

Trauma, Memory and Identity

-- Exhibition of Trauma and Memory in the Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall and the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in China

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Abstract: On the one hand, as a carrier for discussing traumatic experiences, the Trauma Memorial Museum reconstructs information and interprets events or disasters. On the other hand, the museum's archives, public spaces, and narrative spaces serve as texts and places for the audience to reflect on history, gather emotions, and construct collective memories. This article analyzes the relationship between museum display and memory in Trauma Memorial Museum in China and South Korea with case analysis and literature research. This article compares the museums of the two countries and sorts out the elements of museum memory, the types of information sources, the ways of shaping memories and experiences, the museum display design and narrative methods, and the objects for constructing traumatic history and collective memory.

1. Foreword

The essence of exhibition halls and museums is to record and preserve the memory of regions, people, or a nation through tangible materials and displays, because the visible objects or words, images, and spatial scene experiences can often evoke the memories of individuals, communities, and even countries. [1] Studies have shown that humans can choose to remember or forget. What is forgotten is often an ugly or painful past, and collective memory and preserved content often meet the needs of contemporary society.[2] (Wang Mingke 1993, Halbwachs1980) Exhibition halls and museums in the exhibition selectively preserve the memory for the people in society including culture, art, ethnography, scientific and technological achievements, a regional and the preservation and reproduction of national common experience of disasters and traumatic memories, natural disasters, war injuries (During World War II, Japan's aggression and slaughter against China and South Korea, and the incident of comfort women, etc.). For example, the Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall, Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in China, Jewish Museum in Germany, 911 Memorial Hall in the United States, Jewish Holocaust Memorial Hall in the United States, etc. We discuss in cultural studies: Why is the memorial hall used to preserve the trauma of these peoples? How are the collective experiences of these traumas constructed? Painful memories and ugly past are hoped to be forgotten by individuals; however, these collective memories need to be preserved and displayed by the collective and the nation. The former is based on reflection and cognition of the past, while the purpose of the latter is to express political demands and construct a nation's memory community to condense national and patriotic awareness.

2. Two Memory Space of Disasters and Trauma

It is necessary to understand the definition of trauma before constructing the space of trauma memory, and then the trauma memory can be interpreted according to the content of the trauma to evoke the audience's experience and memory of this historical event, and finally construct and repeat this historical memory. In Greek, trauma means "wound", which originally refers to physical pain, but now refers to physical and mental pain. Shen Zhizhong, a scholar of Taiwan, proposes

with psychoanalysis theory that trauma includes "experience-interpretation-repetition", which is the formation process of trauma events.[3] Japan denies the fact of partial aggression against South Korea and China during World War II, especially the Nanjing Massacre and comfort women. Today, more than half a century after World War II, Japan's denial or ambiguous attitude towards these historical events has not ended these traumatic events, which has caused traumatic memories to be continuously circulated and repeated (interpretation and repetition). This brings lasting grief to the people who experienced this historical event and the collective traumatic memory of the country and nation. The memorials and museums established to commemorate historical events are designed to construct this collective memory and to think and test the history and future of the nation.

After visiting the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in China in December 2018 and the Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall in December 2019, the author finds that these two museums build the collective memories of national independence and disasters caused by wars. As shown in Figure 1, John. Rabe said: "Forgivable, but unforgettable." This is the reading experience brought about by the spatial planning of the exhibition, the content of the exhibition and the dissemination of different visual media. These two museums with similar themes have reproduced a history that has often been seen in archives, oral records, and photographs. The museum reconstructs traumatic events through symbols, texts, objects, etc. in an authoritative context, while providing viewers with a virtual experience of traumatic events. In addition, they interpret the meaning of disasters through the translation of display information, and organize commemorative events to guide the audience to build a collective memory about the history of the nation and country.

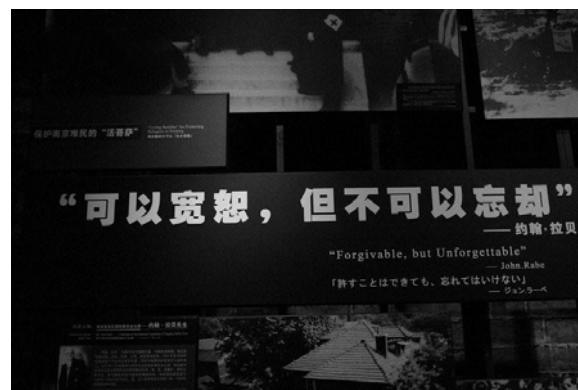


Figure 1. Nanjing massacre memorial hall

Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall is actually an exhibition group consisting of 6 exhibition halls, which are connected by “ethnic identity” and national memory as implicit cultural clues, including the ancestors of the Korean peninsula and the introduction of the culture of different dynasties, the historical material narrative of the modern independence movement, the significance of the independence movement and the current South Korea. After visiting the exhibition hall of "Brilliant History and Culture-Domination and Resistance in Colonial Era-Victory of Resistance", the audience can basically establish an impression of Korea's history. Although the themes of Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall and Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall are similar, the two have different expressions of trauma and memory, in which, the Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall emphasizes the expression of the nation’s historical records of struggle and independence. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall accuses the fact that the nation was slaughtered during the war and constructs a traumatic national memory. The reasons for the difference between the two memorial halls include differences in political demands and national culture. In globalization, communication and information can be easily and multi-dimensionally acquired. Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall preserves the memory of national disaster events through information dissemination. At the same time, it uses effective evidence in the international community, namely the museum's historical materials, to arouse international sympathy and obtain justice. Japan’s denial of the massacre in China highlights the importance of

establishing a monumental institution. For example, many Jewish memorials established after World War II retain memories, condemn the injustice of the Nazi government, and soothe survivors and their families who experienced trauma.

