan took control of Taiwan from the Qing regime as a result of winning the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). During the early stages of Japanese colonization, local performance culture was not severely impacted despite the colonial government's promotion of *shingeki* 新劇 (in Japanese), or Western-style modern theatre born in twentieth-century Japan, and suppression of all kinds of traditional theatre such as *jingju*, or Peking opera. Japan did not begin curtailing *budaixi* performances until the advent of the Second World War when outdoor temple performances were banned. In the mid-1930s, as the political situation of the world became intense, theatre was restricted, and the subject matters and narratives of performance were strictly censored. According to the Taiwanese *budaixi* master Li Tien-lu's autobiography, theatre troupes were forced to join the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (In Japanese: *Kominhokokai* 皇民奉公会). The Association would not only review the content of the performance, but also designate permissible performance times and spaces. The colonial legacy of containing performance in highly censored enclosures, in fact, continued even after the end of Japanese rule. The restriction imposed by the colonial and post-colonial states resonates with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's reflection on the state's "fear of [...] uncontrolled space" (64), especially since open space among the people is considered "the most dangerous area because [it is] the most vital" (68). For both Taiwan's colonial and post-colonial states, by controlling performance space,

the ruling regimes regulated the entirety of public space as a potential site for daily performances and hence further enacted their power.

Nevertheless, censorship and restrictions since the mid-1930s did not halt the development of *budaixi*; instead, they provided an opportunity for the innovation of this folk entertainment with regard to the design, music, and narration style, which further contributed to a new phase of *budaixi* in Taiwan. Puppetry, specifically *budaixi,* was utilized as a tool for the Japanese colonial project during the years between 1941 and the Second Sino-Pacific War, as illustrated by Shih Wan-Shun and Qiu Yuxiang. It was also an epoch when *budaixi* started to be tactically elevated from other recreational activities among the local population to the status of national symbols. Meanwhile, *budaixi* was not the only tool used during Japan's imperialization. In *Colonial Project, National Game: A History of Baseball in Taiwan*, Andrew Morris writes how baseball, a symbol of Taiwanese popular culture imported by the Japanese as a pastime and tool for their colonial project, was made into a "national game" (2) and further represented the multiethnic nature of Taiwan.[24]

After the First World War, newly-formed Fascist unions began to develop organizations focusing on institutionalizing leisure entertainment in hopes that people could develop a strong and patriotic spirit and body through recreational activities. Italy founded Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (O.N.D.), the National Recreational Club, in 1925, and based on the idea of OND, Kraft durch Freude (KdF), Strength through Joy, was founded by Nazi Germany in 1934. In a similar vein, in 1941, *Kominka* 皇民化, the Japanization and imperialization movement in colonial Taiwan, reacted to the Pacific War and was re-positioned as a cultural, rather than political, movement. Partially inspired by KdF, the

[24] John J. Harney also elaborates on the idea of baseball being a Taiwanese national game in *Empire of Infields: Baseball in Taiwan and Cultural Identity, 1895-1968*.

Entertainment Committee of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association was later established in 1941 with three *hontojin* members, including Huang Deshi, who was critical to the survival as well as the development of *budaixi* in colonial Taiwan (Shih 66).

One of the goals of the Entertainment Committee was to seek a way to develop a "healthy and robust entertainment" that promoted the Japanese spirit of Kominka while advancing Taiwanese local culture (Qiu 46). Huang Deshi proposed *budaixi* as one of the most prominent Taiwanese folk arts and the most popular entertainment among the local population. He wrote extensively for newspapers and magazines about the usefulness of *budaixi* for the *Kominka* movement. Huang held three exhibition performances of puppetry in 1941 and 1942 in which he invited masters of string puppetry, shadow puppetry, and *budaixi* to present their mastery, skills, and aesthetics. He even published two articles about *budaixi* in *Konan News* and *Literary Taiwan* (*Bungeki Taiwan*) before the first performance, lobbying for the inclusion of *budaixi* as a legitimate form of wartime entertainment (Shih 69-72).[25]

The selection of plays to be included in the exhibition performances was also strategic. Most selected plays illustrated how *budaixi* could function as a bridge connecting colonial and local cultures. The plays featured in the second exhibition were *Village of Peace* 和平村, written by Huang himself, and *The Battles of Coxinga* 国姓爺合戦, an adaptation of

[25] Articles by Huang Deshi cited in Shih's article are listed below.
"History of Puppetry," *Taiwan Literature*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1943, pp. 38-41.
"Budaixi as An Entertainment," *Konan News*, September 30, 1941, pp. A4
"The Expressionless Expression--The Future of Puppetry on the Island," *The Taiwan Jiho*, vol. 28, no. 3, March 1945, pp. 36-9.
"History and Culture of Xinzhuang," *Minzoku Taiwan*, vol. 24, June 1943, pp. 44-6.
"Budaixi and Entertainment," *Bungeki Taiwan*, vol. 3, no. 1, October 1941, pp. 62-3.
"Kominka Play and Entertainment," *The Taiwan Jiho*, 253, January 1941, pp. 96-101.

Japanese *ningyo joruri* 人形浄瑠璃 by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725).[26] The latter especially demonstrated the intimate relationship between Taiwan and Japan as the story, loosely based on actual history, followed the adventures of Coxinga, or Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662), who was born to a Chinese pirate father and Japanese mother.[27] Coxinga defeated the Dutch outposts on Taiwan, and established the first large-scale and systematic Han Chinese settlement on the island. The legendary figure was not only the protagonist of Chikamatsu's play, but also a critical historical figure in Taiwanese history.

Almost five months later, the third exhibition was held with more pieces adapted from Japanese historical plays. Li Tien-lu also took part in one of the performances. This exhibition performance was especially well-received and hence marked the completion of the "reformation of *budaixi*" after five years of restrictions. *Budaixi* was eventually demonstrated as a good medium to promote the Japanese spirit while cultivating a healthy mentality for local people (Shih 69-75).

Huang listed four major transformations of *budaixi* during the *Kominka* Movement in one of his articles: 1) traditional live music was replaced by prerecorded Western pop music; 2) kimonos were used along with the original costumes for puppets; 3) the narrations were delivered in Japanese instead of Taiwanese Hokkien, and 4) props, scenes, and lighting designs were modernized (Qiu 51). The *Japanization* of *budaixi* on the one hand worked as an impetus to the modernization and development of the art form; on the other hand, it also tactically allowed *budaixi* to survive the de-Sinicization of Chinese and Taiwanese cultural forms in the *Kominka* period.

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[26] *Ningyo joruri*, also known as *bunraku* 文楽, is a traditional Japanese performance art using large puppets. It was founded in Osaka in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

[27] Coxinga is also commonly referred to as Prince of Yanping (*Yanping Junwang* 延平郡王) or Koxinga (*Guoxingye* 國姓爺 in Chinese).

Li Tien-lu recalled the mixed-use of Taiwanese and Japanese languages, dressing puppets in Japanese-style costumes, and performing combat scenes using Japanese sabers. Occasionally, the troupes would secretly put on shows of folk stories that were more appreciated by the local audience, but performers quickly switched to Japanese language and costumes if police appeared (95-97). Li mentioned in his autobiography,

> Xu Tienfu once asked me if I wanted to perform in Xiamen [a city in Fujian province, China]. I thought that even though freedom could not be found anywhere in Taiwan, Taiwan was my home. Despite that the imperial drama looked like neither fish nor fowl, in order to make a living and sustain myself, I could only follow the rules. Therefore, I did not go to Xiamen, and insisted on staying in Taiwan (97).[28]

Li's attitude certainly resonates with the essence of *budaixi* performance—it is not an elite art, not elevated nor noble, but *about* the lives of people and *for* the people. Moreover, the adaptability and flexibility of *budaixi* allow it to be challenged yet still survive through various scenarios.

Yet, the nature of *budaixi* was favored by the government not only for its objectness and seemingly apoliticalness, but also for educational or political purposes. Puppetry around the world has a long history of being used to promote and propagate political messages and ideologies. For instance, Petrushka, a stock character of Russian folk puppetry, was considered an ideal mouthpiece for the revolution and a symbol of revolutionary spirit in the early twentieth century. It was used by Agitprop Theatre, short for agitation propaganda theatre, during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922). In the 1930s, the Mexican government also used puppet theatre "as a didactic tool for the nascent

[28] Xu Tienfu was the founding master of Hsiaohsiyuan Puppet Theater.

socialist education project," with government officials believing that puppetry could serve as one of the most effective ways of "fomenting a sense of national identity" (Albarrán 357). According to Elena Jackson Albarrán, in order to maximize the number of daily performances of puppet shows promoting national values, Mexican puppet groups had to scale down the performances by using hand puppets instead of marionettes, which were more complicated, and simplifying stage design (358). During the *Kominka* Movement and later during the Second World War, *budaixi* puppets were often dressed in kimono or Japanese military uniforms rather than their original costumes. Many of the shows were an education in disguise, and in fact, were staged to arouse militarist patriotism. The innocent and harmless puppets, as well as the popularity of puppetry, have made it the best medium for didactic and propagandic purposes.

Postcolonial *Budaixi*: Post-1945

A similar situation happened again during the late 1940s when the Kuomintang-led (KMT) Nationalist government arrived in Taiwan in the last moments of the Chinese Civil War.[29] After the KMT's arrival, puppet theatre and religious festivals were controlled and closely scrutinized, but never subject to intense government regulations and bans. Because the content of plays was mostly based on historical legends, they were not considered risky or offensive to the KMT regime. Nevertheless, every show was required to begin with a 20-minute propagandic drama spreading anti-communist ideology since the late 1940s. In the 1950s, as a means to combat communism, the KMT government began a project titled

[29] Taiwan was "returned" to Republic of China, and made a province after Japan surrendered in 1945. The KMT officially moved their central government to Taiwan in 1947 and then completely relocated there after defeat by the Communists in mainland China in 1949.

"Anticommunist and Resisting Russian Cultural Promotion Train," which toured propaganda puppet shows across all of Taiwan. Interestingly, the idea of employing art and theatre, especially modern spoken drama, for propaganda purposes was partially influenced by the KMT's *enemy*, the Chinese Communist Party; in particular, CCP Chairman Mao Zhedong's advocacy for art as a tool of revolution was especially influential in his speeches at the 1942 Yan'an conference. In Mao's own words: "literature and art become a component part of the whole revolutionary machinery, so they can act as a powerful weapon in uniting and educating the people while attacking and annihilating the enemy, and help the people achieve solidarity in their struggle against the enemy" (58).[30]

Recognizing the popularity of *budaixi* among the public, the KMT government in Taiwan often featured *budaixi* in promotional events to attract audiences. Li Tien-lu's troupe also performed for these events. Li wrote that the audience had actually been so used to this kind of performance that they hardly even noticed the differences between the prior Japanese and current anti-communist propaganda. "As long as there were shows on, that's fine," said Li (147). Despite restrictions, being heralded as a political mouthpiece indeed offered a way to sustain art, tradition, and livelihood throughout Taiwan's authoritarian period. As Li-Wen Wang explains, "[w]ithout the propaganda theatre, the livelihood of many artists and writers was otherwise not sustained during the tumultuous time," and "the frequent performances of anti-communist plays provided the public with opportunities of legal gatherings" (75). As a commonly seen form of outdoor performance,

[30] *Budaixi* was, in fact, also strongly supported by the Communist government in mid-twentieth century. However, it was never used as a means for propaganda, and most troupes were disbanded during the Cultural Revolution.

budaixi, in a sense, owed its survival during this difficult period to government support for propaganda shows.

Figure 1.1 From left to right: Li Chuan-Tsan (1945-2006), Chung Jen-pi (1932-2021), and Li Tien-lu (1910-1998). Photo taken by anonymous. Credit: National Center for Traditional Arts.

Budaixi was traditionally a gratis outdoor performance dedicated to honoring the gods. Yet, due to censorship during the final stages of Japanese colonization and after political tensions intensified between mainlanders and islanders in 1947 causing the prohibition of public assemblies, many *budaixi* shows were moved to designated indoor theatre spaces and incorporated ticketing. When *budaixi* first began to go indoors, audiences were unwilling to purchase tickets for shows; in response and especially since the 1950s, puppetmasters worked hard to innovate styles and forms of *budaixi* to lure audiences back. Additionally, the popularity of *budaixi* began to expand to non-Hoklo communities during this period, regardless of islander or mainlander status.[31]

[31] As aforementioned, since *budaixi* is traditionally performed in Hokkien, the majority of audience members were Hoklo people in its early development.

The second half of the 1960s and the entire decade of the 70s are commonly referred to as the "Taiwan Miracle" during which Taiwan made great leaps in rapid industrialization and economic growth. The government's economic reforms fundamentally reshaped the island's relations with other nations. As Chun-pai Hsieh explains: "[p]rivate and foreign investments were encouraged, and state control on trade was significantly reduced. Changes in global conditions happened to provide a perfect context for Taiwan's economic metamorphosis" (177). This economic boom indirectly eased mainlander-islander tensions, especially because more islander business elites emerged and became allies with mainlander officials to uphold the system. Moreover, rapid economic growth further influenced the public's cultural tastes and consumption of arts.

During the 1950s, the golden ray style of *budaixi*—which featured martial arts stories, gorgeous scene designs, sparkling costumes, and neon backdrops—flourished.[32] Derived from the chivalric style of *beiguan budaixi*, the immense popularity of golden ray *budaixi* (*jinguang budaixi* 金光布袋戲) was also partially influenced by the use of Western popular music during the Kominka Movement, as well as American cultural exports that accompanied U.S. economic aid (1951-1965) and military protection throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Culturally, Westernization (or, in the context of Taiwan, Americanization) and modernization were the most prominent cultural forces at the time, and as a result, many puppetmasters experimented with modernizing their theatrical tradition with special effects and other stage mechanisms. In terms of the design of puppets, golden ray style *budaixi* puppets are usually slightly larger than traditional *budaixi* puppets and have bigger heads with exaggerated hairstyles and makeup. Their costumes are also less conventional,

[32] Golden ray style puppetry is a direct English translation for *jinguang budaixi*.

often extensively featuring vivid neon colors. Black lights, fireworks, laser beams, and other elements from foreign movies, music, and cartoons are also incorporated into shows. Since golden ray style *budaixi* is influenced by martial arts stories, most plays involve characters with heroic characteristics and supernatural power. Musical accompaniment features less classical instruments and more rhythmic Western pop music. The carnivalesque aesthetics of golden ray style *budaixi* manifests the liveliness of *budaixi* and its innovation.

In the meantime, Taiwan's first public television station was officially established in 1962. TV changed different aspects of everyday life, especially the ways in which people spent their leisure time and enjoyed entertainment as watching television soon became a common leisure activity. In the early 1960s, in response to the emergence of TV stations and programs, TV *budaixi* marked another advancement for puppetry in Taiwan. *Budaixi* had always been a popular form of leisure entertainment for people in the countryside, but the invention of TV *budaixi* made the popularity of this local entertainment extend nationwide. To accommodate the public's taste and aesthetics, TV *budaixi* puppets are even larger than the golden ray style (around 30-35 inches) and have body proportions similar to that of actual humans, as well as exquisite makeup, hair, and costumes. As the size of puppets grew beyond the grasp of a human hand, puppeteers of TV *budaixi* have to control the puppets using both their arms: the puppeteer's right arm can move the puppet's head and right arm, while their left arm holds onto a rod that controls the left side of the puppet's body. This increase in moveable parts also allows puppets to have smoother movements. With the help of camera angle design and later post-production editing after technological advancement, TV *budaixi* not only has the flexibility and potential to do what human TV shows can do, but also much more.

The Scholar Swordsman (*Yunzhou Daruxia* 雲州大儒俠), first released in 1970, heralded the golden age of TV *budaixi*. Produced and performed by Huang Chun-Hsiung (1933-), son of puppetmaster Huang Hai-tai, *The Scholar Swordsman* was famous for its use of modern music (such as in golden ray style *budaixi*), classic and elegant narration, intriguing story, eye-catching stage effects, and the charming characters of Shi Yanwen 史豔文 and "The Man Behind the Mirror" (Cangjingren 藏鏡人).[33] Moreover, the popularity of *The Scholar Swordsman* provided a way for, on the one hand, mainlanders to be introduced to islander culture, and on the other, for islanders to better understand the KMT government's political ideology due to storylines emphasizing Chinese nationalist heroism. There is a character in *The Scholar Swordsman* named "China Strong" (Zhongguoqiang 中國強). Whenever the protagonist Su Yanwen fell into difficulties, Zhongguoqiang would come to rescue him, along with a patriotic song set as the background music.

What is to be noted here is, unlike American or Japanese TV shows, most TV shows in Taiwan have subtitles, including all *budaixi* series. Subtitles not only served as a tool for improving literacy and teaching Mandarin, an unfamiliar language for many Taiwanese, but also for making arts in other languages available to diverse audiences. Consequently, compared to live performances, TV *budaixi* has contributed immensely to the flourishing and broader reach of puppet theatre art and culture.

TV *budaixi* shows were all in Taiwanese Hokkien, but were accompanied by Chinese subtitles in order to reach a broader range of Sinophone speakers. However, as a means to promote the use of "national language" and discourage the public use of what the government considered "dialects," in 1973, the government mandated that all TV *budaixi*

[33] The characters are more commonly refer to in Taiwanese Hokkien—Shi Yanwen as Sú Iām-bûn, and Tsangjingren as Tsông-kiànn-jîn.

series be dubbed into Mandarin. A year later, *The Scholar Swordsman*, along with other TV series, were banned by the government for "violating the Mandarin policy" and "affecting farm workers' daily work routines." It was not until 1981 that *budaixi* was allowed on TV again with extensive restrictions.

Despite the proliferation of new media and digital entertainment arising from technological advancements in the past few decades, TV *budaixi* has continued to thrive, especially since the late 1980s after the lifting of TV program restrictions. Pili Multimedia International's puppet productions (abbreviated as "Pili") are one of the few TV *budaixi* programs that have expanded the business across digital platforms from VHS to DVD and from TV to online streaming. Built on the innovation of golden ray style *budaixi* and previous TV *budaixi*, Pili programming emphasizes special effects, incorporates animation, and further improves the design of puppets. The puppets are more exquisitely beautified and feature movable eyes, joints, and fingers. Pili also owns a dedicated film studio with large production sets, as well as a TV station for their *budaixi* programs. Pili's TV series and films have had a strongly devoted fan base ever since they first aired.

Pili's popularity extends beyond Taiwan. In 2016, Pili collaborated with Japanese screenwriter Gen Urobuchi and the company Nitroplus to produce the very first Japanese-Taiwanese *budaixi* series, *Thunderbolt Fantasy (Donglijianyouji* 東離劍遊紀*)*. Incorporating the techniques and styles of Japanese anime, the series was well-received and even saw the production of a second and third season, along with two films. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is produced in two official languages: the Taiwanese Hokkien version aired in Taiwan, and the Japanese version aired outside of Taiwan. This collaboration further exemplifies the flexibility of *budaixi* in reaching diverse audiences. Due to the

immense popularity of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* and the subsequent development of a non-Taiwanese fan base, Pili was invited to Sakura-Con, the oldest and most well-attended anime convention, in 2017 in Seattle. At Sakura-Con, puppeteer Liang-Hsun Huang shared about how companies like Pili were innovating puppetry culture in Taiwan and keeping it alive in the twenty-first century. Pili's international and cross-cultural exchange is indeed what allows *budaixi* to survive in a world full of high-tech entertainment. I will elaborate on the cultural impact of transnational *budaixi* later in this chapter.

Figure 1.2 Poster of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* season 3 (2021). Photo credit: Pili Multimedia International

One of the major differences between the development of *budaixi* pre- and post-1945 lies in its aesthetics: the former resembles opera, which centers music and treats the story as an accompaniment, whereas the latter focuses more on plot. Chen Long-ting called the former "quasi-opera style" *budaixi*, which encompasses classical *budaixi* styles that are named after musical genres such as *beiguan*, *nanguan*, and *chaodiao budaixi*.[34] Meanwhile, though music continues to be an essential part of all shows, *budaixi* in the

[34] Though recognizing that early classical *budaixi* did not involve singing, Chen uses the term "quasi-opera style" to parallel the aesthetics of early *budaixi* performance with Western opera as both center more on musical elements instead of plots.

twentieth century emphasizes stories and storytelling, which is defined by Chen as "narrative style" *budaixi* (*Taiwan Budaixi* 78). These shows, including Pili's productions, intend to draw people's attention to the intriguing stories and mysterious events that surround a given production's heroic characters.

Likewise, Pili's latest *budaixi*-animation film, *Demigod: The Legend Begins*, was released in January 2022 and featured Pili's most famous character, Su Huan Jen. While using a traditional style of narration in Taiwanese Hokkien, the film adopts a rock song as its theme. The *Demigod* rock theme song was produced and sung by Mixer, a Taiwanese rock band that won the Golden Melody Award for Best Band in 2014. The film received an immense amount of press attention despite being released in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mission of most contemporary *budaixi* productions is innovation so that the art form can adapt to people's ever-changing tastes, remain relevant in a world full of stimuli, and evolve with modern society.

Similar to many other forms of traditional arts and cultural practices, *budaixi* underwent serious crises after the popularization of digital entertainment and has continued to adapt to the contemporary world. To preserve and expand the influence of *budaixi* among younger generations, *budaixi* has gradually been institutionalized, especially since the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act was officially passed in 1982 and reformed in 2005. For example, Yunlin International Puppet Theater Festival was launched in 1999, and the National Student Competition of Creative Puppetry was established in 2005. Additionally, Kaohsiung Museum of Shadow Puppet, the Puppetry Art Center of Taipei, and Yunlin Hand Puppet Museum were founded respectively in 1993, 2004, and 2007.[35] With

[35] The National Student Competition of Creative Puppetry was restructured into the National Student Competition of Creative Drama Art in 2014.

the support of local and central governments, as well as private foundations, *budaixi* is incorporated into many school curricula, occupies an established space in the cultural and creative industries, and continues to be a prominent cultural practice and a witness to the vicissitudes of Taiwanese society in the twenty-first century.

Budaixi as Popular Knowledge

Budaixi lives with the people of Taiwan and documents their lives in a way that is distinct from other forms of historiography. Hayden White points out that there are different approaches to the interpretation of historical narrative and each comes with its own limitations (70-74). There is no perfect way to record what happened on this land comprehensively. Orthodox historiography (or what Presenjit Duara calls History), usually falsely believed to be the account closest to what actually happened, is mainly documented through words—written historical records and literature—and studied and perceived as a part of the *ya* (elegant) culture of a given society. Access to this orthodox history is, in many situations, exclusive to people with power and solely available to the ones who are able to read and write. Unfortunately, for the general public, especially early immigrants and commoners living under colonization, this kind of History does not serve them, and the manner of literal documentation fails to faithfully represent their reality. Moreover, considering Taiwan's multiple political transitions and colonial past, the written history can often be displaced, distorted, or erased.

On the contrary, artistic practices and folk cultures, while low on the hierarchy of historiography, better serve the purpose of mirroring the life of commoners and documenting their oral histories. The unorthodox history or people's narrative can be

understood through Foucault's use of the term *le savoir des gens* (popular knowledge)—a kind of local, regional, and disqualified knowledge that lies on the margin of legitimate knowledge and History. I am inspired by Daphne Lei's use of History/history and popular knowledge to manifest how invented history, appropriated by low-ranking knowledge, is reincorporated by playwrights as they recreate history in their plays (*Uncrossing* 21). The modality of reimagining tradition and reinventing history in Lei's investigation of border-crossing drama resonates with my research on *budaixi*. In a disjunctive society, *budaixi* demonstrates the power of *su* culture and gathers together popular knowledge from the ground up in a way that reflects and responds to people's needs and lived reality. *Budaixi* did not originate as a part of Taiwanese culture; instead, it has *become* Taiwanese over the years as it evolved with the people of this island and continues to be practiced.

Budaixi puppets track the journey of the people and cross borders of time and space. The journeys, experiences, memories, and difficulties of these crossings are engraved on puppets' physical bodies where scratches can be seen and felt. Through these marks and scratches, how the puppets were carried, stored, and performed not only by the people who first brought them but also by the people who inherited them, can be envisioned. The material body of *budaixi* puppets is an archive that documents the changes, transformations, and transitions of society. *Budaixi* puppets are also portable borderlands within which cultures are hybridized and can no longer be distinguished from one another. This is probably one of the reasons why *budaixi* was voted by the Taiwanese people to best represent this diverse and hybridized culture and society. *Budaixi* lives with the people.

Budaixi within and beyond the Island

Budaixi and National Politics

There is a term that was sarcastically used by the media to delineate the strategic analogies and connections made between politicians themselves and *budaixi* during the 2019 presidential election campaign called "*budaixi* politics" (*budaixi zhengzhixue*). Indeed, the association between *budaixi* and Taiwanese subjectivity often politicizes this form of art, which "attracts the attention of politicians eager to associate themselves with Taiwanese culture" in the current political climate (Ruizendaal "Puppets, Identity and Politics" 17). As a living symbol of Taiwaneseness, *budaixi* is considered profitable and marketable for politicians with widely divergent political stances who seek to *perform* their "national identity." For KMT politicians, *budaixi* exemplifies a connection and continuation of Chinese tradition and heritage with a tinge of Taiwanese local culture; and on the other side, pro-independent Taiwanese nationalist politicians perceive *budaixi* as essentially Taiwanese and a representative of Taiwanese native culture that is divergent from its Chinese origins. The use of *budaixi* by both major political camps demonstrates the utility and flexibility of puppetry in political discourse due in part because of its seemingly apolitcal veneer as a mere performance of *objects*. How *budaixi* appears in Taiwanese political scenes can be broadly put into three categories: 1) as a means for political advertisement and promotion; 2) to demonstrate a politician's personal connection to local culture; and 3) to mock current affairs indirectly and metaphorically.

The popularity of *budaixi* makes it, especially the puppet itself, the best advertisement product since the Japanese colonial period. Politicians and political parties

often use puppets to approach the general public, especially their younger supporters. In the press release of *The Road to Democracy* (1999), Lee Teng-hui, the first president to be born in Taiwan and be directly elected, invited the producer of *The Scholar Swordsman*, Huang Chun-Hsiung, and his son, Steven Huang, to build two 'Lee Teng-hui' puppets and stage a biographical puppet show sharing Lee's life stories.[36] Similarly, during the 2000 presidential election, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) launched a series of their candidate Chen Shui-bian's *budaixi* puppets for the presidential campaign. More recently, Tsai Ing-Wen, the first female President of Taiwan since 2016, collaborated with Goodoo Puppet Troupe for a series of promotional events for her presidential campaign in 2016. The events included *budaixi* performances featuring an animated figure of Tsai telling stories about punishing evil at fundraising events, as well as puppet-making workshops at campaign headquarters. The current Mayor of Taipei, Ko Wen-Je, also received a 3D-printed *budaixi* puppet that combines his features and the aesthetics of TV *budaixi* from Yunlin Hand Puppet Museum, the largest puppet museum in Taiwan, when he visited there in 2020.

These *budaixi* figurines of various politicians were mostly cutified and "designed with the same kind of roundness, blankness, and neotenic proportions that characterizes logo characters such as Hello Kitty" (Silvio, *Puppets, Gods and Brands* 200). This "cute culture," imported from Japan, can in fact be perceived as a continuation of the Japanese colonial legacy. Although the Japanese left Taiwan more than half a century ago, the influence of its culture lingers as it has been further incorporated into Taiwanese local

[36] Lee Teng-hui was the chairperson of KMT and President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from 1988 to 2000. During his presidency, Lee oversaw the end of martial law and the full democratization of Taiwan, and advocated the Taiwanese localization movement. He was the spiritual leader of the pro-independence political party, Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), and was expelled by KMT due to his campaign for TSU.

cultures. For instance, the design of TV *budaixi* puppets resembles the same styles as Japanese manga and animation, which first appeared in Taiwan during the colonial period and have continued to be a prominent leisure activity thereafter. The cuteness of these figures, as well as the use of *budaixi*, serve to promote politicians or political parties as approachable, grassroots, and cultured. Politicians in Taiwan are eager to spotlight their connections to local cultures, and *budaixi*, as a national icon, is often considered the best way to achieve this goal. In particular, for politicians who are mainlanders themselves or considered descendants of mainlanders, *budaixi* offers them a way to profile themselves as *Taiwanese* and demonstrate their ability to speak *Taiwanese* despite not being fluent.[37]

In Ma Ying-jeou's 2011 presidential campaign ad titled "Taiwan's Love for Diversity, We Are All Taiwanese," Huang Chun-Hsiung talked about how *budaixi* became his family heritage by being passed down from his grandfather who came to Taiwan from China more than a century ago. The ability of *budaixi* to be culturally inclusive is, Huang elaborated, why Taiwanese people should be proud of this art form. Indeed, there have been more *budaixi* performances in languages other than Taiwanese Hokkien and Mandarin in recent decades. For instance, Shan Puppet is one of the first *budaixi* troupes dedicated to producing shows in Hakka and about Hakka stories. There are also troupes composed of Indigenous children or new immigrants from Southeast Asian countries, telling their own stories with *budaixi*.[38]

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[37] Taiwanese, Taiyu (in Mandarin) or Taigi refer to Taiwanese Hokkien, or Hoklo which is a variety of the Hokkien language spoken by Taiwanese Hoklo people, who descended from immigrants from southern Fujian during the Qing dynasty.

[38] I would like to acknowledge the importance of languages in the discussions about how *budaixi* is engaged with the nation-making process. As an oral tradition, the language used in *budaixi* shows is indeed closely connected to local people's living experience and their identification with the culture. The notion of language will be elaborated more in this dissertation chapter.

In addition to its promotional function, *budaixi* is often used to satirize politicians and the political climate in an indirect and metaphorical way. For instance, the KMT posted a video online featuring a *budaixi* show disclosing Lee Teng-hui's involvement in several scandals in 2004 and two DPP legislators put on a show during the legislative council meeting in 2011 to insinuate that the KMT administration was unable to fulfill its political commitments. The legislative council meeting show was a 20-minute fictive play about unconfirmed political scandals and was told through the mouths of puppets in an allegorical tone so that the "storytellers" could escape potential legal charges.[39] Similarly, politician and media celebrity Jaw Shaw-kong live-streamed a *budaixi* show along with his fellow KMT politician Hsieh Lung-chieh to mock and criticize DPP policy on importing ractopamine-fed pigs from the United States in 2022.[40] In these cases, the cultural heritage and artistic value of puppetry were less important than the way puppets could be used for their *theatricality*. Puppets continue to play "devil's advocate" and be spokespersons for sarcasm and controversial statements as mentioned earlier. The play between truth and lies, critique and satire, can be carried out perfectly on a puppet stage, resonating with the possible origin of *budaixi* in the Ming Dynasty—a literati who failed the imperial examination and told stories taunting the political establishment through puppets in order to escape the charge of treachery.

Ancillary to the theatricality favored by politicians, characters in popular TV *budaixi* series are often mentioned as a means to demonstrate one's characteristics and political

[39] Video clip of two DPP legislators putting on a puppet show during the interpellation in the Legislative Yuan (parliament) to insinuate that the KMT administration was unable to fulfill their political commitments in 2011: https://youtu.be/0lmiNZ9KEws.
[40] The status of United States beef and pork imports has been a critical issue in Taiwan–United States relations of which the controversy has been centered on the use of ractopamine as an additive in feeds.

dynamics with other politicians. Most TV *budaixi* series, following the similar trend in golden ray *budaixi,* tell stories about the martial arts world, feature chivalric warriors as characters, and end with the moral that justice always prevails over evil. Founder of Foxconn Technology Group (a prominent iPhone manufacturer), Terry Guo, once made analogies between Pili Puppetry's most famous protagonist Su Huan Jen 素還真 (or Sòo Huân-tsin in Taiwanese Hokkien), who is charismatic, gentle and wise, and himself.[41] He then praised another politician Wang Jin-pyng, the longest-serving President of the Legislative Yuan and leading figure in KMT, as the character Yi Ye Shu 一頁書, who demonstrates bravery and righteousness, and called themselves the "saviors of the martial world." Both Su Huan Jen and Yi Ye Shu are powerful protagonists who fight against the evil antagonists to restore peace and justice in the Pili Series. Instead of publicly announcing his interest in running for the presidential election, Guo suggested through the invocation of Pili characters how he could be the best candidate for the position and was in full camaraderie with Wang. In addition to Guo, former vice president of Taiwan Wu Den-yih once mentioned that he shared similar beliefs and attitudes toward his career as Su Huan Jen—as long as there was anything that they could do for the good of the nation, they would dedicate themselves to it entirely.[42] Since the majority of protagonists in *budaixi* demonstrate positive characteristics such as bravery and righteousness, they are perfect icons for politicians to be associated with and to promote themselves without being too *political*.

[41] Pili Puppetry is a studio founded by Huang Chun-Hsiung's sons Chris and Vincent Huang with its most famous TV series under the same name.
[42] News about Guo's visit to Pili Studio (https://news.ebc.net.tw/news/politics/164345), and Wu's visit to Pili Studio (https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170501002972-260509?chdtv).

Indeed, *budaixi* has been valued by politicians from different parties and has been present in political campaigns supporting candidates without explicitly expressing puppeteers' personal political stances. Especially in Taiwan, many *budaixi* troupes have been serving local temples and communities for decades, if not an entire century, and thus have built intimate ties with the local community, government, and various factions therein. Hence, these troupes have the power to provide grassroots support to politicians. For instance, Pili Puppetry has one of the biggest puppet film studios in Yunlin, Taiwan, and the studio has become a must-visit spot for candidates from different parties to canvass voters during election seasons. In 2019, a few months before the January 2020 presidential election, candidates from both the DPP and KMT visited Pili Studio and held private meetings there.[43] In fact, one of Huang Chun-Hsiung's younger brothers, also the former artistic consultant for Pili, was elected legislator and has been an active member of KMT's local faction in Yunlin. The visit of DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen was to build connections with local power holders in hopes of obtaining votes from this area and her victory was a testament to the political power of *budaix*i

Unlike most business companies or artist groups eschewing associations with political events, *budaixi* troupes tend to be more welcoming and cooperative to such occasions involving politicians of different political stances. This political flexibility also reflects *budaixi*'s history of survival from various bans, censorships, and government surveillance. As mentioned previously, *budaixi* can be perceived as a survivor's art—it seeks any opportunity to sustain itself even under the toughest situations. Because of the apparent neutrality and apoliticalness of *budaixi*, politicians see the tremendous potential

[43] Both DPP and KMT candidates stopped by Pili Studio before the 2020 presidential election. https://youtu.be/H_ypOY5ImkQ

of the art for their campaigns. Politicians also demonstrate their love and passion for non-political pursuits by fashioning *budaixi* as a Taiwanese cultural or art event.

A brief comparison of *budaixi* with *jingju* (Peking opera) elucidates the intricate roles that performing arts with Chinese heritage play in a difficult political environment in Taiwan. Consider *jingju*, which has more institutionalized training and support when compared to *budaixi*; as a result, the amount of professional *jingju* productions on the national stage surpassed *budaixi* a great deal in the earlier KMT regime. *Jingju* was first brought to and thrived on the island in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Among all performances, troupes from Shanghai were especially popular. During the Sino-Japanese War, Shanghai troupes were no longer able to travel (Wang *Taiwan jingju* 26), but there continued to be performances by local troupes.

