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The warp and weft of life: heritage and working-class nostalgia in a Chinese textile town

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Chapter 7

Sharing Nostalgia: A Retrospective Exhibition

In this chapter, I will argue that understanding collective and individual memory within nostalgia is an effective way of learning what industrial heritage means for working-class people. In the ethnographic part, I will show how the government and working-class people share a sense of nostalgia, but even though their presentation of how they remember the past is similar, especially in relation to the glorious heydays, the meaning of their nostalgia is not the same. Indeed, significant variation even exists within the working-class community. If we no longer see that it is the community that shares one single memory, then what is the intellectual significance of a variety of different memories and different kinds of nostalgia? Thus, how working-class people used nostalgia to interpret, remember, and commemorate industrial heritage through interacting with and negotiating the present is my main concern. It is in this framework that I will analyze the relations between heritage and nostalgia.

Here, I raise three questions in order to analyze the relationship between memory, nostalgia and heritage. First, what do people remember and how do they represent their lived experience when they recall the past that happened here? Second, how do people relate to nostalgia during a period marked by social and cultural transformation? Third, how do people understand the past through heritage as a form of cultural memory that represents and reconstructs the past within a larger society? In this chapter, I will describe a retrospective exhibition in order to explain the complexity of nostalgia and industrial heritage.

In the textile town, many workers know the term “cultural heritage” because of the frequent official publicity stating that many of China’s heritage sites are on the list of world heritage sites. Especially in Xi’an, a very famous historical city in China, many well-known heritage sites have become a symbol of the glorious past because the local authorities use the past to restore an imagined ancient imperial city (Zhu 2018). “Industrial heritage,” however, is an unfamiliar and abstract term for them. In fact, during the fieldwork, workers in the textile town rarely used the terms “heritage” or “industrial heritage” and other related Chinese words of their own accord. Instead, they communicated the details of their working life and lived experience, and they told background stories about the factory ruins by discussing people, events, and places in the previous factory community. This demonstrated what parts of the past they had remembered and memorized in particular. Therefore, to understand industrial

heritage, we have to delve deeper into who has the power to define this concept, and how local people's experience has become embodied in heritage practices. In this chapter, I will show that working-class people have capacity to express their thoughts and feelings on the past and interpret the present. Their previous experience of working and living in the factory community was worth remembering and should be passed on from generation to generation.

A Retrospective Exhibition in the Textile Town

Reproducing Collective Memory

In April 2021, the textile town's subdistrict office (jie dao ban shi chu) planned to hold an exhibition. It launched a call for the community and working-class residents to collect documents, photos, and other objects about the history of the textile town since the founding of China. The year 2021 was the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. All levels of government and public institutions conducted various activities to celebrate this unique and meaningful year. As part of this, the textile town's local government planned to make an exhibition of industrial history to celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party's founding.

As part of the plans to exhibit a wide variety of objects, the local government published a leaflet, promoted the event online, and called on the factory community to participate. The subdistrict office left their contact details and promised to reward those who could provide something for the collection with commemorative certificates or souvenirs. The objects the organizers asked for included two categories. The first category was written materials, split into five types:

1. Archival materials: historical materials of the Communist Party in the textile town area, documents, letters, diaries, flyers, and other important materials that related to the textile town.
2. Tickets: documents and tickets with distinctive characteristics of the times and historical traces of the textile town.
3. Honors: all kinds of collective and individual honors, medals, certificates, medals, prizes, and souvenirs with distinctive characteristics of the times and historical traces of the textile town.
4. Books and magazines: newspapers, publications, books about important events and historical figures related to the textile town, factory chronicles of the work units, company histories, and internal publications.
5. Images and pictures: photos, documentaries, recordings, videos, pictures, posters, etc., about the production, construction, education, research, sales, and workers' lives and cultural and sports activities of the textile town.

The second category consisted of material objects, split into four types:

1. Production facilities and equipment: small-scale production equipment or production tools marked with historical traces of the textile town.

2. Main products: industrial products and civilian consumer goods produced by the textile town's enterprises with distinctive features of the times and marked with historical traces of the textile town.
3. Production supplies: labels, tags, trademarks, badges, seals, protective work clothing or accessories and work uniforms with features typical of the times.
4. Daily necessities: Everyday objects needed as part of family life with features typical of the times.

