

Forgetting, Remembering, and Forgiving the Second World War: Representation and
Redemption of the Taiwanese Veterans in Postwar Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the history and historiography of Taiwanese World War Two veterans (commonly known as *Taiji Riben bing* or Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers), who served as Japanese paramilitary fighting against the Chinese and Allied forces during the Second World War. Hundreds of thousand of Taiwanese were recruited to serve in the Japanese forces during the war, serving in Taiwan, mainland China, the Pacific islands, and across Southeast Asia. After the war, however, the experiences of Taiwanese fighting against the Chinese (and the Allied)—and vice versa the experience of the Chinese (and the Allied) fighting against the Taiwanese were largely repressed and ignored in official and scholarly accounts of the war. Consequently, the Taiwanese veterans was absent in postwar discourse of veterans and public memory of the war. This politically imposed **amnesia** in public memory served as an **amnesty** on the Taiwanese veterans—its former enemies on the one hand, and on the other hand allowed the KMT government to **redeem** the Taiwanese veterans and re-represent the latter as a force in its anti-communist campaign since 1949. Overall, forgetting the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers helped to create and maintain **national and social unity** in postwar Taiwan under the KMT rule.

As a result of this amnesia, the Taiwanese veterans have been rather insignificant, if not completely absent, in the postwar discussion of war-related issues such as *Jus post Bellum* (war crimes, compensation to the civilians and veterans) and commemoration

of the war till 1990. In the 1990s, with the publication of oral history projects and autobiographical works, history of the Taiwanese veterans gradually emerges out of the private domain and begins to draw more attention in the public discourse of the Second World War. This paper will argue that the emergence of a new discourse of Taiwanese veterans since 1990s has served as a (long-overdue) redemption for the Taiwanese veterans and the beginning of recovering (and re-constructing) the long-neglected general wartime history of Taiwan. At the same time, however, this new discourse of Taiwanese veterans (and recovered memory of the war) becomes a challenge to the **national and social unity** created by political amnesia in postwar Taiwan. Issues related to the historiography of the Taiwanese veteran such as the recent controversy over Lee Tang-hui's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine continue to stir debate over the legacy of the Second World War in Taiwan and to generate conflict over the already divisive national identity in Taiwan.

*“Memories are shaped by forgetting, like the contours of the shore by the sea”.*¹

Scholars have argued that as a “discredited war”, either the Second World War in Japan and Germany and the Vietnam War in the United States has created a “daunting task” for history textbooks authors and school teachers.² In postwar Taiwan, part of the Sino-Japanese War, as experienced by those who fought alongside the eventually-defeated Japanese, is also treated as a “discredited war”; yet the same War, as experienced by those who fought alongside the Allied, is categorically represented as a victorious war. In pursuit of postwar political unity of one nation under the Chinese KMT rule, how did postwar historical accounts represent these conflicting views of the war and antagonistic experiences? And how did the agents of the war remember these wartime experiences? Did people who write history (histories) find a way to “reconcile” the conflicting views? To explore these questions, this paper will focus on one of the many agents of the war, Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers (and military personnel) [Taiji Riben bing], and examine the postwar historiography of these soldiers and their experiences in Taiwan.

I. Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers in the Second World War and Taiwanese veterans

During the Second World War, especially since 1937, more than one hundred thousand Taiwanese were recruited to serve in various capacities in the Japanese armed forces. Some served under the designation of “paramilitary” [C: junfu, J:

¹ Marc Augé, *Les formes de l'oubli* [Forms of Forgetting] (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1998), quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.215.

² Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “The Lessons of War, Global Power, and Social Change”, in Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), p.4.

gunfu], some were known as “auxiliary military personnel” [C: junshu, J: gunzoku], while others served as simply “volunteer soldiers” [C: zhiyuan bing, J: shigan hei].³ Their designations may differ and they may be assigned originally to perform non-military function, but as scholars point out, “when the war is at such intensity, they were given no choice but ‘forced’ to pick up guns and, from that moment on, became ‘soldiers’”.⁴ These Taiwanese serving in or alongside the Japanese military became known collectively as Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers. During the war, as the Japanese military pushed into mainland China, Southeast Asia, and islands across the Pacific, these Taiwanese were also sent to work (and fight) in foreign and remote lands across Asia and the Pacific. Some of the major overseas destinations include Hainan Island, the Philippines, New Guinea, and Rabaul (in present-day Papua New Guinea).⁵ At the end of the war, according to accounts by the Chinese and the Allied authorities, there were estimated more than 17,000 Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers in mainland China, and more than 67,000 all over Asia and Japan (but excluding those serving in Taiwan).⁶ But the statistic compiled after the war by the Japanese Ministry of Health shows much higher figures: it was reported that during the war, there were more than 80,000 Taiwanese-native soldiers and more than 126,000 “auxiliary military personnel” recruited or mobilized by the Taiwanese

³ Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), pp.5, 23-24.

⁴ Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), p.2.

⁵ Based on the list of destinations, compiled from four different oral history projects done between 1995 and 1997, in Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), pp.254-260.

⁶ Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), pp.32-34.

Government General.⁷ According to these various accounts, it would be fair to conclude that at the end of the war, there are between 100,000 and 200,000 Taiwanese veterans who had fought in the Second World War.