According to the purpose and effect of these two exhibition institutions on trauma and memory, we can roughly summarize the significance of the establishment of a memorial hall for trauma and memory in a country, nation or region, namely 1) historical evidence; 2) commemoration of heroes; 3) strengthening national and social cohesion; 4) concern for the experienter; 5) reflection on historical lessons; 6) the purpose of current political rights and the interests of stakeholders.

As an educational institution for cultural research and practice, museums inevitably have political purposes. Therefore, culture is fundamentally political.

3. The Display and Narrative Strategy of Traumatic Memory

The Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall and the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in China, as exhibition halls of traumatic memory type, record the history related to the war, and more importantly, gather national consciousness and provide a place for the audience to stand in silent tribute and reflect on the wars. Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall builds the nationality's subjectivity in the space in situational experience and archival display narrative, and it combines the sites of the holocaust to commemorate the people who were slaughtered in the war. Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall tells about independence movement through time, events, and multimedia means. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the designers of the two exhibition institutions create traumatic memories with different planning ideas and narrative strategies. Carnegie said that history is about the discourse of the past rather than the past itself. The museum cannot reproduce and restore the past, so it is very important for the wars memorial museum to interpret and reproduce historical events. [4]

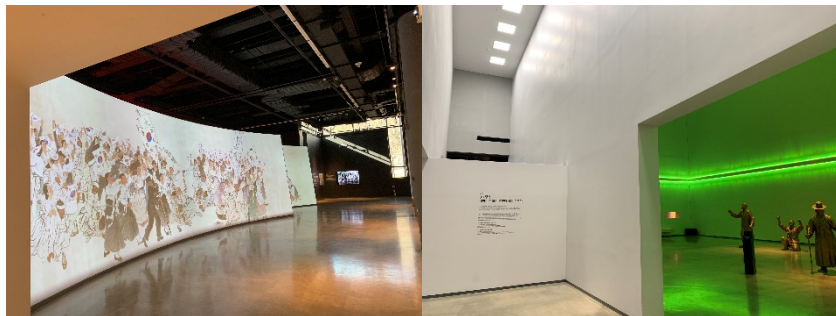


Figure 2. Korea independence movement museum -- video and sound media exhibition



Figure 3. Nanjing massacre memorial hall -- archive, site scene

Kavangh (1990) pointed out that there are three historical methods to analyze the display of historical museums: narrative, descriptive, and analytical. [5] Although the two memorial halls have different display methods, their main display strategies can be summarized as the creation of traumatic memories by means of text archives, iconography, materialized display, and virtualized scenes.

3.1 Narrative Description and Analysis

A country's independence and war memorials build the history of the nation. Exhibition curators use texts and files to practically construct historical discourses to constitute an authoritative source of independence and war memorials, mainly through rich display and narrative. Kavanagh believes that there are three display methods in the history museum: narrative, description, and analysis. Narration is a storytelling method advocated by museum research since the 20th century, and description is a visual description of events. The analysis introduces causality and people's way of thinking, feelings, and motivations. In the exhibition of constructing traumatic memory, display strategies cannot be used in isolation, because the comprehensive use of these strategies can achieve better information exchange. In terms of information dissemination, a good dissemination path is the resonance of the information obtained in the exhibition and the audience's own memory. Research shows that watching stories is more likely to resonate with viewers.

Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall values historical narratives, starting with text, data, and archives (Figure 4), describing the holocaust to establish an authoritative context. Then, according to the time clues of war, the background and process before the war, with similar chronicles combined with spatial experience, scenes, images, and other means, it constructs historical memory scenes and analyzes historical events. The audience is immersed through the atmosphere, the display of real objects, and images, and then a collective memory is formed. The trauma of the holocaust, the collective memory of the nation and the political identity are established through the narrative, description, and analysis.



Figure 4. Nanjing massacre memorial hall -- archives of victims at the entrance of the pavilion

3.2 Image and its Power to Spread

Regarding photography and viewing photos, Sontag (translated by Huang Handi, 1997) pointed out in *On Photography* that in the traumatic exhibition space, the great function of photos is to provide evidence. [6] As a documentary document, the image has nothing to do with visual aesthetics. Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall and Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall use a large number of photos to convince viewers of the incredible history. People and events that did exist in different time and space, places can be observed (Picture 5). The narrative method is established by these documentary photos, so the audience can construct a memory association across time and space in mind.