The leaflet's title was *The Textile Town at That Time* (na shi fang zhi cheng), written in red. Its subtitle was *Wrap and Weft Shuttle, the Fiery Years* (jing wei chuan suo, huo hong nian dai). The local government emphasized historical values as certain words were always mentioned, such as "historical traces," "marks of the era" and "features of the times." Such terms highlighted the history of the socialist experiment conducted in industrial communities. The officials believed that the collections presented the glorious past and brought the community a sense of pride that once made an enormous contribution to China's industrial development.

The local official published another four posters to publicize the exhibition. All the posters used historical photos as background, and the title "The Textile Town at That Time" was displayed vertically in the middle. The first poster showed many female textile workers leaving work and walking out of the No.5 factory gate. Most workers wore dresses as they changed clothes after work. Some dresses were bright yellow or green, and the style looked fashionable. The second poster's background image was very simple: a white apron. It was not just a plain apron but an everyday object that textile workers were familiar with. The third and fourth posters both showed scenes on shop floors. The third poster showed a worker sitting in front of the winding machinery and spooling, while the fourth poster presented many warp beams neatly arranged on the floor. These four photos were taken in the 1980s, and they revealed the textile factory's busy, lively, thriving, and prosperous heyday. Although the textile town started to go downhill after the 1990s, the exhibitions' main concern was to show the glorious past because this heyday echoed the achievements of the Communist Party of China's leadership.

Despite the local government conducting this activity, the working-class residents were pleased to contribute to the exhibition. Many residents, especially older ones, provided the organizer with precious photos, documents, souvenirs, and other objects. In total, the organizer collected more than one thousand objects from the public. One retired worker told me why she was willing to provide her certificates of merit and other materials to the exhibition:

These things represent the past, our past, the period of our youth. The honors proved that I worked hard to contribute to the country and that I did not fail to live up to the country's expectations. But now, no one knows it, and no one cares about it. I want to ask the next generations to see our past, and to know what we have done for the country.

The exhibition was displayed in the textile town's artist district. The building's interior, which

occupied almost 1500 square meters, was once a shop floor of the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory. More than seven hundred objects were exhibited, and they displayed the social and cultural history of the textile town over the last seventy years.

Before visitors entered the exhibition hall, they would see a large board in the lobby, with a sentence in the middle of it that read, “The textile town is the model of China’s first round of industrial construction.” The board had a black-and-white photo in the background, which depicted a typical workday scene on the weaving shop floor: many female workers dressed in white caps and white aprons sat beside the machines and weaved. A sign celebrating the Party’s centenary was in the board’s top left-hand corner.

The reception was opposite the large board. Three desks were arranged in a row as the registration area. Two young staff members from the local government, who wore white shirts and black pants, were in charge of the reception area. A white-haired woman in her late sixties was writing her name in the registration notebook.

Beside the reception was a large screen playing a video promoting this exhibition. The main part of the video was a series of interviews with older workers who talked about their experience of being textile workers. Each visitor could watch the interviews on the large electronic screen and hear various voices from many older textile workers, like:

My name is Liu Donglan. I was recruited to the No.3 factory when I was seventeen and attended the opening ceremony of the first factory in 1953 ...

Several visitors sat in front of the screen and watched the video attentively. They felt very touched. An older visitor said excitedly, “Only courageous, selfless, ordinary textile workers like these are the real backbone of China and our idols.”

When entering the exhibition hall, a preface to the exhibition displayed the following text:

These photos, medals, documents, and old objects represent the scenes of construction, production, and life of the textile city over the past seventy years, witnessing the pace of the times. In the 1950s beneath the Bailu Plain near the Chan River, tens of thousands of young men and women actively responded to the national call, and they came here together from all over the country. They built new factories every year between 1953 and 1958 and finally completed the construction of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Textile Factory and the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory, and so this area became known as the textile town. From then on, several generations in the textile town have worked hard, dedicated themselves, and strived to achieve first-class quality, and they have made remarkable contributions to improving people’s lives, revitalizing and developing the textile industry, and bringing about socialist modernization. The history of the textile town’s endeavors is an important microcosm of the development of industrialization in new China and is a vivid example of learning about and teaching Party history. On the centenary of the Party’s founding, we collect and organize representative documents and

objects to exhibit the historical scenes and developmental achievements of the textile town to celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party of China.