II. Forgetting Taiwanese Veterans in Public Memory of the War since 1945

Since the end of the war, history of the Second World War has been written extensively in Taiwan, often under the auspice of the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) government. In any postwar account of war, soldiers (and thereafter veterans) are certainly one of the focal points. Stories of soldiers are featured predominantly in postwar accounts not only because soldiers had played a key role in war. To the (postwar) construction of nation and national identity, stories of soldiers and veterans are particularly valuable, if not indispensable. The bravery, commitment, and sacrifice made by soldiers—on behalf of the nation—in the battlefields are often represented in (wartime and) postwar accounts as the ultimate manifestation of patriotism. In other words, soldiers are represented as the builders, defenders, and embodiment of the nation and the model citizen that all citizens should aspire to follow in time of national crisis.

In postwar accounts in Taiwan, however, the episodes of more than 100,000 Taiwanese soldiers fighting on the side of the Japanese—in other words, against the Chinese—was nowhere to be found. These Taiwanese veterans were hardly visible in the postwar discourse of veterans. Instead, postwar account and public memory of the war has been dominated by the history of (mainland) Chinese soldiers and the mainland Chinese view(s) of the war.

⁷ Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui,

Discourse of “(mainland Chinese) veterans”

In postwar Taiwan, the discourse of veterans [tuiwu junren] is centered on two major groups of veterans, namely “glorious citizens [rongmin]” and “old soldiers [laobing]”.

The term “glorious citizens” is represented in a highly positive light, at least in political rhetoric and certain government benefit, and usually refers to Chinese soldiers who have helped the KMT government in the latter’s various war efforts.

These mainland Chinese soldiers subsequently have been recognized by the government as “glorious citizens” and received veteran welfare in postwar Taiwan.⁸

For example, a state-run hospital is named after “glorious citizens” and devoted to providing free health-related service to retired soldiers.⁹ On the contrary, the term “old soldiers” refers to mainland Chinese soldiers cast in a less than glorious role, stressing the hardship, lack of government assistance, and decades of separation from families in the mainland that these Chinese soldiers have endured after they retreated to Taiwan with the KMT government.¹⁰ While the composition of “glorious citizens” is similar to that of “old soldiers”, “glorious citizens” is represented in a more positive light and the term “old soldiers” often comes with a sense of sympathy and pity.

Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), p.35.

⁸ It should be noted that Taiwanese-native soldiers who have served in the KMT military after 1949 are also recognized as “glorious citizens” and received veteran welfare when they retire. However, their number remained small till **XXXX**. As a result, the term “glorious citizens” generally refers to retired mainland Chinese soldiers.

⁹ *Rongmin zong yiyuan* or Veterans’ General Hospital, located in Taipei.

¹⁰ For studies of the “glorious citizens” and “old soldiers”, see works by Hu Tai-li, “Cong shachang dao jietou: laobing ziji yundong gaishu [from the battlefield to the street: self-help movement of the old soldiers]”, in Xu Zhengguang and Song Wenli, eds., *Taiwan xinxing shehui yundong* [new social movement in Taiwan] (Taipei: Juliu, 1989), pp.157-173; “Yuzai yu fanshu: Taiwan ‘rongmin’ de zuqun guanxi yu rentong [taro and sweet potato: inter-ethnic relations and identity of the ‘glorious citizens’ in Taiwan], in *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzusuo yanjiu jikan* [Journal of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica] Vol. 69 (1990), pp. 107-132.

But in spite of the hardship that many “old soldiers” are facing in reality, both “glorious citizens” and “old soldiers” are well recognized as “veterans” in postwar Taiwan. In fact, since 1945, they are the only “veterans” recognized *politically* in the public discourse of veterans (including state policy and administration) and *historiographically* in the general accounts of wars. Conspicuously, the Taiwanese veterans from World War Two are absent in the postwar public discourse of veterans, without receiving state recognition or veteran welfare after the war. And *historiographically*, the Taiwanese veterans are similarly absent in most, if not all, postwar account of the war.

- (Institutionally) Ministry of Veterans (or Veteran Assistance) [tuichuyi guanbing fudao weiyuanhui]: dealing with mainland Chinese veterans and post-1949 Taiwanese veterans. Under its administration, the Taiwanese soldiers from World War II are categorically ignored.
- (Symbolically/Performance) The Martyrs Shrine [zhonglie ci]: commemorates mainland Chinese soldiers and post-1949 Taiwanese soldiers
- (Symbolically/Performance) Soldiers’ Day [junren jie]
- (Symbolically/Performance) Glorious Recovery Day: October 25th : the soldiers recognized are those who fought *against* the Japanese invasion and occupation of Chinese territories. Retroactively speaking, during the war the Taiwanese soldiers were not on the winning side; and worse, they were on (China’s) enemy’s side. Therefore, the Taiwanese soldiers were not, and could not be, recognized in the most significant postwar commemoration of the War.
- **History textbooks:** following the discourse, institutional and symbolic definition of “veterans”

Consequently, experiences of the Taiwanese veterans were largely, if not completely, suppressed in postwar accounts. Between 1945 and 1990, the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers who had fought against the Chinese and the Allied forces were hardly known to the public in Taiwan. During this period, no war memorial (tangible representation) or commemoration (ritualistic representation) was dedicated to the Taiwanese-native veterans of the Second World War.