Jingju is often misperceived as an advocate for a China-centric culture and identity, especially since it had been enshrined as a "national drama" (*guoju*) since the 1920s and 30s with the complicated connotation of the "nation" being "China."[44] *Jingju* was supported by the early KMT regime due to its popularity in both Chinas (China and Taiwan). Nancy Guy asserts the impact of the political environment on *jingju* in the first four decades of KMT rule:

> Peking opera was put to work in support of hegemony [. . .] to strengthen its authority and legitimacy. [. . .] It also created mechanisms for controlling repertoire and performance practice. The preservation and dissemination of Peking opera in its

[44] *Jingju* was first considered as a national drama by Yu Shangyuan in the 1920s. Later, Mei Lanfang and Qi Rushan, along with other pioneers, established *Beiping Guoju Xuehui* (Beiping Association of Peking Opera, also known as Peking Opera Association) that reformed *jingju* (Wang, *Xunlu* 33).
This "China" can be interpreted either as the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan), depending on the context and discourse.

"traditional," pre-Communist form bolstered the regime's identity as the legitimate Chinese government" (*Peking Opera* 4).

Though *jingju* and *budaixi* are both immigrated arts and have been appreciated by the public, they have different destinies. While *budaixi* is able to survive despite never being considered authoritative or legitimate, *jingju*'s association with "China" is both the reason for its prosperity and the cause of its decline, especially after the 1990s. The process of democratization and *Taiwanization* since the last decade of the twentieth century has eroded state support for *jingju*. the distinct trajectories of *jingju* and *budaixi* are partly due to how they landed on the island and the unique sociopolitical environments they were placed in. The ideologies that have once shaped the development of *jingju* and *budaixi* saturate and fundamentally influence many aspects of people's lives in Taiwan.

Budaixi for Nation-branding

How does a puppet, a human-shaped artifact, a material representation of a virtual personality, become a narrative that brands a nation? Nadia Kaneva defines nation branding as "a compendium of discourse and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms" (118). In 2006, glove puppet theatre was chosen as the symbol of Taiwan in a national opinion poll held by the Government Information Office; yet, *budaixi* has long been a medium through which questions of nationhood are explored. As the question of a never quite unified "Taiwanese identity" continues to haunt Taiwanese society, methods for securing national consensus internally are increasingly needed especially in light of Taiwan's long-standing crises of international legitimacy whereby Taiwan faces political threats and isolation due to the lack of de jure

independence. Especially since 2018 when multiple countries severed official diplomatic ties with Taiwan to ally with China, Taiwan has had to find alternative ways to engage with the global community. This section, along with the later one on cultural diplomacy, examines both how *budaixi* serves as a means for Taiwan's self-branding and how *budaixi* functions as a form of soft power on the international stage.

It is not surprising that *budaixi* was chosen as a symbol of Taiwan over and against Taipei 101 and Mount Jade because *budaixi* connotes a sense of *Taiwaneseness*—not necessarily referring to any specific Taiwanese culture or identity, but a kind of sentiment, or a feeling of being associate with Taiwan. The popularity of *budaixi* in Taiwan can be attributed to its ability to provide people on this island with a communal and collective practice of national consciousness. *Budaixi*, as a hybridized culture and highly adaptable elastic practice, responds to people's anxieties and desires for a shared past and collective cultural tradition. The lack of a recognizable Taiwanese identity or agency has skewered the nation both internally and externally. *Budaixi*, then, fills this lack by consolidating a highly transformative and performative Taiwanese consciousness and identity.

How does *budaixi* negotiate diverse cultures and ethnicities while offering a sense of a united *Taiwaneseness*? The unique meaning of *budaixi* to Taiwanese people is similar to what Juwen Zhang describes as "diversity within unity" (450) when he writes about diasporic folklore and the identity of the Chinese American community. *Budaixi* can be regarded as an invented tradition in Taiwan, to use Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger's term. It becomes a cultural practice presented or perceived as traditional and "native," despite originating in China.[45] As an invented tradition, *budaixi* is a "[response] to novel

[45] The problem of Han Chinese culture as native Taiwanese culture will be interrogated in Chapter 3.

situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (2). *Budaixi* is made a tradition as a means to create a national identity that promotes an imaginary national unity despite internal divergences.

Consider another cultural form that produces a sense of united community among a diverse Chinese American community: the lion dance. As Mu Li writes: "When Chineseness is negotiated in the geographic and cultural space where the ethnic performance—lion dance—is played, a sense of 'united community' with identical self-awareness rises among all attendees, including performers and audience, beyond the social, ethnic, and cultural boundaries" (314). Like lion dance, when watching or performing in a *budaixi* show, people not only share time and space, but also feel a sense of togetherness with others in the show and thus a sense of "united community." Li further explains that during the lion dance, "Chinese communities are reorganized and reintegrated by a cultural performance that constructs a new identity to embrace people with different cultural origins into one" (314). I believe that Li's analysis is applicable to the relationship between *budaixi* and being Taiwanese. *Budaixi* embodies Taiwanese subjectivity as a frontier, a borderland that is further mobilized by its marginality. *Budaixi* is able to *become* local and hence *become Taiwanese* despite the idea of a unified *Taiwaneseness* being inherently ever-changing.[46]

Another question to consider is: how does *budaixi* claim its legitimacy and orthodoxy as a unique practice of Taiwaneseness regardless of its origin in China? Initially being a southeastern Chinese cultural form, *budaixi*, along with most puppet theatres and traditional performances were banned during the Cultural Revolution in China, and such a

[46] The sense of a collective and unified Taiwanese identity and culture induced by *budaixi* is essentially imagined because *budaixi*, as a Han cultural practice, still oftentimes fail to represent non-Han populations in Taiwan, including the Indigenous peoples, new immigrants and more.

long interruption resulted in the damage or even loss of performance traditions. Li Chuang-Tsan, Li Tien-lu's second son, recalled his visit to Quanzhou, one of the origins of *budaixi*, and surprisingly noticed that *budaixi* art in China resembled *budaixi* art in Taiwan almost a century ago.[47] Though the Cultural Revolution is evidently one of the reasons for this temporal lag, this explanation fails to account for how traditional string puppetry still thrives in Quanzhou today. A more fitting explanation might be that *budaixi* has faded from public consciousness in China, which results in puppet artists being deprived of support and motivation to advance and innovate their art. *Budaixi* has not evolved with society in China as much as it has in Taiwan.

Hence, *budaixi* has become more prosperous in Taiwan than in the place where it originated, and being *away* has allowed for the continuation and innovation of this precious cultural heritage. From colony to autocracy and finally democracy, *budaixi* has evolved alongside Taiwan, and over time transformed itself to fit into contemporary Taiwanese society. *Budaixi* not only reflects the zeitgeist of the nation, but also serves as a means to explore cultural identity and express political opinions, which contributes to politicians' eagerness to connect themselves to *budaixi*. People in Taiwan have cultivated an even more intimate affiliation with *budaixi* as the artform becomes more distant from contemporary Chinese culture and available as an "expression of Taiwan grassroot culture" (Fushiki and Ruizendaal 13).

Moreover, the association of *budaixi* with Taiwaneseness can be attributed not only to China cutting ties with traditional culture during the Cultural Revolution, but the mythical and untraceable origin of *budaixi*. People on the island imagine that there can be a

[47] Li Chuang-Tsan's observation was addressed in Long-Ting Chen's *A History of Taiwanese Glove Puppet Theatre*.

cultural tradition born and raised here. Unlike Indigenous traditions that have been practiced on the island for thousands of years, *budaixi* has a relatively short history; however, as a portable borderland, it provides a space for people to maintain, negotiate or even re-create their multiple and often competing ethnicities of being *Taiwanese*.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the vitality and validity of *budaixi* in relation to Taiwanese identity are constantly making and remaking itself; it is also important to recognize that *budaixi* does not imply any intrinsic truth or reality of the nation or of identity. The notion of Taiwaneseness will continue to be challenged, contested, and negotiated as it is situated within a complex network of culture, history, and politics. Yet, it provides a kind of alternative narrative in addition to the linear textual documentation of history that is indeed needed by the people on the island for this specific period of time.

Transnational *Budaixi*

I have reiterated the portability and adaptability of *budaixi*. Based on these two features, *budaixi* is then by nature transnational and closely associated with Chinese diasporic communities. Its transnationality can be traced back to the exile from its birthplace, the point of departure—China. *Budaixi* originated from the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou prefectures in southeast China and was popular among the people in these regions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the early regime of Communist China in the 1950s, *budaixi* was, in fact, supported and promoted by the government as a form of Chinese cultural heritage. Longxi Puppet Theatre (Longxi Zhuanqu Muou Jutuan 龍溪專區木偶劇團), later known as Zhangzhou Puppet Theatre (Zhangzhou

Muou Jutuan 漳州木偶劇團), was established in 1959 to provide professional and institutionalized training of *budaixi* talents, and soon, *budaixi* expanded beyond the province to perform nationally and internationally. However, *budaixi*'s association with religious practices contradicted communist ideology, especially during the Cultural Revolution, and was thus banned. Yeung Fai, the fifth-generation puppetmaster of his family, shared in many of his works how the violent upheaval his family went through during the Cultural Revolution became the impetus for him to leave China and go into exile in the 1980s (qtd. in Isherwood). Yeung Fai and his brother Yang Feng traveled around the world and eventually landed respectively in Europe (later Asia) and in the U.S., where they continued their careers as *budaixi* puppetmasters while incorporating the aesthetics of different cultures.[48] Their experience was not unique compared to that of many other artists in China during a similar period. Their journeys all became sustenance for *budaixi* to grow its roots in different lands across the world. It was not until the late 80s that *budaixi* slowly reappeared on stage in China and international exchange resumed. Meanwhile, *budaixi* never ceases to be cultivated and practiced in other Asian countries.

Traveling back in time, there has been a surge in intra-Asian contacts since the late nineteenth century, especially due to foreign invasions of China in addition to waves of migration since the sixteenth century. Though *budaixi* first arrived in Taiwan much earlier than the late nineteenth century, this time period was indeed when more troupes and similar cultural traditions were brought from the Fujian area to not only Taiwan but also various Southeast Asian countries. Kaori Fushiki and Robin Ruizendaal, along with four

[48] Yeung Fai was based in Paris for the past few decades, and is now traveling between Europe and Asia to collaborate with artists from different countries. He has multiple collaborative productions with artists in Taiwan in the past decade. His brother, Yang Feng, was based in Seattle, the U.S. in the 80s and 90s, and passed away in 2003.

other scholars, explore the adaptability, innovation, and transformation of *budaixi* in Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, the last *budaixi* puppeteer in Yangon, Myanmar, and *wayang potehi* in Indonesia.[49] Migrant and diaspora communities originally from China form the core of transnational *budaixi* as they continue to practice this tradition. According to the research mentioned above, *budaixi* in these countries broadly stays the same as their southern Fujian root over time and space with regard to religious context, repertoire, and techniques; and yet, the languages used for performance have been adapted to local languages and dialects. *Budaixi* basically evolves with and adapts to its environment, further incorporating other local and migrant cultures.

For instance, while *wayang kulit*, shadow puppetry of Central Java, and Wayang Golek, rod puppetry of West Java, feature distinct Indonesian cultures, *wayang potehi*, as its name suggests, has a Chinese root and was brought by early immigrants. Instead of portraying characters from Indian epics such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* like other wayang puppets, *wayang potehi* tells stories originating from Chinese legends. Though the shows used Hokkien when *budaixi* was first brought in, it is now performed in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, so that the show is accessible to more audiences. The mobility and flexibility of *budaixi* can indeed be seen in different countries which allow this culture to survive through time, especially considering that anti-Chinese sentiments and violence throughout history have seriously harmed these communities and their cultures.

Resembling the situation of *budaixi* in Taiwan, *budaixi* always manages to overcome challenges and circumvent difficulties. The only exception mentioned in Fushiki and

[49] Fushiki and Ruizendaal chose to use the term *potehi*, *budaixi* or glove puppetry in Taiwanese Hokkien since the term is present extensively in Southeast Asian countries, and "is still handed down from generation to generation, even if people no longer use Chinese characters in their writings and all that remains is the sound of the word" (3).

Ruizendaal's book is in Yangon, Myanmar. Due to the change of government policy and increasing anti-Chinese violence in the 1950s and 60s, many ethnic-Chinese Burmese migrated or immigrated to other cities and countries. During this time period, performances at temples or for religious events were replaced by the marionette of Myanmar (*yokhte pwe*). The disappearance of *budaixi* in Myanmar went hand-in-hand with other traditional cultures as the result of the repression of ethnic Chinese communities in the country. In addition, like in other countries, the rise and advancement of mass media technologies also eroded traditional entertainment forms, a fate which is not exclusive to *budaixi*.

The fact that *budaixi* is able to be passed down for generations in Southeast Asian countries accentuates the importance of this folk culture to ethnic Chinese and Chinese diaspora communities. The dynamic confluence of transnational performance and mobile connections have shaped the configuration of *budaixi* in different countries. Though the beginning of *budaixi* in Taiwan followed a similar trajectory, it has experienced more acute transformations, as mentioned in the above sections, and thus has become more localized compared to *budaixi* in other countries. Moreover, in contrast to other countries in which *budaixi* is generally performed by and for a limited or ethnically specific group of people, such as diasporic Chinese communities, *budaixi* is widely accepted and enjoyed by the general population in Taiwan, which allows *budaixi* to sustain itself and be identified as a Taiwanese cultural form instead of an exclusive Sinophone or Chinese cultural form. The flexibility of *budaixi* as both/either Taiwanese and/or Chinese as well as local/national/transnational performance tradition is why the art form is embraced by

politicians and the general public in Taiwan; *budaixi* circumvents societal dissonances between disparate political stances and groups.

Budaixi and Cultural Diplomacy

As a transnational performance form, *budaixi* has long served as a form of soft power, taking on the role of cultural diplomacy to counter Taiwan's international marginalization. Political scientist Joseph Nye defines power as the "capacity to do things and in social situations to affect others to get the outcomes we want" (6). An effective way to analytically differentiate power is by separating it into two categories: hard power generally refers to military might, while soft power encapsulates the ways in which a country's culture, beliefs, and policies can be used as a viable means of "framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction" from other countries and further forming allyship (Nye 13). Soft power can be created and performed by both government officials and individuals. In order to manifest soft power effectively, "broad public opinion and cultural attitudes" (97) must be targeted and shaped. Many countries strategically promote cultural attitudes and utilize the power of opinion to compensate for a lack of hard power.

Many East Asian countries have been actively invested in the creation and exercise of soft power. After the end of the Second World War, Japan was forbidden by international treaties from expanding its military hard power. Thus, Japan has been focusing on strengthening its soft power, such as manga, anime, traditional heritages of *noh* and *kabuki*, and most recently, the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, in order to increase its global visibility and economic weight.). South Korea's soft power can not only be seen in cultural artifacts such as the world popularity of BTS or the critically acclaimed film *Parasite*, but also in the

active export of K-Pop and K-Drama in the past two decades. These countries' soft power contributes to the expansion of "their existing economic influence" as they acquire "more sophisticated politico-cultural leverage" (Lee and Melissen 4).

Diplomacy concerns the pragmatic ways in which the global community interacts with each other through "representation and communication" (Pigman 88). The former gives countries a voice and secures their active role in global society, while the latter promotes cultural and economic exchange and has the ability to resolve conflicts and sustain international relations. Effective communication can change opinions and beliefs, as well as further consolidate relationships between nations. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges that Taiwan has been facing internationally is the exercise of diplomatic power, especially since its position in the United Nation was officially replaced by The People's Republic of China in 1971. Restrained in hard power and by limited official engagement in the international community, Taiwan has been investing in its soft power in an attempt to improve its diplomatic predicament. By using culture as a form of soft power for communication, cultural exchange, and cultural diplomacy, Taiwan is able to promote its "cultural" image to the international community while avoiding thorny political issues. Additionally, it is important to note the government's role in international cultural exchanges as the host or sponsor that provides resources and financial support. Soft power, then, manifests not only the richness of a given culture but also a state's economic power.

Budaixi is one of the common cultural tools for demonstrating soft power. As mentioned previously, *budaixi* has undergone a unique evolution and is entwined with Taiwan's historical vicissitudes; this adaptability has later allowed *budaixi* to be considered the symbol that could best represent the island. *Budaixi* has been utilized as a means for

nation branding and cultural diplomacy by both state and individuals. The puppets and theatrical performances often appear on the global stage to represent a kind of uniquely Taiwanese culture and heritage. *Budaixi*, then, presents a "Taiwan-centred globalization" (Silvio, "Remediation" 287).

Puppetmaster Li Tien-lu was an iconic figure in Taiwan who was often invited to travel extensively in the 80s and 90s to Japan, Korea, France, Australia, and the United States for *budaixi* performances and workshops. Through frequent travels, he attracted many foreign artists to follow him to Taiwan. His disciples, French sinologist Jacques Pimpaneau, Jean-Luc Penso and Catherine Larue of Théâtre du Petit Miroir, Lucie Cunningham of Compagnie HOLD UP!, and Margaret Moody of Margaret Moody Puppets, to name a few, all studied under him before establishing their own puppet theatres that incorporated *budaixi* aesthetics and techniques upon return to their home countries. Li's performances abroad and welcoming of foreign disciples were important acts of cultural diplomacy, especially considering the time when he began touring predates Taiwan's democratization. In other words, *budaixi* was brought to the global stage before Taiwan was.

Puppetmaster Chen Hsi-huang, Li Tien-lu's eldest son, was invited to perform at the Center for Puppet Arts in Atlanta in 2019 in celebration of Atlanta and Taipei's 40-year anniversary as Sister Cities. Some local news emphasized how *soft power* connected the two cities and that their relationship extended into diplomacy. In most news articles, *budaixi* was referred to as Taiwanese puppetry and Chen as a national treasure of Taiwan. The event was in part sponsored by different government institutions, such as Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture, the Taiwan Academy of the Taipei Economic and

Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO), and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta (TECO in Atlanta). Along with the cultural events featuring *budaixi* performances, Ko Wen-je, the mayor of Taipei, also visited and met with Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Governor of Georgia Brian Kemp to *celebrate the cultural exchange* (Williams). This celebration illustrates how *budaixi* can function as a political exchange in disguise and a manifestation of soft power and cultural diplomacy.

Michel Ching-long Lu, ambassador of the Taipei Representative Office in France from 2007 to 2015, also pursued cultural diplomacy by bringing *budaixi* puppets to public events as a means to increase the soft power of Taiwan. Lu would dub the show in fluent French and advertise Taiwan with small puppets. He once said, "diplomacy is a profession as well as an art with infinite ways of doing and possibilities. Small countries are more urgently in need of pursuing national benefits through diplomacy, and the diplomats are the 'sales' of their country." *Budaixi* is not only transformable, adaptable, and portable, but also marketable.

To better understand cultural diplomacy, I analyzed three major venues in which *budaixi* reaches the global community as a form of soft power: 1) government-led or sponsored events, 2) events organized by overseas Taiwanese communities, and 3) events held by educational institutions. In the following paragraphs, I provide a few examples, focusing mainly on the events that took place in the United States in the past decade.[50]

Many *budaixi* performances or workshops in the United States are held or sponsored by the Government of Taiwan or related official organizations such as the Overseas

[50] Multiple allies broke official diplomatic relations with Taiwan in the 2010s to ally with China. As a result, the government has been investing more in soft power as a means to build and sustain relationships with the global society. As of August 2022, Taiwan has full diplomatic relations with 13 countries and with the Holy See (Vatican City).

Community Affairs Council or the regional Taipei Economic and Cultural Office.[51] Some examples are the *budaixi* performance by Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre hosted by Seattle Legacy Multiculture & Education Service Center in 2012 and the 2020 Los Angeles Workshop for Chinese Culture and Folk Arts Teachers. The former was designed to bring the traditional culture of *budaixi* to second or third-generation Taiwanese and Chinese Americans, while the latter focused on providing training to U.S.-based teachers to teach students about *budaixi*. In addition to government-led events, many *budaixi* troupes are invited to perform in Canada and the U.S. by local immigrant and diaspora communities or organizations. For instance, the 2014 TAIWANfest in Vancouver, Canada featured Pili Puppetry, Yuanlin New Paradise Glove Puppet Troupe was invited to the Taiwanese American Heritage Week in Los Angeles in 2013, and Shinergy Puppet Show visited Taiwanese American Heritage Week in both Los Angeles and Seattle in 2019.

Budaixi not only serves to promote Taiwan, but also allows an imagined unity to be formed among overseas Taiwanese and diaspora communities. Indeed, Taiwanese and Taiwanese American immigrants develop a sense of diaspora community in the United States through *budaixi* as a shared self-awareness of their identical "home culture" arises when seeing the performance. It is through these shared cultural experiences that overseas communities are reshaped and reintegrated into a unique temporality and spatiality together.

In some cases, the ambivalent Taiwaneseness and Chineseness of *budaixi* blurs the line between and unites diverse ethnic Chinese overseas communities under the umbrella

[51] The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) is an equivalent to the official embassy of Taiwan, and was established based on the Taiwan Relations Act (PL. 96-8), for the purpose of promoting and strengthening the economic, cultural, educational and other ties between the United States and Taiwan.

category of "Chinese" or *hua*.[52] Panethnicity allows ethnic minorities to position themselves within an imagined community, and maintain subgroup distinctions while generating a broader sense of solidarity. Despite the disputations over the concept, a sense of pan-Chineseness indeed conveniently connects overseas communities, especially culturally.[53] *Budaixi*, as a form of performance with a Chinese root, represents a certain kind of culture encompassing all ethnic Chinese people regardless of their political and national diversity while circumventing any potential political disputes. For instance, I have performed with the Taiwanese Puppet Troupe for Lunar Festival celebrations hosted by Irvine Chinese School under South Coast Chinese Cultural Association, a non-profit educational organization promoting Chinese language learning and preserving Chinese cultural heritage. Shan Puppet Theater from Taiwan was invited to perform at the School during their U.S. tour in the summer 2022.

Meanwhile, some Taiwanese American organizations in the United States uphold *budaixi* as exclusively Taiwanese. They use it as a means to manifest Taiwanese grassroots culture and distinguish between Chinese and Taiwanese American identity in resistance to ethnic-Chinese or pan-Chinese labeling. Echoing what was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the flexibility of *budaixi* is surely the reason why it survives and continues to be

[52] *Hua* is used as an umbrella term by overseas Chinese as an ethnic identity for the Chinese diaspora—*huaren* means "ethnic Chinese people", and *huaqiao* refers to "the Chinese immigrant" or overseas Chinese. The word hua derives from Huaxia, the term used by ancient Chinese scholars prior to the Han dynasty in texts to describe China proper at that time. *Hua*, as a concept, is ambiguous and contestable as it contains a diverse immigrant and diaspora groups. Based on Li Yao-Tai's field research in the United States, first-generation Chinese immigrants do not distinguish between *huaren* and Chinese people from the People's Republic of China. For Taiwanese and Hong Kongers, *hua* exclusively relates to the cultural aspects. For some people, using the word *hua* is to deliberately avoid politics and to emphasize the cultural connections of Sinophone regions.

[53] See Allen Chung and Jianli Huang's articles.

Chun, Allen. "Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity." Boundary 2, vol. 23, no. 2, 1996, pp. 111–38.

Huang, Jianli. "Conceptualizing Chinese Migration and Chinese Overseas: The Contribution of Wang Gungwu." Journal of Chinese Overseas, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 1–21.

popular among people. Puppets are at times not directly associated with politics as a *culture* or *art*, while other times they are used as a tool for political purposes or to make statements.

Additionally, not all *budaixi* performances taking place in the United States are by invited troupes from Taiwan. Professors, students, and alumni of the University of Wisconsin-Madison founded Taiwan Puppet Troupe to promote Taiwan and Taiwanese culture to the American public. Taiwan Puppet Troupe was founded in 1997, the same year as the Student Association of Taiwan, an association that serves Taiwanese international students on campus, was established. Their first show was performed by members of the association during a Moon Festival celebration in Milwaukee. Since none of the students had previous experience with *budaixi*, they came up with the idea of karaoke-style *budaixi*; furthermore, in order to reach a broader US audience, they decided to use English for their performance. In terms of set transportation, the members built a portable stage that could be assembled and disassembled without hazard. Taiwan Puppet Troupe has been successful in bringing puppet shows to different venues such as schools, senior care homes, health care centers, and Scout camps. The stories they tell include Taiwanese folk tales, historical stories, and Indigenous legends.

The Taiwan Puppet Troupe is not limited to Taiwanese international students, as students from other countries and Taiwanese American students are also members. As the Troupe continued to grow, members began to rethink what *budaixi* means and does as a staple of Taiwanese culture and how they could better promote Taiwanese culture instead of being an “ethnic event” that only drew an ethnic-specific audience from campus. These discussions led to the Troupe repositioning itself to connect with other Taiwanese

American communities across the United States, perform in more events outside the state of Wisconsin, and gain more media exposure. The transition the Troupe experienced indeed reflects the evolution of *budaixi* as a representative of Taiwanese culture not only domestically but also transnationally.[54]

Budaixi shows are often featured to represent the cultural heritage of Taiwan while adapted to meet a global audience's expectations. Some invited performances are like those of Cheng Hsi-huang, which demonstrate classical *budaixi*. Others are highly innovative and interdisciplinary, incorporating modern theatrical designs and multimedia; for example, Shinergy Puppet Show transforms *budaixi* with projection and music from their collaboration with a local metal rock band. In addition, many of the shows are specifically designed to be educational. Robin Ruizendaal was invited to offer a lecture on "Puppets, Politics, and Identity in Taiwan" before a puppet performance by Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company when they visited UCLA in 2014. The University of Wisconsin-Madison always includes a brief slideshow introduction to Taiwan and *budaixi* before their performances.

Apart from the United States, *budaixi* has also been featured in many other international arts festivals. For instance, the Cultural Centre of Taiwan in Paris has been presenting outstanding Taiwan-based artists and a great diversity of performing arts works from Taiwan at the Festival Off d'Avignon, France, since 2007. During the festival parade in 2013, *budaixi* was used for advertising Taiwan's theatre and drawing a crowd. In 2018, Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company's *The Soup of Reincarnation*, a modern *budaixi* play, was very

[54] History and stories about the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Taiwan Puppet Troupe is from my conversations and experience working with the former members, Diane Hsieh and Iris Ma for the performance celebrating the Lantern Festival on March 5, 2018 in Costa Mesa, California, as well as the blog post by Jing-Nu Chu (Chu Jing-Nu. "Weisikangxin Daxue Taiwan Budaixituan de gushi part I: diyige shinian" 威斯康辛大學台灣布袋戲團的故事 Part I: 第一個十年 [Stories of the First Ten Years of Taiwanese Puppet Troup in University of Wisconsin-Madison Part I], *Taiwanese American Historical Society*).

well received at the Festival and subsequently appeared in several media and theatrical review forums. "Festival OFF d'Avignon was deeply infatuated by vivid Taiwanese palmar drama. *The Soup of Reincarnation* ingeniously integrates Taiwanese drama and Western puppet theatre. The mythical power is still vivid in the mind, and every little story becomes extremely lively," wrote Jean Talabot of *Le Figaro*, the largest national newspaper in France.

Taiwan is made visible and further builds international connections through *budaixi* as a form of soft power. *Budaixi* has become a cultural surrogate of Taiwan, which has been absent from the global stage and international organizations. *Budaixi* is able to escape from interference or external censorship as long as it remains a cultural event, a performing art that ostensibly has nothing to do with politics. *Budaixi* as a form of cultural diplomacy is a valuable and viable means to communicate and educate a broad audience while fostering global alliances. Taiwan combines its unique history with traditional and modern culture to create a vibrant, dynamic and evolving entity. By presenting *budaixi* to a global audience, Taiwan uses individual puppeteers' hands to amplify the country's collective voice.

Concluding Thoughts: Alternative *Budaixi*

The performing arts industry in Taiwan entered a new phase in the 1980s with the flourishing of the Little Theatre Movement (*xiaojuchang yundong* 小劇場運動). Chung Minder explains that this movement was propelled by "the momentum of an exploding society and the cries of the people for a better life" (ix).[55] As Taiwan grew to be more

[55] Little Theatre derives from André Antoine's Théâtre Libre, which opposed consumerism and the institutionalized mainstream theatre, in the late nineteenth century Europe. Influenced by European theatre, the Little Theatre Movement also took place in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s. The term *xiaojuchang*, literal translation of little theatre in Chinese, was first introduced by Song Chun-fang, a theatre professor in Beijing University in 1919. He defined Little Theatre as anti-commercial and experimental. While some argues that Little Theatre Movement emerged in Taiwan as early as the 1960s, Taiwanese theatre scholar Chung Minder claimed in his PhD thesis "The Little Theatre Movement of Taiwan (1980-1989)" that

democratic both socially and politically, theatre in Taiwan also became more diverse and divergent. The Movement welcomed experiments on form, genre, and language, as well as promoted intercultural and interdisciplinary collaborations in theatre.

The Movement accentuates the collision of traditional and modern theatre, as well as the Eastern and Western cultures. This collision, which further transformed into collaboration, derived from the import of foreign works to Taiwan and their impact on traditional arts. Though there were fewer restrictions and more artistic freedom after the lifting of martial law for these performance genres, the liberalization of the arts also resulted in a waning audience for traditional arts in the contemporary society. Traditional arts and cultures gradually realized the impending extinction of various traditions. Consequently, artists in different genres sought to reform traditional arts and adapt their artistic practices to changing trends through various means; this was especially the case for more traditional forms of theatre such as *budaixi*, *gezaixi* (Taiwanese Opera), and *jingju.* As articulated in previous parts of this chapter, *budaixi*, alongside most theatres in Taiwan, has been associated with and impacted by the political climates of the past two centuries. Puppetry has had to constantly adjust its contents in order to be accepted by the dominant political ideology of various time periods. In other words, traditional aesthetics of the arts were sometimes sacrificed in exchange for survival. The democratization of Taiwan and the Little Theatre Movement offered a chance and space to seek an alternative redefinition of what "traditional" means and to further recenter the artistic values of these art forms.

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the foundation of Lan-ling Theatre (*Lanling jufang* 蘭陵劇坊) in late 1970s marked the official beginning of the Movement in Taiwan. Ever since the 1980s, there have been different waves of the Little Theatre Movement with distinct focuses and missions in Taiwan.

For instance, Contemporary Legend Theatre adapted Shakespearean plays and Greek tragedies to traditional *jingju* performance methods to create an alternative form of intercultural *jingju* theatre. Likewise, *gezaixi* began to incorporate traditional performing skills with modern theatrical techniques and has, since the 1980s, been able to enter into modern theatre spaces. Both *jingju* and *gezaixi*'s reformations resulted from the interplay of the Little Theatre Movement and the interculturalization of theatre in Taiwan, as well as the changing sociopolitical environment of the late twentieth century. Additionally, the institutionalization of *gezaixi* was also a critical part of the reform process, which heralded a new era and redefinition of Taiwanese theatre. In 1996, the first three-year educational program of traditional *gezaixi*, sponsored by the Council of Cultural Planning and Development, was established (H.Y. Chang 127).

The situation of *gezaixi* parallels the development of puppet theatres in Taiwan. Puppetmaster Chen Hsi-Huang lamented in the documentary *Father* (2017) that a tradition is hard to preserve but even harder to be practiced. In the new era where outdoor performances are no longer a part of people's lives, fewer artists are dedicated to puppetry as there is no longer a readily available audience. In response to the marginalization of puppetry in Taiwan, theatres and artists sought alternatives regarding puppetry aesthetics, stories, techniques, and puppet designs. More specifically, after frequent interactions with international artists, many *budaixi* companies began to reflect on *budaixi* as a theatrical *art* that can be staged both outdoors in front of temples and inside professional theatres. They infused the heart of modern/Western theatre, its technique and themes, with the poetic nature and metaphorical beauty of *budaixi*, thus experimenting with new ways of

storytelling through puppetry that continued the life of this art form. One example of this process can be seen in Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company's recent productions.

The name of Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company comes from the expression "so happy" in Taiwanese Hokkien. It derives from the Company founder Chiang Szu-mei's motto that everyone involved in puppet shows should be happy, including but not limited to the audience and the puppeteers. Chiang is one of the first female puppeteers of *budaixi* in Taiwan. The majority of traditional puppet theatres and *budaixi* companies in Taiwan are family-run and almost exclusively led by male puppetmasters. It was taboo to have female puppeteers perform in early society due to religious customs.[56] Classical plays therefore often center on male characters and their epics, such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin*, and *Journey to the West*. Female characters are mostly relegated to supporting roles and are either saved or punished. For instance, consider Pan Jinlian's story in *Water Margin*, an epic about 108 heroes where Pan is depicted as the epitome of wantonness and sexual excess, and is hence fated to be brutally killed.

Despite the long-standing popularity of martial arts *budaixi* in Taiwanese local society, Chiang Szu-mei develops her expertise in performing stories that feature female protagonists and focus on family, friendships, and romantic relationships. She deconstructs traditional patriarchal epics and emphasizes female voices throughout her work. As the first generation female puppeteers in traditional puppet theatre, Chiang's mastery,

[56] Traditionally, women were considered "feculent" because the blood in the menstrual cycle was associated with bad luck. As a result, women were banned from entering temples during their menstrual cycle, and consequently, women were not allowed to perform *budaixi* as it was dedicated to the gods. Another saying about the prohibition of women's involvement in puppet shows is because some puppet shows, especially string puppets, were staged to dispel evil and end adversity. Women's presence would weaken the power. ("Taiwan chuantong shehui de jingxue jinji" 臺灣傳統社會的經血禁忌 [Menstruation Taboo in Traditional Taiwanese Society] *Taiwan Nuren*, https://women.nmth.gov.tw/?p=1926.)

aesthetics, and courage to challenge untimely traditions have had a huge impact on puppeteers of later generations, including Ko Shih-hung and Ko Shih-hua, her grandsons, the third generation puppetmasters of Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company.

As a third-generation puppetmaster of *budaixi*, Ko Shih-hung realized the contemporary challenges of audience loss faced by almost all traditional theatre troupes in Taiwan. As a result, despite having already obtained mastery in *budaixi*, he joined the Puppet Arts Program at the University of Connecticut and studied Western puppetry under Professor Bert Roccoberton Jr. In an interview, Ko expressed how much he appreciated the chance to learn puppet-building and design at school. Once he crafted a puppet of *dan*, a female role type in traditional drama, and the professor responded, "the puppet is exquisitely made, but lacks personality" (qtd. in Bai and Hsu). Ko then began to rethink the possibilities of *budaixi* and realized that it was actually the limitations in form and material that make puppetry interesting. For instance, in *The Finger Movement* (2011), Ko deconstructs *budaixi* by first walking onto the stage with a puppet in his hand and then removing the puppet from his hand in front of the audience, all the while continuing his hand gestures as if he still had the puppet over his hand. Eventually, he layered the projection of the puppet on a sheer black screen moving with his bare hand. At times, the audience was able to see Ko and his hand through the screen moving along with the puppet; while at other times, Ko's hand fades into the blackness and only the puppet stays on screen. This double image revealed what was behind a *budaixi* performance, blending the virtual and the real, and further exposed the two souls that animated the puppet.