The photos had been enlarged and printed on a long photo board linked up and placed around the exhibition hall to create a vast and long roll of film. These photos were arranged in chronological order and divided into four periods: Beginnings, Development, Heydays, and Transformation. When visitors walked around the hall, they learned about the textile town's historical development in different periods from 1953 until the present day. Several showcases were placed beneath the photo board. In the center of the exhibition, there were several other rows of showcases that displayed various documents including old original photos, photos examining each factory's design, photos of the opening ceremony, of the inspection by leaders from the political center and foreign dignitaries in different periods, of work scenes in each workshop, of the work groups' excitement over product awards, over work and study, over the kindergartens, over primary and secondary schools in the factory community, and group photos, for instance, of workers on the same shop floor or team.



Figure 7.1: The view of the exhibition. Photo taken by Chi Cheng.

The exhibition highlighted the honor and reputation that the textile town obtained. Several awards, medals, and prizes were exhibited in the showcases, which included medals from the national and ministerial levels to provincial and factory levels. The prizes were more varied and included a practical file package, an enamel basin and porcelain cup printed with the name of the factory, and a notebook

printed with the word “award” in red. In addition, on the wall at the end of the hall several boards displayed certificates detailing the merits that the model workers as individuals and the textile factory as a unit had obtained. The model workers were the brightest shining stars in the textile town, and some of them appeared in the video interviews by the entrance.

In addition, various cards and tickets also attracted visitors’ attention. There were work cards, bathing cards, swimming cards, voter cards, reading cards, movie tickets, food stamps, oil stamps, cloth stamps, deposit books, various scripts and sticky notes, etc. Many of the original official documents were very precious, such as documents with the square red seal of the Northwest Textile Administration of the Central People’s Government (a central administration established in 1954), and other provincial and municipal documents, as well as factory, team, and Party documents.

Several original newspapers were on display. They presented the achievements and developments that were reported in a timely manner to the public to inspire the textile workers to work harder. These newspapers included the *People’s Daily*, *Wen Wei Po*, *Liberation Daily*, *Yangtze River Daily*, *Workers’ Daily*, *Shaanxi Daily*, and so on. Some reports were also on display, including planning reports, work arrangement reports, production task completion reports, and quality reports. Visitors also saw the wage-setting reports of the textile workers, which covered employees ranging from the factory manager and shop floor director to each type of worker. There were also other official documents, including



Figure 7.2: Visitors looking at the “red boat” that was built out of shuttles previously used for weaving. Photo taken by Chi Cheng.

provincial and municipal documents, factory documents, team documents and Party documents.

Furthermore, some works of literature related to textile workers were also exhibited in the hall. For example, a comic strip named “Honglan and Qinglan,” was published by the Chang’an People’s Publishing House in 1958. This was a story about two sisters who became textile workers and strived for advancement and learned from each other. *The Looms are Singing* was a fiction written by a worker and writer named Yang Dafa from the No.4 Factory, who brought visitors to the past era. The newspapers published by each factory were important food for thought for the workers in those days. One visitor said she still remembered how happy she was when her mother finished work for the day and brought her latest factory newspaper home.

In addition, some material objects attracted visitors’ interest. For example, several visitors stood around a “red boat” that was built out of shuttles previously used for weaving. Several visitors borrowed the white hat and apron from the guides who dressed up as a former textile worker. These visitors would then hold a weaving shuttle while others took photos of them.

On the first day of the exhibition, the textile town’s subdistrict office awarded “Fifty Years of Glory in the Party” medals to sixteen representatives of old Party members. In a small hall next to the exhibition, the old textile workers sat on chairs, and the local officials awarded the medals to them. In the ceremony speech, an official stated that the purpose of giving these awards was to convey the care and concern of the Party organization for the workers and to enhance the sense of honor, belonging, and mission attached to being Party members. After the ceremony, a journalist interviewed the subdistrict party committee’s secretary, and he said, “This is a vivid Party history education class. In looking back at the history, we can derive strength and pay tribute to our predecessors. We can learn the history of the Party, give thanks to the Party, and follow the Party. We have to continue to carry out concrete practical activities and do practical things for the public.”