As Suleiman argues, forgetting is the “active agent” in the formation of memories as it “gives memories their shape and relief”.¹¹ By forgetting the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, an actively and politically constructed public memory of the war—as well as an officially imposed *amnesia*—came into shape in postwar Taiwan under the KMT government.

The Significance of Forgetting/Amnesia to *Amnesty* and *Redemption*

The official amnesia can be understood as a two-stage forgetting (in the sequence of **Forgetting → Forgiving → Redemption**). First, forgetting is a form of KMT government forgiving what the Taiwanese soldiers did against the Chinese during the war. Secondly, after forgiving by forgetting, forgetting is a way of KMT government redeeming the Taiwanese from what the Taiwanese soldiers did during the war against the Chinese.

A: Forgetting as a form of **forgiving/amnesty:**

In the immediate years after the war ended, many Taiwanese were prosecuted in Taiwan, China, and at the International War Crime Tribunals across the Pacific and

¹¹ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 215.

Japan. However, after 1949, “war crimes” committed by the Taiwanese against the Chinese and the Allied forces, as convicted by the International War Crime Tribunal after the war, were completely ignored by the KMT government in Taiwan. This “forgetting” (of what the Taiwanese soldiers did during the war against the Chinese) allowed the KMT government to forego war crime prosecution after 1946 and subsequently (or consequently) forge national unity between the formerly antagonistic mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese. Especially after 1949, as the KMT government retreated to Taiwan and consolidated itself after losing the civil war against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), this “forgetting” became ever more urgent in KMT government’s fight against the primary enemy—CCP

As Paul Ricoeur points out, this kind of “official injunction to forget”, or “amnésie commandée”, is a “prescribed amnesia”.¹² In postwar Taiwan, the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers as well as “war crimes” committed by these Taiwanese soldiers were almost completely forgotten after 1945, and this “prescribed amnesia” continued for more than fifty years under the KMT government. So, what is the significance of this political amnesia? We can understand the KMT’s forgetting as a form of amnesty.

Again, quoting from Paul Ricoeur, amnesty is a “forced amnesia” and a “parody of forgiveness”.¹³ Yet, amnesty has its “conciliatory”, “utilitarian”, and “therapeutic” function, as Ricoeur recognizes that for the sake of political unity, amnesty can

¹² Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.580, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 218.

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), pp.589 and 634, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 231

“silence the non-forgetting of memory”.¹⁴ In forgetting the Taiwanese “war crimes” committed against the Chinese and the Allied forces, the KMT government effectively—regardless of its intentionality—imposed a political **amnesty** on the Taiwanese soldiers who served in the Japanese military during the war. This amnesty first allowed the KMT government to halt prosecution of Taiwanese war crimes. As Suleiman points out, amnesty can happen “before, during, or after the completion of legal procedures”. In postwar Taiwan, forgetting what the Taiwanese soldiers did (against the Chinese) during the war became an “official forgetting” that “prevents or undoes legal action” and “wipes out the very memory of offense”¹⁵ Furthermore, this **amnesty by forgetting** helped to reduce—if not erase—animosity between the mainland Chinese and the newly incorporated Taiwanese population. In doing so, it allowed the KMT government to build and maintain the much-needed political unity in Taiwan. As Stéphane Gacon argues, “the citizens grant amnesty to other citizens with the primary aim of reestablishing a national unity unbroken by civil conflict”.¹⁶ In imposing a “forced amnesia” of the Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and their “war crimes”, the KMT rule could prevent domestic conflict between the Chinese and the Taiwanese in postwar Taiwan.

As Suleiman argues, “[I]f there is a ‘duty to remember’, there is also, just as importantly, a ‘duty to forget’”.¹⁷ For the sake of national unity, particularly after 1949, the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers was forgotten and this

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.651, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 231

¹⁵ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 218.

¹⁶ Stéphane Gacon, *L'ammistie* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p. 387, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 220.

¹⁷ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 216.

amnesia imposed by the KMT government served as a form of granting **amnesty** on the Taiwanese soldiers.

B: Forgetting as a form of redemption

Hannah Arendt has pointed out, forgiveness provides the “possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility” and frees both “the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven” from consequences of an irreversible act.¹⁸ Wartime suffering inflicted by Japanese (including the Taiwanese soldiers) on the Chinese is surely an irreversible act. As discussed above, amnesia of wartime history imposed politically by the KMT government after the war granted the Taiwanese **amnesty by forgetting**. In other words, forgetting is essential to forgiving. After the war, forgetting provides both the KMT government and the general population an opportunity—if not the only opportunity—to forgive war crime committed by the Taiwanese against the Chinese before 1945. And as Hannah Arendt argues, forgiving allows redemption from an irreversible act. Only by forgiving what the Taiwanese soldiers had committed during the war can the Taiwanese—as well as the Chinese—can be freed from the consequence of an irreversible act like war crime. This act of forgiving became ever more indispensable, particularly after 1949, as the Chinese KMT government consolidated itself in Taiwan and was forced to depend on its former enemies, the Taiwanese, as compatriots.