The Company is dedicated to passing down the beauty of Taiwanese *budaixi*, and therefore, Ko and his family continue to produce classical plays staged outdoors for

religious festivals. Simultaneously, they also pursue new possibilities for *budaixi*. For instance, since 2018, the Company has been collaborating with directors of modern puppetry to create interdisciplinary and multimedia puppet shows; these works include *The Soup of Reincarnation* (*Mengpo Tang* 孟婆．湯; 2018), *Cycle of Gongho* (*Yizhang Qing* 一丈青; 2019), *My Puppet My Life* (2020), *Wangye's Meal* (*Wangye Fan* 王爺飯; 2021), *Adieu* (*Bai* 掰; 2021), and more. Building upon the beauty and techniques of *budaixi*, these pieces transcend the fourth wall of the *budaixi* platform stage to reflect on the puppeteers' family, life and art through interweaving classical *budaixi* plays with puppeteers' personal stories.

The Soup of Reincarnation and *Cycle of Gongho* draw parallels between female characters in male-centered classical plays and Chiang's own career as the first female puppeteer in the male-dominated art of *budaixi* in Taiwan. These female characters of these two plays—Wang Baochuan, Bai Suzhen, Pan Jinlian, and Hu Sanniang—are often neglected as archetypal female characters in classical texts and *budaixi* plays, treated as mere appendages to their male counterparts. These womenare either praised for their compliance with "female virtues" or condemned for their defiance. The plays themselves can be interpreted as Chiang's response to the patriarchal environment of *budaixi* and discrimination against women in folk and religious traditions. *Wangye's Meal*, on the contrary, features one of the gods of theatre, Xiqin Wangye 西秦王爺, and reflects on religious devotion, familial harmony, gratitude, and humility in Chiang and her family's lives. All of Chiang's plays dismantle the theatrical illusion of traditional *budaixi* by emphasizing the performers' presence on stage as well as the *humanness* and liveliness of *budaixi*.

Figure 1.3 *The Soup of Reincarnation* (2018). Photo Credit: Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company

The Company has dedicated itself to repositioning *budaixi* from a folk practice or political tool to *art* by recontextualizing the aesthetics of *budaixi* in contemporary theatre. Indeed, the folk aspect of *budaixi* and its political utility constitute unique artistic values in themselves that reflect the various temporalities and spatialities to which *budaixi* has been adapted. However, *budaixi* can easily become replaceable if it is only valued for its "functions." As mentioned earlier, as a survivors' art, *budaixi* has survived even the most intense political turbulence by being elastic. Ironically, it is in this new era when *budaixi* is finally from being appropriated by politics that it faces the biggest challenge of survival. Reformation and innovation have been the most urgent task for all *budaixi* companies in Taiwan; however, the pressure to adapt can also shackle the potential of *budaixi* as an art

form. For example, artists are driven by box office and media coverage to pursue more modern style *budaixi* shows that involve advanced lighting technologies, projections, and scenic designs. While stage effects easily catch people's attention, puppets can become secondary to the show. In a scene of a puppetry competition documentary, Chen Hsi-Huang, one of the competition judges, angrily left his seat after seeing a few contestants' performances (L.C. Yang). Chen lamented seeing so much creativity in the younger generation but no basic skills (*jibengong* 基本功). When modernization and Westernization become the basis of and goal for performances, there arises a dilemma between innovation and preservation of puppetry skills and artistry (*jiyi* 技藝). The yet-to-be-answered question then lies in how one maintains rigorous training in established technical skills while at the same time inviting creativity and innovation.

As *budaixi* goes from outdoor to indoor and from local entertainment to global performance, the challenges of adaptation to change persist. In the past decade, some have looked toward the commercialization of *budaixi*, like what Pili Puppetry has been contributing to, as a means to revitalize *budaixi* as popular culture (Silvio "Pili budaixi"), while others call on the government to provide financial support to *budaixi* companies, which are claimed to be but never treated as the national treasure of Taiwan (Li, qtd. in *Father*).

Nevertheless, *budaixi* does not cease to evolve with the people on the island. It is always ready to take on new challenges, to serve as a reservoir of people's memories (*jiyi* 記憶) and skills (*jiyi* 技藝), and to *become* something different and unique. Ko Shih-Hung shared in an interview that he never simply perceived *budaixi* as "an art, but his life and his reality. Being a real life, it has to keep up with the times, and constantly make connections

with the people and the things around" (qtd. in Bai and Hsu). Moreover, similar to what Chen said in the documentary, they both believe in "passing down the cultural heritage" with the support of modern technology; yet, *budaixi* is to be practiced as a living repertoire rather than being displayed in museums as archives. *Budaixi* acts as a cultural heritage; in this sense, puppetry performances are a reenactment or reimagination of traditions, transmission of knowledge, a remembering of one's roots, and an embodiment of a collective identity.

Budaixi presents the zeitgeist of Taiwan. In my opinion, it is never possible or necessary to depoliticize *budaixi* as politics have always been an essential aspect of puppetry throughout the centuries. As mentioned earlier, most of the performing arts troupes and organizations in Taiwan depend on government support. The innovation, modernization, globalization, and intercultural experimentation of the arts can all be, explicitly or implicitly, an extension of government policy. Moreover, though *budaixi* has metamorphosed over the years, it does not simply submit to political pressures but instead finds a way to turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones; *budaixi* is, after all, a survival art. It can also be said that tumultuous political environments cultivate *budaixi*'s unique artistry and resilience, just like Taiwan. It is crucial to consider the performativity of Taiwaneseness and Taiwanese culture, and how *budaixi* is involved or is used for the making and remaking of this ideology.

CHAPTER 2

A Response to Trauma—Puppets and White Terror

228 Peace Memorial Park looks like nothing more than an ordinary city park in Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan. Located close to my high school, 228 Park holds some of my fondest memories of hanging out with friends and practicing guitar after school. Yet, people always looked perplexed when I mentioned the wonderful time I had there, as I was apparently oblivious to the historical trauma associated with the Park. It was not until relatively recently did I start to realize its historical significance; 228 Park is indeed a political space. My generation—the millennials who were born in the 1980s and 1990s—is considered fortunate because we grew up with the sweetness of economic bloom and witnessed Taiwan's gradual democratization and because the historical trauma that defined Taiwan seemed forgotten history. This generation-specific experience is probably the reason why I could experience 228 Park as nothing more than a leisure space.

The Park contains a peace monument commemorating the Incident that occurred on February 28, 1947 (the 228 Incident). This cenotaph was installed in 1995, but the plaque's inscription remained blank for another two years. Shortly after the completion of the cenotaph, the plaque bearing the original inscription describing the incident was pried off due to 228 victims' disapproval of the official version concerning the cause and aftermath of the incident. Though the plaque was restored later, there has never been a consensus around what *History* should be inscribed on the cenotaph; the disagreement of the text reflects people's divergent perceptions of history and competing historical memories. What to write, as well as how and who to commemorate, have been and will certainly continue to

be political. *History* is oftentimes, if not always, controlled by those in power, whereas *history*, is by nature multiple and dissonant. Inscribing any text to commemorate a historical trauma at this scale is almost an impossible task.

The blankness of the plaque and the absence of the inscription resonate with the argument of Taiwan's "subject as void" investigated in the first chapter. What *history* should be inscribed? Is it ever possible to accurately describe a historical event on a plaque, or even in research? How do artists, as well as readers, especially those from later generations, approach the nation's past? The 228 Incident, which was preceded by centuries of colonialism and followed by thirty-eight years of martial law, is merely one of Taiwan's many ineffable *histories*, and yet, the memory of the event is still relatively fresh and its impact persists even today.

Following the framework developed in the previous chapter, this chapter illustrates the intersections between puppetry and historical memories and trauma by looking at three creative pieces that use puppets as a narrative medium to performatively embody and reenact historical memories during the first two decades of martial law after the 228 Incident in 1947. If official commemorations and monuments are manifestations of memories promulgated by the state, then performative reenactments are examples of individual memories standing beyond the limits of official memory, which is inherently selective and always already politicized.[57] In this chapter, I draw parallels between a puppet's ambivalent nature of *being alive while dead* and the victims who died or

[57] When addressing the idea of "official memory" or "official history," I am referring to government sanctioned versions and narratives. It is important to note that even the official history, though, is not monolithic—it changes depending on the ruling party and/or dominant ideology under every specific temporality and spatiality. The official history also influences and is influenced by Taiwan's multiple educational reforms since the Second World War, especially pertaining to the narratives and choice of words used to describe Japanese colonization, the 228 Incident, and the White Terror in high school history books.

disappeared, and thus were unable to be remembered or commemorated, during the White Terror, a period of massive political repression that started in the late 1940s. This chapter further explores the potentiality of puppets in challenging death and forgetting.

This research grew out of my personal experience as someone born and raised in post-martial law Taiwan. I feel a sense of urgency in investigating the second or third-hand memories of the White Terror period that continue to haunt Taiwan, especially as the first-hand victim generation ages out. Meanwhile, there is also a plethora of scholarly exploration of Taiwan's history and how history is inscribed, represented, and presented to the generations following the 228 generation. 228 and what comes thereafter, whether it be presented literally or symbolically, have also become a popular literary and artistic topic in the past two decades through the extensive creation of works in diverse forms and genres, such as films, TV series, novels, poetry, games, and theatre, among others. This chapter is one of the many scholarly contributions that interrogates the power and potential problems of these literary and artistic representations. I begin with a historical background of the 228 Incident and the martial law period, specifically what has been later defined as the White Terror, with special attention to the intersections between history and memory. I further discuss the potential of puppetry to address and redress trauma through its relationship with death and destruction. I then offer a detailed analysis of three White Terror-themed creative pieces that use puppets to *represent the unrepresentable*.

Looking Back: A Brief Note on Historical Background

It is generally agreed that the impetus of the 228 Incident occurred in Taipei on February 27, 1947, when agents of the Tobacco and Alcohol Monopoly Bureau struck Lin

Jiang Mai, a widow suspected of selling contraband cigarettes, with the butt of a pistol while arresting her.[58] A large crowd swarmed the agents, prompting one agent to open fire on the angry bystanders, killing Chen Wenxi.[59] The incident plunged the island into a mix of mass protests and armed uprisings that spanned the following days. On February 28, more than a thousand people gathered to march on the Monopoly Bureau to demand the execution of the agent in question and the resignation of the bureau director. Another large crowd then gathered outside of the Governor-General's office where they were fired upon by soldiers, causing several casualties. Subsequently, mass uprisings erupted all across Taiwan. While the 228 Incident marked the beginning of the uprising, people's dissatisfaction with the corruption and disorganization of the KMT administration remains the primary reason for the unrest. The unrest lasted for around a week before military reinforcements were commanded to put down the uprisings, causing thousands of deaths of both islanders (*benshengren*) and mainlanders (*waishengren*).[60] For the following thirty-eight years,

[58] The description of the 228 Incident can be found in books, articles and documentations of interviews with slight variations. I referenced an edited collection of related articles by Chang Yan-hsien, Chen Meirong and Yang Ya-Hui, as well as a book series of oral history by the witnesses of the 228 Incident published by Wu San-Lian Taiwan History Foundation Publishing, and the *Research Report of 228 Incident* by Executive Yuan of Taiwan in 1994. In the English resources documenting and examining the incident, Lin Jiang Mai's name is often mistakenly given as Lin Chiang-mai or Lin Jiangmai. In fact, Lin was her husband's surname and Jiang (or Chiang) was hers. The custom at the time was that the wife would place her husband's surname before her own.

[59] Descriptions of the Incident can be found in the newspapers *Taiwan Shin Sheng Daily News* (*Taiwan xinshengbao* 台灣新生報), *Heping Daily* (*Heping ribao* 和平日報), *Zhongjian Daily* (*Zhongjian ribao* 重建日報), *Taiwan People News* (*Minbao* 民報), *People's Herald* (*Renmin daobao* 人民導報), *Daming News* (*Daming bao* 大明報), *Rising Taiwan Daily* (*Xintai ribao* 興臺日報), *Chungwai Daily* (*Zhongwai ribao* 中外日報) and *China Daily News* (*Zhonghua ribao* 中華日報) on February 28, 1947.

[60] Mainlanders, or *waishengren*, generally refer to the group of migrants who arrived in Taiwan from mainland China after the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II in 1945, and the Nationalists, or Kuomintang (KMT)'s retreat at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. During the early years of the receipt of Taiwan from Japan, most government officials were mainlanders. In contrast to mainlanders, islanders, or *benshengren* refers to the people who came to Taiwan before World War II and their offspring. Taiwanese whose ancestors came from southern Fujian (specifically, the Minnan region of Quanzhou, Xiamen, and Zhangzhou) and have been living in Taiwan since before the Japanese occupation in 1895 would be universally considered as *benshengren*. Most islanders were Hokkien and Hakka speakers whereas mainlanders spoke different languages based on their origin; nevertheless, since Mandarin was the official language for ROC, more mainlanders could apprehand Mandarin than islanders.

Taiwan was placed under martial law to suppress communist activities and political dissidence.

Martial laws, along with other temporary provisions, authorized the arrest and trial of civilians by a military court under various pretexts. Massive suppression, imprisonment, and even execution of political dissidents took place during this period, which was later generally referred to as the White Terror period.[61] Thousands of people in Taiwan were executed for their real or perceived opposition to the KMT government led by President Chiang Kai-shek, and for their being a threat to the regime. Most of the people prosecuted were convicted as spies or sympathizers for Chinese communists, and were thus punished or executed. White Terror in Taiwan took place during the similar period of time as the emergence of Red Scare in the U.S. after the second World War.

Jonathan Manthorpe has identified the White Terror as "the command's campaign against Taiwanese advocates of reform or independence" that eventually led to 90,000 arrests and about 45,000 executions by the KMT government from 1949 to 1987 (204). Yet, due to the difficulties of identifying victims, collecting relevant documentation, and even reaching a consensus about the exact period of the White Terror among the government, scholars, victims, and their families, the number of legal cases, victims and human casualties remains controversial, depending on whether to cover the 228 Incident and/or the few years before or after the lifting of martial law. It is certain that the White Terror has

[61] The Republic of China, overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911, took control of Taiwan on behalf of the World War II Allies following the surrender of Japan in 1945. The resumption of the Chinese Civil War resulted in the ROC's loss of mainland China to forces of the Chinese Communist Party and the KMT-led ROC officially moved the central government to Taiwan in 1949. To tackle internal and external crises, the government implemented the "Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion" in 1948, then martial law the following year in Taiwan.

some, if not complete, overlaps with the martial law era.[62] In addition to the persecution and disappearance of overt political dissidents, omnipresent state surveillance, police patrols, and self-censorship cast a long shadow over the entire society.

Though tthe cases of political arrests and executions substantially decreased after the 1960s, resistance did not cease. Finally, in December of 1979—the Formosa Incident, the watershed event of Taiwan's democratization movement took place in Kaohsiung, the biggest city in southern Taiwan. The Formosa Incident, also known as the Kaohsiung Incident or Meilidao Incident, was a result of multiple political and social factors at the domestic and international levels. Internationally, the Formosa Incident indirectly resulted from the U.S. government's termination of diplomatic ties with the Republic of China and the establishment of an official relationship with the People's Republic of China; domestically, election scandals intensified conflicts between the state and opposition movement activists who were represented by the dissident magazine *Formosa* (*Meilidao zazhi*).[63] An International Human Rights Day rally was then organized on December 10.

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[62] While historians like Jonathan Manthorpe argue that Taiwan's White Terror began right after the 228 Incident in 1947, others claim that it started with the implementation of martial law in 1949. As for the end of White Terror, while many consider the lifting of martial law in 1987 also marks the end of the White Terror, the Taiwan Association for Truth and Reconciliation argues that the White Terror did not officially come to an end until the abolishment of the Betrayers Punishment Act in 1991 and the amendment to Article 100 of Criminal Code in 1992 when speech and thoughts would no longer be censored. The divergence makes it difficult to calculate the number of political cases and victims of the White Terror. Based on the estimation by the Ministry of Justice, Republic of China, and "The White Terror and Transitional Justice" by Zhang Yanxian, there were over 29,000 cases and 140,000 victims during the White Terror.
Zhang Yanxiang. "Jieyan shiqi baisekongbu yu zhuanxing zhengyi lunwenji daoyan 戒嚴時期白色恐怖與轉型正義論文集導言 [Introduction to Paper Collection of White Terror under Martial Law and Transitional Justice]." *Wu San-lien Taiwan shiliao jijinhui* 吳三連台灣史料基金會 *[Wu San-lien Taiwan History Materials Foundation]*.

[63] KMT had been the largest political party recognized in Taiwan before the 1970s that took up majority of seats in Legislative Yuan (parliament). The *tangwai* (literally "outside the party," the KMT) movement was a loosely knit political movement in the mid-1970s and early 80s. Since the majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan were held by delegates representing constituencies in mainland China, who were elected in 1947 and appointed since then, the *Tangwai* movement were unable to acquire substantial power. They were yet able to use the legislature as a platform for debating the ruling party. In response to more islanders taking public office, the *Tangwai* movement attempted to contest elections in the late 1970s and demand more changes to the political system. However, the election in 1979 was canceled due to the cease of official ties with the

Though the rally was intended to be a peaceful demonstration, the situation soon turned violent as many central figures associated with the magazine were arrested. Many of those who were put on trial, as well as their lawyers, later became the core members of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The Formosa Incident marked the first planned civil movement in Taiwan's postwar history and was a triggering event for the growing democratization movement and people's burgeoning political consciousness. Due to similar incidents gaining global attention, the state gradually eased its control for international pressure, eventually announcing the end of martial law in 1987.

Opening up of the historical wounds of the authoritarian period was a slow and painful process. It was not until 1995 that President Lee Teng-hui offered an apology and invited open discussion of this past. After many official documents had been slowly declassified, there were more explicit discussions and depictions of historical events during the White Terror. Despite increased access to historical materials and more literary and artistic representations of the event, people find it difficult to approach this part of history due to a substantial portion of the general public is personally connected to the people involved;many of the victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and their families still being alive and living with the repercussions of what happened. As mentioned previously, conflicts between the official memory and individual memories also pose hindrances to navigating this trauma.

United States. The situation then intensified the conflicts between the authority and those who were "outside the party." The activists of *Tangwai* movement perceived the cancellation of the election as a conspiracy that intended to suppress them from being involved in the political system. Along with other factors, the Formosa Incident broke out.

Many scholars draw inspiration from Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma as a way to critically approach the investigation of Taiwan's White Terror. Caruth writes:

> trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language (4).

Likewise, I am particularly intrigued by what Caruth describes as a "delayed appearance," or an absence of immediate response to overwhelming and catastrophic events. Sylvia Li-Chun Lin also points out that the recollection of Taiwan's past mirrors the symptoms of a trauma patient in the sense of a "delayed response" caused by "government-imposed amnesia" administered through repressive regulation of the past (8). In fact, this belatedness and amnesia, whether coerced in order to suppress dissent or as a psychological response to collective trauma, resonate with many other traumatic events that, instead of receiving recognition or apology instantly after the event, require decades for acknowledgment, or have simply remained disavowed. Some examples include the forced laboring of comfort women in Taiwan, South Korea, and several other Asian countries during World War II; the wartime abuse of these women has never been properly or officially acknowledged, and some victims have even received backlash for speaking up due to Japanese officials' neo-nationalism (Kuki). While awaiting an official apology and reparatory action for over eight decades, many comfort women victims have already passed. Some survived the atrocities yet struggled their entire lives with post-traumatic

complications that manifested both physically and mentally, as well as amnesia, social marginalization, and political stigma. Traumatic experiences become the *yet-to-be-remembered* memory that may temporarily deny people the ability to iterate, to convey what has actually happened. Despite trauma not being consciously remembered, it nevertheless does not simply disappear, but is rather suppressed and persists in a different manner. Submerged trauma leaves traces and is oftentimes passed on to subsequent generations.

The Taiwanese government and local organizations, along with survivors and victims' families, have recognized the need to revisit the past and document what happened in order to start the process of reparation and healing. In addition to documentation from historical archives, there has been an extensive amount of literature, theatre productions, films, and artistic interventions into authoritarian period history after the lifting of martial law. As most of the works above are a recreation or reimagination of the past in the present based on fragmentary documents and individuals' recollections, we must critically explore how historical memory, meaning and meaning of it are constructed. There are always inevitable gaps between the actual events themselves and how they are perceived, remembered, digested, interpreted, imagined, and later presented through diverse mediums.

Pierre Janet defines "habit memory" as an "automatic integration of new information without much conscious attention to what is happening" (qtd. in Alphen 36). Particularly after martial law, people's urge to know what exactly happened in the past sixty years resulted in their taking as fact the memories depicted in texts, films, and art pieces as the only memories and reality of the past; in other words, this form of memory formation,

which Janet would categorize as habit memory, potentially construes intentionally recreated memories for actual history. The habit memory of 228 is generated through films and literature in which mostly portray the Incident as "something terrible happened," followed by scenes of curfew, occasional conflicts and constant military presence in the streets. Habit memory complicates how history is presented and interacts with the present; however, the term is not a pejorative concept meant to degrade this form of memory as an unreliable source of history. Dominick LaCapra argues that memory can be a critical source of history and is informative even in "its falsifications, repression, displacements, and denials" (19).

Recognizing the imperfect nature of memory and the difficulty of representing trauma and atrocity, Sylvia Li-Chun Lin investigates the strategies and problems of literary recreations and cinematic depictions of the 228 Incident and White Terror by focusing on representations of state-sanctioned atrocity, referencing the creation of habit memory. Building upon Lin's research on literary and cinematic representations, this chapter examines puppetry as a means to reenact memories of the past as well as memorialize and heal a nation's trauma. The practice of trauma redress and memory making share similar features to what Richard Schechner calls "restored behavior." Schechner writes that "behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed," and people "get in touch with, recover, remember, or even invent these strips of behavior and then rebehave according to these strips, either by being absorbed into them (playing the role, going into trance) or by existing side by side with them (Brecht's *Verfrerndungseffekt*)" (36). The notion of restored behavior, or twice-behaved behavior, underpins the central argument of this chapter. In a similar spirit, I contend that puppetry provides a way to engage with

trauma and memories by offering a "reparative reading" (24), using Marriane Hirsch's term denoting an alternative way of knowing, and thus further serves as an alternative method of revisiting historical memories, transmitting embodied knowledge, and potentially healing trauma.

This chapter analyses three case studies—the two puppet shows, *Lala: The Singing Bear* (*Ai Changge de Xiaoxiong* 愛唱歌的小熊; 2019) and *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry* (*Shuohao Buyaoku* 說好不要哭; 2019), and a video game, *Detention* (*Fanxiao* 返校, 2017)—to explore how puppetry works as a means to address and redress national trauma since all three of these works use puppets as either symbols or incarnations of White Terror political victims.[64] My interest further lies in how these pieces from different artistic mediums use puppets to recuperate stories previously untold, censored, or silenced. In addition, they offer distinct immersive experiences, the spatiality of which further complicates the interactions and relationships between puppet and audience/player.

Since my case studies target generations born and raised after martial law, this research explores puppetry's potential to present or transmit White Terror memory to the *generations after*, referencing Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory. Hirsch describes postmemory as:

> mediated, cultural, but it has also escaped through the open doorway in the photograph to haunt the natural landscapes of the present. The ghosts have become part of our landscape, reconfiguring the domestic as well as the public spaces of the postgeneration (25).

[64] The two puppet shows will be referred to as *Lala* and *I Promised* in this chapter thereafter.

Hirsch first used the term "postmemory" in the early 1990s and has been redefining and refining the term since. Postmemory describes "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (Hirsch). Hirsch explores Holocaust survivors and their children's relationship with traumatic memories. Postmemory was later adopted to refer to the younger generation's experience and imagination of, resonance with, and emotive responses to horrible events that happened in the past. These experiences are transmitted to later generations through literature, films, artworks, journals, and memorials, among other mediums.

To date, it has been 74 years since the 228 Incident and only a few decades since the end of martial law. Not everyone in Taiwan today has personally experienced or witnessed the 228 Incident or the White Terror. Those who came from mainland China in 1949 only saw the aftermath of the 228 Incident. The generation born in the post-martial law era understands the 228 Incident or White Terror even less, echoing my personal reflection at the beginning of this chapter. As Dominic Yang argues regarding the historical memory of the 228 Incident, Taiwan has gradually entered the postmemory generation—the generation that has never personally had similar experiences. Meanwhile, many of the people who have experienced these traumatic events themselves have passed away. The postmemory generation continues to bear the unutterable feeling of anxiety and haunting while accessing and learning about this trauma only through second-hand sources.

Certainly, experiences of the 228 Incident and the White Terror are mostly transmitted to later generations through literature, films, artworks, journals, and

memorials, among other mediums. The connection between postmemory and the past is not direct but rather, echoing Pierre Janet's notion of habit memory, mediated by imagination, projection, introjection, and creation. While the terror, fear, and perhaps pain are filtered, they can still be felt by and passed onto later generations. This is how past events continue to influence the present and future. In this chapter, I am especially interested in how puppetry serves as a medium that influences the present through performative reenactment and embodiment of the past.

Maurice Blanchot also argued that the children of the postgeneration "are thus obliged to fill in the blank spaces with their own words and imagination, to find their own way back to the past that has been denied to them—to remember what they did not know" (qtd. in Fine 44). Such memories are constructed and thus diverge as they, in contrast to the monolithic official history, are created by and belong to each individual person. The creative pieces discussed in this chapter are all mediums designed to forge an individual's remembrance of the past. Through these case studies, I demonstrate puppetry's ability to not only retain but transmit memories and knowledge and hence respond to the nation's need of remembering. Through the discussion of puppetry's engagement with White Terror discourse, I argue that puppet performance serves as a means for the postgenerations to navigate past trauma, as well as a mechanism against the institutionalization of memory that has designated what is to be remembered and is to be forgotten. The productions of these pieces that involve puppetry are, if not overlapping, in line with the current government's active advocacy for transitional justice through revisiting trauma and memories starting from the second decade of the twentieth century.

Additionally, the two plays and the game investigated in this chapter are manifestations of individual memories and reflect individual engagement with the (re)invention of memories as a way to counter the systematic and selective erasure of memories through diverse means. While *Detention* invites players to witness and participate in reimagining historical trauma through the medium of a video game, *Lala* and *I Promised* reinterpret the actual experiences of two survivors and turn the horror into a narrative accessible to a broad audience. Nevertheless, these artistic interventions offer distinct spaces and create opportunities for commemoration.

Trauma, Violence, Death and the Uncanny Resemblance

With regards to a nation's trauma, the inability to deal with pain, struggle, suffering, and death is one of the main reasons for willed amnesia, which functions as a survival tactic to avoid retraumatization. Certainly, death is hard to touch upon in its nature, not to mention the recreation of death in literary or artistic works. Though the concept itself is abstract, death cannot be more real, frightening, and heartbreaking for people who have slipped through death, or have someone. Death is also not an uncommon theme in literature, films, and art that touch upon the 228 Incident or the White Terror; yet, it is often depicted in an extremely restrained and subtle manner. One of the most memorable scenes in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *A City of Sadness*, a film set during the 228 Incident, includes a poem referencing Meiji era folklore of a young Japanese girl who committed suicide to preserve her youth and beauty like cherry blossoms:

> Fellow cherry blossoms,
>
> Just fly.

I will come with you thereafter.

We are all the same.[65]

The poem shares a metaphor of death being inevitable and inescapable. It expresses an unsettling undertone and the impact of colonialism, as well as an uncanny reincarnation of Japanese fascism and imperialism in the 1930s and 40s that once again haunted the public after the takeover of Taiwan by the KMT government. The imagery of the cherry blossom is used in Hou's film to encourage and invigorate those who were arrested during the 228 Incident, while at the same time denoting the possibility of death ahead of them and the ephemerality of freedom and life. Besides this poem, death itself is consistently absent in the film. Like *A City of Sadness*, many films, literary works, and theatrical pieces tend to address cruelty and atrocity through allusions, similar to how scenes of death are always delivered by messengers in Greek tragedies. How then do puppets engage with such conversations of death and destruction and present the unrepresentable?

Puppets have an intimate relationship with death. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, puppets have been traditionally associated with death in various cultures as *doubles* of the dead. Actually, the life of puppets may feed on death and destruction. In many cultures, "puppets were brought to life precisely to provide homes for the souls of the dead; they repair a loss of life or to keep ancestral spirits alive, to give them a way to speak to the living" (Gross 22). Puppets give people a channel to connect with the dead as they resemble but are not actually humans. These puppets provoke a sense of the *uncanny* and strangely familiar feelings of revulsion in viewers.

[65] Cherry blossoms (*sakura*) fall down and wilt when they are in full bloom. The allegory of cherry bloom refers to the mentality that it is better to leave or die gloriously instead of muddling along. It is also a manifestation of *mono no aware*, a Japanese idiom referring to the awareness of impermanence or transience of things around life. The idiom can be literally translated as "the pathos of things."

Uncanniness features prominently in the following case studies, especially with regards to how the two puppet shows analyzed here target postgenerations by using animated animal puppets to incite positive emotional connection, which contrasts sharply with the use of *budaixi* to evoke fear in the horror genre video game *Detention*. Additionally, the death of puppets and their bearing of violence are close to but not exactly resembling the death and violence inflicted on actual victims and thus generate feelings of uncanny in the audience. John Bell explores the social function of puppets' uncanniness by explaining that: "Modern puppet performances can be threatening, doubt-inducing, and anxiety-provoking events because they remind us that we are not necessarily in control of as much as we thought we were" (50). Puppets bring the audience's attention to the people who were silenced or died during White Terror and keep their spirits alive by listening to their stories and remembering what happened to them.

In addition, the resiliency of puppets resonates with the survivors of the White Terror. Matthew Cohen suggests that puppets "are made to be destroyed in performance and return magically to life" (127)—just like what Picasso said about his paintings: "a sum of destructions" that is made to be destroyed but is never lost as it always turns into something else. In French puppeteer, Philippe Genty's famous untitled puppet show, a clown boy named Pierrot Marionette suddenly becomes aware of the strings controlling his limbs, which extend to a control bar above him, and thus discovers the puppeteer. Determined to liberate himself from the strings that control him, the boy casts the strings off one by one until finally there is no string attached and he falls to his death. Freedom eventually comes, but the boy also loses the source of his movement and expression. When the last string breaks, Genty picks up the marionette and walks off with it. Despite the

lifelessness of the puppet, it does not really *die*. Pierrot Marionette's death and destruction are incomplete because he can always be revived in the next show, at least until the puppet figure disintegrates into a "formless materiality" (Williams 18). Victor Molina said, "as long as we can see the smallest fragment of its destroyed body, there is a potential puppet" (177). A puppet's death is simultaneously their *unbecoming alive* and *becoming a different life*, as death is solely a migration of spirits, memories, and stories.

This is, in my opinion, exactly the reason why puppets are used to portray a traumatic history since they do not simply vanish after death but become something else. As many 228 and White Terror victims were removed from society without any documentation, identifying these victims remains a difficult task. Puppetry somehow captures and embodies a mode of existence that resists being completely erased. Puppets' lives linger, as do historical memories.

Earlier in this dissertation, I discussed the relationship between humans and puppets and argued that puppets have the ability to become or unbecome the thoughts on our minds and embody or reenact our memories and emotions. Puppets are also unassuming. In the case of the White Terror, puppets are the representation of the victims and also our own incarnations, as the audience connects to those figures portrayed by puppets *as if they were alive*. Through interacting with the puppets in a video game or in theatre, audience members are offered a chance to experience what Victor Turner would call "liminality," which goes beyond any representation of the past and trauma. Puppets are, in a sense, a material medium (re)connecting us to things that are dead, lost, repressed, or untouched. They liberate people and their energies to *feel* and *experience* trauma and manifest postmemories.

There are other reasons for using puppets to represent the victims, and sometimes, the perpetrators of a traumatic past. Handspring Puppet Company's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) is a play with puppets that responds to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission vis a vis performance and a theatrical discussion about national trauma. The victims in the play are performed by puppets in consideration of victims' dignity and feelings, especially those who are alive or even in the auditorium watching the show. Director William Kentridge explained the impossibility of showing the experience of trauma through reproducing torture due to our inability to fully comprehend a victim's experience or realistically reproduce a murder scene; thus, Kentridge elaborated, the horrifying experience of trauma should be presented through a heightened theatricalized reality. The use of puppets creates a proper distance between the actual events and their theatrical or artistic representations for people to react and respond to the unspeakable and unrepresentable experience of trauma. Puppetry offers an alternative means for (re)presenting trauma and unfolding associated sensibilities through interaction between humans and puppets.

Shane Graham comments on the use of puppets as victims in *Ubu*: "[b]y using puppets to stand in and for the bodies of victims and survivors, *Ubu* calls attention to the constructedness of self and the very experience of embodiment" (42). The uncanniness of puppets has the potential to transcend the very notion of embodiment and representation that has restricted people in their pursuit of the real. Similar to how puppets function in *Ubu*, puppets in *Lala* and *I Promised* stand-in for victims of the White Terror in order to undercut the boundary between reality and theatricality and to provide an emotional distance for the audience. In thinking of *Detention*, though the game itself already provides

a mediated player experience, puppets similarly function to produce a feeling of uncanniness and a heightened theatrical experience. In the same spirit, the presence of shadows—not necessarily shadow puppets—in all of the case studies analyzed in this chapter works as a *double* of the people as well. Shadows are also referred to as the embodiment of lingering souls and spirits, resonating with many puppet traditions, which will be further elucidated in the next chapter.

Finally, how to bring life to the dead through puppetry? Teri Silvio employs the concept of animation instead of performance in her study of puppet performances in the age of digital media. Silvio distinguishes performance from animation by arguing that performance is the "construction of social selves (individual or group identities) through the introjection of qualities from exterior models (roles, images) and the expression of those qualities through the medium of the body" while animation is the "construction of social others through the projection of qualities perceived as human [. . .] outside the self and into the sensory environment, through acts of creation, perception, and interaction" (*Puppets, Gods, and Brands* 18-9).[66] Silvio draws our attention to the power of animation in relation to puppetry by emphasizing the animative act of *breathing life into* inanimate things.

Though this dissertation does not adopt Silvio's distinction between performance and animation, her idea does enrich the analysis of *Lala* and *I Promised* as the characters and puppets are animated, further allowing them to connect with younger audiences as both are family and children-oriented. Additionally, the avatars in *Detention* are also closely associated with animation as they are 2D computer-generated figures. The idea that

[66] The quotes are italicized in the original text.

animation involves the projection of qualities perceived as human (*Puppets, Gods, and Brands* 19), in my opinion, shares a quality with Richard Schechner's restored behavior and Rebecca Schneider's performative reenactment—it is not about reproducing the experiences of the two actual victims of the White Terror through the most accurate and realistic representation, but about how the audience engage with their stories and how they project and see themselves in the position of the victims. Puppetry and animation allow the audience to recognize and constantly be aware of, or even question, one's position; they further allow the audience to build a relationship between oneself and the past through what has been seen and experienced. As Silvio writes: "[a]nimation is a platform for the comparative study of how human beings negotiate the relationship between self and the world" ("Animation" 435).

Puppets' Performative Reenactment for Postgenerations: Flip Flops Theatre (*Gajiaotuo jutuan* 夾腳拖劇團)'s *Lala: the Singing Bear* (2019) and *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry* (2019)

Despite the common use of the 228 Incident and the White Terror as an artistic or literary trope after the martial law era, it remains difficult for some people to openly or effectively address these historical traumas since 1) many families of the victims, perpetrators, and witnesses are still living in its repercussions and are thus unable to be emotionally distanced or detached from these events; 2) much conduct was either undocumented or their documents were lost, and 3) there is and will never be a true account about what has happened, what is right or wrong, and what to do. It was not until the past two decades that the themes became more common in the media and on stage and involved more explicit discussions and portrayals of historical events. Especially after

Taiwan's Transitional Justice Commission and National Human Rights Museum were officially established in 2018, more government resources and private funds have been invested in the documentation of the White Terror and seeking reparations for the victims. The two puppet shows discussed in this section were supported by these resources.