Interaction Between Individual Memory and Collective Memory

The interaction between individuals’ perspectives and the official intentions in the exhibition is an effective way of observing the relations between individual memory and collective memory. Did the working-class residents experience the same feelings that the exhibition described and sought to convey?

At the exhibition, several young tour guides from the local government dressed as female workers and explained the stories behind the images, documents, and objects to the visitors. Many visitors were extremely well-acquainted with the photos and the objects because they had many similar materials in their homes. Thus, when the young guide told the story of the picture, some visitors were keen to correct her or add some details. When this happened, the young guide listened to the visitors and gave an embarrassed smile. But after talking with more visitors several times, the guide became used to this and was willing to hear different versions. The young guide’s job training involved remembering the texts for each exhibit in advance, and then reciting them to the public. For the visitors, however, these were not other people’s stories; they were their own stories. They were able to reinterpret their

past from their individual memories and to build on working-class history, express their sense of community, share their personal experience, and even educate the next generations. For example, two female visitors pointed at one photo together and told others about its background. This photo showed two young female workers cooperating in front of a machine. In the photo, a worker with her back to the camera spoke to another worker facing the camera, and they smiled while they both looked at a spool in one worker's hand. It was a typical work scene in which the textile workers learned how to remove the spool and rewind the remaining yarn to reduce waste. The most interesting thing was that those two visitors were the very same figures who featured in the photo. When they saw this photo taken forty years ago, they expressed their feelings by saying, "We believe the exhibition is a great way to remember the past. We can use these old objects to teach the younger generation how the older generation struggled under the circumstances to attain the good life we have today."

Few visitors were alone; most had someone accompanying them. Some older workers visited the exhibition with their children or grandchildren. These older workers were very excited to tell the next generations about the background to the exhibits. A female visitor in her eighties talked with her daughter about one figure in a photo. Both mother and daughter were textile workers and had lived in the factory community all their life. It was exciting for them to find people they knew who featured in the photos. When they saw photos of the model workers, they discussed how important these model workers were:

In the past, the labor role models were based on real model workers, frontline workers, seriously. We would be very proud if our factory had a model worker at the provincial level. Nowadays, we don't trust the model workers, because the people who receive the model worker accolade are assessed by people who were either rich or powerful.

Every visitor who was once a worker was able to find personal connections to this exhibition. In that moment, they were not so much visitors but rather hosts who were familiar with every object and who even told other guests the background stories. Their narratives about the past were not like the information introduced by the guides sent by the local government. Even though these guides had been trained professionally, they could never become the same people as those who had experienced the industrial past directly, people who experienced all the changes and all the vivid and real interactions with other workers.

On the conclusion board, a long paragraph attracted attention:

The 1500 square meter exhibition hall is limited to exhibiting more documents and objects, but the historical contents and connotations of the times are indeed rich and profound. Maybe you are an old resident in the textile town. Does this moment take you back to the rumble of machines? Maybe you are a new resident of the textile town. Do you understand the hardships and happiness of the predecessors right now? Maybe you are a guest here. Can you feel the passion of textile workers in the previous era right now?

This text was the first paragraph that summarized the exhibition while emphasizing the visitors' emotions and their connection with the past. The narrative aimed to awaken a nostalgic attachment to the textile town. In terms of working-class residents, this exhibition could awaken their individual memory of the past and bring them back to the shop floor full of the "rumble of machines." In terms of new residents, despite not working as textile workers in the factory, the exhibition enhanced their understanding of the history and people of the textile town because the place where they were now living was a place where the older generations had worked hard. Visitors from outside the area could also learn about the contribution that the textile workers and the factories in the textile town had made, and they could be inspired by the textile workers' spirit.