As Suleiman points out, Ricoeur’s view of “forgiveness” is redemptive as the latter argues that forgiveness proclaims to the sinner, “You are more worthy than your

¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: university of Chicago Press, 1998), pp.237, 240-241, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.227.

actions”.¹⁹ By forgetting the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, the postwar KMT government was able to re-represent and *redeem* the Taiwanese as more “worthy” than their “action” (such as war crimes committed against the Chinese in the mainland). As Suleiman further points out, the “established democracy could not afford to throw out, let alone bring to trial, everyone who had worked under or implicated with” a now defunct and officially condemned regime. It happened in France after the Vichy, Italy after Mussolini, Argentina and Chile after military dictatorships and Eastern Europe after communism.²⁰ The same happened in postwar Taiwan under the KMT government. By **forgiving** war crime (of the Taiwanese soldiers) allows the KMT government to redeem the Taiwanese soldiers for the sake of national reconstruction, especially after 1949. For example, several former Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers residing in Japan came back to Taiwan and met with the supreme KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei. One of them later reported that they were personally asked by Chiang in 1971 to organize a “righteous army” to assist KMT’s “planned” anti-Communist campaign when the opportunity arose.²¹ For the sake of “saving” the Chinese living under the Communist regime in the mainland, former Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers were redeemed and represented as a force prepared to “recover the mainland” [fangong dalu] under the lead of the KMT government,²² regardless of what they did during the Sino-Japanese war.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.642, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.231

²⁰ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 221. For further discussion of the case of post-Vichy France, see Henry Rousso (Author Goldhammer, tran.), *The Vichy Syndrome: History and memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1991); for further discussion of the case of post-communist Germany, see A. James McAdams, *Judging the Past in Unified Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²¹ Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It's me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001), p.148.

²² **Hamazaki XXX (Binqi Xuanyi)**, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It's me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001), pp.147-148.

III. The Creation of a New Discourse of Taiwanese Veterans

Under the politically imposed amnesia, the history of Taiwanese veterans is largely forgotten in postwar Taiwan. In public discourse, Taiwanese veterans were not recognized for decades. However, in private domain, Taiwanese veterans have been keeping their memories alive. Some veterans (and veterans' families) organized comrades for social activities and published directories and internal newsletters; others organized themselves to seek (KMT government's assistance in seeking) veterans' compensation from the Japanese government.²³ Although the public was hardly aware of these organizations and the history of Taiwanese veterans, the private efforts and network helped to keep the history of Taiwanese veterans alive under the politically imposed amnesia for more than five decades.

Things finally started to change in 1990s. After five decades of being forgotten in official accounts of the war and in public memory of the war, several volumes of Taiwanese veterans' oral history, conducted by historians, were published, coincidentally, in 1997.²⁴ The publication of oral history gives the Taiwanese veterans

²³ Based on preliminary survey of existing literature, at least six Taiwanese veteran organizations exist in Taiwan, see Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), pp.5-8, and Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, "Preface", in Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), no page number. In addition, at least one similar organization in Japan, see Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It's me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001), pp.133, 138.

²⁴ See Chou Wan-yao (Zhou Wanyao), ed., *Taiji Ribenbing zuotanhui jilu bing xiangguan ziliao* [record from the roundtable discussion by Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and related materials] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1997); Pan Guozheng, *Tianhuang dianxia no chizi* [loyal sons of his excellence the Tenno] (Xinzhu: Qifengtang chubanshe, 1997); Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997). Pan's work was sponsored by the Xinzhu (Hsin-chu) County Government. Another oral history project, which is the earliest oral history work on Taiwanese veterans, was published two years earlier under a sponsorship of the Taibei (Taipei) County Government, see Zheng Liling, *Taiji Ribenbing de*

their first opportunity—since the end of the war—to bring their private memories of the war into public discourse.

One of the major contributors to this new discourse of Taiwanese veterans is the Institute of Taiwan History (ITH) at the Academia Sinica. ITH initiated its oral history project on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers—in fact the first oral history project conducted by ITH—as early as 1994. ITH researchers invited more than sixty Taiwanese veterans and held its first seminar of the project in March 1995.²⁵ Recording from the seminar was transcribed, edited, and published in 1997,²⁶ and the project continued and produced another more formal oral history work in late 1997.²⁷ Academia Sinica is a top research institution in Taiwan, and notably, it is also a state-sponsored national-level research institute. Similarly, several county-level local governments also conducted their own oral history projects during this period.²⁸ And all together, more than one hundred and forty interviews were conducted with Taiwanese veterans (including “paramilitary”, “auxiliary military personnel”, and

“*zhanzheng jingyan*” [war experiences of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers] (Banchiao: Taipei xianli wenhua zhongxin, 1995).

²⁵ Hui-yu Caroline Ts’ ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.2.

²⁶ Chou Wan-yao (Zhou Wanyao), ed., *Taiji Ribenbing zuotanhui jilu bing xiangguan ziliao* [record from the roundtable discussion by Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and related materials] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1997).

²⁷ Hui-yu Caroline Ts’ ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997).

²⁸ On the preliminary survey, the earliest oral history project is by Taipei County Government, see Zheng Liling, *Taiji Ribenbing de “zhanzheng jingyan”* [war experiences of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers] (Banchiao: Taipei xianli wenhua zhongxin, 1995). Xinzhu County Government later conducted its own oral history project on Taiwanese veterans, see Pan Guozheng, *Tianhuang dianxia no chizi* [loyal sons of his excellence the Tenno] (Xinzhu: Qifengtang chubanshe, 1997). About the same time, Yi-lan County Government also held seminars and invited Taiwanese veterans to talk about their experience under the Japanese rule. Though the post-seminar work published in 1996 was not devoted exclusively to the history of Taiwanese veterans, see Hui-yu Caroline Ts’ ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), pp.12 and 16.