This section examines two contemporary puppet shows, Flip Flops Theatre's *Lala: The Singing Bear* (2019) and *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry* (2019); both use puppets as the incarnation of two actual victims of the White Terror.[67] The two shows are based on two people's actual experiences being arrested and imprisoned, which is in contrast to the other case study of this chapter, *Detention*, in which the setting and characters are semi-fictional and unspecified. This section specifically looks into how puppets interweave the present with the past, the physical with the psychic, reality with dream, and further unfold individual experiences and sensibilities while retrieving lost history through an interfolding network of humanity beyond humans. Particularly, both *Lala* and *I Promised* are produced as family, children-oriented theatre. The two shows replaced realistic portrayals of violence and atrocity under the White Terror with the magical and fantastical world of the puppets. I focus on the poetic and figurative nature of puppetry as it is adopted as a medium to address trauma and translate memories into accessible narratives for young audiences.

Furthermore, I draw attention to the interplay of puppet performance and space. Both *Lala* and *I Promised*, though not necessarily designed to be site-specific, were once staged in the Jing-Mei White Terror Memorial Park, a site that was once used as the Military Justice Academy campus and later became the location of security agencies' detention centers and military courts, and is now home to the National Human Rights Museum. This

[67] The production of both pieces was indirectly attributed to the establishment of Taiwan's Transitional Justice Commission and National Human Rights Museum.

unique spatiality creates an immersive experience for players and audience to see and to be a part of what happened. The puppet shows in this specific setting invite audience members to be witnesses to the past and actively engage with the retelling and remembering of multifaceted histories through being physically present in this historical space. In what follows, I consider: how are postmemories constructed and imagined through these puppet shows for young audiences? What contributes to the transition from suppressing traumatic memories to actively participating in historical reenactment? How do we *perform* transitional justice?

Performing Transitional Justice

Supported by the National Human Rights Museum, *Lala* and *I Promised* are explicit about their goal to be a motivating force for Taiwan's transitional justice. Based on Louis Bickford's definition, transitional justice is a field of activity that focuses on "how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses, mass atrocity, and other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war, in order to build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future" (1045). The practice of transitional justice endeavors to confront, seek effective means to redress, and prevent the recurrence of injustice by being vigilant and conscious of the context in which these events took place. How is performance, especially puppetry, employed in the larger field of transitional justice?

"The trial is preeminently a theatrical form. [. . .] And as the trial is preeminently a theatrical form, the theater is a courtroom," said Susan Sontag (90) in response to the Eichmann trial. Likewise, Catherine Cole writes extensively about the theatricality and performativity of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, drawing attention to

how it "embraced performance as a central feature of its operation" (167). Law or legal procedures and theatrical performances indeed share an affinity with regard to notions of public presentation and participation. The process and path to transitional justice require a performative aspect that allows different modes of address and expressive embodiments that shape the experiences of victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and also people who have never experienced the injustices under trial. Performance of the past can bring traumatic experiences to the present, incorporate them into public memory, and encourage the public to be engaged in the discussion and learning of history.

Cole further argues that "[t]he need to memorialize, dramatize, and document crimes against humanity is enormous and of paramount importance" (170). The most salient reason for adopting performance as a means to unfold history is indeed its ability to reenact past events and further help people *remember what happened*. Reenactment can also be a healing process for people who experienced trauma firsthand, as well as their families, creating a new narrative that bestows agency on them and further allows them to confront the past by therapeutically reliving those moments. Both *Lala* and *I Promised* are repertoires, as well as performative reenactments, of the White Terror—they demonstrate the potentiality of puppetry to unpack and bring individual stories to the public sphere by involving adults as well as young audiences to openly talk about their shared society's most buried memories.

Lala: The Singing Bear was first published in 2017 as a picture book by Wu Yi-Chen and later adapted to a puppet show in 2019 under the direction of Wu with the Flip Flops Theatre. The story is based on the actual experience of Tsai Kun-lin 蔡焜霖, who was a victim of the White Terror in the 1950s. Tsai was accused of participating in a reading

group that was suspected of including books about communist propaganda. He was arrested in 1950 at the age of 20 and then sentenced to ten years in prison on Green Island (*Lüdao* 綠島), a small island about 21 miles off the southeastern coast of Taiwan.[68] In the picture book and the play, Lala is a shy bear who loves singing. One day, he was caught by the king's guard for being too conspicuous due to loud singing and was then transferred to an isolated island. Though terrified, Lala soon met many companions, including a monkey, Duoduo. The two worked, hung out, and sang happily together. They both missed their families. Unfortunately, a guard caught them singing again. After fighting against the guard, Duoduo, along with other friends, vanished without a trace. Depressed, Lala dreamed of reuniting with his friends. After 10 years of isolation on the island, Lala was released and was thus able to meet some of his friends again. Since their status as former prisoners greatly hindered their ability to make ends meet, Lala decided to start his own business and invited all his friends to work together. Finally, they could sing happily together once again.

The role of Duoduo is the incarnation of Tsai Bing-hong, Tsai Kun-lin's inmate and closest friend on Green Island. Tsai Bing-hong 蔡炳紅 was caught sending a slip of paper with lyrics of a popular song in communist China to encourage a female inmate, and was hence executed. The story not only conveys Tsai Kun-lin's experiences, but is also in remembrance of Tsai Bing-hong and the comradery of the inmates. In reality, Tsai Kun-lin established Prince Publishing Company after being released and employed many of the inmates who were unable to find jobs.

[68] Green Island is an offshore island away from the southeastern coast of Taiwan that once served as a colony for political prisoners during Taiwan's period of martial law. The area of the prisons is now transformed into the Green Island White Terror Memorial Park to commemorate those who had fought for Taiwan's freedom, democracy and human rights.

I Promised I Wouldn't Cry is also a picture book and a puppet show by Wu (published in 2019), which was commissioned by the National Human Rights Museum in Taiwan. The story is based on the life of Chen Chin-shen 陳欽生, a Malaysian political victim who came to Taiwan for university study in 1967. Since Chen wanted to improve his English proficiency, he visited the United States Information Services (USIS) in Tainan frequently in order to access their English library. In his junior year of college, Chen was suspected of being involved in the explosion of USIS and was summarily arrested. He was tortured for weeks as the investigators tried to coerce him into making a false confession and naming his alleged accomplices. The secret police then accused him of joining the Communist Party in Malaysia, with which Chen never had any contact. Chen first received a death sentence, which was later changed into a twelve-year sentence. The picture book and the puppet show turn Chen into the character of a dolphin, Dondon, who was accused of setting a fire on an island that he happened to swim by. Dondon was kept inside a cage in the sea when his mother came all the way from another side of the ocean to visit him. In reality, Chen's mother traveled from Malaysia to visit her son on Green Island. When they finally got to meet, they had no words but tears.[69]

Both pieces use animated characters to represent the victims of the White Terror, and their experiences are also depicted metaphorically. The two shows performatively reenact traumatic experiences that are essentially personal through animation and puppets. Yet, they are not merely about individuals, but call for collective attention, a plea to listen to the unfolding stories of victims that have been untold and unheard.

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[69] From an interview with Chen Chin-shen by the National Human Rights Museum.
Chen Chin-Shen Koushu Lishi 陳欽生口述歷史 [Chen Chin-Shen Oral History]. Directed by National Human Rights Museum, 2014. https://imedia.culture.tw/channel/nhrm/zh_tw/media/40735

Wu and all members of the Flip Flops Theatre are from the post-national trauma generation, and so most of their works target younger generations. Wu explained that her artistic influence and inspiration come mostly from films, theatre pieces, and installations pertaining to other nations' transitional justice endeavors and responses to trauma, such as the movies *The Pianist* (2002) and *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), both of which are set in Nazi Germany but contain disparate narratives. Wu further said that "our way of perceiving the history easily indulges ourselves in the 'scar' itself; yet, instead of 'giving oneself up to the pain,' we should try touching the scar with warmth, and further manifest the value extracted from fragments of history" (qtd. in H. Hsu). Certainly, the imagination of transitional justice for most Taiwanese people remains in the forms of government apologies, memorials, and commemoration events and never reaches individuals' *scars*. Hence, what Wu attempts to do is to invite the public to feel and manifest the power behind individuals' stories.

One thing to re-emphasize is that, though the two puppet shows are explicit about their stories being based on actual experiences of victims under White Terror, the aesthetics, design and storytelling yet reflect their goal to be family and children-oriented, meaning there is more fun than horror in the plays. In the show descriptions of *Lala* and *I Promised*, love, courage and freedom are some of the keywords or story morals, instead of human rights or White Terror—which set a tone for the shows. Though not every audience can relate scenes in the plays to the actual history, they are prompted to ask questions, such as "Why are they not allowed to sing?" "What happened to Dondon?" "Who arrested them?" By going back and forth, meaningful dialogues are generated alongside feelings of sympathy and empathy invoked by the characters and stories, which can potentially be a

starting point for further discussions. In my opinion, the most important message comes not necessarily from the shows, but from what is around or comes after them. Hence, whether or not *Lala* and *I Promised* are about White Terror specifically, or what the stories try to educate depends on how the stories are perceived and understood, which resonates with the unique feature of puppets being flexible and open to diverse interpretations.

Letting Silence Speak

Lala and *I Promised* use puppets in the form of anthropomorphized cartoon animals to represent the victims of the White Terror. As it is not possible and probably not necessary to recreate torture or murder in any form, puppets are favored as the incarnation of victims for children since they are farther from the *real*. The use of puppets creates a space in-between the actual events and their theatrical or artistic representations for people to react and respond to the experience of life-in-crisis, as elaborated earlier in this chapter and also in Chapter 1. Puppets' non-humanness and object-ness make them seemingly apolitical and neutral, and by extension multifarious and thus transformative. Characters portrayed by puppets symbolize what cannot be revealed or named: distorted or lost memories, the experiences of the deceased, and the horrific reality of traumatic events.

The puppets and anthropomorphized characters constantly remind the audience not to conflate actual events with their theatricalized narration, which further demonstrates respect to the actual victims and their families who might themselves be amongst the audience. For example, the vicious state officer appears in *Lala* as a rabbit, and the gun that he points at the prisoner is replaced by a carrot. Other scenes of violence are mostly

demonstrated through shadow plays with only the silhouettes of torture and execution shown. On the one hand, these designs are used to soften the severity of the draconian measures and legal punishment commonplace throughout the White Terror as the show targets young audiences; on the other hand, *Lala* aims to focus on the protagonist, foregrounding the individual's shattering experience of life and death rather than some gruesome spectacle of suffering. The puppet show does not demand the audience to be immersed in horror; instead, the puppets appear similar to those in *Avenue Q* and *Sesame Street* and thus create a friendly and festive atmosphere for the show. The use of puppets, along with other objects, offers a perspective and a narrative that goes beyond the representation of trauma and unfolds the experiences and sensibilities of both characters and audience members together through the interaction between humans and puppets. Perhaps, the puppet characters can be more palpable for the audience to explore the past later on in their journey of life.

Figure 2.1 Carrot-gun. Photo Credit: Flip Flops Theatre

Lala and *I Promised* recapitulate the ability of puppets to *reenact* and *practice the past* instead of representing or re-presenting it. Both shows bring the past to the present in a non-literal but metaphorical manner. Puppetry does not involve imitation, and puppets never attempt to be or represent something that they are not. For instance, though the two shows involve both puppets and human actors, the protagonists in *Lala* and *I Promised* are a personified bear and a dolphin, which are both played by puppets. Puppets may not be real (i.e. real in actuality), but they are also not *not real* (as they do exist materially). Even though the stories may already be adapted and fictionalized, the visceral experience of witnessing the puppets' pains and suffering, as well as the subsequent emotional reaction of the audience, cannot be more authentic. The veracity of the show and the audience's experience of the show is related to the ambivalent nature of reenactment as both "is" and "is not"—what has been shown both is and is not the past, is and is not real. The power of these puppets lies in the fact that their *lives* are flexible. Depending on their relationships with the audience, their lives grow out differently. Puppetry requires imagination. Although audience members see the same puppet show, they all engage with the story differently based on their personal experiences and perspectives. In this sense, puppetry is an especially appropriate medium to address sensitive issues like the 228 Incident or White Terror since it never intends to provide the audience a definite way of perceiving and understanding what happened on the stage, but instead leaves plenty of space for the audience to come up with their own interpretations. Put differently, all puppet shows themselves per se never make judgments or deliver solid interpretations of the historical events, but encourage the audience to reckon beyond the narrative presented.

Additionally, similar to what we see in *Lala*, Chen's life story and struggle were reenacted through anthropomorphized animal puppets. Like stuffed animals in Mori's conceptualization of the uncanny valley, the animated animal puppets undoubtedly appear positive and appealing in the minds of the audience as they are so distant from actual human resemblance. *I Promised* creates a magical and fairytale-like undersea world that attracts young audiences with colorful sets and costumes. Despite telling the heartbreaking story of a victim being forcefully separated from his friends and family, the show also creates a space and narrative that is accessible for young audiences. This play was commissioned by the National Human Rights Museum to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The goal of the anniversary events was to encourage children to be an advocate of human/animal rights instead of an appendage of their parents or others and to further educate children about the value of freedom. In the play, Dondon used to swim in the ocean freely, but after being arrested by an octopus, he lost his freedom. Thankfully, he is reunited with his mother and eventually returns home.

Because the play targets a young audience, instead of focusing on the suffering of Chen, *I Promised* spotlights the love between Dondon and his mother. The play uses puppetry as a relatable means for its audience to engage with the narrative. The colorful puppets, bubbles, props, and mesmerizing sets catch the young viewer's attention, despite the actual story behind these elements being dark and heavy. In an interview with a young audience, the boy expressed the feeling of sadness after seeing Dondon separated from his mother, and therefore, he wanted to protect Dondon (qtd. in P.Y. Lin 2019). The boy's words demonstrate how the audience can always find their own ways to relate to the play, and

further respond to the historical memories and the victims' experiences. The notion can be referred back to the goal of performative reenactment: to not only see but *feel* the experience. The message of the play is also in line with Taiwan's Transitional Justice Commission and Wu's mission to contest the past in the present and offer possible reparations and potential healing for individuals by telling their stories from multifaceted perspectives.

Co-presence: Puppets Intertwined with Humanity

Another noticeable feature of the two puppet shows is the co-presence of human actors and puppets. As mentioned previously, both *Lala* and *I Promised* incorporate not merely puppets, but other forms of performative practices such as shadows, clowning, miming, acrobatics, balloon art, object performance, and more. These diverse forms and spectacles alleviate the serious undertone of the stories being told and instead make the performances feel more like a festival or parade. Moreover, distinct from puppet traditions like *budaixi*, *Lala* and *I Promised* never attempt to hide the performers' presence behind the stage or screen, or by dressing them in black; instead, the play embraces their presence on stage as a central part of the performance. Performers and puppets appear to belong to the same actuality by sharing the same physical space and generating a corporeal relationship with each other through interaction. Performers alternate between performing different tasks and playing multiple roles throughout the show: they are sometimes stagehands, sometimes puppeteers, and at other times, they are the clone or doppelganger of their puppets by portraying the same characters. The performers' shifting roles show the

intricate interplay between the performers, the puppets, the fictional and animated characters, the audience, and the actual victims.

The characters of *Lala* are mostly played by small table-top puppets and hand puppets ranging in size from 11 to 15 inches. As a result, when holding the puppets by hand, the performers are highly visible since they do not have a stage platform to hide behind. Performers in *Lala* appear dressed in gray coveralls while wearing white clown-like makeup. As mentioned above, in some scenes, performers step out of the role of a puppeteer, put on headbands with furry ears like the ones in Disneyland, and replace the puppets to play the same characters with their own bodies. Interesting dynamics arise between the puppets and the puppeteers, the manipulated and the manipulator, in these two shows. The puppets, in a sense, resemble the victims of the White Terror—controlled and confined, while the puppeteers are manipulators with power over the puppets. Interestingly, in both pieces, puppets are the incarnation of not only the ones arrested and imprisoned, but also the government officers and guards, connoting that even the

seemingly vicious characters of the narrative are the victims of the age and manipulated by invisible hands—the state.

Figure 2.2 & 2.3 Puppeteers playing the same characters as their puppets.
Photo Credit: Flip Flops Theatre

Another way to perceive their relationship is to consider puppets an extension of the puppeteers, and vice versa. Puppets are material bodies in which puppeteers inject thoughts and will. They are, in fact, *one*, a unity living in mutuality. In one scene, Lala the puppet and his puppeteer sit side by side, and the puppeteer pats the puppet on its shoulder as if Lala is having a conversation with his imaginative friend or with the physical manifestation of his consciousness. In another scene, when Lala's friend Duoduo the monkey attempts to fight against the rabbit guard's cruel orders, the guard does not point his gun at the monkey puppet, but at the performer who controls the puppet. Agency is transferred between the puppet and the performer as the audience witnesses the puppet's becoming and unbecoming as a character or victim. Pointing the carrot-gun at the puppeteer can also be interpreted as highlighting what authorities tried to suppress and demolish: not necessarily the physical bodies of individual victims, but rather the collective

human consciousness and free will. The atrocity is explicit, and can be seen and felt even without the portrayal of physical and violent torture of people's bodies. The scene echoes strongly what Tsai Kun-lin once said: "this is the time when people [who] believe in justice could hardly survive."

In contrast to the small table-top puppets in *Lala*, the puppets in *I Promised* are large wearable puppets carried on performers' backs and over their heads. Performers are dressed in full bodysuits matching the color of their puppets. From the audience's perspective, the puppet and performer are one character in two *bodies* appearing in the same frame. It is almost as if the puppet is an extension of the performer's body, but bigger and more vivid. The images of the performer and puppet are layered. They are not substitutional or oppositional, but connected and complementary. The performer is the *double* of the puppet, and vice versa. Together, they share Chen's story with the audience.

Figure 2.4 Puppets in *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry*. Photo Credit: Flip Flops Theatre

The co-presence of performers and puppets is prominent in both pieces, possibly as a dramaturgical or directorial choice meant to draw attention to the multilayered meanings and representations of the White Terror. In addition, the co-presence established on the stage can be perceived as the relationship not only between the performers and the puppets, but also between two different types of *subjects*: performers are human subjects while puppets are objects that exist in performance as *theatrical subjects*. Paul Piris argues that the stage co-presence of performers and puppets challenges the binary dividing the subjectness of humans from the objectness of puppets. This kind of co-presence, according to Piris, is "particular because it establishes a relation of self to *Other* between two beings that are ontologically different: one is a subject (in other words, a being endowed with consciousness) and the other one an object (in other words, a thing)" (30). In the case of *Lala* and *I Promised*, co-presence is a way to give agency: if puppets are the incarnation of victims, manipulated and powerless, by infusing life into puppets and making them *subjects* of the narrative, the lived experiences of individuals can be fully foregrounded.

Co-presence not only appears between puppets and performers, but also between the past and present, as well as the actual and the illusional. The performative reenactment of victims' experiences repositions them as the subject of discourse rather than an object left in the past or mere names in historical records or on memorial plaques. By making the individual's story the center of the narrative, we are able to have access to history and create a bridge between past and present. This effect resonates with what Schneider writes regarding the power of reenactment in making the past and the present coexist and affect each other (15). Puppets are the *double* of actual humans and allow for a visualization of

the soul within, a reflection in the mirror that enables audiences to gaze into a scene and see the eyes of an inner-self and an unrecognizable past that is both familiar yet unseen. There are moments when a puppet, writes Basil Jones, "becomes the manifest incarnation of our own struggle to live, to be human, to act" (63). Puppets do not merely represent but rather incite emotions, struggles, experiences, and perceptions. Puppetry, then, works as an embodied language for invisibilized narratives that have been left unspoken or unexplored. Jones argues that the potentiality of puppets to depict life is derived from the fact that puppets have a "different ontological narrative from a human being" (63); they are not words, but corporeal, embodied, and practiced. Puppetry creates a relationship and narrative different from written records to express the experiences of victims.

Reclaiming Historical Space

Performative reenactment of the White Terror involves interactions between audience (players), puppets, performers, and space. In David Saltz' theorization of the "art of interactivity," interactivity is simultaneously pursued by both live and mediated performances and is partially defined by the space where performers and participants encounter each other. Spatially speaking, the interactions and conversations generated in *Lala* and *I Promised* take place in a tangible space, an actual historical site—the Jing-Mei Memorial Park, which is listed as one of the "Historical Sites of Injustice" (*buyi yizhi* 不義遺址), referring to "historical sites where the state carried out various acts of injustice, using illegitimate means and institutes to systematically violate human rights" (Historical Sites of Injustice Website).[70] These sites include places where the state formulated and

[70] The U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi paid a visit to the Jing-Mei White Terror Memorial Park to meet with human rights activists on August 3, 2022 amid her trip to Asia. Chen Chin-shen served as the guide for her and introduced Taiwan's martial law history and endeavor for human rights.

implemented policies and issued commands that violated human rights, as well as locations where political prisoners were arrested. Most sites were where interrogations, torture, prosecution, imprisonment, execution, and even burial took place. The goal behind identifying and naming historical sites of injustice is to preserve these places as a means to recognize the mass human rights violations that have taken place on this land before and further transform these spaces into vessels for the traumatic memories of the people. The performance politicizes, historicizes, and memorializes the space, and vice versa.

The space in which the performances take place adds another dimension to my analysis of the two puppet shows in terms of the act of *witnessing*. Chen Ching-shen, the archetype of Dondon the dolphin in *I Promised*, also stayed in the Jing-Mei Detention Center for a short period of time before being transferred to Green Island and other facilities. The site is itself a witness to the major historical traumas undergone by Taiwan in the development of human rights. It is then an immersive experience for the audience to come into the theatrical space and watch the performative reenactment of Tsai and Chen's personal stories while being physically in a historical site. Spatially, audience members are offered a glimpse of life during the White Terror period and are able to explore the states of mind of political prisoners as they pass through the hallways of the original site with signs of military slogans to get to the auditorium, while not necessarily being fully aware of the significance of the space as the auditorium itself has been renovated.

This performative reenactment is not complete without the audience playing a part. There is a scene portraying the execution of Lala's companions for violating the "no singing policy." In that scene, the audience is placed in the same position and with the same level of knowledge as Lala and the performers, witnessing the passing of the people. No one knows

what kind of crimes led to their execution, yet everyone tries to conjecture what happened, just like the characters themselves. While the audience feels emotionally affiliated with the characters in the play, they are also building connections with the historical past despite the historical reference being indirect and implicit. Their witness involves a "cross-temporal slippage" (Schneider 14) that gives the audience a chance to not just see, but to feel, experience, and be an active agent within the reenactment. The boundary between the past and the present, the real and the fictional, and the theatrical space and the historical site is no longer recognizable. Different temporalities and spatialities are brought together, inviting the audience to experience the contact of disparate spacetimes. This experience resonates with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's argument. He writes: "It would have to be a theatre that went to the root of the historical space of the people's experience in order to speak to their immediate presence as they faced their tomorrow" (52). The presence of the audience works as a means to reclaim historical space against the confinement of people under the White Terror.

Puppets and the Futurity of Justice

At the beginning of this chapter, I shared an anecdote about my personal experience with the postmemory of the 228 Incident. I learned this part of history through the medium of 228 Peace Memorial Park and through interacting with that space. 228 Peace Memorial Park, as well as Jing-Mei White Terror Memorial Park where *Lala* and *I Promised* were staged, have been memorialized and transformed into public parks, as well as living spaces where people live their everyday lives. These spaces survive, witness, and document the histories of postwar Taiwan. They are also sites of heated debate and societal controversy.

As Herng-dar Bih writes: “space is an extension of body, a symbol of self-identification, and a battlefield of social culture and political power.” Following Bih, I suggest thinking about the performance of/in/with space along with Diana Taylor’s idea of repertoire. Space itself documents history as an archive, and the performance of/in/with space is a repertoire that allows history to be practiced and knowledge to be transferred.

*Lala: The Singing Bea*r and *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry*, along with multiple other pieces by Flip Flops Theatre, are dedicated to telling and remembering the events and trauma of individuals’ stories and experiences under the White Terror. Furthermore, these plays create a collective postmemory with their audiences. The two puppet shows provide a means for Tsai’s and Chen’s stories to be heard and remembered. In Rebecca Schneider’s words: “Live performance is the best mode of refusing to disappear; when an event is left to artifact and document alone, it vanishes” (39). What makes *Lala* and *I Promised* different from other theatrical or cinematic pieces focusing on similar themes is that they use puppets and create a fantastical and magical world for younger audiencess.

Puppets appear differently and have different *lives* based on the audience’s imaginations and past experiences. Particularly, as a nonverbal puppet show, *I Promised*, further leaves more blanks that await interpretive closure through the audience’s engagement. The show is nonverbal since the suffering and grief of victims are inexpressible in their full magnitude. Instead of words and languages, puppets are the narrative of the show. The use of puppets in these two shows provides a perspective that goes beyond the representation of trauma and unfolds White Terror experiences and sensibilities through the interaction between humans and puppets. Puppetry also prevents the audience from being vicariously immersed in the horror, fear, or anger of suffering

while simultaneously offering the experience of multilayered representations of events. The puppets can be *anyone*. The co-presence of puppets and human performers shows the intrinsic ruptures and displacements of testimony and *narrative truths* that, in fact, provide people space to think and rethink the past and history.

Lala and *I Promised* indeed reaffirms the purpose of transitional justice to engage with the past and ameliorate the present context in which the consequences of past sufferings echo. There is a need to remember and name experiences that may be forgotten if not properly documented. Moreover, showing and seeing ineffable experiences of suffering and trauma can function as a form of healing, as proposed by Yaël Farber in response to South Africa's TRC. When Tsai and Chen saw the performances of *Lala* and *I Promised*, they were not only seeing their stories being presented to others, but also learning their experiences from the audience's perspective, which can potentially be a healing process.

There is an anecdote from one of the performances of *I Promised* that demonstrates the therapeutic potential of these shows for the actual victims they are based on. Scared by the scene of Death, a large puppet, offering Dondon poison, a little boy broke down and could not stop crying; he was then brought away from the auditorium. Chen Chin-shen happened to witness this incident and gently told the child: "don't cry. Those were all fake. They were just acting, so don't be afraid." Later, Chen quietly remarked that "it is fine for the child to just cry so that he will not forget that feeling of fear for the rest of his life."[71] As Chen saw this response from the audience, the show then extends beyond a creative retelling of an individual's story and holds the potential to offer a therapeutic encounter for Chen and

[71] The anecdote was shared by the staff on Flip Flops Theatre's Facebook page.

Tsai and others who have suffered under the White Terror as they can hear their stories finally being heard. Respecting the integrity of victims undoubtedly requires this level of attention to their stories. The shows confirm and resist the dominant narrative that often reduces the life-in-crisis of victims to names and descriptions, finally giving a space for victims' voices to be heard.

Memories Detained: Puppets and Avatars in the Video Game *Detention*

Early on in the 2D horror adventure video game, *Detention*, the game prompts the player with the following line: "Have you forgotten, or are you too afraid to remember?" Set in 1960s Taiwan under martial law and created by Red Candle Games, *Detention* begins with two students, Wei (Wei Chung-ting) and Ray (Fang Ray-shin), finding themselves trapped in Greenwood High School, the school they attend, which has suddenly become unsettling, deserted, and haunted by malicious and rampaging monsters. While the students are trying to hide from the anthropophagous creatures, the cursed school's dark past is slowly unveiled through unscrambling a series of puzzle-game mysteries. Players enter the world of *Detention in medias res*, without knowing what happened before or what will be next, with the singular goal of escaping from unrecognizable ghosts and finding a way out of the school.

Like *Lala* and *I Promised*, the popularity of *Detention* can partially be attributed to the increased public attention to the 228 Incident and the White Terror, especially amongst those belonging to the postgeneration.[72] Unlike the young target audience of the two puppet shows who have a limited comprehension of history, *Detention* players of the game,

[72] Due to the presence of bloody, cruel, and terrifying scenes, players have to be 18 years old or above to purchase and play the game on Steam (Taiwan).

mostly millennials and gen z, have been equipped to some extent with knowledge of Taiwan's national trauma from history classes at school or from other media representations. Therefore, even though the time and space of the game's setting are never specified and largely fictional, players are capable of contextualizing the game, relating the game plot to actual historical incidents, and grasping the connotations therein.

Detention incorporates religious elements rooted in Taiwanese culture and mythology, including the extensive use of *budaixi* as a symbol of the silenced people and victims of the White Terror. This section explores how *Detention*, as a post-national trauma role-playing game, provides an embodied experience through reenactment of the past and engages with historical memories and trauma. More specifically, I look at the intricate relationship among players, avatars, and *budaixi* puppets in the game: players appear in the world of *Detention* as the game avatars of Wei and Ray and encounter puppets, the victims of the past, as well as ghosts and other non-player characters (NPC). How do avatars and puppets, as a mechanism aimed at redressing hidden historical atrocity and traumatic memories, shape the experience of game players? This case study will primarily analyze the video game version of *Detention*, but will also include some comparative discussions of the film adaptation under the same title.[73] While recognizing that video games are a unique media form, I intend to approach the game from the perspective of performance studies by focusing on its theatrical performative reenactment of the past and the analogies between avatars and puppets.

Both the avatars of game characters and in-game puppets function as the *alterity* through which players engage and explore the past. The interactions between human

[73] The film *Detention* was based on the video game and released in 2019.

players, game avatars, and puppets, as well as the notion of *human manipulation,* offer Taiwanese players and gamers around the world access to historical memory *as if they were a part of it*. While players attempt to solve in-game mysteries through Wei's and Ray's avatars, they also experience, witness, and reenact the past. Game playing provides a space for players to encounter the past while recognizing their presentness, much in the same way that the experience of watching *Lala* and *I Promised* compound past and present, but in a virtual game setting. In addition to this double temporality, the unique cross-spatiality of the game between the virtual and the actual world also adds a layer to the game playing experience that allows players to navigate national trauma without being immersed in empathetic emotions and failing to distinguish between the fictional setting of the game and the historical context of the game's subject matter. As Paul Manning argues, "virtualness is constituted precisely by the meta-awareness of this gap between the actual and the virtual" (311). Virtualness is not defined by immersion in the virtual world as if it were another actual world, but by the realization and acknowledgment of the line differentiating both worlds.

If *Lala* and *I Promised* strive to make individuals' stories accessible to young audiences through the use of fantastical world settings, *Detention* takes on an opposite approach by amplifying the darkest side of its subject matter. Yet, though *Detention* is marketed as a horror game, unlike the famous *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* series, it centers less on sensational tension but more on problem-solving. As one of the game developers shared in an interview: "instead of the in-your-face style of jump scare, I am more interested in the horror and fear associated with the unknown" (Ren Rong). This so-called "Taiwanese-style horror" accentuates the game's dark storytelling and plot of uncovering

an authoritarian era tragedy.[74] The plot progression of *Detention* involves the Punishment of Rebellion Act, military presence on campus, anti-communism and espionage, book and ideology censorship, blacklisting, arrests, interrogations, and exile, among other themes and events related to the White Terror.

Detention was officially released on January 13, 2017 on the 29th anniversary of President Chiang Ching-Kuo's death.[75] Despite official claims that depoliticize its release, the game has indeed drawn much attention since its debut. Just a month after its release, *Detention* reached third-ranking globally on Steam, the world's largest video game digital distribution platform. The movie version also experienced a huge box office success in several Asian countries, and a TV series under the same title and setting but a different plot was created by Netflix and released in 2020. While *Detention* is merely one of the many art pieces focusing on the White Terror in the past two decades, it is exceptional in its candor by directly engaging undesirable discussions of the past while simultaneously approaching these themes in an ambiguous and devious manner. Furthermore, instead of recreating actual events, *Detention*, for theatrical effect or otherwise, emphasizes chilling feelings of horror and uncertainty, which resemble the world in which people dwelled under suppression and oppression.

Detention revisits history by telling previously untold stories that have been censored, suppressed, or silenced. The game's approach is multilayered, intersecting the real and virtual and mobilizing alterity through the self and avatar. Moreover, by using

[74] *Detention*, along with another video game named *Devotion* (*Huanyuan*, 2019) also by Red Candle Games, are praised by the media to create a new genre of horror game that is uniquely Taiwanese.
[75] Chiang Ching-Kuo was the President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from 1978 to 1988. Under his tenure the government of the Republic of China, while authoritarian, slowly became more open to political dissent, and eventually, lifted the martial law in 1987.

budaixi puppets to represent White Terror victims, the game is able to circumvent exploiting real human pain in a visceral way as puppets are by nature alienated from reality, but all the while still depicting the historical horrors of the period. It is through the game's distance from realism and the player's recognition of the gap between actual historical events and their virtual representations that players are afforded both space and sufficient distance to *learn*, *relearn* and *unlearn* the past.

Puppets and Redress of Trauma

Detention incorporates folk cultures and beliefs, including religious figures; for instance, the Taoist deities City God (*Chenghuang* 城隍) and the Black and White Guard of the Underworld (*Heibai Wuchang* 黑白無常), as well as traditions like Poe divination, joss paper burning, *bagua*, among others.[76] *Budaixi* imagery is also used extensively throughout the game, such as *budaixi* puppets, carts, and stages. Traditionally, *budaixi* is performed during temple ceremonies and religious festivals to honor and show gratitude to gods. Contrary to its traditional festive nature, in *Detention*, *budaixi* is used as the symbol of victims (and in some parts, perpetrators) to accentuate the cruelty and suffering that occurred during the White Terror. The puppets are not lively as they customarily are in conventional *budaixi* performances, but portrayed as numb and deathly.

[76] The City God, or *Chenghuang*, protects people and manages affairs of the village or city, and is the judge of afterlife. The Black and White Guard of the Underworld are a pair of deities in charge of escorting the spirits of the dead to the underworld.
Poe divination, or *poa̍h-poe* in Hokkien, is a traditional way to ask deity questions. Askers hold the two wooden pieces together, ask questions, and then throw them to the floor. When one piece faces up and the other down, it means approval. Two ups mean undetermined, and two downs mean disapproval.
Traditionally, people burn joss papers for the dead to use in the afterlife.
Bagua are eight symbols used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality, seen as a range of eight interrelated concepts.

Budaixi puppets appear in the game in some of the most memorable and horrifying scenes as background props or non-player characters (NPC). As NPCs in *Detention*, puppets are, unlike avatars, directly controlled by players, programmed to perform certain movements, and meant to provide hints for players without direct contact or interaction with avatars. In one scene, when Ray slowly enters a room used by the student *budaixi* club, she is forced to face different body parts of puppets placed ominously inside glass jars, such as those used to preserve organs. Upon the ceiling of the classroom, puppets hang and sway as if they are the physical hosts of phantoms, moving aimlessly throughout the room. Shortly after leaving the room, the player's avatar passes by an aisle sided with prison-like bars, behind which are people locked inside cells. The bodies of the people behind the bars are covered with blood and have sacks over their heads. An uncanny parallel can be made between *budaixi* and these sacks: *budaixi* is literally translated as cloth-sack puppets, which refers to both the puppet's sack-like body and the big sack used to carry puppets. The tortured, dismembered, and hanged puppets allude to the victims of the past, whose heads appear in this scene covered with sacks. To pass this stage of the game, players must make their avatar hold their breath and pretend that they too are lifeless, otherwise, Ray is devoured and turned into one of the puppet-victims. Later in the game, players encounter a birdcage featuring a caged puppet in a school uniform with a sack over its head. Underneath the sack, there is a dismembered and distorted hand. As a whole, the use of puppets in this way throughout *Detention* can be interpreted as standing in for victims tortured under the White Terror. Considering that *budaixi* is traditionally associated with religious events and performed to honor deities, the severing of a *budaixi* puppet's head in the game can be considered sacrilegious and thus more appalling.