Emotional Complexity: The Combination of Pride and Loss

The local government intended to put on a positive, educational, and hopeful exhibition that created an atmosphere full of nostalgic connections with the past. Their purpose was to offer working-class residents a sense of belonging and a sense of pride. When the workers saw these pictures, their reminiscences brought them back to the shop floor where their most important friendship was established, to the communal apartment where everyone shared food and knew each other very well, to the secure sense of being a textile worker in a socialist country, and to a society in which workers could earn respect and, more importantly, dignity.

Beside the corner of the exhibition hall, a place named "Post-viewing Message," had been set up. Here, visitors were asked to respond with their feelings about the exhibition. It used voice input in a novel way to record visitors' messages. A staff member helped visitors to leave their messages on the machine. An older, retired worker left an excited message:

This exhibition is excellent! When I see all the photos and objects in this hall, I feel like I am still a young man full of energy, and I feel like I have come back to the regular production workshop.

This reflected local people's nostalgia, which built an emotional bridge that connected the present with the past. Compared to the positive sense of nostalgia shown in the official narratives, however, many working-class visitors were deeply emotional, and mixed a sense of pride with a sense of loss. What emotional complexity underpins how they understood the meanings of nostalgia? They emphasized that they did not experience a simple nostalgia; instead, they carried on describing the past they remembered:

This does not mean that I want to go back to the glorious days, the heydays. Yes, I agree that I feel proud of the glorious past. Everyone would envy you in the 1980s heydays when you said you came from the textile town. You may know that our town was once called "little Shanghai," and then "little Hong Kong." We earned more than others, and we wore more beautiful clothes than others. People admired us, the textile factory workers.

I heard many stories that painted a picture of these heydays. When they mentioned the details of their experience, I could sense how proud they were. Did the pride come from the economic conditions, as they said, given their position producing family-owned products in a period of material shortages? In fact, in the 1970s and 1980s, periods marked by a planned economy, most urban residents worked in state-owned factories. Living standards did not vary much. Even though the textile factory's output rate was better than that of other factories, and the workers in the textile town earned larger average salaries than workers at other factories, the products they could buy were limited. Thus, the truth is that the sense of pride is not based on economic priority but is instead rooted in a sense of security and self-esteem or dignity, which they described in more detail when they saw pictures showing schools and clinics in the factory community:

We did not worry about sickness or children's education. The factory provided us with real social welfare. If I was sick, I just went to the factory clinic, I didn't even pay. Our factory just deducted a little from my salary. And more importantly, we did not worry about the children's education. Our factory provides education from kindergarten to high school, and you just need to register when the kids reach the appropriate age. We felt relaxed about those things because the factory helped us to take care of them. What I needed to do was just focus on my work.

While many workers recalled their past experiences and proud emotions, certain other workers, however, sighed and shook their heads. One worker described his sense of loss:

(Sigh.) Don't believe how glorious the past was. The work on the shop floor was tough. Especially the night shift, so tiring. We devoted our whole life to the factory, but what did we get? Nothing, except for an unhealthy body.

Their sense of loss became written into their bodies. Mauss (1979) used the term "technique of the body" to illustrate how people in different societies carry out automatic bodily actions. Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) also discusses how the habitus acquires specific attributes within the human body and subsequently influences it through other institutions such as education and employment. Moreover, Brownell's ethnography of Chinese athletes (1995) analyzed how the concept of "body culture" was applied to sports in Chinese society. She argued that Chinese athletes' bodies are not their own; instead, the body is permeable and highly malleable, and it could be bent to the demands of the family or state. To some extent, the actions of frontline workers when operating machines resembled the repetitive and practical actions typical of Chinese athletes' practices. Their everyday routines on the shop floors were not only a job; rather, these workers bore a heavy responsibility for building socialism. Thus, the "body culture" applied to the shop floor formed a kind of connection that linked up everyday practices with the working class's sense of honor and mission. Even though each worker's body suffered during the labor process, they had to tolerate these personal challenges. But after many years, their physical condition suffered, and as they aged, their bodies experienced chronic, incurable pain and became unhealthy. For example, nearly every worker I talked with mentioned that speaking

loudly was a specific characteristic of workers in the textile factory, even when they were away from the shop floor and in a relatively quiet atmosphere. One former worker pointed at a photo depicting workers on the weaving shop floor, and he said:

The noise of machines, especially the intensity of the din on this weaving shop floor, was unbearable. Your voice can't be heard if you do not speak loudly. Every day when we left the factory, our ears were still ringing.