“volunteer soldiers”) and subsequently published to *record*, for the first time since 1945, wartime experiences of Taiwanese veterans.²⁹

In addition to the aforementioned changes in the *narratives* of Taiwanese veterans by oral history projects, the emergence of a new discourse of Taiwanese veterans was also seen in *practice*. Also in 1997 (?), a special exhibition of Taiwanese wartime history, “Taiwan ren zhanzheng zhan [exhibition of Taiwanese people’s wars]”, was held in Taipei by the Taipei Municipal Government.³⁰ This exhibition showed pictures of several Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, personal effects saved from the war, and historical documents related to Taiwanese veterans.³¹ Since the end of the war, this exhibition is the first time in which the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers was featured publicly and predominantly in a governmental function in Taiwan. A companion to the exhibition was subsequently published.³² Since then, more scholarly works on Taiwanese soldiers are published, and often in collaboration with local governments.³³ In addition to the aforementioned oral history works by scholars and various local governments, there are notably several autobiographical accounts by Taiwanese soldiers and oral history conducted by the families of

²⁹ Based on the list of interviewees, compiled from four different oral history projects done between 1995 and 1997, in Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taipei shi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), pp.254-260. It needs to be noted that a handful of veterans are interviewed for more than one project, so the total absolute number of veterans interviewed is slightly smaller.

³⁰ Chen Ming-cheng, *Taiwan bing yingxiang gushi* [photographic stories of the Taiwanese soldiers] (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1997), pp.219, 223.

³¹ It should be noted that this exhibition covers a wide variety of “Taiwanese war stories”, as it displayed items related to the Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, to Taiwanese-native Japanese nurses, Taiwanese-native KMT soldiers, and Taiwanese-native PLA (People’s Liberation Army) soldiers. Though the focus of the exhibition is on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers. See Chen Ming-cheng, *Taiwan bing yingxiang gushi* [photographic stories of the Taiwanese soldiers] (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1997), pp.219-220.

³² Chen Ming-cheng, *Taiwan bing yingxiang gushi* [photographic stories of the Taiwanese soldiers] (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1997).

³³ For example, Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taipei shi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian

Taiwanese soldiers.³⁴ But in terms of their significance to the emergence of a new *public* discourse of Taiwanese veterans, scholarly works came earlier and more widely read.

Significance of oral history

The emergence of oral history gives the Taiwanese veterans a chance to bring their private memories of the war into public discourse in the 1990s. More significantly, oral history (or more precisely, being interviewed for oral history) and a new discourse of Taiwanese veterans give the Taiwanese veterans an opportunity to speak to redeem yourself from amnesty and to recover the forgetful memory from amnesia.

A. (**Politically**) To speak/write to redeem yourself from amnesty: seeking due **state recognition** as “veterans” in Taiwan

Oral history done by the veterans themselves (and their family) and academia (sometimes in collaboration with governments and/or government affiliates) alike provided the Taiwanese veterans a new opportunity to recover the latter’s wartime memory. It allowed the Taiwanese veterans to speak publicly, for the first time, *for* and *of* themselves in their own country. At a seminar hosted by the Academia Sinica in 1996, a veteran commented on the long-awaited opportunity: “please allow me this opportunity to talk a bit more, this is the only one chance I got in fifty years, and it will be gone if I miss it”.³⁵

weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001). The significance of collaboration between scholars and local governments will be discussed later in the paper.

³⁴ For example, see autobiography/biography of Lin Suide, *Wode kang Ri tianming* [my destiny of resisting the Japanese] (Taipei: Qianwei, 1996), and Jian Maosong, Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It’s me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001); Wu Shuzhen and Wu Shumin, *Tuonan shaonian shi* [history of the *Tuonan* youth] (Taipei county: Xiangrikui wenhua, 2004).

³⁵ Statement by Hong Tianzhen, in Chou Wan-yao (Zhou Wanyao), ed., *Taiji Ribenbing zuotanhui jilu bing xiangguan ziliao* [record from the roundtable discussion by Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers

For more than fifty years, the Taiwanese veterans were seen as “sinners” (in the war) in postwar account and, consequently, their wartime experiences were neglected, if not intentionally erased. For the sake of social and national unity, wartime experiences of the Taiwanese veterans were forgotten in postwar *public* memory (or amnesia) of the Sino-Japanese war. This public amnesia allowed the possibility of an amnesty on Taiwanese veterans, whose wartime crimes and atrocity committed directly or indirectly as the Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers were forgotten and thereby forgiven. But in doing so, “for the sake of public harmony”, memories of the Taiwanese veterans became what Ricoeur calls the “forgetful memory”.³⁶ Furthermore, Taiwanese veterans were represented categorically as “sinners” who were only forgiven for the sake of postwar national unity. In other words, Taiwanese veterans would not be allowed publicly to speak *for* themselves or speak *of* their wartime accomplishment (or contribution) or suffering.