Figure 2.5 & 2.6 *Budaixi* puppets as victims. Credit: Red Candle Games

Detention's use of prisons (as well as in *Lala* and *I Promised*) resonates with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's claim that the prison is a "metaphor for the post-colonial space" (60) since it continues the colonial legacy of confining the uncontrolled to signify the exercise of state power. The caging of *budaixi* puppets also echoes the restrictions on *budaixi*, traditionally a gratis outdoor performance, in postwar Taiwan. Under Japanese colonization and shortly after the Second World War, martial law was implemented, meaning that public assemblies and open-air performances were restricted. According to Ngũgĩ, performance spaces are controlled and censored because they are the most vital and thus the most dangerous spaces of resistance to the colonial regime.

If the game only suggests the use of puppets as stand-ins for White Terror victims, the film adaptation of *Detention* more explicitly analogizes puppets and victims by, in one scene, layering the image of puppets hanging from the ceiling with an illusion of campus book club members hung dead for their crime of collecting and reading banned books. Covering one's head with a sack not only marks a person as a criminal, but also suggests the act of interrogation and torture as; moreover, it indicates a silencing act, literally and metaphorically, as sacks limit and disable one's ability to see, hear, and talk. The people

with sacks over their heads resemble puppets, deprived of mobility and the right to speak for themselves.

Another *budaixi* imagery that appears in both the game and film is the puppet in military uniform, which references a style of *budaixi* that was performed during the 1950s and 60s under martial law when *budaixi* shows were censored. During this time, different forms of drama, including *huaju* (spoken drama), *gezaixi* (Taiwanese opera), and *budaixi*, were used by the government to promote new policies. Arts of diverse forms and genres were used to serve the nation. As mentioned previously in the first chapter, in order to defend against the permeation of communism, the KMT government used propaganda drama to craft a "virtual China" that "obfuscated or simply denied fifty years of local [Taiwanese] history" (Scruggs 9) and fashioned the culture of this 'virtual China' as profoundly pre- and anti-communist. Puppet troupes were requested to stage shows advocating a unitary history with nationalistic overtones. The outfits of military officer puppets in *Detention*, then, correspond with the real presence of military personnel on school campuses under martial law as well as their glorification in propaganda dramas. Most propaganda puppet plays adapted from *gezaixi* included scenes such as workers being oppressed by communists and thematic subject matter revolving around "women, money and spies" (Y. Chen).[77] Puppets (or characters) in military uniform appeared in propagandic dramas to deliver the important message of reporting any potential act of treason as a

[77] From Yi-ching Chen's interview with puppet master Chung Jen-Pi.
Chen, Yi-ching. "Jieyan sanshinian zhuanti-budaixi yeyao fangongkange: Chung Jen-Pi【解嚴30年專題】布袋戲也要反共抗俄 鍾任壁 [Thirty Years After Martial Law–Anti-Communism and Budaixi: Chung Jen-Pi]." *Mirror Media*, 9 July 2017.

demonstration of patriotism. In *Detention*, perpetrators of terror are also symbolically portrayed by ghostly monsters as well as *budaixi* puppets in military uniform.

Figure 2.7 A puppet in military uniform. Credit: Red Candle Games

The film adaptation further extends this imagery by adding an original character, A-Shen, who is a member of the book club. A-Shen always carries and plays with his favorite *budaixi* puppet. In one scene where A-Shen is frantically hallucinating, a puppet show about a military officer (performed by a puppet) executing A-Shen's *budaixi* puppet is staged. The scene then fades into a déjà vu of the school's military instructor, who becomes a puppet, and shoots and executes students. Then in another scene, A-Shen is found desperately and hysterically looking for the missing head of his puppet. If the puppets in *Detention* are symbols of White Terror victims, the headless puppet connotes the people who are silenced or executed. The act of beheading the puppet also parallels covering people's heads with sacks in previous scenes, which simultaneously disallows the formation of memory and the expression of thought. Pathologically speaking, amnesia can also be the result of partial

brain dysfunction; the loss of a puppet's head is a physical manifestation of this breakage—an amnesia resulted from violence.. A-Shen's puppet needs its head in order to be *complete*, to be able to remember and voice his experience. Moreover, the sanctity of a full-body corpse is important in Chinese culture for the deceased to rest in peace and reincarnate; this cultural context alludes to the idea of using puppets as the *doubles* of the deceased and hosts of their souls.

Figure 2.8 & 2.9 Puppets in the movie version of *Detention*. Photo Credit: 1 Production Film co.

Finally, the puppets in *Detention* create *affect*. The majority of Taiwanese people are able to easily relate to *budaixi* puppet imagery due to the status of *budaixi* as a form of popular entertainment, folk art, religious effigy practice, and common symbol of Taiwanese culture. Though the game world of *Detention* is semi-fictional and thus unrecognizable, Taiwanese players are still able to locate themselves within the game and feel connected to the *budaixi* puppets that appear therein. However, the puppets' smiling faces no longer come off as festive but instead creepy, which enhances the feeling of uncanniness throughout the game as a familiar cultural symbol is recomposed away from its usual setting: the puppets that were once used to honor gods now appear lifelessly in a godless world. The use of puppets, as well as avatars, in *Detention* produces intrinsic ruptures and

displacements in the act of narration because the retelling of stories through the plot is never meant to recreate actual events. Instead, these stories ask the audience to actively engage with the reenactment of the past and incorporate their own memories and imaginations into the game.

Experiencing the Past through Avatars and Role-playing

While *budaixi* puppets are considered more background spectacles in *Detention*, avatars function more directly as the incarnations of players g and manifestation of their thoughts and consciousness. Role-playing games, often referred to as RPGs, are games in which players take responsibility for acting out the roles of characters in a fictional setting and within a narrative. The "acting" involves a series of structured decision-making points that push forward a character's development and the plot's progression (Cover 6). In role-playing video games, players always appear as animated characters, or avatars, in a virtual world. The word "avatar" comes from a Sanskrit word meaning the manifestation of divinity. In Hindu mythology, Vishnu and several other deities appear on earth as avatars. The term entered the English language around the end of the eighteenth century with a less spiritual but more rhetorical meaning, and was then later associated with technology in the late twentieth century through the rise of New Age ideologies. In 1985, the video game *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar* was released in which the players' quest was to become an avatar. Likewise, game designer Chip Morningstar first started to use the term to refer to user-controlled game characters around the same time. Avatars, resembling puppets, have their roots in the incarnation or embodiment of deities. With similar features, Steve Tillis (2006), along with many puppeteers, perceives avatars as puppets created and

manipulated through new technology. Avatars are puppets that exist in the virtual world and are performed by "puppeteers," or game players.

Game avatars are the player's alterity, just like puppets are the alters of their puppeteers. In "Can Avatar Speak?", Paul Manning discusses avatars and puppetry by documenting the production of the play in *Meyerhold on Theatre*. There were two directors working with puppets. The first director embraced naturalism and wanted puppets to imitate and be like real people; he later realized that the simplest solution would be to replace these realistic puppets with real human actors. Like the first director,

> [T]he other director wanted to make his puppets imitate real people, too, but he quickly realized that as soon as he tried to improve the puppet's mechanism it lost part of its charm. It was as though the puppet were resisting such barbarous improvements with all its being. The director came to his senses when he realized that there was a limit beyond which there is no alternative but to replace a puppet with a man. But how could he part with the puppet which he had created a world of enchantment with its incomparable movements, its expressive gestures achieved by some magic known to it alone, its angularity which reaches the heights of true plasticity? (Meyerhold 128)

The story above re-emphasizes that puppets have to be *not real* and stay uncanny to sustain their charm and generate a positive and empathetic emotional response in viewers. Avatars are, like the puppets, not just a copy of reality, just as the world they create is not a slightly unrealistic version of the actual world. Avatars are, borrowing Manning's description, "an alterity, an other's, a set of dispositions, needs, desires, alien to themselves" (320). In *Detention*, the avatars are *us*, the players, and yet they are also *not us* as we can only control

the avatars' present while the game controls their past. Avatars are also an introjection of the past into ourselves, and a projection of ourselves into the past. They embody our vulnerability and powerlessness since what the avatars/players face is unknown.

Set on the campus of a high school, *Detention* begins with the military instructor of the school questioning Ms. Yin, a school teacher, if she has heard anything about the list of books that students are reading in the book club.[78] The setting, though primarily fictional, coincides with the actual experience of Tsai Kun-lin, who is also the subject of *Lala*. In the game, Wei, one of the members of the book club, falls asleep in class and wakes up realizing everyone has vanished. Trying to leave the school, Wei passes through the auditorium and finds Ray slumbering on the stage. While seeking a way out, the two notice that the bridge connecting to the road outside of the school has collapsed, and the river underneath has turned blood red. Wei and Ray return indoors in a quandary, only to find that they are now trapped in the haunted school.

Players first enter the game with control over the avatar of Wei. The perspective, however, swiftly shifts to Ray's after players are taken back to the auditorium where Ray wakes up from a nightmare and sees Wei hung upside down from the ceiling, dead. Alone and terrified, Ray attempts to seek clues while escaping from the phantoms and monsters. During the journey, Ray slowly learns about the horrific events that once happened at the school and retrieves her lost memories as players endeavor to find clues to who they really are, what they have done, what happened to the people in the school, and where to go next

[78] Military instructors are military personnels who serve as a symbolic presence of the military, offer physical training and political education, and are in charge of the management of student behaviors in educational institutions. During the martial law era, military instructors took a critical role in uncovering communist and anti-government ideologies on campus, including the censored books. They are symbols of power and authority.

as Ray. Like in most RPGs, players are not omniscient and share the same level of knowledge as other characters in the game. The players/characters gain new skills and information through fighting monsters or solving mysteries; and meanwhile, they witness a previously unknown story unfold while being a part of it.

Figure 2.10 Opening scene. Credit: Red Candles Games

The notion of reenactment is central to this role-playing game. The acts of game-playing and role-playing are performative reenactments of the past in a virtual space and through the medium of avatars. As Rebecca Schneider writes in her description of the conception of reenactment: "The past, replayed, was not necessarily given to be seen. Rather, it was given to be experienced, or 'felt,' by those who reenacted" (33). An important aspect of RPGs is the fact that players *are* their avatars, *living* their life as avatars and *experiencing* the world of the game. While playing *Detention*, players are not only attempting to find a way out of this place without being caught by the monstrous creatures, but they are also witnessing and living this semi-fictionalized historical moment *with* and

as the characters. Though the game mostly proceeds from a third-person perspective, players' vision sometimes overlaps with Ray's, revealing some of the most terrifying scenes in first-person perspective.

Game-playing and role-playing are also associated with what Richard Schechner calls twiceness and repetition. For the game characters and avatars, it is never their first time going through the series of events that make up the game, just as it is with players. When players have to start over at a certain stage, they are re-living the life that has already happened with a different approach. Players try and err, making other choices in hopes of achieving something different from the last time they played. The experience of being dead but not exactly dying echoes what was mentioned earlier in this chapter about the perpetual restorability of puppets as long as their material form endures. The lives of both game avatars and puppets are tenacious. Through revisiting the same scene over and over again, players gain new knowledge of the setting they are in.

Detention provides an alternative space to access national trauma through the experience of avatars and their alterity. On the one hand, the restricted actions and choices that can be performed by the avatars resemble the plight of commoners under the White Terror; on the other hand, players' unlimited amount of tries give them a seemingly endless ability to explore what could or could not be done or known in the past. This bounded freedom serves as a contrast for players against which they can acknowledge and appreciate the hard-earned freedoms of the society that they now live in. Nevertheless, the avatar's ability to repeat, redo, and re-experience a series of events also function like Philippe Genty's *Pierrot Marionette*, altering the meaning of death and welcoming a

redefinition of the manipulator-manipulated relationship as players gain new knowledge and understanding of the game's world and story.

Performing Agency and Creating Accessibility

There are three forms of *humans* coexisting physically and metaphysically in the world of *Detention*: human players, avatars, and *budaixi* puppets. While game avatars are directly controlled by human players, puppets are not. Though the freedom of players to choose and decide how the story progresses through their avatars is a central feature of RPGs, players are not omnipotent. Both players and their avatars are compelled to witness the suffering of the puppets (or victims) in order to move forward to the next stages of the game. Players are unable to intervene and stop Ray from doing what she did as her traitorous act of reporting on the book club took place before players entered the game. Despite witnessing all the suffering and inhumane deeds done to the puppets, the players can do nothing to halt these scenes. They have no control over the situation nor ability to alter the puppets' destiny as they are programmed, or fated. Players must encounter this horror in order to learn what happened before they entered the game, which eventually discloses the *reality* behind the game's many illusions. The game places players under a unique temporality and spatiality to experience a sense of helplessness, just as real people might under particular circumstances.

Mori's hypothesis of the uncanny valley is once again applicable to players' emotional responses to the game. The 2D animated avatars in *Detention* function in a similar way as the stuffed animals in Mori's theory and the animal puppets in *Lala* and *I Promised*; however, the *budaixi* puppets in *Detention* arouse discomfort because of their

simultaneous verisimilitude with actual humans and unfamiliarity to players.[79] The same is true for the jarred body parts of puppets and the distorted human hand in the birdcage in *Detention*, which evokes Mori's example of prosthetic hands eliciting innate fears. The uncanny likeness between puppets and unrecognizable political victims also frightens players in a similar way. The story and setting might be fictional, but the feelings, as well as the visceral and emotional responses of players, are authentic and powerful. Though the pain of White Terror victims cannot be corporeally felt, the horror of what they experienced is nevertheless profoundly inscribed on the minds of players, which also explains why *Detention* is marketed as a horror game instead of a historical game.

Following the analogy between players and puppets further, people who lived during the White Terror era are not unlike puppets. In fact, artists often used puppets to escape from political censorship and sustain their lives under difficult circumstances thanks to puppets' objectness, ostensible political neutrality, as well as flexibility to adapt to distinct environments. For instance, unlike other forms of performing arts, *budaixi* was never fully banned during any political regime or transitions throughout Taiwan's history. Instead, it was able to circumvent complete surveillance by accommodating itself to the unique political environment of different temporalities and spatialities. It is undoubtedly the grassrootness of *budaixi* that allows it to survive Taiwan's multiple political transitions and turbulences. The survival of *budaixi* can be seen as a microcosm of the Taiwanese people's survival under different colonial rules.[80]

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[79] A myriad of research draws attention to the notion of uncanny valley, of which many take *Final Fantasy* game and movie series' photorealistic character models, especially those from the early 2000s, as one of the examples that may potentially trigger feeling of eeriness because of their not-quite human resemblance (Schneider et al. 2007; Eveleth 2013; Trentini 2019; McCarty 2020).

[80] The argument is addressed and examined in details in Chapter 1.

In *Detention,* puppets are used to convey the agency of victims and survivors of the White Terror. Teri Silvio describes puppets as vessels with "internal agency" (*Puppets, Gods, and Brands* 64), which refers to the existence of individual subjectivity in puppets. In *Detention*, unlike avatars that are controlled directly by players, puppets cannot be controlled by players and hence appear as if they are *alive* with their own individual will, agency, and subjectivity that extends beyond the possibility of external manipulation.

Additionally, puppets' suffering and death are not real but also *not* not real. On the other end of a puppet's death is their *immortality*, or the ability to transcend the boundary between life and death. It is as if they "magically return to life" (Cohen 127) after being destroyed. The tenacious life of puppets parallels the lives of people who suffered under the authoritarian regime. Like the victims, puppets are silent, but their being is tangible and real; moreover, the victims are not solely names and numbers in historical records, but are *real* individuals. Through puppets' material being, players step into the realm of the uncanny and cross over the thresholds of the living and present to connect themselves with the dead and the past. The past is then laced with the present as actual events overlap with the fictional setting of the game. There is not only a "cross-temporal slippage" (Schneider 14), but also a cross-spatial one, or what Victor Turner would call "liminality." This liminality occurs between the victims from the past and the players in the present, as well as the virtual (avatar) and the real (players). Game players land in a liminal space where one can touch the contact of time and experience the dissolution of one's self, which is undoubtedly disorienting but also opens up the possibility of new perspectives.

Players' interactions and encounters with puppets also resemble what Elizabeth Son's analysis of how people are engaged with the bronze comfort woman statue outside of

the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, both puppets in *Detention* and the comfort woman statue embody victims' unsettlement and fragility. The materiality of the statue, as well as the materiality of puppets, are embodied engagements with the past that elicit a kind of "performance of care" (Son 158). The interactions between puppets and players (avatars) parallel those between the statue and people who visit, touch, or otherwise compassionately connect with the statue. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, *budaixi* is an important part of Taiwanese culture and also a collective childhood memory for many. The use of *budaixi* puppets in the game creates affect, inciting visceral feelings and emotional responses. It also links the unnamed victims to a familiar cultural context while emphasizing the feeling of displacement as these puppets, traditionally associated with festivals, are transformed into signs of horror. Nevertheless, through the well-known cultural symbol of *budaixi*, victims' experiences are no longer unimaginable or ineffable, but instead contextualized as a part of Taiwanese culture and society.

For Taiwanese players, *Detention* serves as a medium for traumatic memories to be released, felt, and eventually relieved. The avatars and puppets in the game function as the alterities of the people who have either witnessed or are living under the aftermath and psychological impact of White Terror trauma. Daphne K. Lee explains that *Detention* is based on "a real-life event that happened in 1949 in Keelung Middle School, where the school was caught running an underground newspaper. The principal was executed while hundreds of students [. . .] were jailed" (D. Lee). The newspaper was published by Chung Hao-tung, who once served as the principal of Keelung Middle School and was associated with pro-communism organizations promoting revolution and left-wing ideologies. Many teachers and students involved in the newspaper were imprisoned or executed.

During the game, players qua avatars must pay attention to the descriptions of each object in the game in order to find out what happened in the past and what is going to happen next. In fact, this process of detangling mystery can be interpreted as Ray's journey to redemption as she slowly recalls what led to the school's abandonment. As the game plot progresses, players start to realize that it is Ray, the character that they have been identifying with, who becomes a traitor by disclosing the smuggling of censored books and divulging the names of teachers and students involved in the book club. Her information leads to the arrest and execution of the book club members. Wei, the first character to appear in the game, is sentenced to 15 years in prison. While Ray is awarded by the government or her patriotism, the guilt of what she has done haunts her. Eventually, she commits suicide at the school.

Players enter the game uninformed, not knowing what happened or what is ahead, just like Ray, who wakes up at the very beginning of the game oblivious to the fact that she was the cause of this tragedy. Only later do Ray and the player realize that they *are* the informant, the cause of the horror they are witnessing. Players are no longer *outsiders* to the story or the history it tells—they are witnesses, victims, and perpetrators all at the same time. The characterization of Ray reveals real problems of memory and history–not the mere misrepresentation of history, but the endless negotiation with memory as unreliable sources of history that haunts historiography itself, which always involves contradictions and omissions.

Towards the end of the game, Ray retrieves her memory, and as a metaphor for finally being able to face herself and the consequences of what she has done, she encounters her shadow, the *her* that she refused to acknowledge—"You, are me." The

reflexivity here works just like the avatar and the puppets. There are two endings to *Detention* which are determined by the choices that players make in the final stages of the game. In one version, Ray passes by the river of blood that appears in the first scene, but this time, there are bodies all over the river. Finally, she arrives at the auditorium where she was awarded for her patriotism and eventually hangs herself. Everything seems to start over from the very beginning in this version. What the character tries to escape is not the haunted school but her own shame and guilt. The other ending dates years later. After being released from prison, Wei, much older now, revisits the school. Wei sits at a table inside a deserted classroom, reflecting on the past. Across from him is the ghost of Ray, looking remorseful and sitting solemnly. The two gaze at each other, reminiscing about a bygone era.

Figure 2.11 Final scene. Credit: Red Candle Games

Is there forgiveness and reparation in *Detention*? The first ending can be construed as a return to a never-ending cycle of guilt and forgetting, while the second one suggests acceptance and reconciliation. One of the lines in the second ending writes, "[n]o matter

how many times this replays, nothing can be unwound." Eventually, no single antagonist is to blame for all the tragedies in *Detention*; instead, a multitude of structural and institutional circumstances conspire to render Ray—and by extension the player—powerful yet simultaneously powerless. What has happened cannot be undone. Yet, players have to involve themselves in remembering these incidents, the people involved, and the lessons learned from them. As Karen Barad puts it, "[a]gency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world" (818). This engagement in truth-seeking and collective remembering gives victims, as well the *history itself*, agency, and is thus inherently performative.

Concluding Thoughts: Acts Against Forgetting

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting," says one character in Czechoslovakian novelist and expatriate Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. This statement echoes the slogan of *Detention*—"have you forgotten, or are you too afraid to remember?" Kundera's book was published almost a century after French historian Ernest Renan delivered his renowned lecture "What is a Nation?", which argues that the creation of a nation is based as much on what the people jointly forget as on what they remember (11). Forgetting is natural while remembering is not. People struggle against the passage of time and against the elapse of past memories on a daily basis. Nevertheless, both can be intentional and tactical as nation-constructing tools. National memory is always selective, as some experiences are deliberately forgotten and others are intentionally remembered.

At the beginning of the chapter, I shared my personal encounter with the 228 Memorial Park as a politicized space and also an anecdote about the contested inscriptions on the park's memorial plaque. Diana Taylor writes in "Caught in the Spectacle" that "nation-building [. . .] was based not just on commonality and shared experience, but on communal forgetting" (27). Certainly, Taiwan's journey from colonization to authoritarianism and then democratization in the past three decades is partly built upon initially national amnesia and a delayed response to the past, especially to the horrific events of the 228 Incident and White Terror, and later upon a selective memory. It was as if selective forgetting and remembering were the only ways that the nations could progress towards reconciliation. Even the official commemoration also continues to marginalize individuals' narratives through ostracizing divergence and choosing what is to be remembered or forgotten. The plaque remains rhetorically unfinished as it can never reflect or represent all the stories behind those who suffered, and perhaps will continue to be so since memories are constantly shifting as time goes by.

"Our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past" (Connerton 2). Yet, the information and records that shape historical knowledge are always partially filtered or veiled; hence one constantly struggles to (re)shape one's past into a livable present. As mentioned earlier, it was not until fairly recently that people started to realize the importance and urgency of knowing and documenting what actually happened under the White Terror. There has also been a noticeable increase in more explicit portrayals or discussions of terror and trauma through contemporary media due to Taiwan's changing political climate.

Yet, the 228 Incident, White Terror, and transitional justice in Taiwan not only represent the push and pull between memory and forgetting, but also between *this* memory and *that* memory. The White Terror has been addressed, examined, and interrogated extensively in theatrical productions with many of these productions featuring individual narratives that stand in for a larger national narrative, which is potentially dangerous as historical interpretations of 228 and the White Terror are disparate. Wu Nai-Teh points out that the three main contentions in the historical discourse on 228 are: 1) Is the 228 Incident a national fight against the foreign regime, or a revolt against state oppression?; 2) Is the 228 Incident an ethnic conflict between islanders and mainlanders?; and 3) Should the 228 Incident be understood and studied within a larger historical context, such as the Chinese Civil War and the Cold War?

The discrepancy between different communities' understanding of these historical incidents is rarely addressed in cinematic and theatrical events; for instance, these discussions do not appear at all in *Lala* and *I Promised*. Chien Wei-Chiao points out in his critical review of *Lala* the problem of decontextualizing and the unilateral discussion of intricate history by only portraying one person's suffering. The aestheticization and generalization of historical incidents and the circumvention of a more comprehensive discussion of sociohistorical context are up for debate, if not outright concerning. The shows can work as sugar-coated pills, and be consumed by the audience without them even noticing. Chien's critique also highlights the problem of habit memory as mentioned earlier. This tension is crucial to finding a way to tell individual stories while also noting the multidimensional *facts* of the *histories* implicated in them, rather than pushing forward a unifying narrative that falls into the sentimentalism of "victimhood nationalism," a term

Jie-Hyun Lim uses to denote when victimhood in South Korea becomes "hereditary in national historical imagination" (139).

Referring back to the notion of second-hand memories addressed at the beginning of this chapter, memories are not innocent as they are always manifested and interpreted with a distinct amount of bias. The partiality of memory indeed permeates the subjective lens through which artists create their art. In this light, even though I argue that the use of puppets provides the audience more space for personal imagination and interpretation, the conflicts of authenticity vs artificiality, as well as actuality and its artistic re-creations, are still very much present. After all, no memories or their representations are innocent.

In contrast to the two puppet shows, *Detention* certainly offers more freedom regarding how memories of trauma are manifested as a game, particularly because the players, compared to the audience of the shows, have more freedom of choice despite the game design following a set script just like plays. Moreover, unlike the two plays, *Detention* uses the White Terror as its framing backdrop; yet, instead of shedding light on the story of a specific individual, it emphasizes the process of speculation and collecting clues. *Detention* is less explicit with its historical and political associations in comparison with the productions of *Lala* and *I Promised*. The game is intentionally designed to be a semi-fictional universe saturated with the presence of ghosts. Gameplay primarily consists of putting together fragmented stories and sorting out puzzles. In the case of the White Terror, there is never a complete or cohesive narrative regarding what *really* happened during that particular period of time; this historical indeterminacy is one of the reasons why it has been so difficult for people to approach or learn about this part of Taiwan's past. There will always be undisclosed information, undiscovered messages, unidentified people,

and untold stories. The use of *budaixi* puppets to signify victims of the White Terror, though connecting to players through a familiar cultural context, further increases the distance between the player's experience and historical actuality, which enhances the feeling of the uncanny.

The game *Detention* invites players around the world to experience a sense of being haunted despite the *affect* it incites may be distinct. While playing the game, players feel an obligation to unravel the game's story and *save* Wei and Ray from the monsters; in reality, this drive can potentially become a catalyst to know more about the unheard stories that dwell within the annals of national history. The game not only allows immerses players into its story, but also creates public space and means for revisiting the past. "Why did Ray become an informer? What happened to Ray's father? Why was he taken away by the police?" As the players try to look for answers to these questions, they are simultaneously unveiling the stories behind the game—the historical events of the White Terror.

Detention, for Taiwanese players, is a journey of self-exploration, recognition, and eventually, healing, not only for people who have experienced the trauma of the White Terror first-hand, but also for the postgenerations. Through a different approach, the two theatrical pieces, *Lala* and *I Promised,* share the stories of individuals by transforming their horrific life experiences into a fantasy world. They offer the audience another form of immersive experience by staging shows at historical sites.

In this chapter, I have shown how both the game and the two puppet shows create a space, either virtual or physical, that was once contained and restricted for postgenerations to engage in discussions on the past through distinct yet equally performative mediums. Such discussions are also intentionally conducted at a critical distance from actuality

through the use of puppets and avatars. By bringing these histories into public discourse, people gradually step beyond state-sanctioned atrocity and the confinement of trauma. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o elaborates, "The performance space of the artist stands for openness; that of the state, for confinement. Art breaks down barriers between peoples; [the] state erects them. Art arose out of human struggle to break free of confinement" (68).

To conclude, the use of different mediums in these pieces to represent, recreate, or reenact memories function as an alternative form of commemoration which proceeds *from the bottom up* and celebrates the divergence and multiplicity of memories as well as histories. As Homi Bhabha argues that the nation-space is constantly "in the process of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in medias res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made" ("Introduction" 3). Through personal engagement with remembering and commemoration, people reimagine what nation and history mean to them.

CHAPTER 3

IndigenousPuppetry:

An Embodiment of Indigenous Knowledges and Mythologies

In 2016, the Center for Indigenous Studies at National Taiwan University held a series of lectures focusing on the repatriation of Indigenous remains and cultural objects in relation to Indigenous and transitional justice in Taiwan. Many discussions centered on the relationship between cultural objects, community, and museums. Sakuliu Pavavalung, a Paiwan (a major Indigenous group in Southern Taiwan) artist, once used the metaphor of a mango to address the practice and preservation of Indigenous culture and cultural objects: Indigenous cultures are like mangos. Museum collections are about preserving mangoes by wrapping them in plastic bags. However, the life of a mango can be reborn when it is on the ground. When they are ripe, they drop to the ground, rot, and become mud that continues to nurture other mango trees.[81] With the proper ecosystem, Indigenous art can continue its life cycle without artificial intervention. The cultural objects under scrutiny bear rich Indigenous knowledge systems and traditions. Only when they are socially used and practiced do these objects truly *live*; on the contrary, preserving them as they used to be kills them. How might we comprehend the multitudes of Indigenous knowledge systems and lifeways through the creation and circulation of these cultural objects?

In this chapter, I investigate two unique performative projects that involve puppetry, *Touch Taiwan* (2012-3), a shadow puppetry program, and *The Elders of Katumayan* (2018). Both invite community members from distinct Indigenous tribes to attend puppetry

[81] Sakuliu Pavavalung is an Indigenous artist from the Paiwan tribe of Taiwan.
Sakuliu Pavavalung. "Liangan gonggong yishu yentaohui 兩岸公共藝術研討會 [Cross-Strait Public Arts Conference]." *Public Art Forum*, https://publicart.forum.deoa.org.tw/papers/sgl.html. Accessed 8 Aug. 2022.

workshops and perform local stories that have been passed down for generations. This chapter investigates Indigenous puppetry and its relationship to the practice of Inigeneity. I am specifically inspired by Sun Da-chuang's use of "Mountains and Seas culture" (*shanhai wenhua* 山海文化) to present an Indigenous-centred narrative that does not rigidly distinguish between creative or scholarly pieces by Indigenous or non-Indigenous contributors. Sun also emphasizes the relationality between humans and their contact with the landscape: "for Indigenous peoples, mountains and seas as symbols are not solely spatial, but also humanistic." Here I explore how puppetry can be used to mediate, reflect, and embody the intimate relationships between humans, ancestors, lands, and spirits. This chapter also addresses possible shortcomings of Indigenous puppetry, especially when it is treated as a token for Taiwan's ethnocultural diversity and a tool for national identity formation and reconciliation, as seen in many other countries that approach Indigenous issues through multicultural liberalism.

I would like to first bring attention to the complexity of Taiwan's indigenous cultures. I am aware of the difference between Taiwan's sixteen recognized Indigenous groups and the plight of the many non-recognized Indigenous groups in Taiwan.[82] When I use the term "Indigenous" to indicate Indigenous groups in Taiwan, it is not to generalize or conflate different Indigenous cultures and traditions as a *whole*, but instead to seek common grounds in the discourse on Indigeneity in Taiwan while specifying the distinctiveness of individual case studies.

[82] Indigenous peoples in Taiwan generally refer to two populations: plain Indigenous peoples and Highland Indigenous peoples. Plain Indigenous peoples are Taiwan's Indigenous peoples originally residing in lowland regions, as opposed to Highland Indigenous peoples. Plain indigenous peoples consist of anywhere from eight to twelve individual groups.

Moreover, the two puppet projects, though centering on the collective efforts of local Indigenous communities, both involve Han Taiwanese and foreign artists as their leading force. Parallels can be found in W.E.B. Du Bois's agenda for Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre when he argued that African American theatre should be "*about us*," "*for us*," "*by us*" and "*near us*" (134). Based on Du Bois's definition, Josephine Lee further complicates the attempt to describe a 'real' Asian American theatre with the criteria set up by Du Bois, because of "the problems inherent in embracing ideas of community and representation that are necessarily exclusionary", which is unable to properly encompass a diverse and changing population (8-9). Du Bois's agenda can certainly be seen in the attempt of the two projects; and yet, the involvement of non-Indigenous artists forces us to rethink about such relationships, and about who this "*us*" includes. In this chapter, I aim to be attentive to the potential perplexity and problematic power dynamics that are present in these collaborative projects.

Nevertheless, as an individual who has participated in another project and workshop with a non-Indigenous community led by the team of an Italian artist discussed in the second case study, I am knowledgeable enough to say that, unlike many invited foreign artists, this group did not simply come, make art, and leave. They made an effort to understand local cultures and experience life with workshop participants. When it comes to communities that have been historically marginalized and erased, I believe this continued care and sensitivity on the part of outside artists is even more crucial. After all, the two projects demonstrate how interventions made by Indigenous communities and their cultural practices respond to the natural landscape and integrate notions of time and space. Based on my interaction with workshop artists and community members, evaluations of

the program were generally positive on both sides. Community members had immense fun spending time after class or work experimenting with puppetry materials and *playing* along with others to create something with their hands.[83] Ancillary to my experience, the participants of *Touch Taiwan* shared positive feedback on the shadow puppetry workshops and appeared to be content with the collaboration as well.

In the same spirit as the artists leading these workshops, I am constantly mindful of my positionality as a Han Taiwanese person in this research and have consciously ensured that I do not reinforce Han cultural hegemony by confusing my personal life experiences with that of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples. Ethically responsible research with Indigenous communities requires this sensitivity. This chapter is by no means a comprehensive study of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples' relation to puppetry, but an attempt to encompass puppetry as an artistic and performative medium that fosters dialogue both within Indigenous communities and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous publics.

Rewriting and Repositioning Indigenous Narratives

On August 1, 2016, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen made a landmark speech in which she officially apologized to Taiwan's Indigenous peoples for their "pain and suffering" from more than four centuries of colonization, exploitation, and forced assimilation. The significance of Tsai's speech lies in the fact that it was the first national apology made to Taiwan's Indigenous peoples. Tsai's speech comes after former Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper's apology to former students of Indian residential schools in 2008, Pope

[83] I worked as an English-Chinese interpreter in the workshop led by Snuff Puppets from Australia and hosted by Weiwuying Children's Festival in Kaohsiung, Taiwan in the summer of 2016. The leading artist, Daniele Poidomani, visited Taiwan again in 2018 for the workshop at the East Coast Land Arts Festival as the director of Memetia, theatre group focusing on giant-scale puppets and site-specific performances.

Francis's apology for the "grave sins" of colonialism against Indigenous Peoples of America in 2015, and multiple official statements offered to address injustices to Indigenous peoples in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Tsai's speech not only responds to the international Indigenous rights movement, but signifies a critical turning point in Taiwan's nation-building process, which has historically neglected or undermined Indigenous presence.[84]

As mentioned previously in the introduction and first chapter of this dissertation, Taiwan is an ethnically diverse country with Han Taiwanese as the current majority (96% of the population), Indigenous people from a total of 16 major groups accounting for 2.45% of the population, and 1.1% of the population being immigrants from other countries and regions.[85] The ethnically Han population has been prominent in multiple aspects of the country's history especially after two waves of mass immigration from mainland China respectively between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries and in the mid-twentieth century. The dominance of the Han population also has an immense impact on the nation culturally, socially, and politically, as well as how the nation is perceived and how its history is written.