Another worker mentioned that they inhaled cotton-batting easily; it floated in the air and caused lung diseases. Also, workers stood for more than eight hours per day and had to bend over frequently when operating the machine, which put them at risk of discomfort and possible injury as they aged.

Feelings of loss always tended to focus on the decline of the textile industry and the workers' precarious situation. As a female worker from the No.4 Factory said,

You can now see how backward the textile town is compared with other areas in Xi'an. Our factory closed down in 2008, and thousands of textile workers were laid off. Several years before the bankruptcy, our salaries were very low, and they did not rise after the year 2000. We could afford the crazy rising prices. And our social status became very low — people from other districts looked down upon us, the people from the textile town.

Some visitors constantly asked why their lives had changed so much. A piece of pink silk with many different signatures was placed in the showcase, and it came from the opening ceremony for building the No.5 Factory in 1955. When the man looked at this piece of silk, he whispered those signatures one by one, and finally sighed helplessly, said, "You see, this is a town built from the First Five-year Plan period, how come it is like this?"

The most common visitor request was that they hoped this exhibition was a permanent exhibition. As one visitor said, the local government should build a special industrial museum to exhibit photos and more material objects like textile machines in the exhibition permanently. Or, as another visitor put it, they could "use more attractive media, such as voices, light, and videos, to create a more vivid space and build a permanent textile museum." In reality, however, the exhibition was only lengthened from two weeks to one month.

Different Senses of Nostalgia Between Generations and Between Workers

An old photographer named Quan Shizhong, who once worked as a staff member in the No.5 Textile Factory's propaganda department, came to the exhibition. Uncle Quan pointed at the photos one by one and told other visitors that he had taken almost one-third of the photos in the exhibition. He had come to the textile town from another city, Chongqing, when he was sixteen as part of the call to support Northwest China. And now he was eighty-nine. He looked spry, carried a camera, and was excited to tell others about the background to these pictures. He pointed at a black-and-white aerial photo of the whole textile town and said he was the only man from the textile town who joined the

team of provincial photographers to take this picture. He went up in the helicopter five times in the 1980s and eventually took this photo. Then he pointed to another group photo, looked at the figures in it, and said sadly, “Many people have died, only I am left here.”

Uncle Quan is one of the thousands of textile workers who devoted their lives to the factory. When these workers saw such photos and objects, they became emotional and felt nostalgia because many things that had truly existed in their everyday lives and represented their actual past experience were now being displayed in the elegant and well-arranged exhibition hall.

Many things had vanished, especially some of the already-demolished buildings in the photos. A female visitor pointed to a building and said, “The office block in the No.6 Factory was the only original factory office block in the textile town.”

Another man standing next to her added more details, “But those windows had changed, and the building was sold to the China Railway Group. The building becomes history now.” Another woman standing behind her echoed, “True, like our factory (the No.4 Factory), all were demolished, and only the big pine tree on the side of the road was left.”

These older workers had a deep attachment to the factory as many of them had constructed the factory buildings. A male textile worker who was at least seventy years old explained his attachment to the factory and those buildings:

We have deep feelings about our factory because we built many building ourselves. We moved the bricks and built it up bit by bit. It was not like nowadays, when the state grants building permits. We worked very hard, not only on the shop floor, but we built our schools, the middle school, and the elementary school for the No.4 factory, we built it ourselves.

He continued to complain about the sense of being abandoned by the state and discontented with the reform policies:

We provided the country with much profit, never a loss. Our factory paid off the entire loan in the first two years, and over all the remaining decades we have been giving the country money. In the end, why is the result like this? Maybe because of the policy, but not just because of the policy: someone wants to turn this state-owned asset into a private asset ... The officials’ descendants have good lives; our workers’ children were always poor although we worked too hard, too hard ... The apartment I live in now is still in a Soviet-style building distributed by the factory. There is no toilet inside; the toilet is for public use. You can’t imagine what we have suffered.