However, the *private* memory of the Sino-Japanese war does not suffer from the aforementioned political and historiographical amnesia. On the contrary, Taiwanese veterans continued to seek for recognition of their wartime contribution and compensation to their wartime suffering. Having been forgotten under the postwar Chinese KMT government, in policy and in historiography, Taiwanese veterans could obtain neither due recognition of their wartime contribution nor compensation to their wartime suffering in the hands of both the Allied forces and the Japanese. Without official support, the Taiwanese veterans were left on their own in 1) seeking and

and related materials] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.59.

³⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.651, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 232.

establishing a due place in postwar historiography of the war, and 2) preserving and recovering their wartime memory.³⁷

The emergence of oral history in 1990s finally gave Taiwanese veterans the opportunities to publicly speak *for* themselves and speak *of* their wartime accomplishment (or contribution) or suffering. As a newer means of history writing (at least in the context of Taiwan), oral history became widely adopted since the early 1990s and helped to establish a place for the Taiwanese veterans in postwar historiography of the war. As the Taiwanese veterans are given the opportunities to publicly speak *for* themselves and speak *of* their wartime accomplishment (or contribution) or suffering, they get a chance to redeem themselves and their wartime memory from the earlier politically-driven amnesia. The once “forgetful memory”—erased for the “sake of public harmony” as Ricoeur points out³⁸—of the Taiwanese veterans has been re-constructed *in* and *by* works of oral history since the 1990s.

And in speaking publicly of their experiences, what the Taiwanese veterans are seeking is due recognition—particularly **state recognition**—of their wartime

³⁷ It should be noted that from 1950s to 1990s, the Taiwanese veterans turned their attention first to the Japanese government, which has been equally responsible for the public amnesia of the Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers. The Taiwanese veterans sought, simultaneously and ironically, due recognition of their wartime contribution and compensation to their wartime suffering from the Japanese government. And this dealing with the Japanese government raised the public and scholarly awareness of the (existence of the) Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and their wartime experiences, and kept the issue in public sphere in both Taiwan and Japan. The lawsuits brought against the Japanese government (and its denial of war compensation to the Taiwanese veterans) since the 1960s³⁷ and contention over the worship of the former Taiwanese-native soldiers (and ownership of the tablet) in the Yasukuni in the 1980s all contributed to a greater public awareness and a greater momentum among the Taiwanese veterans to pursue their cause for due compensation and recognition. Since 1997, lawyers and the judicial system in Japan have been formally dealing with request for compensation made by former Taiwanese-native (and Korean-native) Japanese soldiers, and the Japanese media also has paid a great deal of attention to this issue. Due to the scope of this paper, the discourse of Taiwanese veterans in Japan will not be further explored here.

³⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.651, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 232.

accomplishment (or contribution) as well as their wartime suffering like other “veterans” being recognized in the public discourse. Like what some Taiwanese veterans have done since the late 1950s in Japan, the Taiwanese veterans started seeking recognition in Taiwan in the mid-1990s. And they are seeking recognition from both the general public and the government.³⁹

Speaking of the Taiwanese government, a former nurse commented: “the government treats these glorious citizens [rongmin], (and) these mainlanders [waisheng ren, or people from the outer provinces] so well, why it does not treat these poor people (former Japanese soldiers and auxiliary military personnel) the same way, we have all been poor and miserable, why the government does not care about us?”⁴⁰ Speaking of private efforts to erect memorials to commemorate the deceased Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, a veteran commented that the efforts was made to raise public awareness of the issue because these “poor” deceased soldiers were never “respected” or “properly worshipped”.⁴¹ To the Taiwanese veterans, their present-day government and society at large have neither recognized their war efforts nor provided them veterans’ welfare. And this lack of recognition and welfare is particularly acute and unbearable in comparison to other veterans such as the “glorious citizens” who are mostly mainlanders. Therefore, veterans in Taiwan are organizing themselves and

³⁹ It is worth noted that in seeking recognition from the Taiwanese government, some Taiwanese veterans are also seeking government assistance to their continuing cause in seeking veteran compensation (like Japanese veterans) from the Japanese government. See statement by Jian Maosong, in Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It’s me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001), p.6.

⁴⁰ Statement by Chen Guogui, in Chou Wan-yao (Zhou Wanyao), ed., *Taiji Ribenbing zuotanhui jilu bing xiangguan ziliao* [record from the roundtable discussion by Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers and related materials] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.63.

⁴¹ Statement by Jian Maosong, in Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It’s me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei: Yuanshen, 2001), p.6.

asking their own country to “reverse the verdict [pingfan]” on their wartime experiences.⁴²

The researchers and the publishers behind these oral history works are of special meaning to the Taiwanese veterans. Based on the above survey, most oral history works are conducted by scholars in collaboration with local governments and Academia Sinica. In other words, since 1995, official and semi-official institutions have played a major role in recovering the history of Taiwanese veterans and re-establishing the new public discourse of Taiwanese veterans. The official and semi-official affiliation and sponsorship, which can well be represented and understood by the veterans as an indirect **state recognition**, give these oral history projects an extra significance to the veterans interviewed.