In Tsai's speech, she referenced a book named *The General History of Taiwan* (*Taiwan Tongshi* 臺灣通史), the prologue of which states: "Taiwan had no history. The

[84] Indigenous communities in Taiwan have a long history being viewed through the lens of primitvism and colonialism. It was not until 1994 when the government officially replaced the pejorative term used to refer to Indigenous communities in Taiwan with "Aboriginae" and later "Indigenous peoples." In this chapter, I use the term "Indigenous peoples" while noting that "Aboriginal people" and "Aborigine" are still commonly used in government documents and scholarships to refer to Indigenous population in Taiwan.
[85] Numbers are provided by the Executive Yuan as of March 9, 2021.
https://www.ey.gov.tw/state/99B2E89521FC31E1/2820610c-e97f-4d33-aa1e-e7b15222e45a

Dutch pioneered it, the Koxinga Kingdom built it, and the Qing Empire managed it" (Lien).[86] This narration of Taiwan reflects a typical Han-centered historiography that intentionally erases the presence of Indigenous people on the island for thousands of years. This history has been manipulated by dominant ethnic groups and continues to be reinforced and manifested in Taiwan today. One example can be taken from the research keywords of the *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*. According to Wei-ting Yen's discovery, the word cloud generated from the keywords of this leading Taiwan Studies journal demonstrates the dominance of Han centrism in academia; the immense popularity of keywords such as "democracy" or "diversity," though relevant, often homogenize the histories and experiences of multiethnic communities in Taiwan, and thus fail to properly reflect the perspectives of Taiwan's Austronesian Indigenous peoples.[87] One of the case studies I scrutinize in this chapter is a program that worked with different Indigenous tribes to write, tell, and perform Indigenous stories through puppet shows in their native tongues. The program is titled *Touch Taiwan* in English, with its original Chinese title literally translated as "Taiwan Disappeared" (*Taiwan Bujianle* 臺灣不見了). What disappeared? What is absent? Though never explained, the title encapsulates the exclusion of Indigeneity from what has been known as *Taiwan*.

In the previous chapters, I navigated the differences between orthodox History and histories to embrace the plurality of historical narratives offered by puppetry. Yet, Indigenous peoples' presence and voices have yet to be discussed in the case studies of this

[86] English translation is quoted from the press release of Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan). Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan). "President Tsai Apologizes to Indigenous Peoples on Behalf of Government." https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/4950.
[87] A word cloud is a visualization of keywords listed in the Journal, with most frequently used words or terms taking up the center and larger part of the image, and less used ones being smaller and scattered on the margin.

dissertation. For instance, in the second chapter, the video game and the two puppet shows fail to portray Indigenous peoples' suffering resulting from the 228 Incident and under the White Terror; several Indigenous leaders were imprisoned and executed during this time, with Indigenous lands, languages, and religions continuing to be plundered, suppressed, and restricted. Most importantly, *budaixi,* as the most renowned puppetry tradition in Taiwan, is almost exclusively Han Chinese and Han Taiwanese, and thus the languages it uses, the stories it tells, and the philosophies it involves present an ethnoculturally Han worldview.

In fact, though Indigenous peoples and cultures have stimulated interest and have been described as making what is "truly and uniquely Taiwanese" (H.T. Liao 50), they are oftentimes erased by Han population from the native discourse of Taiwan. In the Qing dynasty and under Japanese rule, Indigenous peoples were referred to as *fan* (番/蕃; a derogatory term for "barbarian."), and were often dominated and exploited for resources, or entirely excluded by the regime from the island's population. Indigenous peoples were never considered native during these two periods, especially after the emergence of Taiwanese consciousness under Japanese rule, when Han *hontojin* started to further claim the native identity in opposition to the Japanese. Later under the KMT regime, Indigenous peoples were called "mountain compatriots" (*shanbao* 山胞) or mountain people (*shandiren* 山地人) to support multicultural national policy in a demeaning manner.

The Han population on the island was categorized into two different groups after 1945: the *mainlanders* who moved to the island after the defeat of the Chinese Civil War in the 1950s, and the *islanders*, the Han settlers of an earlier wave of migration from mainland China who were later defined as the "native people" of Taiwan who had inhabited the island

before the mainlanders. The word *native* is often translated as *bentu* 本土 or *xiangtu* 鄉土 in Mandarin, meaning local soil or homeland, which refers generally and exclusively to Han islanders.

Taiwan's localization and Taiwanization movements arose in the 1970s when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was recognized as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations." Thus, the Republic of China (Taiwan) was removed from the United Nations and, effectively, the world stage. During the subsequent political turbulence, the need for a *native* national identity that rejected foreign interventions before and during the Cold War reemerged, and native experience was embraced as a way of decolonization. Nativeness, in this case, was specifically construed as the experience of the *Han native people*, and so the localization and Taiwanization movements primarily promoted their culture as the native culture of Taiwan.

On the one hand, the Han natives took advantage of this construed nativeness as a way to revolt against the hegemony of KMT government's Chinese nationalism and advocate for Taiwanese nationalism; on the other, their attempt to gain strength was predicated on the erasure and exploitation of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan. Despite some scholars believing that the nativist movement (*xiangtu yundong* 鄉土運動) in fact supported Indigenous people and embraced the promotion of their culture (G.C. Huang 188), these arguments fail to adequately account for what Julie Burelle describes in *L'Empreinte (2014; The Imprint)* regarding French Québécois' "desire to possess Nativeness" (58).[88] The notion of "felt Nativeness" (58) allows descendants of early Han settlers in

[88] The literal translation of the Nativist Movement is the "homeland soil" movement. The Nativist Movement started off as an artistic and literary movement in the 1970s in response to the political climate at that time with the Nativist Literature Polemic being one of the most significant events during the time. The Movement

Taiwan (the islanders) to distinguish themselves from the later Han immigrants, namely the mainlanders; such naturalized nativeness of islanders deprived the real native people (the Indigenous) the right to exist.

Indigenous narratives, therefore, were and continue to be, if not outright erased, suppressed by what Bert Scruggs names as "indigenized settler colonist" (125). Such historical exploitation of Indigeneity and appropriation of nativity manifest Arif Dirlik's argument that "nation-building is itself a colonial activity per se" (87). It was not until the 1980s when Taiwan's Indigenous rights movement first appeared that more Indigenous people started actively seeking a higher degree of political autonomy and economic prosperity (M. Hsu 95-9). It was during this time that the government was pressed to recognize the *nativeness* of Indigenous communities and make efforts to preserve their cultures. The 1980s was a transitional time as the government control was gradually loosened, eventually leading to the end of martial law. The Indigenous movement was, in fact, kicked off by the emergence of Indigenous literature during the same decade when the magazine *Mountain Greenery* (*Gaoshanqing* 高山青) and poetry journal *Spring Breeze* (*Chunfeng* 春風) were established respectively in 1983 and 1984. The Indigenous movement and Indigenous literature movement were significant and essential to the (re)making of Taiwan's national identity after martial law as they were instrumental in generating a multiethnic and multicultural Taiwanese national consciousness or native consciousness (*bentu yishi* 本土意識) (Chi 277). Similar to Han settlers' claiming of nativeness during Japanese colonization and in the 1970s as a means to distinguish oneself from colonizers and foreign forces, the *return* of nativeness to Indigenous peoples since the

was then followed by the Taiwanization Movement (*bentuhua yundong*) in the next decade. Both contributed to the nativization and the configuration of Han-centred native discourse in Taiwan.

1980s is also strategic and calculated. As Chen and Chiu argue, "this intriguing interplay between the production of Indigeneity and the production of the Taiwanese identity, for this is one of the reasons why Indigenous culture began to claim a significant place in the political and cultural discourse in post-martial law Taiwan" (56). Especially in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the state has become more proactive in forging a new ethnoculturally diverse Taiwanese identity by using the Indigenous population as a means to counter the PRC's promotion of a new Chinese ethnomulticulturalism. Considering that Taiwan's Indigenous peoples are not ethnically Han but linguistically associated with the Austronesian family, Indigenous culture and identity, Indigeneity in Taiwan continues to be approached through the paradoxical framework, shifting from cultural otherness and essential Taiwaneseness; such ambiguity and flexibility allow Indigeneity to be tactically utilized to present Taiwan as a multicultural society on the global stage as well as a unique state distinct from mainland China, like *budaixi*. Indigenous peoples and cultures are claimed by the emergence of this new Taiwanese nationalism as the soul of Taiwanese culture.

Though the recognition of Indigeneity was based on its usefulness to broader nation-building processes of the settler state, Indigenous writers have nevertheless been playing a significant role in the field of literary production since the 1980s. The development of Indigenous literature can be divided into two stages: the first stage took place between 1983 and 2000, with the turn of the twenty-first century marking the beginning of the second stage (Chen and Chiu 54). While the former celebrates Indigeneity and focuses on de-Sinicization and reclaiming native roots, the latter often adopts a global and transcultural vision (55). The distinct attitudes and approaches of the two stages also

reflected and promoted transformation of Taiwanese society culturally, socially, and politically in such a way that was conducive to Indigenous peoples' advocacy for recognition and substantial support.

Indigenous literature and literary scholarship have also contributed to the repositioning of Indigeneity and centering of Indigenous rights. For instance, the seven-volume *Chinese-language Indigenous Literature in Taiwan* (2003) edited by Sun Da-chuan and *A Literary History of the Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples* (2009) by Pasuta Poiconu are critical to the study of Indigenous literature in the Chinese language. In terms of English scholarship, the "Aboriginal Literature in Taiwan" special issue of *Taiwan Literature: English Translation Series*, a literary journal led by Tu Kuo-ching, and *Indigenous Writers of Taiwan: An Anthology of Stories, Essays, and Poems* (2005), edited and translated by John Balcom, offer a critical introduction to Indigenous literary works. Kuei-fen Chiu has also been contributing to research on Indigenous literature and cinema since 2009. Regarding the latest scholarship, Shu-mei Shih and Lin-chin Tsai's *Indigenous Knowledge in Taiwan and Beyond* and Chia-yuan Huang, Daniel Davies, and Dafydd Fell's *Taiwan's Contemporary Indigenous Peoples* are both edited volumes published in 2021 that include discussions and reflections on the development of Indigeneity in different fields.

A question then arises in regard to the emerging discourse: What exactly is and counts as Indigenous literature? Wu Jin-Fa uses the term "mountain literature" (*shandi wenxue* 山地文學) in his introduction to a 1987 edited volume of Indigenous novels, which contains writing from both Indigenous and Han writers. Similarly, John Balcom makes a distinction between Taiwan's aboriginal literature and Indigenous literature by adopting the term "aboriginal literature" for mountain literature in Chinese (*shandi wenxue* 山地文

學) and "Indigenous literature" for native inhabitants' literature (*yuanzhumin wenxue* 原住民文學). The former is defined by Balcomm as "writing about the Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous writers, and the latter refers to "all writing by Indigenous writers" (xix). In the 1992 conference of "Listening to Indigenous Voices," authors and scholars came to a more rigid definition of Indigenous literature by reserving the term for literary pieces by writers from the nine highland Indigenous peoples groups and plain Indigenous peoples groups.[89] Tu Kuo-ching, taking an opposite position, argues that "[t]he so-called 'aboriginal literature in Taiwan' encompasses all literary works with the theme or subject matter related to the life, culture, thoughts and feelings of the aboriginal peoples in Taiwan, regardless of whether the author is a Han Chinese or an aborigine."

Despite the differences, it is commonly agreed upon that Indigenous literature should adhere closely to the notion of Indigenous identity and the reality of Indigenous peoples, including but not limited to the pains and sufferings that have been imposed on them, as well as what Gerald Vizenor calls survivance, which he defines as "[m]ore than survival, more than endurance or mere response; survivance is an active presence [. . .] an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (15). Indigenous literature also occupies a unique position among the Taiwanese literary tradition as it reflects a cultural background, historical tradition, and set of family values that is distinct from Han literature. Sun Da-chuan came up with the idea of Indigenous culture as "Mountains and Seas culture" (*shanhai wenhua* 山海文化) and Indigenous literature as "Mountains and Seas literature" (*shanhai wenxue* 山海文學) in his introduction to the first issue of *Shanhai Wenhua Bi-monthly* in 1993. He explains: "the importance [of Indigenous literature] is not because it

[89] The conference summary was published in *Literary Taiwan* (*Wenxue Taiwan*) vol. 4, 70-94.

indicates a literary tradition that has a background in 'mountains and seas'; more noteworthily, we can finally witness Indigenous writers attempting to convey their ethnic experiences as a subject and relieve the vitality and creativity suppressed for centuries."

Additionally, Sun also outspokenly points out that written language is a critical conversation that the magazine has to consciously and actively be engaged with, especially in regards to how one might center Indigenous identity and voices while using Chinese, a Han settler-colonial language. A special focus, then, on the interplays between the rich traditions, cultural heritage, knowledge, and wisdom that have been passed down orally through songs, music, legends, folklore, and mythologies, and their literary manifestations is needed. How does one capture and put into words the spirits of non-literal traditions?

This chapter uses puppetry as a lens to look at the world of Indigenous spirits and beliefs. While the tradition of story-telling and performance culture is central to Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, puppetry is not part of the indigenous traditions. Only in the past decade has puppetry become more commonly adopted by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists as an art form to tell Indigenous stories and present an Indigenous-centred narrative that has been central to constructing a new Taiwanese identity since the new millennium.

Why Puppetry?—Transcending the Limits of Indigenous Narratives

I would like to preface my study by sharing my challenge of searching for the meaning of "katumayan." *The Elders of Katumayan* is a play about the Amis, the largest Indigenous group in Taiwan. As a person who does not understand Amis, I did an online search hoping to find out more about the word but immediately realized how few results

there were. I then turned to the Online Indigenous Language Dictionary, compiled by the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan, which includes 16 different Indigenous languages.[90] However, no results appeared under the search term "katumayan."

One of the reasons for the difficulties of deciphering the Indigenous languages of Taiwan, also known as Formosan languages, is due to the declining Indigenous population and the gradual extinction of their languages. The most recent census, done in March 2022, shows that Taiwan's Indigenous communities make up about 2.48% of the nation's population at about five hundred and seventy thousand. However, far fewer are able to speak their ancestral languages due to centuries of Han settler-colonization, as well as Dutch and Japanese colonization. According to Elizabeth Zeitoun and Ching-Hua Yu's linguistic research on the Formosan Language archive, of the 26 Taiwanese Indigenous languages that have been recorded, at least ten are extinct, another four (or five) are moribund, and several others are to some degree endangered. Besides, all Formosan languages are spoken languages that lack their own writing system. The current writing system of Formosan languages is Latin-based and first appeared in the seventeenth century when the island was under the colonial rule of the Dutch Republic. From the seventeenth to nineteenth century, Han Chinese settlers used Chinese exonyms to document Indigenous languages; similarly, during Japan's colonization of Taiwan around the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese characters were used to document Indigenous languages and communities. It was not until the 1940s when Christian churches motivated by missionary

[90] Online Indigenous Language Dictionary: https://e-dictionary.apc.gov.tw/
The Council of Indigenous Peoples, formerly known as the Council of Aboriginal Affairs, is a ministry-level body under the Executive Yuan in Taiwan founded in 1996. It was established to serve the needs of Taiwan's Indigenous populations, plan and promote Indigenous policies and affairs based on the guidelines laid out in constitutional amendments.

purposes developed a Latin-based alphabet system for Formosan languages. By 2005, the Council of Indigenous Peoples proposed the current official version of the alphabet, which was later endorsed by Taiwan's Ministry of Education.

In spite of the official writing system, various spoken languages are sometimes spelled in disparate ways. For instance, since "The Elders of Katumayan" is the official English title provided by the Festival. I had been seeking related research materials with the spelling of "katumayan;" yet, a friend of mine, who is an anthropologist, mentioned that the word could also be spelled as "katomayan," and surprisingly, the latter is more commonly used. "Tomay" means "bear" in the Amis language, and thus "katomayam" means "where the bears inhabit." People of a certain tribe used to live in Katomayam, and the tribe was relocated to the current Douli location by the Japanese settlers during their colonization.[91]

The discrepancy discovered in the Indigenous writing system is certainly the result of the island's history of migration and colonization. Ever since the first arrival of settlers, the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan have fallen into the minority, which has resulted in the continuous marginalization of their livelihood and narratives. Even the intention to document or archive Indigenous cultures and lives was historically conducted by and for settlers' intent on converting Indigenous people, as in the case of Christian missionary activity, or settlers' occupying Indigenous lands. There has been a general absence of Indigenous narratives in writing throughout Taiwanese history due to the nature of oral traditions and the intentional erasure or alteration of Indigenous narratives by settler

[91] There is no record explaining why the creative team chose "katumayan" over "katomayam" for the title of the puppet show. It is possible that people had different pronunciations for the same word (which resulted in the slight difference when the word is romanized) due to the nature of Indigenous oral culture.

colonizers. To refer back to the claim of Taiwan originally not having history mentioned earlier—Indigenous peoples have *history*, but not the written one.

Artists working within an Indigenous context have been continuously searching for alternative ways to articulate, enact, and embody Indigenous narratives and stories that were passed down orally or recorded in Chinese or Western languages. The puppet shows of the *Touch Taiwan* series were written and performed in different Indigenous languages as they were intentionally produced by and for the communities. The name "Taiwan Disappeared," the direct Chinese translation of *Touch Taiwan*, alludes to the endangering of Indigenous languages, which resonates with the project's larger goal of language revitalization. Though not all audiences understand these languages, the unique features of shadow puppetry enable the audience to nevertheless create a world filled with fascination and welcoming imagination out of the performance.

Additionally, I argue that the use of giant puppets in *The Elders of Katumayan* offers a unique approach to Indigenous culture and narrative by allowing for a reimagining of different entities' and beings' relations to nature and the environment, a challenge to an anthropocentric "angle of vision" that further embodies how Indigenous ancestors share their landscape, temporality, and spatiality with other beings. Andrew Macklin describes puppetry as an "embodied language" (qtd. in Jones 64) and the act of puppet-making as a way to devise corporeal modes of interpretation and articulation generated by the body and irreducible to words. Macklin's reflections point to the ability of puppetry to supplement or even dismantle written narratives.

Indigenous Puppetry

In this chapter, I argue that Indigenous puppetry is contemporary in contrast to traditional, practiced in a collective and collaborative way, and presents Indigenous worldviews and mythologies; Indigenous puppetry is inclusive and engaging, and is not a utilitarian means through which to performatively demonstrate Taiwan's ethnocultural diversity. Indigenous puppetry has no preconceptions or preexisting standards. Instead, it embraces any assortment of forms, genres, colors, sizes, styles, materials, and controlling methods as long as they *tell stories*. Indigenous puppetry prefers unconventional performance spaces much in the same way that many Indigenous festivals and rituals refuse to be restricted to the conventional stage.

The two case studies in the chapter both fall under the sphere of Indigenous puppetry: *Touch Taiwan* is a cultural program initiated by Taiyuan Puppet Theatre that worked with different Indigenous communities to create shadow puppet shows in Indigenous languages that were by and for the communities and toured across the island in 2012 and 2013; and *The Elders of Katumayan* was a featured production of the 2018 Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival that invited local community members to create puppets and characters that envisioned the mythological past of their land.

Though puppetry is not traditionally a part of any Indigenous culture in Taiwan, it has oftentimes been deployed as an educational tool to tell Indigenous stories, especially through *budaixi*. Hong Guo-ching, the founder of the very first Indigenous *budaixi* troupe in Taiwan that often works with children and young adults in remote areas, produced the first full-length *budaixi* show in the Bunun language in 2012. The National Museum of Natural Science also produced a *budaixi* show of *Seediq Bale* in 2012. Inspired by the movie under

the same title, the show aimed to share Seediq culture and tell historical stories of the Musha Incident to young audiences.[92] Hsiao Tien-cheng's Folk Budaixi Troupe was also invited to showcase a *budaixi* piece about the historical incident of Likavong in which over 700 people from a Hakka village and the Indigenous groups of the Taivoan, Amis, and Puyuma rebelled against the local officials' oppression and harassment in 1888 during Qing dynasty rule. Hsiao's troupe intentionally chose an elementary school located in the Huadong Valley, where the Incident took place more than a century ago, as its performance venue to connect the historical play with the land.

All of the abovementioned pieces take great pains to care for the unique spatiality and locale. Yet in my opinion, they do not fall into the category of Indigenous puppetry, not only because *budaixi* is a Han cultural practice primarily performed in Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien and because each of these productions lacks Indigenous subjectivity. For instance, the stories of the Likavong Incident and Musha Incident are generated from historical records documented by Qing officials, Japanese colonizers, and Han Chinese scholars who portrayed Indigenous peoples as passive objects who were primarily plot devices rather than storytellers in their own right. Even though Hong Guo-ching consciously attempted to go beyond generic conventions by performing *budaixi* shows telling Indigenous stories with Indigenous languages, the cultural hegemony of *budaixi* still inevitably shaped the creative process of transculturation; for instance, in Hong's play, traditional *budaixi* puppets are merely dressed in Indigenous costumes to portray

[92] The Seediq is an Indigenous group residing primarily in Nantou and Hualien County in Taiwan. Under the Japanese colonial period, in response to long-term oppression by Japanese colonial authorities, the Seediq Indigenous group in Musha, also known as Wushe in Mandarin, attacked the village, killing over a hundred Japanese in 1930. Later on, the Japanese officials led a counter-attack which killed hundreds of Seediq. The incident is known as the Musha Incident or Wushe Incident.

Indigenous characters. In all the examples above, *budaixi* is the primary subject on stage despite incorporating some Indigenous elements. A parallel can potentially be made between this kind of theatrical model and what Daphne Lei terms "hegemonic intercultural theatre" that combines "First World capital and brainpower with Third World raw materials" ("Interruption" 571), with Han narrators being the First World capital and Indigenous cultures and figures as raw materials.

One of the goals for proposing the genre of Indigenous puppetry is to avoid positioning Indigenous cultures and symbols as transplantable, primitive, or raw; and additionally, to de-Sinicize what can be told through puppetry in order to open up a space to perceive the world from an Indigenous animistic worldview that views the world as alive. Hence, the two puppetry projects discussed in this chapter do not involve the presence of *any* specific Han cultural symbols or practices. For instance, instead of simply dressing *budaixi* puppets in Indigenous outfits, *Touch Taiwan* invites performers from Indigenous communities to design and create their own shadow puppets in whatever way can best convey their stories of enchanting mythical beings, while *The Elders of Katumayan* uses giant puppets crafted by community members to portray the *larger-than-life* knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous ancestors. Secondly, the stories and narratives of both of these productions are directly derived from Indigenous mythologies and legends, which, in my opinion, better manifest the perspectives and worldviews of these communities.

As Paul Lin, the founder of Taiyuan Foundation, describes: "Taiwan aborigine life and history can be found in the wonderful and exciting legends of every tribe. These stories are passed on through the ages and they are about nature, love, struggle and the joy of living,

full of drama and humor" (9). These stories are not only familiar tales for tribal members but also directly derived from their history, beliefs, and ways of living. One of the puppet shows that was a part of the *Touch Taiwan* project, titled *Ten Suns*, tells an Amis legend of a time when there were ten suns in the sky that dried out the land and the rivers. The women of the tribe decided to weave nets and catch the sun after seeing the men failing to shoot the suns down. Succeeding in catching seven suns, the women then negotiated with the remaining three and eventually settled on turning one of them into the moon and another into the stars of the sky. The story demonstrates the animist notion of suns being nonhuman yet alive and also explains how the Amis became a matriarchal society.

Bronislaw Malinowski, Joseph Campbell, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and many other scholars have reiterated the intimate connections between human minds, spirits, and cultures through the function and meaning of mythology. As Pasuya Poiconx writes, "mythology is a series of loose narratives accumulated along humans' long journey pursuing knowledge and seeking answers to questions" ("Shenhuashu"). It reflects humans' perception of and relationship with the natural worlds, as well as their respect, fear, and sense of awe toward the unknown and the uncertain. Mythology is a collection of humanity's imaginations of an ancient past divergent from, and at times intersecting with, what has been considered history. However, it is important to note that mythology does not always stay the same, whether it be written down or orally transmitted. Telling or passing down mythology involves interpreting, retracing, adding, deleting, and restructuring the stories in response to changing temporalities and spatialities, which thus makes mythology itself an observational, interactive, and complementary process that co-constructs human experience.

This co-constructive feature of mythology resonates with Walis Labai's attitude toward Indigenous culture and art: "[One must remember] that native/aboriginal people are not 'extinct;' nor is their culture. [. . .] Aboriginal identity and culture do not have to be defined as intrinsically 'tribal.' Aboriginal identity/culture exists as it continues to do so: having survived as well as transformed" (qtd. In McIntyre 117). Indigenous cultures are in an ongoing process of continual evolution; they are not a recent phenomenon nor are they some bygone relic that has long been extinct. Puppets have the potential to manifest such a kinesthetic process of evolution. Moreover, they visualize and embody the unimaginable or indescribable creatures and figures of mythology and are constantly in the process of (un)becoming into different beings.

The last feature of Indigenous puppetry that I wish to emphasize here is the contemporaneity of Indigenous puppetry. Taking seriously Sophie McIntyre's warning of how the terms "traditional" and "contemporary" can be problematic terms to categorize Indigenous arts and creative works since they fail to describe modern Indigenous artworks that take inspiration from Indigenous traditions or ancient mythologies (107). I use the term *contemporary* to specifically underscore the evolving nature of Indigenous puppetry as always already a manifestation of the present. I also use the term to make a simple distinction between Indigenous cultures and arts *before* the 1980s when Indigenous artworks were mainly approached through the anthropological gaze and *during/after* the turn of the century when Indigenous artworks were deployed as a way to advocate for Indigenous consciousness building.

In the same spirit, it is crucial to reiterate that the contemporary Western or Han notion of theatre or performing arts does not exist in most of Taiwan's Indigenous

languages, though many Indigenous rituals and festivals are undoubtedly theatrical and performative. As Kuo-Shin Chuang, an Amis director of the Kuo-Shin Chuang Pangcah Dance Theatre, explains: "in the past decade, 'Indigeneity' was perceived as a 'symbol.' It is obvious that choreographers from different Indigenous groups like myself have been trying to generate dialogues and communicate with the public. But how? Our syntaxes are different from the Han's. Many simulations and excitements are invoked during the process of seeking creative expressions" (*Cong shenti yuanxiang chufa)*. Likewise, Indigenous puppetry also demonstrates an attempt to communicate both within the community and with the larger public.

Indigenous puppetry never ages nor becomes stale; instead, Indigenous knowledges and worldviews are evoked and reimagined whenever Indigenous puppetry is performed. Similar to all Indigenous cultures, it is a repertoire that enacts embodied knowledges and articulates cultural, historical, collective and individual issues. I contend that contemporary Indigenous puppetry is about encountering and reconnecting communities with the land, both physically and spiritually, through puppets. My argument resonates with what Julie Burelle describes as Stanley Vollant's 3,600-mile project of walking through the land, whereby project members "participate in weaving the textures of the land, marking with their moving bodies new connections between communities, Indigenous or not, and repatriating an embodied and experiential knowledge of the land that was central to Indigenous peoples" (128). The process and performativity of moving bodies and connecting with the land disclose a uniquely Indigenous ontology.

Tim Ingold describes ontology as "not of making a view of the world but of taking a view in it" (42) and draws attention to how people know, create, and practice various

ontologies based on the experience of being. Taiwan's Indigenous ontologies, regardless of differences amongst various groups, essentially center on one's experience of and relationships with the ever-changing world that surrounds them. How then do different genres of performance engage with Indigenous ontologies? In her article "Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis," María Regina Firmino Castillo proposes Indigenous performance as an ontological praxis that allows a reimagination of Indigenous worldviews. In that vein, Basil Jones also states that "the puppet's striving to depict and embody life means that it has a different ontological narrative from a human being" (62). Inspired by these ideas, I am especially interested in the potential of puppetry as a creative means and practice that offers a distinctive way of experiencing the natures and cultures of the world, as well as understanding the relationships between humans and other beings. Indigenous puppetry manifests embodied and experiential knowledge of the land and can potentially serve as an ontological praxis for Taiwan's contemporary Indigenous narratives and subjectivity.

Touch Taiwan, or Taiwan Disappeared

Touch Taiwan, or "Taiwan Disappeared" (*Taiwan bujianle*), is an educational program led by Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company and supported by Taiwan's Council of Indigenous Peoples. Over the span of two years from 2012 to 2013, Taiyuan worked with different tribes to explore their life stories and present them through shadow puppetry. All stories were written either in Chinese or in participants' respective Indigenous languages and then translated into English; hence, each story appears in three languages in the

published play scripts.[93] The majority of stories selected for the program are mythologies and legends that have been passed down orally for generations, while some other stories are about historical incidents that took place on tribal land or social issues that Indigenous peoples in Taiwan have been facing, such as the anti-reinterment movement against the removal of ancestral homes and reburial of Indigenous ancestors. Together with the community members, shadow puppets were constructed and used in these puppet shows performed by and for the communities.

The designs of shadow puppets in *Touch Taiwan* vary, though most are made of paper and cardboard with colored cellophane sheets that allow light to go through and create colorful projections on the screen. The stage screen is usually a large white fabric attached to a metal frame or hung on a rod from the ceiling to separate the audience from the backstage. Some of the puppets resemble Chinese shadow puppets, which feature a wooden or bamboo stick fixed to an individual paper puppet as a control rod and sometimes a wire to strengthen puppet's structure. Others are made as two-dimensional masks or hats worn by performers. The control rod puppets allow a performer to control several puppet characters at once, while the masks and hats use the performer's body as a part of the shadow puppet and therefore a performer can only be in charge of one character at a time but is able to execute much more flexible movements. The mixed use of these two puppet styles enables more creative possibilities and better caters to the size of the cast as all of the plays have different numbers of characters. Additionally, altering the puppets' distance to the light source changes the size of shadows on the screen; hence the character

[93] As one of the core members of Taiyuan, Robin Ruizendaal has been dedicated to promoting works to global audiences, many of their productions are available in English or with English subtitles.

of a giant can turn into a tiny ant in almost no time. A magical world of shadows is thus created.

Paul Lin, the founder of the Taiyuan Foundation, explains that "shadow theatre is an excellent medium [for the program.] It is not expensive, it can be done fast, and the results are wonderfully theatrical and entertaining" (Taiyuan 9). In this part of the chapter, I delve into the functions and meanings of shadow puppets and attempt to demonstrate how shadows and shadow puppetry have the potential to embody Indigenous knowledges and serve as an intangible archive for their stories and histories. Ancillary to the above, I approach and analyze the plays of *Touch Taiwan* through the perspective of animism—–a set of beliefs about the world being alive and life itself being relational—and engage animistic theory with the discourse of shadows.[94]

Animals, Animism and Shadow Plays

The presence of animals is prevalent in Indigenous stories, where animal characters typically bear human characteristics and appear not as a different species but as cohabitants of the lands. In "Signs of Life and Personhood," Graham Harvey writes about the significance of the idea that "animals are people too" in animist worldviews (*Animism* 99). Similar points can be extended to all other-than-human persons, such as animals, plants, rocks, rivers, and other existents, both natural and man-made. This notion of personhood does not necessarily equate to the idea of humanhood, but instead refers to the extension

[94] I seek to use the term "animism" mindfully as its origin and theorization attribute to Western anthropologists' encounters with mystical, supernatural or non-empirical spirit beings in the nineteenth century. "Animism" has then been used overarchingly to refer to religious beliefs and Indigenous practices while remaining conceptually and terminologically nonexistent in many communities and cultures considered "animistic."

and projection of human's feelings of personness toward other existents. Eduardo Kohn also speaks of how we, humans, are somehow

> colonized by certain ways of thinking about relationality. We can only imagine the ways in which selves and thoughts might form associations through our assumptions about the forms of associations that structure human language. And then, in ways that often go unnoticed, we project these assumptions onto nonhumans (21).

From an animistic perspective, the reason why the other-than-human or beyond-human existents are normalized as not alive is because of the failure of humans in seeing their personness and the relations that all existents have with the larger world. On the contrary, Indigenous stories typically normalize personhood in non-anthropocentric ways and emphasize the communicability between human persons and animals. Many shows in *Touch Taiwan* feature personified animal characters that are essentially perceived and treated as persons. For instance, in a Hla'alua legend, a pangolin saved the life of a girl who was buried in the wilderness by villains; and in the Rukai story of *The Filial Youngest Daughter* (2013), a man's third daughter married a hundred-pacer snake in exchange for her father's well-being.[95] As animal and human characters in both pieces are all portrayed through shadows ornamented by colorful cellophane sheets, from the audience's perspective, there are no fundamental differences or separation between animals and humans, which eventually blend into a larger darkness. In the world of these plays, as well as the Indigenous ontologies they express, language, reasoning, and moral awareness do

[95] The Rukai people honor hundred pacers (snake) which they believe to be sacred and host the spirits of their ancestors.

not appear to belong exclusively to human beings as features that set humans apart from the rest of the world.

Philippe Descola describes different forms of individual relationships with animals treated as persons: "although actively hunted for food, or feared as predators, animals are nevertheless considered as persons with whom humans can, indeed should, interact according to social rules" (77). In the stories *Rescue by Pangolin* (2013) and *The Filial Youngest Daughter*, neither humans nor animals intrinsically occupy a superior ontological position; instead, they establish various kinds of personal relations between each other, whether it be relations of gratitude or revenge.[96]

Nurit Bird-David also talks about the notion of personness in the article "Animism Revisited," which references Irving Hallowell's ethnography of the Ojibwa (from fieldwork conducted in the Lake Winnipeg area of northern Canada during the 1930s). From Hallowell's observations, "the Objiwa sense of personhood, which they attribute to some natural entities, animals, winds, stones, etc., is fundamentally different from the modernist one" (71). The modernist sense of personhood is built upon the axiomatic split between human and nonhuman, with "person" referring solely to human. However, the Objiwa conceive the notion of "person" as an overarching category within which are "human person," "animal person," "rock person," and more.

On the basis of Hallowell's insight, Bird-David examines the senses of "*devaru*-person" in Nayaka, a hunter-gatherer community in the Nigiri region of South India. In one of the anecdotes mentioned in the article, she illustrates how Nayaka distinguishes between elephants as *devaru*-persons and as objects (75). The fact is that

[96] English titles of individual plays in *Touch Taiwan* are provided by Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company.

Nayaka does not seem to distinguish merely between the idea of persons and objects, but between persons *in the process of relating* and persons being disinterested in and unresponsive to others. As a result, when elephants engage with humans or other-than-elephant persons, they become persons. From Bird-David's study, it can be understood that the concept of personness or personhood is thus relational, much like the dialogical being of Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship.

The Yam Monster (2012), one of the plays in *Touch Taiwan* by students from Lan-Yu High School, tells a Tao legend of a mother kidnapped by the Yam Monster and later saved by her children after they build a boat, sail across the ocean, and eventually drag the Yam Monster into the water; the play ends with the reunion of the family.[97] The Yam Monster in the play is portrayed as human-like, but also features detachable wings which make its physical appearance unsettling. In the play, the daughter questions the similitude between yams and humans when digging them out from the ground. The mother gently replies that "yams often look like people" (117) before being seized by the Yam Monster.[98] Through the shadows, the monster grows from the ground and then swiftly flies into the sky. The story itself demonstrates the resemblance between humans, plants, and the monstrous creature through its presentation vis a vis shadows with minimum colors. This presentation style suggests fewer discrepancies between different species and echoes the idea that all beings, like shadows, have no formal ontological distinctions but are simply *persons* with different characteristics.