During the conversation, he shook his hand several times and said, “It’s not good to talk about it; it’s meaningless to talk about it. That’s how society is.” Or he said, “I don’t want to say it, I don’t want to say it, no meaning. Just look at these photos, memories, just nostalgia, that’s enough.” This emotional complexity is a sentiment that can’t be put into words. This is not a simple nostalgia that desires a return to a collectivist past, but a reflective, helpless nostalgia that is not willing to compromise.

Not all the visitors were pessimistic. A middle-aged woman shared her experience and claimed that leaving the textile factory was not bad for her. She was a textile worker in the No.4 Factory, and she worked there for more than twenty years. When the factory was bankrupt, she decided to leave the factory and then worked for a real estate company. Compared with when she worked in the factory beforehand, she felt more satisfied with her current situation, as she earned more than she had in the factory. Although she was dissatisfied with the factory, she was proud of being a textile worker from the No.4 Factory:

In the past, the textile people were dedicated. The labor discipline was stricter than in other neighboring factories. Thus, when the workers from our factory worked elsewhere, they had an outstanding reputation. You see, like us who are now going out to society (for work), they all like to use workers from the No.4 Factory. Our responsibility, labor discipline, and reputation are excellent. So many talented workers were buried in the No.4 Factory. For example, I was just a general worker in the factory, but many workers including me now get promoted to the management level when we work outside.

She accompanied her eighty-year-old mother, a member of the older generation in the textile town. She still believed the textile town was the best place in which to stay:

Today is my second day coming here. Yesterday I came here alone, and today I asked my daughter to accompany me. When I was twenty years old, I came here. And now I am nearly eighty years old. I graduated from a professional textile school and worked all the time until I retired. Wherever I go, I feel our textile town is the best. But when I see these pictures, it's so sad, nothing is left.

The nostalgia they presented was not the same. The mother felt grief because the factory's tangible objects were gone. When she saw these exhibited photos, she, like other older retired textile workers, remembered the vivid past through the place, people, and other objects in the photos. The daughter, however, conveyed a positive nostalgia in which she focused on the current benefits and the future hopes, which were affected by the past.

This moment shows how differently nostalgia is experienced. Individual nostalgia differs because nostalgia is a reconstruction of the past that incorporates affective memory. This memory is selective, and the affect drawn upon is complex and diverse. The complexity of emotions stems from the complexity of individual experience and identification with the collective unit. For each generation of textile workers, the difference in their sense of collective identity leads to a different kind of nostalgic tendency. The first generation of workers believed they were the most qualified to speak about the history of the textile town, as their collective identity formed due to their contributions to the country. Their nostalgia echoes the purpose of the official nostalgia, wherein the glorious industrial past should be remembered. As the "lost generation," the second generation has experienced social suffering throughout their life courses. They enjoyed a unique and privileged status offered by the state, which provided them with a sense of pride as workers in their youth. Nevertheless, after being laid off

and finding employment elsewhere, this collective identity became disintegrated and fragmented. When the work unit no longer existed, there was a break in the transmission of working-class culture and tradition. Although they were nostalgic for a time when the factories ran well, they felt more pessimistic about what they had experienced after everything had changed. This affection was based on a contrast between the present and the past, which reinforced a comparison between their pride in the past and their loss in the present.

Individuals' sense of nostalgia varied in line with their different encounters. Some workers obtained a better job, and then their sense of nostalgia viewed the past positively because what they learned from their past continues in the new position, especially when they benefit from their previous experience. But for those who suffered precarity after leaving the factory, nostalgia seemed to function as a security blanket that allowed them to return to a secure past when they still had dignity, and when working-class people were "masters" of the country.

Memory, Nostalgia, and Industrial Heritage

Now I will delve into the relationship between memory, nostalgia, and heritage by analyzing the relationship between people and place in the past and present. Let me return to the three questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter.

First, I asked, "What do people remember and how do they represent their lived experience when they recall the past that happened in the place?" To answer this question, memory studies help us understand the process of remembering and forgetting, with a focus on how a memory is formed and sustained in a social context. Different layers of memory, as discussed in memory studies, overlap and interact with each other in a complex dialogue. When we ask what people remember, we should first pay attention to individuals' narratives about the past in order to learn more about their own experiences and knowledge. Internal variations also exist in the past that individuals describe. Then we can compare these various narratives about the past and find the differences and figure out what reasons cause such variety. The analysis of memories of everyday life in the past is an effective way of understanding how an individual's memory works, and it shows what they remember and forget. This helps us grasp what parts of their lives are important, and why they remember or forget.