B. Historiography: To speak/write to recover the forgetful memory and history from political amnesia

Since the war ended in 1945, the official postwar historiography and discourse of war in Taiwan has not allowed the Taiwanese veterans to seek recognition of their suffering—as well as recognition of “a fault on the part of the wrongdoer” (**the Japanese government**). However, private discourse and actions initiated by the Taiwanese veterans and aided by scholars gradually brought the private memories of the war into public discourse. This new public discourse of the war further enabled the Taiwanese veterans to bring their cause to the Japanese courts and media and eventually force the Japanese government to face its responsibility. As a participant stated at a seminar—hosted by the Academia Sinica in 1996—devoted to the

⁴² Statement by Jian Maosong, in Hamazaki XXX, Qiu Zhenrui, trans., *Wo A!: Yige Taiwan ren Riben bing Jian Maosong de rensheng* [It's me: life of a Taiwanese Japanese soldier Jian Maosong] (Taipei:

Taiwanese veterans' experiences: to the Taiwanese veterans, "the Pacific War has not formally ended".⁴³ To the Taiwanese veterans, the war did not end in 1945. Instead, in the spheres of personal lives, memory, and history writing, the war continues to this day. Facing political and historiographical amnesty and amnesia imposed by both the Japanese government and the KMT government in Taiwan, the Taiwanese veterans continues to seek their recognition and redemption in history (and historiography). More significantly, by speaking publicly of the Taiwanese veterans' experiences, oral history that has emerged since mid-1990s has helped to (re-)establish the Taiwanese veterans in history and postwar historiography in Taiwan.

Interestingly, the process of redemption is partly, if not mostly, initiated by historians in Taiwan in the 1990s. Here, we would like to further explore the issue of **agency** in understanding the emergence of a new discourse of Taiwanese veterans since the 1990s. We want to know: who make this new discourse? As we have witnessed, several agents have played a role in creating and shaping this new discourse: veterans (soldiers and military auxiliary personnel), family members of veterans (*jiashu* for those veterans who are still alive and *yizu* for those veterans who passed away), historians and journalists, and, finally, governments in both Taiwan and Japan (by adopting the new discourse and reinforcing it). In terms of its significance to historiography, we will examine more closely the role of **historians** and historian's (sense of) responsibility/urgency in the emergence of the new discourse of veterans.

Yuanshen, 2001), p.6.

⁴³ Statement by Xu Zhaorong, in Chou Wan-yao (Zhou Wanyao), ed.. *Taiji Ribenbing zuotanhui jilu bing xiangguan ziliao* [record from the roundtable discussion by Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers

Ricoeur differentiates “forgetful memory”, “for the sake of public harmony”; and the “unforgetful memory”, “for the sake of philosophical truth”.⁴⁴ By making the general public aware of the existence of Taiwanese veterans, oral historians are effectively recovering the “forgetful memory” of the Taiwanese veterans and turning it into “unforgetful memory”. Even before any formal oral history work was completed, historians started the process of (re-)establishing the Taiwanese veterans in public memory of the war, by announcing the recruitment of interviewees in major newspapers, for example.⁴⁵ Since the 1990s, the re-emergence of “unforgetful memory” of the Taiwanese veterans not only reconstructs the history of Taiwanese veterans, it further reshapes the history of the war in Taiwan. As one scholar points out, Taiwanese veterans and their history have been “long forgotten”. The purpose of these oral history projects on Taiwanese veterans is to “discover” Taiwanese history through oral history and “challenge” the “orthodox history” dictated by the government, and to fill in the “forty-year gap” in postwar history writing. This task is particularly significant in mid-1990s, as it is conducted at the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war.⁴⁶

At the same time, a sense of urgency propelled historians in Taiwan to initiate numerous oral history projects on Taiwanese veterans in the mid-1990s. As one scholar puts it, when historians finally track down a veteran only to find that the latter

and related materials] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.57.

⁴⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p.651, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 232.

⁴⁵ A call for interviewees was posted by ITH as a new release in two major newspapers in January 1995, see Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai, ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.3, f.n.5.

has passed away, they “feel regret and sorry for being ‘late for the appointment’”. With each veteran passed away, he took with him the “memory of his life”.⁴⁷ And for historians working to “recover” history of Taiwanese veterans, time is literally running out.

IV. Conclusion: A New Discourse of Taiwanese Veterans as a **New Challenge** to Political Unity since 1990s

In forgetting the history of Taiwanese-native Japanese soldiers, postwar accounts of the Second World War created an amnesia of history that made amnesty and redemption of the Taiwanese soldiers possible and helped to reinforce political unity under the KMT government. At the same time, as a result of this amnesia, Taiwanese veterans and Taiwanese wartime experiences have been absent in the postwar historiography of the war and the discourse of veteran for more than fifty years. It was only in the mid-1990s that oral history projects conducted by historians—in collaboration with official and semi-official institutions—began to recover memory of the Taiwanese veterans in public discourse and re-establish Taiwanese veterans in historical account of the war.

Since the mid-1990s, more and more private memories of the war and history of Taiwanese veterans have been recorded and published, and a new discourse of Taiwanese veterans has been created. “According to the argument of repressed memory, it is the very attempt to effect a forced forgetting that eventually leads to the

⁴⁶ Hui-yu Caroline Ts’ ai (Cai Huiyu), ed., *Zouguo liangge shidai de ren: Taiji Riben bing* [original title: The Lives and Times of Taiwanese Veterans] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), p.1.