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[97] The Tao are an Austronesian Indigenous peoples native to the outlying Orchid Island (Lanyu) of Taiwan. They have a unique maritime culture of which ritual and spiritual significance are placed on canoe-building and fishing. What is especially unique about Tao is that the Tao language is the only native language of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan that is not a member of the Formosan grouping of Austronesian. Instead, it is one of the Batanic languages which can also be found in the northern Philippines.

[98] English translations of the scripts in *Touch Taiwan* are by Taiyuan Puppet Theater Company.

The story also highlights the Tao peoples' maritime belief that the ocean is omnipotent. Most Tao rituals involve respecting and worshiping the ocean, which is considered the mother who gives birth to and nurtures all beings on the island. In the story, the ocean gives the family strength to conquer the monster. Syaman Rapongan, a Tao writer, explains that "trees are children of mountains and boats are grandchildren of oceans. All beings in the natural world have their souls. If you don't bless the gods of nature, you are not a part of this vital island. [. . .] With these rituals, nature will never give up on us" (59). In his words, everything in the world is a relative to one another, expanding the family tree to provide nutrition and shelter for more beings.

A few other Indigenous legends with animal characters in *Touch Taiwan* involve the concept of transformation, metamorphosis, and what Bird-David might call the *in process of relating.* These legends include: *A Hunter Turns into A Bird*, *The Children Who Became Crows*, and *A Man Turns into A Mouse*, among others. These pieces show the process of humans becoming animals; and interestingly, through the means of shadows, these transformations are, instead of an instant switch to another manifestation via some poof of magic, smooth, as if the two images are devoured by shadows and then instantaneously reemerge together as a brand new body or a new life in the brightness.

Human characters undergo a process of dehumanization and becoming-animal whereby their human bodily qualities are removed and a new identity or capacity is then taken on. Descola beautifully describes this metamorphosis not as

> an unveiling of the humanity of animal persons, or a way to disguise the humanity of human persons; it is the culminating stage of a relation where everyone, by modifying the position of observation to which he has been confined by his original

> physicality, strives to coincide with the point of view according to which he presumes that the other term of the relation apprehends himself (81).

Shadows are at once a part of the light that creates them, separated by the interposing objects that cast them. Shadows are boundless and belong to something larger than their contours, the darkness of night, or unilluminated space. They are always relational and reflexive. By adjusting the distance and angles between the puppets and the light source, as well as different types of light (i.e. lamp, flashlight, candlelight), the characters change their shapes and immediately transform into different beings. Regardless of whether they come out in the shapes of a human, an animal, or other beings, they are substantially the same in essence, connected, and are never entities that independently exist. In other words, shadows embody an animist relationality. Shadows in the abovementioned plays, portraying the metamorphoses of humans into animals, further divulge such relationality.

Discourse of Shadows

Shadows are relational. They are everywhere and always there, and thus became the inspiration for many throughout history. In Plato's allegory of the cave from *The Republic*, shadows are cast on the wall of a cave by moving figures representing humans and animals. There is a group of prisoners chained in the cave and their view is limited to a single direction toward a wall where the shadows emerge. As the shadows on the wall are the only things that the prisoners see, they believe that the shadows they see are the truth because they know no other reality. The appearances in front of their eyes might be mistaken for truth since our access to the ideal that stands behind the visual world is blocked by shadows. Plato inaugurated a sense of imaginary similitude between light/brightness and

knowledge/truth and between shadows/darkness and illusion/ignorance in Western culture, a binarism that was especially operationalized during the Age of Enlightenment. In *Repetition*, Søren Kierkegaard also described shadow play as an ensemble of illusory arts in which the individual can seek refuge and attach oneself to "an environment as superficial and transient as the shapes, as the frothing foam of words that sound without resonance" (156).

Though shadows are commonly associated with blindness and ignorance, South African director William Kentridge proposes a distinct approach to darkness that challenges these preconceptions. In *In Praise of Shadows*, a speech Kentridge gave in 2011 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, he historicized the dichotomy between light and dark and reversed the symbolic conception of the two by arguing that darkness offers a path to a truer truth. He claimed that "all calls to certainty, whether of political jingoism or of objective knowledge, have authoritarian origin relying on blindness of coercion—which are fundamentally inimical to what it is to be alive in the world with one's eyes open." The significant presence of shadows exposes what has previously been hidden or disguised and reveals things unseen or disembodied. Kentridge sees the potential of shadows to convey meanings behind and beyond the brightness of light and *portray the unrepresentable*. He has adopted shadow plays in his films and theatre pieces, such as *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997), *Shadow Procession* (1999), and *More Sweetly Play the Dance* (2015). Likewise, Japanese writer Tanizaki Junichiro shares a similar admiration for shadows: in Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, he explained that "the beauty of a Japanese room depends on a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows—it has

nothing else" (18).[99] The mystical nature of darkness nurtures profundity and eventually invokes fragile beauty in feeble lights, while complete brightness offers superfluous clarity and thus lacks depth.

In the same spirit, shadows contain more than darkness and two-dimensional silhouettes. While light can sometimes be harsh to the eye if too bright, the darkest shadows lure people's attention even more. It is oftentimes this sense of mystery and untouchability, or the incalculable depth and complexity that allure the attention of people toward shadows, toward an exploration of the unknown. Shadows of gods, ancestral spirits, mystic animals, and monsters in *Touch Taiwan* ignite curiosity and tantalize the minds of the audience. The sacrosanct beings and existents featured in these plays are not to be trapped or confined by material bodies, but should always remain elusive and incomprehensible, swiftly and wittily appearing and disappearing without a trace in order to further invoke awe and sometimes fear in the minds of the audience.

Kentridge and Tanizaki's preference for shadows, in fact, resonates with multiple non-Western cultures, especially those that affiliate shadows and shadow theatre with rituals, ancestor cults, or exorcisms. In the Javanese wayang tradition, puppeteers are also shamans or priests that use shadow puppetry to heal people and unconfuse their minds. Indian and Chinese shadow plays are closely associated with religious practices of Hinduism and Buddhism as well, and sometimes, shadows denote the presence of gods, spirits, or souls that are considered intangible or unrepresentable. Likewise, in some languages, the words for "shadow" refer to a zone or an idea of the spirits of the dead. In Rane Willerslev's study of Siberian Yukaghirs, he explains that the subjectivity of humans

[99] William Kentridge's speech and Tanizaki Junichiro's book happen to share the same title of "In Praise of Shadows."

and nonhumans are formally the same because they share the same kinds of souls, *ayibii*, meaning "shadow" in the Yukaghir language (152); E.B. Tylor also listed several languages in which the concepts of shadow and soul adopt the same word, such as in Tasmanian, Algonquin, K'iche' Mayan, and Arawak, among others (430). Similarly, the word *adingo* in Amis also refers to both shadows and souls.

Most, if not all, of the plays in the *Touch Taiwan* series retell legends of mythological figures from different Indigenous groups in Taiwan through shadow plays. The plays reflect and present diverse Indigenous beliefs and worldviews that are decidedly not anthropocentric, but instead full attuned to relationships with nature, objects, and all nonhuman and beyond human beings. Through the means of shadows, a magical and transformative world of everything being alive is vitalized. Additionally, since these stories have all been bequeathed orally without definitive written records, many have multiple versions and variances in details. The depth and vastness of shadows welcome imagination and provide a blank space for the audience to collaboratively fill and complete their versions of the stories.

Shadows as Manifestations of Souls

In the introduction of this dissertation, I described the idea of puppets being the *double* of beings, and vice versa. Likewise, shadows are associated with a being's *double* as they always coexist and share a mutual and reciprocal life with their alter, whether they be extensions of one's corporeal body or manifestations of an internal soul. Shadows have been perceived as a symbol of souls and spirits in many cultures, especially those with animistic worldviews. E. B. Tylor's study of animism extensively explored the notions of

souls and spirits. Interestingly, he referred to the soul as "the shadow of a shade" in his ethnographic research on religions:

> Where in primitive religion souls are deemed material, in modern religion they are deemed immaterial and are limited to human beings: In our own day and country, the notion of souls of beasts is to be seen dying out. Animism, indeed, seems to be drawing in its outposts, and concentrating itself on its first and main position, the doctrine of the human soul. [. . .] The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, "the shadow of a shade" (vol. 2 85).

Though his dichotomization of primitive and modern religions, as well as how souls are perceived in the past and present, are not fully applicable or accurate to the animist beliefs and practices of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, the link between body and soul and shade and shadow certainly exemplifies the *doubleness*, relationality, and reciprocity between the two terms.

Unlike Cartesian mind-body dualism, most animistic beliefs perceive souls as a part of life that will continue to exist in a different manner after the corporeal body perishes. In some Indigenous groups, after departing from one corporeal body, souls will then possess other material objects to physicalize and continue the cycle of life; for example, Paiwan and Rukai peoples carve on stones or woods to provide shelter and resting place for ancestral spirits. Similar to shadows, souls may temporarily be disconnected from bodies and become unseeable, but they never truly disappear. Shadows and souls are elusive beings that are either welcomed or unwelcomed and sometimes with and sometimes without material or fixed forms. The notion of *persons* can be adopted here to further draw connections between shadows, souls, and animism. I contend that the project *Touch Taiwan*

attempts to use shadows to imagine a world full of persons in order to further expand human perceptions to see and think beyond the material, *seen* world.

Ancillary to this point, most Indigenous belief systems in Taiwan are both animistic and polytheist; these belief systems are ones in which not only ancestors or living species like animals, fish, birds, and so on, but also trees, rocks, mountains, and soils are spiritual and can potentially be deified. There are no distinguishable differences between human souls and the souls of other beings and existents. This flat ontology resonates with the ontology of shadows. Shadows are indiscriminatory, whether they be of humans or of any other co-inhabitants of the lands.

The word *adingo* in the Amis language refers to both shadows and spirits. The lyrics of the song *'Adingo*, composed and sung by Natsuko Lariyod from the Taiwanese band Collage, read:

Hana, mata, 'orad.	Flowers, eyes, rain.
Cokap, koheting, tamina.	Shoes, blackness, ships.
Saheto o 'adingo i hekalan.	They are all shadows on the ground.
Hatiraay aca, aca.	That it. Just it.

Natsuko Lariyod, a person of both Han and Amis ancestry, shared in an interview that she believes "souls stop upon every shell that creates shadows on the ground" (qtd. in Y.H. Hsu). All shadows are intrinsically the same as they essentially belong to a greater darkness, and so are all things and beings that are a part of a larger network. What separates them is the temporal intervention of lights, not the difference itself.

Most shadow plays in *Touch Taiwan* are Indigenous legends; yet, there are two that are not mythological and instead delineate historical events and social issues of the land:

Jingpu Incident (2013) and *We Will Always Be Together* (2013). The former tells the story of a true historical incident that happened during the Qing Dynasty to the Amis tribe "Dafdaf," located at the south bank of the mouth of Xiuguluan River, which is now known as "Jingpu." The story begins with Qing officials arriving at the tribe, taking control of the land, and forcing people into slavery. Finally, the Amis decided to rebel against the oppression and sent out a team of warriors, led by Kafo'ok, to fight against the Qing authorities. Unfortunately, due to a lack of weapons s, all Amis warriors are wounded, if not killed, including Kafo'ok. After the death of Kafo'ok, the Qing officials feigned a call for truce negotiations and invited the remaining Amis warriors to their camps. As the Amis gradually loosened their guard in anticipation of peace, the Qing soldiers massacred them, killing over 160 Amis peoples and causing many others to flee from the region, which led to the disappearance of the entire tribe.

The incident is known as the Cepo' Incident or Takangkou Incident, and is referred to in the play as the Jingpu Incident. The play was written and performed respectively by a teacher and students of Jingpu Elementary School, the historic site of the military camp in which the incident took place. As I mentioned earlier, all the shows in *Touch Taiwan* are designed to be performed by and for community members. In other words, to borrow W. E. B. Du Bois' idea about "real Negro Theatre," these shows were designed to be *near* to these communities. The use of shadows to portray a story like this certainly avoids the reproduction of the traumatic historical events and potential retraumatization of the community, which resonates with the discussions in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, these plays offer a space for young performers to reconnect to the heroes and tribal ancestors of their land. In the play's funeral scene, four people carry Kafo'ok's dead body amidst chanting and

singing to mourn the death of all of the warriors. The shadows represent the souls of the dead, which are held by the living in their hands and slowly but eventually merge into the darkness. Accompanied by the singing, the scene appears less as a theatrical depiction of the funeral, but more as a ritual that shows the Amis people's respect and gratitude for their heroes and witnesses their souls ascending to another realm.

In the last scene of the play, there shows the gate of Jingpu Elementary School with students in Amis traditional clothes walking toward the screen with flowers and millet wine in their hands. Finally, the performers, along with the audience, sing the funeral song again in memory of their ancestors. Though unlike other legends in *Touch Taiwan* in that this shadow play does not feature any mythical creatures, personified animals, or gods, it nevertheless involves many magical moments that bring the present and the past, as well as the actual bodies and shadows (souls) of the Amis people, together in a unique performance space. This piece has less to do with reproducing an actual historical event on stage and more to do with communally commemorating ancestors through shadows. It is both performative and ritualistic. Different from reading historical records written in Chinese, the performers tell the story in their own language to connect with the community and their ancestors.

Echoing the two puppet shows examined in Chapter 2, by staging the play in a historical site, the space adds a different layer of meaning to the show. The audiences share and experience historical moments together by being physically in the space with others. Yet, the audiences in *Lala* and *I Promised* are the general public and unlike the ones in *Jingpu Incident*, who are community members and already familiar with the story and history even before the show starts. If the latter gathers in the historical site for

commemoration, the former enters the space to explore. Hence, while all provide immersive theatrical experience, the response and *affect* that the shows incite are fairly different.

We Will Always Be Together is another shadow piece that is not adapted from Indigenous legends. Set in 2020, it opens with a young Pinuyumayanese couple hanging out in a tourist park with an unrefined monument when they hear a crying sound coming from a stone.[100] They move the stone away and find a deep hole. From the hole, the spirit of an ancestor emerges like a cloud and explains to the frightened couple: "Don't be afraid. A few years ago, this place was still our Pinuyumayan Tribe's burial ground. The ancestral spirits were removed by bad people, but they forgot to relocate me" (Taiyuan 21). The ancestor continues to remark on how the land has now become a resort which takes away their living space and destroys their way of life. To intervene in the past, the couple joins the ancestor in time traveling back to 2012 in order to drip a potion into the cups of government officials that will deform their bodies and expose their dishonesty if they lie. When the officials tell the public at a press conference that although they genuinely respect Indigenous people, they need to remove the cemetery for local development and for everyone's good, their noses, tongues and teeth grow unimaginably big to the point that they are all in pain. After successfully exposing the government officials' trickery, the couple and the ancestor return to where they were. The couple asks the ancestor to stay, but the latter responds, "I will always be with you; the land, the tribe and the ancestral spirits—we will always be together" (23), and then slowly disappears.

[100] *We Will Always Be Together* opened in 2013. The year it was set in, 2020, was supposed to convey a sense of the "near future."

The piece is a response to and a gesture of support for the protest against the 2012 reinterment of Pinuyumayan ancestors' remains. Though the theme and message it delivers are serious, the tone of the play is comedic and fantastical. In the scene of government officials consuming the potion, the performers, all of which are Pinuyumayan children, wear large one-sided masks, on which the nose and teeth are exaggeratedly enlarged, creating a humorous yet grotesque undertone. Similar pleasantry can be found in the character of the ancestor, especially when the ancestor first ascends from the hole and frightens the couple. Certainly, the physical presence of the ancestor is central to *We Will Always Be Together*, and through shadows, the ancestral spirit becomes vivid and apprehensible. When the ancestor first appears on the screen, the silhouette of the ancestor gradually grows larger and more formidable in front of the couple as ancestor's shadow puppet is moved closer toward the light source. Echoing the prologue, the ancestor's shadow slowly moves away from the light source in the last scene, eventually shrinking to a small dot on the white fabric screen before completely dissolving into blankness. Similar to *Jingpu Incident*, the scene is then followed by the singing of tribal songs.

Unlike most Indigenous traditions that involve praying to the ancestors to bless the community, this play reverses the direction of request by having the ancestor ask their offspring for help. Different from heavenly figures in other non-Indigenous traditions, the ancestor in the play is neither solemn nor omnipotent; instead, the ancestor is humanistic and is burdened by the guilt for failing to stop the reinterment in the past despite being able to fly, travel across time, and create the magical potion. The reversal nicely conveys that there is no fundamental difference between the ancestral spirit and the living humans,

the immaterial and the material. Their relationship is not hierarchical but mutual, and together, they will finally be capable of protecting their shared ancestral lands.

Shadows occupy space, but their physicality and embodiment are temporal. It is the same with spirits and souls, as their existence is only noticed or recognized when they are *encountered*. Other lines from Collage's song *'Adingo* read:

> Tossed to the world. Chased by shadows.
>
> Indescribably dazzling. We are just wandering rays.
>
> I recalled that it was the name of a certain flower.
>
> It was not until the falling of the flowers that we know ourselves from others.[101]

Mono no aware, or "pathos of things," is a Japanese idiom and ideology for the awareness of impermanence and the feeling of subtle sadness toward ephemerality. Flowers and souls never truly die or disappear; instead, they are only stumbled upon by encounterers for a limited amount of time. Shadows somehow manifest such sensibility. Paralleling shadows with Indigenous cultures, the purpose of all preservation programs is never to compulsively *save* the cultures and stories as antiquarian objects or like wrapping mangos in plastics, but instead to value and enjoy the transient moments of encountering. Like the shadows in shadow puppet shows, though they eventually become blurred and blended into a larger light or darkness, the moment the stories are performed, they transform into memories that live in the mind of the audiences, just like the nutrient from rotten mangos in the ground, which continues to nourish the community, as described in Sakuliu Pavavalung's allegory.

[101] This part of the lyrics is originally in Japanese. English translation is mine.

The Elders of Katumayan

Touch Taiwan incites fantastical moments of Indigenous mythologies through boundless shadows. *The Elders of Katumayan* (*Laizi Gadoumyang de Zhangzhe* 來自旮都瑪樣的長者 2018) uses a different technique—the enlarged puppets—to physicalize the magnitude of the Indigenous stories which are deeply rooted in the land. *The Elders of Katumayan* is a puppetry piece about a tribe of giants born in the mountains of Katumayan in Taitung County, located on the East Coast of Taiwan. The area currently known as Douli 都歷 (or Torik in Amis) is home to the Amis. The word *katumayan* means "where the Formosan black bears used to inhabit" in the Amis language. Despite the fact that almost no written record about the residents and history of Katumayan exists, people outside the tribe have been attempting to recreate the Amis traditions, way of life, and relationships to the nature of this lost land by reenacting the folklores and origin myths that were orally passed down. Commissioned by the 2018 Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival, the thirteen-foot-tall giant puppets were created at the Amis Folk Centre of Douli (Torik) in a workshop led by Australia-based artist Daniele Poidomani and hosted by a local art group called the Amis Kakeng Musical Group.[102] The performers carried the giants on their shoulders and traversed the natural landscapes of the East Coast. This piece makes use of large-scale puppet creations in collaboration with local communities to explore dialogues among art, nature, culture, and how ancient predecessors adapted to their ecological context.

[102] Amis Kakeng Musical Group is a band of traditional Indigenous music established in 1999. They perform with handmade musical instruments made of wood and bamboo from local forests. The mission of this band is to promote and preserve Indigenous traditional cultures. "Kakeng" is a bamboo bell that is often used to inform the villagers about weddings.

This case study draws attention to non-literal narrative and notions of embodiment by asking: How do these giant puppets reimagine Indigenous experience, reenact the myths of origin, and reconfigure the sovereignty of a disappearing tribe? How do puppets and performers respond to nature while passing through valleys along the routes taken by their ancestors? How does the collaborative process of puppet-making with local communities contribute to the collective remembering and reenactment of Indigenous oral traditions?

Figure 3.1 *The Elders of Katumayan*. Photo Credit: Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

Weight of Puppet, Weight of Life

The artist Daniele Poidomani explained in the audio guide of this piece the reason why he had been fascinated with creating giant puppets in the visage of Amis elders.[103] Knowledge and life experiences are all marked on the physical body of the elders. Through talking to the elders of the Amis tribe, Poidomani described how he was able to create a work that was born out of the local people and originated from the land. In the same audio guide, the curator of 2017-18 Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival, Yun-Yi Li, described

[103] "The Elders of Katumayan." *Dailoo.com Audio Guide*, www.dailoo.com/UvANvi.

how surprised people were when they encountered the giant puppets. The unimaginable size of the puppets reminded people of natural beings living deep under the sea or in dark forests vis a vis resemblance to figures in folk stories and mythologies. In fact, there is a traditional Amis legend about the monsters, called Alikakay, living in the Mei-Luen Mountains.[104] In one of the versions, they are described as a group of gigantic beyond-human beings who were good at exercising sorcery and inhabiting the mountains. They often caused disturbances to the tribes, and therefore the Amis tribes united and fought with the monsters. After losing the battles several times, the chief of one tribe dreamt of the Sea God, Kafit, who told him to use *porog* to fight the monsters.[105] When the Amis fighters raised the *porog* against monsters, the Alikakay begged for a truce so that their entire group would not be completely annihilated. In return, the Alikakay promised that as long as tribal people worshiped them along the rivers and sea with liquor, betel nuts, and *tulun* (rice cake) every year in June, the Alikakay would use their sorcery to grant the tribes plentiful harvests and ocean catches.[106] This legend is later regarded as the origin of several Amis ritual festivals, including the harvest festival and the sea festival.

The story of Alikakay illustrates not only the origin of rituals but also the intimate relationships between Amis people, nature, and other-than-human beings. It contains epistemologies and describes ontological relationships that differ from modernist views of nature and other beings as inherently separate, inferior, and available for conquering. Instead, Amis peoples' view toward nature and other beings is centrally about living along

[104] The legend of Alikakay can also be found in *Touch Taiwan* as Arikakay.
[105] *Porog* is the arrow made of reeds and is often used in rituals.
[106] Documented in Tiway Sayion's *Ameizu Shenhua Gushi* (*Amis Mythologies*). Stories told by Rutuk Sayun of Shuilian Village, Shoufeng Township, Hualien County.

with and further sustaining one another through co-inhabiting the land, which also resonates with the idea of sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity.

This belief, as well as the story, have been passed down for many generations by tribal elders. The giant puppets of the elders, with sizes comparable to the big Alikakay, can be perceived as an embodiment of the mythological figures who had the power to counter the giant monsters, as well as a manifestation of the immensity of Indigenous knowledges and traditions that have been accumulated for generations. The wisdom of the Elders enables them to appear larger than life, and their grand size allows them to perceive the land and things happening on it from a broader and more comprehensive perspective.[107] Furthermore, wisdom enables them to become a formidable force against those who attempt to harm the tribe, such as the Alikakay. The giant puppets, similar to what the curator described, are beings born in the mountains or under the sea, and are a part of nature that arouses feelings of awe.

Puppetry, as Kenneth Gross describes, "suppl[ies] what is lost or dead in us" (35) through "[participating] in the life of men despite not being human" (51). Puppetry restores and tells the stories of Indigenous predecessors and elders through embodying their experiences vis a vis puppets that then corporeally interact with the land and humans. As a form of performance, puppetry is a powerful ontological praxis not only because it is a bodily practice that requires an intimate connection forged between human beings and an ontologically (and substantially) different entity, but also because it is kinetic and, to use Castillo's word, telluric (60), meaning 'rooted in the land'. Distinct from the experience of performing with the almost weightless shadow puppets used in *Touch Taiwan*, performers

[107] I intend to capitalize the first letter of the Elders while referring to the puppets as a way to differentiate them from the Indigenous elders.

of the two puppets in *The Elders of Katumayan* have to hold these giants, at least twice or three times their size, which rhetorically echoes the idea—to comprehend tribal stories and traditions, one needs to learn to bear the weight of them first. Performers carry over 44 pounds (20kg) of gear like a hiking backpack with four bands on their waist, chest, and both shoulders in order to bear the weight of the Elders. Performers must not only endure the somatic difficulties, but also always stand firmly and stably on the ground in order to keep their balance and not fall. If the performers want to move the puppet's hands, they have to raise their arms against the heaviness of these giant beings.[108]

The puppets are not controlled or manipulated by human performers, but, as Gross says, *participate* in their lives. Through being physically inside the puppets, the performers are also *engaged* with the puppets' life and get to experience the landscape of the East Coast *with* the Elders. Walking with the Elders brings local people's memories of the past to the present; together, their gaze settles on the top of the mountains and onto the boundless ocean. Strapped inside the giant puppet, it is as if the performer is in the womb of the puppet, safely protected and embraced by it. Elder and performer live in symbiosis and share the same state of being with their bodies overlapped and spirits connected. Together, the puppet and the performer nurture and give birth to a new life, and they further connect to other beings and spirits from an entirely different vision and perspective.

Kawas is a significant but complicated concept in Amis religious culture that denotes gods, spirits, supernatural beings, and/or ghosts. Resonating with the animist views discussed earlier, Amis belief systems consider everything in the world to be alive and

[108] The giant puppets in *The Elders of Katumayan* are larger and taller than the large puppets in *I Promised I Wouldn't Cry* studied in Chapter 2. Though both are worn and carried by performers, the puppets' structures and controlling mechanisms are different.

endowed with a soul. According to cultural ethnographer Huang Shiun-Wey, *kawas* generally refers to any beyond-human spiritual beings and can be further distinguished into two main categories: on the ground or in the sky. The former includes the spirits of people, animals, plants, fire, rivers, the ocean, rain, land, and evil forces. Ancestral spirits, gods, and other celestial beings belong to the latter. *Kawas* reflects Amis cosmology and is the core of Amis people's everyday life. One of the most essential varieties of *kawas* are the spirits of the living, also called *adingo*, which was discussed before in Collage's song. *Adingo* originally means shadows that do not exist inside the body, but follow one's physical body (*Ameizu Chuantong Wenhua* [*Amis Traditional Culture*] 96). Yet, different from shadows, *adingo* is normally invisible, and will finally detach from the person's body when one passes away. Huang explains that such spirits

> protect every human body. Dreaming means that the person's spirit has gone somewhere. Once the spirit leaves the person's body eternally and returns to the realm of ancestries, the person has got to the end of life. Despite that the power of every spirit in the world varies, human beings basically treat every spirit with equal care, hoping to keep people's life safe and away from dangers through rituals. (6)

Spirit does not reside within an individual's body, but follows and protects the person from the exterior. Moreover, it never dies or disappears, but "return[s] to the ancestral realm" when the physical body withers away. Spirit transcends physical form and *becomes* a different source of energy. The notion of *returning* to the ancestors means a departure from the ground and return to the sky. The connectedness between this world and the world above and beyond emphasizes the bond between different worlds and how spirits and

human beings maintain reciprocal relationships. As Anthony Kubiak writes, both spirits and humans are "continually becoming world, as it is continually becoming [them]" (56).

I contend that a parallel can actually be made between *kawas* and the performers in *The Elders of Katumayan*. The performers do not simply control the giant puppets; instead, they have to follow the puppets' body and feel their movements in order to stay balanced since the puppets' structure, texture, height, and weight all affect the performers' ability to move and perform. The performers become the medium, a repository for the Indigenous elders' *kawas* which are not only substantial, but *real*. The performers and the puppets rely on each other in order to mobilize the elders. Resembling Melissa K. Nelson's depiction of Indigenous connections to nature, the performer "step[s] outside the sense of [self] as a contained being" and experiences "a larger sense of self" (230) that is a part of the giant puppet and a part of nature. When the giant puppets walk through plains and valleys, their *kawas* also interact and connect to other *kawas* along the way—more specifically, the *kawas* of animals, mountains, trees, rivers, and wind. As Graham Harvey writes, animism is an attempt to "[live] out in various ways that are all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons" as members of the diverse community which we call the world or cosmos (*Animism* xvii). The "persons" that Harvey refers to map onto the *kawas* in Amis cosmology, as both are considered always inter-relational and tightly connected.

In addition, making the puppet Elders taller than other people signifies that they are closer to the sky. Wang Sung-Shan explains that the Amis social class and power hierarchy are determined by age: elders are decision-makers, middle-aged people are executors, youngsters are helpers, and teenagers are pupils (160). The giant puppets embody the

highest stature of elders in Amis society. They connect the two spiritual realms, the land and the celestial, not only through their physical beings, but also through their knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

Figure 3.2 The Elder gazing at the city and the ocean. Photo Credit: Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

A similar practice of bearing large-sized puppets on one's body can be found in Han Taiwanese religious traditions. There are many folk-religion parades in Taiwan throughout the year. A typical parade procession begins and ends at a temple with the main focus of carrying a deity effigy in a palankeen. The god is preceded and followed by devotees carrying banners and placards, or playing musical instruments. One of the most eye-catching features of a parade is the *zhentou*, which involves a group of people serving as the divine guards of the god accompanying the parade. In many cases, these people not only put on costumes dressing as the divine guards, but also hold a large puppet or mask on their shoulder and over their head, and sometimes walk in stilts to better portray the larger-than-life image of the guards. For instance, the clairvoyant Qianliyan and clairaudient Shunfeng'er always escort Mazu, the sea goddess, through the journey of the blessing tour.

The people portraying the two guards have to be inside the giant puppets, swing the puppet's arms, and perform specific steps unique to the divine guards to ward off evil spirits and protect the main god of the parade, the people, and the community. These giant puppets are called *tuā-sian-ang-à* in Hokkien, which can be translated as "giant god puppet." Though they are the guards of gods, some temples also worship these divine figures and put them beside deity effigies in the temple. In the procession, they appear much more theatrical and almost steal the show.

Despite the huge divergence between Indigenous and Han Taiwanese traditions, the puppets in *The Elders of Katumayan* in a sense resemble the *tuā-sian-ang-à*. Through both of these physical figures, people are able to approach and communicate with the divine, the deceased, and their predecessors. Giant puppets are spiritual mediums that turn the abstract ideas of gods and ancestors into concrete manifestations. The idea of welcoming them to share a physical body with one's self also suggests a recognition and embrace of other-than-us beings. Unlike in many Western traditions, the notion of possession in Amis does not mean losing control of one's body, but rather is an act of allowing oneself to be liberated from the containment of the body and feel connected to other existents and knowledges—and eventually, to perceive worlds from a different perspective.

Puppets and Industrial Development

The use of puppets for presenting Indigenous stories and life experiences also echoes animist beliefs. In *The Elders of Katumayan*, performers and participants co-live with beings different from themselves. The image of the giant Alikakay, despite sharing some features with humans, is bigger, stronger, and more powerful than humans; Alikakay

also have the ability to *become* human with the use of sorcery. In contrast, the Elders *are* humans, but also *beyond* or *more than* humans, just like puppets. The formal description of the Elder puppets reads: "these gentle giants do not belong to any culture. They are simply a part of nature." The existence of these figures decenters humanness and further transcends the boundary between various objects and beings that co-inhabit the world.

Figure 3.3 & 3.4 The Elders in the mountains. Photo Credit: Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

Yet, the sharing of space between culture and nature has been challenged and gradually eroded by modern constructions and ideologies. In the promotion video clip of

the performance, the performers carry the puppets while trekking through plains, mountains, and rivers and walking along the pacific coastline with Amis performers dressed in traditional garments dancing around them. Though the Amis people are still living with the knowledge and wisdom of their elders and traveling on the same roads taken by their predecessors, the world has evolved over the years. There is a scene where the puppets are placed on the back of a truck and taken through a long concrete road; in another scene, spectators in t-shirts and shorts take photos with the puppets. The background music of the clip is an Amis pop song called *Malan Guniang* (*Malan Girl*), which was written by an anonymous composer and gained popularity in the 1960s. The song depicts a girl's wish to be with her lover; if her parents do not accept this relationship, she will kill herself by lying on the railroad (Huang "Amis Modern Songs" 21-2). Besides portraying the resilience of Amis women, the song also provides commentary on the industrial development and subsequent social transition experienced by Indigenous communities when the East Coast railway began to operate and introduced modernity to the tribes. It thus changed people's lifestyles and experiences of the land and nature both temporally and spatially.

Figure 3.5 & 3.6 The Elders on a freeway. Photo Credit: Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

Industrial development continues to affect the everyday lives of the people and slowly encroach on Indigenous land and sovereignty. Concrete roads and railways split the mountains and forests are razed to make space for buildings. Most people are aware of this destruction; however, the change is unstoppable and many have gradually become desensitized to their loss of balance with nature. When the giant puppets walk through the roads, they survey the land from above. The Elders are more conscious of what has been brought into the tribe and what is lost because they are taller and therefore see farther. Through the eyes of the Elders, this puppetry piece attempts to paint a fuller picture of local history, transformed lifestyles, and loss of land. Kenneth Gross talks about the relationship between puppets and humans: "[w]e bring objects to life in a world where human beings made themselves into their own effigies. The life is provisional, always emerging, or recovered from life that has been lost" (33). Echoing the *Touch Taiwan* play *We Will Always Be Together*, the Elders have always been watching over and protecting the people and the land, sustaining Indigenous life and culture. Such relationships together form and foster a network connecting humans, nonhumans, and every being.

Concluding Thoughts: Letting Knowledges Grow

Indigenous performance and installation artist James Luna explained in an interview the reason why he decided to turn from painting to performance: "in performance, I found that you could use words, you could speak them, you could write them. Your body, its movements was another voice" (187). Words and languages are all tools of expression and articulation, and so is one's body. Narratives do not always have to be written down or spoken, but can be felt, experienced, and embodied. Indigenous people in Taiwan have started to search for methods of presenting their voices and narratives in ways that reflect their experiences of history, life, culture, land, and nature. The puppetry pieces discussed in this chapter provide a unique approach to the embodiment of such narratives vis a vis puppets that, to borrow Basil Jone's argument regarding the potentiality of puppetry as a form of performance, are able to "become the manifest incarnation of our own struggle to live, to be human, to act" (63). Through the lens of puppets, we see the bond between different existents, beings, and *persons*, bonds that are dynamic, relational, and ever-changing.

Despite the fact that the pieces indeed offer a way to reimagine or re-learn Indigenous narratives, I also recognize that the creation of these works and the local community's engagement with the creation process should be critically scrutinized, considering the workshops were led by people outside of the community. Nevertheless, *Touch Taiwan* and *The Elders of Katumayan* are certainly community-based theatre projects that are made by, with, for, and near the communities. Resembling Indigenous rituals and festivals in their forms, the two projects required community members' collective efforts and buy-in and functioned as an opportunity for social gathering and communal

empowerment. In addition, creating awareness of members' own resources, mobilizing them to seek collective expression, and fostering cooperative thinking and action are pivotal missions for community-based projects. Indeed, the process of puppet-making can be perceived as a collective remembering and reimagining of local tradition, history, and experience. The workshop leaders were professional artists who would encourage and assist local people in sharing their personal experiences and further guide them to build puppets that incorporated everyone's story together and reflected their unique local culture.

Yet, the idea of non-Indigenous artists, like Western missionaries, coming into the community and *mentoring* the amateurs to tell their stories can still be problematic due to reinforcing a certain power hierarchy. Certainly, the distinction between community-based projects as a survival strategy for continuing endangered cultural practices and, in the case of *The Elders of Katumayan*, members outside of said community unveiling the mystery of Indigenous life for commercial public consumption is often blurred. Regardless, it is clear that such projects, especially those associated with festivals, seldom receive pushback from community members because they bring tourists and attention to the communities alongside government support of funds and resources. These projects, in this sense, help sustain the communities. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine whether such collaborations truly benefit the communities in a long-term perspective or fundamentally if we consider the sociohistorical challenges Indigenous peoples in Taiwan have been facing.