It is worth noting that the photo is incomplete, or a still picture that has been cropped and retouched, so it needs to be combined with text to supplement and interpret the information. The intent of the photographer at the time may not be consistent with the intent of the curator, so the same photo has completely different meanings in different political contexts.

Or, the photos are used as archival data, such as the tower of faces in American Jewish Holocaust Memorial Hall. The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in Figure 6 shows the people who died in the Holocaust and the current survivors. These photo walls can be regarded as imaged information. And this array expression is extremely shocking and instantly arouses the mourning and resonance of the audience.



Figure 5. The Korean independence movement memorial - an image of a historical event/



Figure 6. The Nanjing massacre memorial - resembles a photograph of archival data

3.3 Information about Relics

The essence of physical exhibits in the spread is the symbol of spreading information. So how can these objects be conveyed by material and extremely meaningful information? Foote (1988) proposed the characteristics of material expression from the perspective of semiotics: 1. fixedness: 2. absent participation: an item can represent the absent person to participate. For example, the owner of the object in Figure 7 is no longer alive, but the object can make the historical scene more complete. 3. symbol of status and situation. 4. the function of environmental background.[7]

In the traumatic exhibition space, the items mainly express information with "absent participation". In the display of objects, we can imagine across time and space and combine other texts and images to construct a memory of the past of the other.



Figure 7. Korean independence movement memorial / Nanjing massacre memorial hall -- features of objects "absent participation"

3.4 Virtualize and Reconstruct Historical Scenes

The audience constructs the image of traumatic memory, the understanding of political background and the identification of historical facts in the past through space, exhibits and images. However, history cannot be fully reproduced. In a limited spatial sequence, the museum needs to consider ways to reproduce history to make the audience experience the past time and space, so as to establish a framework of collective traumatic memory from "visual reading-spatial experience-information resonance". The following are often used to virtualize and reconstruct

historical scenes: 1. partial reconstruction replaces overall reconstruction. 2. the model is used to display the panorama. The development of information technology has provided new ways for museum display and the construction of cultural memory, such as holographic technology and VR technology, bringing immersive historical experience and museum experience that are different from real space scene experience. In the exhibition hall of Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in picture 8, a ring-shaped device is set on the stone monument of the number of victims. Each individual piece is a brick of the old city gate in different locations of Nanjing after being bombarded, which reconstructs a conceptualized Nanjing city in part. The heavy sound and the pictures of the victims on the walls around the exhibition hall put the audience into a time and space where the trauma resonates. The Korea Independence Movement Memorial Hall in picture 9 uses a model to illustrate the whole, reproducing the historical events of the student movement, and combining the dissemination symbols of the video to enhance the sense of reality, which achieves an experiential museum experience.



Figure 8. Nanjing massacre memorial hall -- partial reconstruction instead of whole



Figure 9. Korean independence movement memorial -- model to indicate the whole

The museum serves as a "real" and "reproducing" place for traumatic memories of countries and nations. Through texts, archives, photos, models, and physical objects, the museum intends to construct a historical scene intertwined with real and virtual spaces, so that the audience can recognize this experience collective memory. The traumatic memory in the museum exhibition can be structured and processed through the above-mentioned museum display and narrative strategy content. So, can museums present history objectively? The relatively objective history is influenced by the ideology of the historical narrators (eg, individuals, nations, political parties). Therefore, the display and narrative of the collective traumatic memory of the country and nation will narrate the historical viewpoints with national ideology from the national ethnic perspective to strengthen the national history and national identity. In addition, narrate from the perspective of the victims, such as the narrative of Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, which can arouse people's sympathy for the victims and criticism of the perpetrators.

History is objective, but it can also be modified!

4. Trauma, Memory and Identity

The cultural memory proposed by the German historian Jan Assmann refers to the reusable texts, images, festivals, ceremonies, buildings, museums, etc. that can stabilize and convey the collective image in society. The museum records, preserves and reproduces cultural memories or traumatic memories through memorial ceremonies and relic display strategies.

Trauma hurts the body and mind, but at the same time it deepens the lasting physical memory. Individual traumatic experience can be classified as a collective interpretation to become a collective traumatic memory. When this memory enters identity and affects collective identity, it becomes a cultural trauma. Cultural memory largely shapes national identity, and the construction of national culture includes the reselection, arrangement and reinterpretation of texts, values, symbols, ceremonies, etc. Therefore, trauma positively affects identity to a certain extent. For example, the shame and guilt of the Germans after World War II greatly hindered and destroyed their original identity, while the Jewish identity was built on trauma, because the massacre awakened their national consciousness and their collective identity. During World War II, Asian nations and countries that suffered similar sufferings also followed similar methods to construct their collective identity and cohesion based on traumatic memories.

The museum that preserves traumatic memories is like a TV series, playing backgrounds and pictures that arouse the audience's pity and compassion. Ideology is used to strengthen the audience's recognition of the nation's nationality and political power. Ernest Renan, a French thinker, said: "Disaster and pain can more closely integrate the people and evoke resonance, and then unite the people into a solid community, therefore, they are more important and valuable than pleasure or glory in the common memory of the people."

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