⁴⁷ Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, “Preface”, in Tang Xiyong and Chen Yiru, eds., *Taibeishi Taiji Ribenbing chafang zhuanji* [special investigative report on Taiwanese-native Japanese soldier in Taipei city] (Taipei: Taibeishi wenxian weiyuanhui, Taipei Municipal Government, 2001), no page number.

return of the repressed".⁴⁸ In recent years, this new discourse becomes politically and historiographically more significant, particularly as this act of writing begins to challenge the long-held national and social unity in postwar Taiwan. In place of the formerly imposed unity and political amnesia, the public memory of war in Taiwan has become highly contentious in the past decade. The latest example of contention is Lee Teng-hui's recent visit to Yasukuni Shrine.⁴⁹

The Significance of Lee's visit to Yasukuni Shrine

Lee has asserted that his recent planned/aborted visit to Yasukuni Shrine is meant to pay tribute to his deceased brother, who died fighting in the Japanese military in the Philippines in 1945 and has been enshrined in the Yasukuni since the end of the war. Some politicians who oppose Lee's visit have argued that Lee's visit to Yasukuni is politically motivated and "has ruined the dignity of the Taiwanese", while other politicians who support Lee assert that this visit is for the "love of family" and criticized those who oppose Lee as "cold-blooded".⁵⁰ After Lee's visit to Yasukuni, a PRC man attempted to attack Lee by throwing a plastic bottle at the Narita airport in Tokyo as Lee was preparing to return to Taiwan, claiming that he "does not like Lee".⁵¹ Amidst emotionally charged political rhetoric and action, what is the historical significance of Lee paying tribute at Yasukuni? Its significance can be found in the larger context of the postwar historiography of forgetting, remembering, and redeeming Taiwanese veterans.

⁴⁸ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 224.

⁴⁹ Lee visited and paid tribute to his deceased brother at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on 7 June, 2007, see <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/17/fgkp.html>

⁵⁰ <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/1/fgtv.html>

A. (Politically) To seek state recognition:

State recognition is particularly important for veterans. Since the end of the war in 1945, Yasukuni is the only officially sanctioned place commemorating the Taiwanese veterans. Therefore, Yasukuni, regardless of the political controversy started in 1980s, remains the only official place to pay tribute to the Taiwanese veterans. Ironically, some politicians who opposed Lee's visit started to argue, somewhat satirically, Lee as a former president should also seek recognition of others who were affected by the war.⁵²

B. (Historiographically) To establish/restore (the history of) Taiwanese veterans in history:

Having been ignored in most historical accounts till today (2007), Lee's action is drawing unprecedented public's attention to the history of Taiwanese veterans (and the Taiwanese suffering during the war in general).

C. To seek personal/family redemption:

Before he visited Yasukuni, Lee told reporters: "to pay respect to my brother (at Yasukuni) is something that I have to do as (his family)" and "should have been taken for granted".⁵³ For Lee, the visit has fulfilled a wish he has hold for more than sixty years, since the time he last saw his brother before the latter left for the battlefield in the Philippines.⁵⁴ Some have argued that the tablet of Lee's deceased brother is said to have been moved back to an obscure temple in Taiwan, according to several KMT

⁵¹ The incident took place on 9th June, 2007, see

<http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070609/2/flrm.html>

⁵² <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/8/fgp5.html>

⁵³ <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/17/fgkp.html>, and <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/17/fgwd.html>

congresswomen at a new conference on 31st May, 2007. However, the tablet is probably done without the family's knowledge and probably there is no direct family involvement in the "moving of spirit [yiling]" process. Since there is only a book recording names of the deceased Taiwanese soldiers (supposedly copied from Yasukuni) in and a tablet set up by the temple in Taiwan, no physical trace of the deceased is ever brought back to Taiwan. As Lee personally explains shortly after the visit: "since my brother died in the war, his soul has appeared at home; but my father, throughout his life, refused to believe that he (my brother) is really death".⁵⁵ Religiously and personally, the tablet in Taiwan may not suffice the need for tribute-paying. Instead, as Lee personally stated after his visit to Yasukuni, only a personal visit to where the dead family member is worshipped could truly fulfill the need of paying tribute.⁵⁶

As the postwar (contention over) memory of Taiwanese veterans has demonstrated, officially imposed "tidiness"⁵⁷ on memory of war hardly lasts or stays unchallenged. Although "the temptation of closure"⁵⁸ in history writing never ceases, memories of war are questions that will continue to surface and lead to heated debate in writing of history. In Taiwan, amidst the growing debate and the more open conflict over national identity since the 1990s, the new discourse of Taiwanese veterans becomes another notable site of contention. As the recent controversy over Lee's visit and paying tribute at Yasukuni has demonstrated, the Taiwanese society—as well as the

⁵⁴ According to recent newspaper reports, Lee's brother left for the Philippines in 1943, see <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/11/fgvz.html>.

⁵⁵ <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/8/fhvg.html>

⁵⁶ <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/article/url/d/a/070607/8/fhvg.html>

⁵⁷ Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), p.24, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.232.

larger Chinese and Japanese societies—is far from reaching a consensus on the legacy of the Taiwanese veterans. After decades of forgetting, remembering, and forgiving, writing the history of Taiwanese veterans continues, and it continues to reflect a deeply divided national identity and different perception of the war and Japanese colonial legacy in Taiwan.

⁵⁸ Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), p.24, quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.232.