As of 2022, the Elder puppets are displayed at the East Coast National Scenic Area and, since 2018, have been taken out each year for the annual Land Arts Festival since they

were commissioned by the Festival. The problem of puppet ownership is complex and requires more research into related themes. Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, the community members participating in another workshop led by the same artist shared positive feedback on their collaboration and enjoyed having a platform and opportunity to release their creative energies freely. As a piece of art, *The Elders of Katumayan* has also been well-received among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, tourists, and locals alike. By bringing the puppets out to interact with different audiences each year, the puppets' lives continue to grow, engage with the public, and create new connections.

As for *Touch Taiwan*, the shadow plays are specifically meant to be educational programming. The shadow plays were made entirely by, for, and about the communities, with non-Indigenous artists serving mostly as facilitators of the process instead of leaders. Moreover, since each shadowplay was created by individual schools or tribes, the puppets and skills of puppet-making could continue to be practiced and performed by students and community members at will. The teachers involved in the project also shoulder the responsibility of passing on Indigenous stories and their plays.

Referencing Sakuliu Pavavalun's analogy, Indigenous cultures are like mangoes. When cultures become a part of the exhibition or museum collection, they are still mangoes but wrapped so that they can *stay the same*. On the contrary, cultures should be practiced in everyday life. Living objects are supposed to be changed or remade and will always be developed into different cultures based on changes in time and space. Mangoes in the eighteenth and the twentieth century may look the same because the nutlets were all the same. Mango nutlets resemble the ancient wisdom of the tribe, the roots of their culture. Depending on changes in the exterior environment such as sunlight exposure, air quality,

and water quantity, mangoes might become bigger and tastier, or fall to the ground before mellowing, or some species might go extinct. Nevertheless, each mango contains a mango nutlet that, if given the chance, can eventually grow.

The growth of Indigenous cultures also resonates with what leader of the Hawai'ian sovereignty movement Haunani-Kay Trask's writes about reviving the historical narrative of the land that has been repressed by colonialism:

> To know my history, I had to put away my books and return to the land. I had to plant *taro* in the earth before I could understand the inseparable bond between people and *'aina* [land]. I had to feel again the spirits of nature and take gifts of plants and fish to the ancient altars. I had to begin to speak my language with our elders and leave long silences for wisdom to grow (124).

The mango, or taro analogy also offers a way to understand Indigenous literature, puppetry, and other mediums of expression and representation which did not formerly exist in Indigenous traditions. Indigenous writer Liglav A-wu tells a story in her prose "Moon Peach" about problems a shamaness encountered when she learned that the new shamaness of the tribe, selected by the divine, was from a Christian family and thus unable to take on the duties of a shamaness (74-5). Yet, the story does not connote the potential extinction of shamanism; on the contrary, the conflicts between shamanism and Christianity, in fact, are proof that Indigenous religions are still living. In a talk featuring Liglav A-wu and Paiwan pop singer A-Bao (Aljenljeng Tjaluvie), both speakers emphasized the importance of making Indigenous languages and stories *a part of life* instead of static preservations that are sacrosanct and fragile. Indeed, A-Bao's music is mostly inspired by Western music genres such as R&B, pop, hip-hop, soul, and gospel, but nevertheless

incorporates traditional Paiwan tunes and are sung in her Pinayuanan mother tongue. Her music also proves that the Paiwan language and cultures are living traditions and practices which continue to grow. Both Liglav A-wu and A-Bao's works echo what choreographer Kuo-Shin Chuang argued about the mission of modern Indigenous dance as seeking a way to communicate with the larger public regardless of languages or mediums. They demonstrate Indigenous people's struggle and yet power to confront centuries of colonialism that aims to exclude and erase their presence. It is through creative integrations and collaborations that Indigeneity is no longer an ancient myth or passive agent, but denotes presentness and vitality.

In my opinion, Indigenous puppetry, especially the two projects mentioned in this chapter, functions as a medium through which stories can be told, performed, and further passed down; Indigenous puppetry is also a catalyst that inspires innovative storytelling and provides nourishment for artistic creativity. Indigenous puppetry is always transforming, incorporating new ideas and perspectives. *Touch Taiwan* and *The Elders of Katumayan* rebuild the connections with the land and language, whether it be spoken or embodied, and provide a potential approach to Indigenous history.

Continuation and revitalization of cultures require the integration of both ancient and contemporary wisdom, the ancestral land and the space of our daily life now. Objects and puppets, be they material or immaterial, bear not only *jiyi* (skills) and *jiyi* (memories), but an entire knowledge and ecosystem. If they are not connected to the community and involved in dialogues with a larger network, they will become like fruit covered with plastic wrap which can never be reborn after rotting on the ground.

CONCLUSION

I try to develop a form of theatre where the stage would be the area of the subconscious. I had a strange obsession. I used to feel very uncomfortable when someone would enter from the wings. It took me some time to finally discover that in my dreams people don't appear from the side; they surge and melt. This is maybe why unconsciously I started to use illusion not for the sake of illusion, but in order for the performers to appear and vanish from the stage like in my dreams. The progression of the sequences would follow the pattern of a dream through association of images rather than a story. Illusion also helped me to crumble the rational in order to open a gate to the subconscious of the spectator.

This is not theatre of the unreal; on the contrary it shows internal conflicts of the man facing his struggle with reality. He has to take into account his internal spaces to negotiate with those from the outside, which explains these landscapes that appear, metamorphose, disappear. Internal landscapes testify to our abysses and dizziness.—"Abysses and dizziness–an interview with puppetmaster Philippe Genty."

This conclusion opens with two shifts that occurred during the development of this dissertation: the emergence of the golden age of Taiwan Studies and of puppetry in Taiwan's contemporary theatrical scenes. In their 2017 articles, scholars like Dafydd Fell, Gunter Schubert, and Min-yeh Rawnsley suggested that we were witnessing the golden age of global Taiwan Studies, especially in the European and North American academia. There have been extensive discussions in response to this claim since then, whether they be agreements or criticisms.[109] Nevertheless, growth in the visibility of Taiwan-related research and publications in the English language is particularly evident from the increasing impact of the *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* and the number of

[109] Lev Nachman provided a counterargument to the Golden-age narrative from a graduate student's point of view by pointing out that he would "feel more encouraged [. . .] if the greater China studies field did more to acknowledge, support, and encourage graduate students to go into Taiwan studies," and hope that the golden age of Taiwan studies would truly create a sustainable path to a future in academia.
Nachman, Lev. "The Golden Age Of Taiwan Studies?: A Graduate Student Perspective." *New Bloom Magazine*, 26 Jan. 2018, https://newbloommag.net/2018/01/26/golden-age-response/.

monographs published under Routledge Research on Taiwan Studies Series in 2021 and 2022.[110]

Likewise, over the past few years, puppet performances of distinct genres and themes have taken over the stage in Taiwan. Many of these more recent puppet shows diverge from traditional puppetry and are dedicated to experimenting with performance forms and expanding story themes. Some of these puppet shows are produced by traditional *budaixi* troupes but also incorporate *budaixi* aesthetics with modern theatrical techniques and experiment with new ways of storytelling. For instance, since 2018, Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company has been setting the standard for interdisciplinary puppet shows that incorporate traditional *budaixi* with modern theatrical designs and storytelling.[111] In addition, some other theatre troupes have also begun to employ puppetry to portray major characters. Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group, famous for its unique postmodern aesthetics, has been utilizing object and puppet performances of different forms since the 2010s. The Party Theatre Group has also been working with *budaixi* puppetmasters since 2018 to explore themes and address issues that were rarely seen in traditional puppet shows, such as Japanese colonization, the White Terror and gender issues and queerness. The popularity of puppetry in Taiwan is certainly not unprecedented, but the most recent flourish of puppetry is indicative of a new golden age that has emerged alongside new digital technologies.

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[110] The Routledge Research on Taiwan Studies Series was first established in 2003, and currently has a total of 39 books published under the Series. Nine monographs were published as a part of Routledge Research on Taiwan Studies Series in 2021 and 2022, substantially surpassing the number of publications in previous years.

[111] More about Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company can be found in Chapter 1. My article about one of Jin Kwei Lo Puppetry Company's interdisciplinary puppet show, *A Soup of Reincarnation* (2018), was published on *Puppetry International*. Wu, Chee-Hann. "Stewing An Alternative Epic—*The Soup of Reincarnation*," *Puppetry International* 50, 2021, 24-27.

Beyond the framework of Taiwan, I also noticed a growth in the number of puppetry-related academic research projects and topics from my participation in the Puppetry and Material Performance Working Group of the American Society for Theatre Research and puppetry panel at the Association for Asian Performance since 2019. A myriad of edited volumes, monographs, and journal articles on distinct aspects of puppetry has also been published in the past decade, of which many were referenced or cited in this dissertation.

Consequently, the landscape of research on Taiwan and puppetry has changed substantially since I first embarked on this research journey in 2017; however, my goal remains the same: to amplify and theorize diverse narratives of Taiwan through the lens of puppetry. This dissertation is itself an epistemic endeavor that engages puppetry in every discussion. Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to generate a comprehensive overview of puppetry in/of/with Taiwan, I have nevertheless illustrated how puppetry can potentially be a narrative that prompts diverse discussions of Taiwan. The question of why puppetry is the best medium to study Taiwan threads the chapters together. In the introduction, I proposed the concepts of *becoming* and *unbecoming* to draw attention to the transformative nature and *in-process-ness* of both Taiwan and puppetry. I also contextualized this dissertation politically and historically to complicate the concept and definition of *Taiwaneseness* and Taiwanese identities, and concluded by theorizing my approach to puppetry as a meaning-making paradigm, including a meta analysis of situating Taiwan as part of the puppet show

Chapter 1 demonstrates the intimate relationship between the evolution of Taiwan's most popular genre of traditional puppetry, *budaixi* and Taiwan since the nineteenth

century. *Budaixi* is *made to become* an exclusively Taiwanese cultural form. Special focus is placed on the flexibility and adaptability of *budaixi* to survive through multiple drastic social and political turbulences since it first set foot on the island. I also trace how *budaixi* continues to serve as a cultural symbol standing at the forefront of Taiwan's nation-building project, as well as its function as a form of soft power for cultural diplomacy that represents Taiwan on the global stage. My work in this chapter is one amongst many research projects that situate the transformation of *budaixi* in relation to the development of Taiwan. My contribution lies mainly in departing from an ethnographic approach to *budaixi* and turning to the kinesthetic movements of puppetry as a survivors' cultural practice and the intrinsic transitionality of puppetry as an art form.

Following the same lineage, Chapter 2 illustrates how puppetry is engaged with the discourse of national trauma, untold stories, and memories. Chapter 2 situates puppets in a specific temporality—Taiwan's White Terror—and examines how the medium of puppetry provides access to national trauma for the postgenerations. This chapter examines puppetry in theatrical and virtual settings respectively through two puppet shows by Flip Flops Theatre and a detailed investigation of puppets in the videogame *Detention*. While the former is set up for educational purposes for young audiences, the latter leans more toward entertainment. Regardless of this distinction, the puppets used in the case studies recreate and reenact memories that have long been unspoken, further working to invoke an alternative form of commemoration and remembering of the past.

The third chapter marks a slight turn in this dissertation by challenging the predominantly Han-centered puppetry culture of Taiwan. In this chapter, I propose a narrative of puppetry that is inclusive of Taiwan's Indigenous population, and argue

puppetry as a potential means to embody and imagine Indigenous knowledges and mythologies through two case studies—*Touch Taiwan* and *The Elders of Katumayan*. I draw connections between puppetry, animism, and Indigenous mythologies to demonstrate that puppets embody indigenous worldviews that encourage thinking beyond anthropocentricity.

This dissertation is also different from other scholarship on Taiwanese puppetry by including both traditional and contemporary, as well as distinct genres of puppet arts. The historical development and contemporary manifestations of *budaixi* can be found in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, especially as they pertain to Taiwanese national discourse. Contemporary puppetry with distinct styles and forms is present in the second half of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, which emphasize puppetry's community engagements and educational outreach. Unlike the rigid materiality of other puppets examined in this dissertation, the discussion of shadow theatre in Chapter 3 is unique in that shadow puppetry is essentially insubstantial, which allows for flexibility in shapes, appearances, and the further visualization of magical creatures that only exist in our imaginations.

In sum, all three chapters exemplify the capacity of puppetry to be a vessel and repository of Taiwan's distinct social, political, and cultural journey as it has traveled collaterally with the evolution of Taiwanese subjectivities. Puppets are simultaneously archives and repertoires that store and practice memories and knowledge; furthermore, puppets continue to adapt themselves to their ever-changing environment by incorporating new practices and ideas.

This conclusion further traces my personal journey with and reflections on puppetry as a creative medium. In fact, there are two fundamental philosophical questions that have

functioned as the starting point of my research. Although I address these questions in the context of each individual chapter, I wish to present my general thoughts connecting all these chapters more thoroughly in this conclusion. It is also my goal to expand my research into other fields in the near future in order to more fully explore potential answers to these fundamental questions.

The Yet-to-be-answered

What is the life of a puppet? What does it *do*? In the introduction of this dissertation, I mentioned my involvement as an interpreter in a marionette workshop led by German puppeteer Alice Gottschalk. It was an intense 14-day workshop designed specifically for performing arts students, artists, and educators. Since the workshop was held in a small village, all participants had to spend 24/7 together for two entire weeks, including the staff. It was thus an extremely precious experience for me where I was able to develop an intimate relationship with all of the attendees, observe their work closely, and come to understand their thoughts and approaches toward art and life.

Gottschalk was an amazing artist who always emphasized the importance of learning the materials and following the puppets. When making paper sculptures for puppet heads, she reiterated the need to work *with* paper and to be aware of their *lives* instead of treating paper solely as raw material. For instance, when folding a piece of paper, one had to be careful and make sure that every fold was essential because once the paper was creased, its tension would not be able to be restored. This attention was also applicable to the cutting and trimming of paper. One could experiment with the shape and form of a

piece of paper, but one was not allowed to cut off anything from it because doing so would disable the paper, just like removing an arm or a leg from a person or any living being.

When adding strings to a puppet's body, everyone experimented with the gravity, weight distribution, and balance of the body to make the puppet's movements smooth. I often had to stand in between Gottschalk and the participants when they had conflicts. Oftentimes, the puppet makers, considering themselves as the creators that gave life to the puppets, tended to be concerned about how their puppets looked, their design aesthetics, and the movements or gestures that they wanted the puppets to achieve; in contrast, Gottschalk would ask them to calmly *listen to the puppets*, to feel their ways of breathing and observe how their joints moved rather than forcing the puppets to follow directions silently. Through this guidance, Gottschalk demonstrated her respect for puppets as individual beings. She did not see herself as the puppet's dominator or creator, but rather as a facilitator and connector who could provide a space for materials to come together and share a new *life* together. In her work, puppets were not just actors, but playwrights, directors, and storytellers in their own right.

In the same spirit, this dissertation focuses not only on how puppets are employed as tools to tell stories, but also on what stories they tell. Chapter 1 traced Taiwan's vicissitudes by looking at the roles *budaixi* puppets have played throughout Taiwan's history and how the evolution of *budaixi* largely matches the multiple major transitions of Taiwanese society. The puppets and avatars in Chapter 2 symbolically connote the previously untold stories in theatrical settings. Similarly, the giant puppets in the third chapter *are* the stories they try to convey. Their enlarged bodies are manifestations of Indigenous wisdom and knowledge and are beyond the scope of any language system. All

chapters emphasize the indispensability of puppets as *subjects* of stories and history. Resonating with Gottschalk's methods, humans are engaged in the storytelling process mostly as facilitators, mediums or witnesses instead of manipulators of the narratives.

Following the above, if Alice Gottschalk's artistic practice puts forth an attitude toward puppets, what about the audience? How does puppetry offer a new way of thinking about audiences? While most tend to pay attention to the puppet's head and face, its design and gestures, when seeing a puppet show, I am usually more drawn to its legs and feet. In many contemporary puppet shows, the focus is mostly placed on the puppet's head and hands, as the majority of the puppet's movements happen in its upper body. As a result, the puppet's lower body, especially the feet, is sometimes overlooked. There are moments when the puppet's feet flutter and swing, stomping unstable, appearing to be having a debate with gravity. In fact, in many puppetry traditions, such as *budaixi* and Japanese *bunraku*, puppeteers train relentlessly to secure a puppet's legs and feet on the stage so as to make it appear as if they stand and walk while being bound by gravity.

Though not about puppets but human actors, Japanese director Suzuki Tadashi values training actors to control their cores and lower bodies and considers standing, stomping, and walking as the three basic yet essential exercises to increase stability of the body, deriving from the movements of traditional *noh* theatre. Suzuki argues,

> The way in which the feet are used is the basis of a stage performance. Even the movements of the arms and hands can only augment the feeling inherent in the body positions established by the feet. There are many cases in which the position of the feet determines even the strength and nuance of the actor's voice (6).

The focus on feet emphasizes a vertical connection to the ground, which forces the performer to be conscious of one's relationship with the land and surrounding environment. Suzuki's method distances itself from the logic of realistic acting, which considers movement as a function of the character's expression, gesture, and locomotion; instead, Suzuki focuses on performing the inner experience, feelings, and consciousness of characters. While realist theatre aspires to reproduce the experience of daily life on stage, for Suzuki, the self in the real world represents nothing but an alienated and de-individualized self that inhabits a world devoid of meanings. Thus, performing is not a process of reproduction, but rather an emanation of the primitive and animal-like energy force that comes from the inner body and expresses itself through a vibrant physicalization. Though there are fundamental differences between puppets and human actors, Suzuki's method of actor training, especially the focus on connection to the ground, is applicable to the performance of puppetry. An example can be found in Japanese cart puppetry (*kuruma ningyo*), where puppets' feet are attached correspondingly to the puppeteer's; hence, the movements of the puppets' lower bodies resemble those of actual humans with the ability to stomp, make sounds, and release bodily energy. The attachments also physically and spontaneously connect puppets' feet to the ground.

Moreover, despite the fact that puppets can freely *fly* in the air as if they counter gravity, they ultimately land and fall to the ground as everything on earth is bound to gravity and puppets are essentially a part of the earth. The flexibility of puppets is, then, rooted in a recognition of the limits and capacities of their materiality in response to gravity. Echoing Philippe Genty's aesthetics, puppets do not belong to the *unreal* or the illusional, but instead, share the same world with us. Undoubtedly, the magical life of

puppets can be seen in their liminal status of being grounded by gravity and yet never-really-being-restricted to the ground. Such liminality resembles the notion of Taiwan, a subjectivity that is both bounded and unbounded; the idea of Taiwaneseness resembles puppets as they both continue to land on new grounds. People are always in the process of encountering, negotiating identities, and *becoming* new beings, just like puppets. This process is never static but always mobile and thus performative.

This dissertation uses puppetry as a lens and a means to map Taiwan; and meanwhile, Taiwan, following the previous discussion, works as the gravity that grounds this research on puppetry. This dissertation covers a wide range of time spanning from roughly the eighteenth century to the present (the 2020s) and encompasses discussions of issues that are simultaneously personal and collective. In particular, this research exhibits how the internal conflicts, thoughts, and/or memories of a person, community, or nation can be reenacted and carried out through puppets. I include a variety of artistic and creative manifestations of puppetry, as well as diverse genres of puppet performances, throughout this dissertation. The sizes of puppets analyzed in this dissertation also vary from small puppets that fit in a hand to thirteen-foot-tall giant puppets that can hardly be operated by one single performer. The puppets in all three chapters, regardless of form or size, are epitomes of larger historical narratives or knowledge systems.

Despite the distinctions of forms and subject matters mentioned above, there are several shared fundamental features of puppetry as a unique theatrical medium and performance tradition that endure throughout the case studies of this dissertation. More specifically, I distinguish puppets from objects of museum collections as the former is meant to be performed, and performativity is indispensable to the study of puppetry. In a

similar spirit, throughout the chapters, puppets are addressed and theorized as a narrative, symbol, practice, method, tool, tactic, mode, and means of expression, but *never* as a language or a text. I have intentionally avoided the textualization of puppetry, meaning reading puppetry as texts, as it imposes a plethora of presuppositions onto puppets, which further reinforces the ontological dominance of human control over objects as their creators and/or meaning-makers as well as the hegemony of text over kinesthetics. Instead, what I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this dissertation is the relationship and mutuality between humans and puppets; I do so by departing from the modernist subject-object dichotomy. The overarching principle and attitude toward puppets that I wish to propose can, in fact, be illustrated through the puppet show *I Am Another Yourself* by Puppet & Its Double Theater.

I Am Another Yourself (*Woshi lingyige niziji* 我是另一個你自己 2002) is certainly not a common title for a play. The dynamic and interdependent relationship between *I* and *you* somehow corresponds to the English name of the puppet company, "Puppet & Its Double Theater," which is inspired by Antonin Artaud's *Theatre and Its Double*. The puppet company is thus named due to the belief that puppets are the double of humans, and vice versa. Artaud challenges the separation of art from life, a separation that he considered to be the debasement of theatre in the early twentieth century. Likewise, the dichotomization of subject and object, human and puppet, limits one's ability to be connected to the larger world. I have explored this sense of doubleness throughout the chapters of this dissertation, not merely with the view that puppets are humans' alter egos, but with invocations of a reflexivenses and symbiosis inherent to puppetry that goes beyond the human-puppet binary.

Puppet & Its Double Theater's company logo is derived from the concept of *yin* and *yang* in the Chinese philosophy of Taoism. *The Book of Changes* (*I-Ching* 易經) and *Tao Te Ching* (*Daodejing* 道德經) are the two ancient classics on Taoism On the surface, the *yin/yang* 陰陽 dichotomy is often simplified as receptive/active, dark/light, feminine/masculine, negative/positive, and weak/strong. In non-dualist Chinese philosophy, however, *yin* and *yang* are in fact complementary and containing. They are always in the process of transforming and balancing the power dynamics between them. In the words of Sondra Fraleigh: "Yin is never fully yin, and yang is never fully yang because perceptually they are in constant movement of interchange" (225). *Yin* emerges with *yang* and *yang* with *yin* in an endless dynamism. In traditional Chinese astronomy, the sky is *yang* and the earth is *yin*. Through the interaction between *yin* and *yang*, the earth and the sky, all things on earth were created.

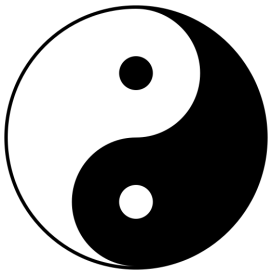

Figure 4.1 *Yin* and *yang*

The *yin* and *yang* of the logo resemble the relationship between puppets and humans: one is more grounded and the other is mostly above the ground, up in the air, and yet, the circular shape suggests a fluid movement of switching positions. They interact, counter each other's force, and create. This fluid interaction, mirroring the ebb and flow of *yin* and *yang*, also portrays the agency flowing in-between a puppet and human, as well as between the material and the allegorical. *Yin* is continuously *becoming yang* while

unbecoming yin, *yang* moves in the same pattern. Human and puppets share the similar *yin/yang,* becoming/unbecoming, dominating/dominated, subject/object relationship as well.

I Am Another Yourself can be regarded as a reflection on and embodiment of the dynamic and interactive relationship between 'I' and 'you'. In the piece, the deep interconnection between 'I' and 'you' are positioned at the center of each story. 'I' and 'you' do not independently exist in some original state apart from each other. Instead, drawing from the perspective of existentialism and Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, each individual exists within a structure of the psyche, a relational network. No one in this world is isolated from others because even the idea of solo-ness is in contrast, and thus in relation, to collectivity. Moreover, "I and you" forms a basic theatrical relationship between the performer and audience—"I" perform for "you," and yet, "I am another yourself." Eventually, it is like "your other self" is performing for "you." This dynamism manifests another common feature of puppetry: only through the collaborative efforts of the performer (operating puppet) and audience (projecting thoughts and imaginations onto puppet) can full meanings be endowed to a show.

From the title of the play, "I am another" and "yourself" portray the mirroring of a reflexive self that enacts deeper emotions and consciousness through puppets. Yet, this puppet piece goes beyond the notion of binary oppositions in traditional existentialist and structuralist thinking by perceiving and proposing the relationship between I/you, puppets/humans, and the spiritual/the material as complimentary—a double instead of a half that reciprocally supplies the life of each other, just like *yin* and *yang*. I perform for/with you=I perform you=I am you.

I Am Another Yourself focuses on the kinesthetic movement of agency and energy between different existents. The I/you relationship in the latter piece does not suggest a binary understanding of humans and puppets by perceiving I (human) as subject and you (puppet) as object; nor does it propose an essential separation or isolation between the two. The dynamic relationship between the two offers a means to decentralize humans' *self-ness* and puppets' otherness. Consider Eduardo Kohn's interrogation of the relationality between the human and nonhuman: "[a]n ecology of selves is a relational pronominal system; who counts as an *I* or a *you* and who becomes an *it* is relative and can shift" (119).

Figure 4.2 *I Am Another Yourself* (2020; 20th Anniversary version). Photo Credit: Puppet & Its Double Theater Company

Moreover, the I/you relationship can be further described through Martin Buber's theorization of I-Thou. Buber proposes that both I-Thou and I-It are frames of encounter through which an individual engages with other individuals, inanimate objects, and indeed all realities of consciousness, interaction, and being. Buber wrote: "the primary world

I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary work I-It can never be spoken with the whole being" (3). This recurring theme is deployed throughout Buber's work to describe dual modes of being: either dialogue as in I-Thou or monologue as in I-It. "It" refers to the world as we experience it; by contrast, I-Thou describes a world of relations. The "I" in I-Thou does not objectify any "It," but instead acknowledges a living and active relationship with "Thou." On the basis of Buber's theory, I-Thou refers to a definitive relationship involving the whole being of each subject. Indeed, all chapters in this dissertation center on the interactions between humans, puppets, and environments and focus on how they complement one another by fostering mutual and reciprocal relationships, eventually generating meanings through their dialogues with a myriad of possibilities.

The I-Thou, or I and You, relationship, though never elaborated on in any specific chapter, underpins this entire dissertation and fundamentally frames my relationship with the subjects of this research. Puppets are mirrors that embody and reflect both our minds and society. We see ourselves in and through puppets, as well as our becoming and unbecoming. For a person like myself, born, raised, and later dedicated to studying Taiwan, puppets offer me a critical distance to navigate and examine the complicated evolution of the nation, its history and sociopolitical challenges. Through such relationships and interactions, we embrace distinct approaches to unveiling the nation's past, present and future, in the hope that alternative narratives going beyond binarism can be found.

What Is Next?

These reflections lead me to my last questions and final remarks: What is missing from this research, and what does it lead to? I elaborated on *budaixi* as a survivors' art in Chapter 1, how puppets address and redress a nation's trauma in Chapter 2, and shadow theatre offering a space for commemoration in Chapter 3 (particularly for the play *Jingpu Incident*). Both imply puppets' ability to speak for the unspoken and give people the strength to live. Yet, what is absent in the chapter is understanding puppets as a critical means for healing both individually and communally. For instance, *I Am Another Yourself* is, in fact, a play about life and also death. Several natural and man-made disasters struck Taiwan in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the Sun Moon Lake shipwreck in 1990, several deadly plane crashes from 1994 to 2002, and the 921 Earthquake in 1999, the second deadliest earthquake in Taiwan's history. When Puppet & Its Double was barely founded for 20 days, they encountered the 921 Earthquake. With the belief that they should do something for Taiwan, the artists packed up all the puppets into a large suitcase and headed for Nantou and Taichung, the two severely affected areas, and the following repeated trips lasted for two years. They spent countless times at playgrounds and inside prefabricated buildings, accompanying children and elders with puppets to pass through that unsettling time. Puppet & Its Double found puppets to be a perfect medium for addressing trauma metaphorically, and for providing consolation and further serving as a means for healing.

I hope to involve more meta-narratives of puppetry when studying Taiwan, and highlight the *power of restricted agency*, shared by both puppets and Taiwan. As reiterated throughout the dissertation, Taiwan has been controlled by *puppeteers*, deeply wounded

and scarred, and yet, still alive. Echoing that puppets hardly *die* because they can easily resurrect as long as their materials remain. Their own life and spirit allow them to never be fully killed or erased, and so as Taiwan's. Additionally, it is my wish to further my research not solely by pointing out and addressing Taiwan's difficulties, challenges and pain through puppetry, but by making arguments about puppets' resilience in conversation with Taiwan, and the ways they engage in the process of healing. In my opinion, such an approach can potentially bring insights to the field, and foster a sustainable environment for Taiwan studies, resonating with the golden-age narrative mentioned earlier.

As for the puppetry part—this dissertation resituates puppetry—from traditional folk culture to a form of contemporary art, and from essentially a local outdoor performance to a phenomenon on the global stage—through analysis of diverse examples of puppetry. The transnational aspects of puppetry still require further exploration, especially because puppetry is a unique genre and medium of performance due to its portability and flexibility to embody stories that exceed the limitations of words and languages. The use of *budaixi* in the videogame *Detention*, as analyzed in Chapter 3, also demonstrates the transnational reach of puppetry and crossing between the real and virtual worlds.

Another topic for further study, though not necessarily related to Taiwan, is puppetry's relation to object theatre which shares similar virtues with puppetry but is not confined by it. If puppetry focuses on the process of becoming and transforming itself into another being, object theatre sheds light on the *untransformed*—a pen, in its original form, shape, and design performs the character of a teacher, while white plastic packaging pellets play snow. By using everyday or found objects to create stories, object theatre explores the

possibilities of objects *as they are* but out of their usual contexts. Object theatre certainly has more flexibility than puppetry as "it does not demand high costs of developing special figures, long period of building, or extensive technical/visual arts training" (UNIMA). The creative process of object theatre also, unlike puppetry, starts mostly with objects themselves than stories. In many cases, stories are created to serve objects and highlight their characteristics than the other way around. Though object theatre is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is nevertheless closely related to and inseparable from the study of puppetry.

Another theme, in relation to puppet and object performance, I hope to explore in future research is the performance of modern technology, including but not limited to machines, avatars, robots, cyborgs, and virtual reality, or what Cole Remmen identifies as "[l]iving beings of artificial construction" (1). Stephen Kaplin, Steve Tillis, and Paul Manning, alongside many other scholars and performers, have expressed their perceptions of the above as extensions of puppetry in a virtual world manipulated through new technologies. Envisioning and exploring the lives and subjectivities of puppets can potentially be applicable and helpful to the study of the performance of and through new technologies. Especially in the era of (post)pandemic when the impact of technology has been expanded and embraced more than it ever has been, discussions on objects and puppetry should certainly be extended and put into conversation with how these beyond human existents (machines, viruses, avatars, etc.) change and shape our everyday lives as well as our relationships with distinct subjects, objects, and perceptions of time and space.

I emphasized the ability of *budaixi* to reflect Taiwan's historical development; undoubtedly, new technologies also, if not better, epitomize different aspects of

contemporary society, and have been present in Taiwan's theatrical scenes. For instance, game avatars are incarnations of ourselves in the virtual world that allow us to do things and perform movements that we are not physically capable of doing—just like puppets. Technological inventions follow a similar developmental trajectory as other things, but they also exceed current definitions of 'thingness'; in a similar way, performing objects and puppets, both of which are transformative and performative in their essences, also demand new languages or ontologies be incorporated into discourse. This quandary is something I hope to explore further in the near future.

Ancillary to the above, posthumanism, a reconceptualization of the limits of humans that emerged at the turn of the century, has hugely influenced how objects and puppets are understood and framed, especially in relation to the figure of the cyborg. Posthumanist theories, though commonly adopted as an approach in the study of twenty-first-century puppetry, are never properly examined or defined in this dissertation. While relevant to my research, posthumanism nevertheless sits awkwardly with my central claims as it prioritizes humans as the center of discourse and posits a state of being more-than-human that in turn reshapes humanity. On the contrary, my approach to puppetry aims to refigure what the human is and is largely inspired by Graham Harvey and Philippe Descola's expansion of personhood as elaborated in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, posthumanist body-based theories, specifically those that focus on corporeality and mediatized subjects, are certainly indispensable to the study of contemporary puppets and object performance, be it in the virtual world or not. Likewise, the concept of the anthropocene and the ecological turn in the humanities, both of which underscore the mutual impact of human activity on the environment, have gradually influenced the study of objects and puppetry in

the past decade by drawing attention to the ways in which material objects and their traces disclose a certain temporality.

The aforementioned concepts and approaches take the practice and study of objects and puppetry further beyond the stage and framework of theatre. Meanwhile, though it is not new for puppetry to be involved in digital technologies such as television, in the past two decades, puppetry has become more mediatized and mediated than ever before. In an attempt to understand this shifting performance paradigm, Teri Silvio applies Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's theory of remediation to her research on puppetry to navigate how "different technes construct mediated selves and draw the boundaries between the imaginary and the real," as well as between the body and soul, manipulation and free will ("Remediation" 427). Similarly, the book *Mediating Religion: Music, Image, Object, and New Media* (*Meijie zongjiao: yue, yingxiang, wu yu xinmeiti*) raises questions regarding the mediatization and digitization of religious effigies, which in turn reshape our perception of and relationship with gods and religions in Taiwan. The connections between objects, consciousness, agency, and intermediality are also present in Bryan Reynolds's 2017 book *Intermedial Theater: Performance Philosophy, Transversal Poetics, and the Future of Affect*. The ideas of mediated puppetry and its co-presence with avatars were briefly addressed but not thoroughly examined in the case study of the video game in Chapter 2. I am looking forward to delving deeper into these intertwined discourses in future research, especially considering how these approaches can expand into different dimensions and spatialities, further complicating the subject-object and manipulator-manipulated relationship that dominate modernist conceptions of puppetry.

My approach to puppetry is puppet-centered and focuses on the life, agency, and energies contained within and surrounding puppets, as well as how they work to unveil thoughts and stories concealed behind representations, whether they be substantial or virtual. I am also interested in the reflexivity of puppetry and its capacity to expand our perception, comprehension, and knowledge of ourselves; this capacity, I contend, accentuates the potential of puppetry as a narrative and knowledge-making paradigm.

Puppets, along with their predecessors and successors, have the ability to become or unbecome the thoughts on our minds and embody or reenact our memories and emotions. They are material mediums and interlocutors (re)connecting us to things that are dead, lost, repressed, or untouched. Puppets also liberate us and our energies by connecting us to the intricate network of the world. Puppets are unassuming. It is their "not-taking-life-for-granted" manner that intrigues us and allows us, the audience, to feel safe and let them be an extension of ourselves, to confide in them because they do not take possession of but respect our life. It is this trust that we have in material beings that expands our perception and understanding of a world that is intrinsically *alive*. Likewise, to me, puppets allow me to see Taiwan as dynamic, transformative and always making efforts to survive and live.

Lastly, I would like to share an excerpt from a poem by Luis Valdez which inspired me to step onto this journey of exploring the beautiful complexity of 'I' and 'you', myself and puppets, puppets and Taiwan, and most importantly, me and Taiwan—

In Lak'ech

Tú eres mi otro yo.	You are my other me.
Si te hago daño a ti,	If I do harm to you,

Me hago daño a mi mismo. I do harm to myself.

Si te amo y respeto, If I love and respect you,

Me amo y respeto yo. I love and respect myself.

—in “Pensamiento Serpentino,” Luis Valdez (1971)

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