At the same time, we also need to concentrate on collective memory. Collective memory does not entail the aggregation of all individuals' memories. Some individuals may share collective values and a sense of belonging within a group, but other individuals may even be opposed to collective narratives about the past. Thus, we need to recognize how the particularities of individual memory operate within or struggle with collective memory. Critics have asserted that collective memory is limited, and it cannot explain how memory is sustained and continually transmitted to the next generations. Connerton's (1989) concept of "social memory," however, could provide an effective way of understanding how memory can be reorganized, decontextualized, and suppressed to give historical events new meanings. Social memory is a dynamic process of struggle or negotiation during a social transformation. Connerton discussed commemorative ceremony and bodily practice as two ways of

sustaining social memory. Commemoration shows how social memory represents a dominant shaping of memory in which shared values are constructed. Then, the tension and contradiction between social memory and individual memory help us understand social conflict and potential structural violence. Bodily memory forms a habitual memory through habits and practices, which can help us to avoid the bias that texts cause. Therefore, when we analyze how memory connects the past and present, we need to focus on the different layers of memory to investigate how they interact with each other.

As a kind of sentimental longing associated with remembering and forgetting the past, nostalgia recalls some parts of a memory and interacts with that memory. Like memory, nostalgia is affected by social transformation. The exhibition in the textile town gives an example of how people relate to nostalgia during a period of social and cultural transformation. Nostalgia is not always present but is evoked by certain scenes. Spatial arrangements can enhance nostalgic sentiment. Industrial museums, for example, establish a connection that helps former workers recall their working experience on a shop floor, and these museums offer an effective way of making nostalgia come alive, in a productive and emotional way. When visiting, workers are not just visitors; instead, they become masters and storytellers of working-class history, and they even build their own history from the memorialization. This is a productive way of paying attention to how people and their communities use nostalgia to evoke hopes of social equality, self-esteem with dignity, and class solidarity in the future.

Nevertheless, nostalgia can be used as a tool by a bureaucracy to distort and tamper with social and collective memory. In the official narratives recalling the past, nostalgia was presented as an innocent and romantic emotion in order to ask people to forget the painful past. Rosaldo (1989) argues that when we are mourning the passing of traditional society, we should realize how complicit we are with imperialism. He proposed the term “imperialist nostalgia” to explain such a sentimental discourse. In his words, “the anthropological trope and the colonial official’s curious longing for what he or she has destroyed” (1989: 120). Herzfeld (2021) put forward a concept of “bureaucratic nostalgia.” He criticized those in power for pretending to regret the destruction of older socio-cultural formations — actions they had willingly carried out. These officials want to destroy all traces of traditional lifestyles, replacing them with a sanitized version that the affected communities can no longer recognize as their own. The textile town exhibition demonstrated how bureaucratic nostalgia was presented by selecting materials to display and by writing glorious illustrative notes. Nostalgia often relates to something really painful for people, but what the official state narrative does is generally to conceal the painful side, only showing the beautiful surface and evoking a nostalgic imagination. The purpose of this narrative is to ask people to forget the pain in order to build a positive image. This attracts people involved in their romantic nostalgia and avoids people’s resentment toward them. Thus, forgetting becomes a frequent occurrence during urbanization, and it then distorted memories.

Nostalgia is also a personal experience, but it is affected by collective memory and social memory. Nostalgia often evinces a sentimental yearning for a lost past related to a place, a period, or a situation. Although people experience a similar past in a collective, nostalgia nonetheless varies within a group. Some people may yearn for a period or place that has changed. Others, however, may think that the past is the past, and the present is better than the past. But sometimes, when people face external forces

or threats, the nostalgia they exhibit may become rather consistent as a form of resistance. Thus, it is important to analyze what causes such internal variation, and to embrace consistent nostalgia when people confront an external force. Nostalgia can reveal cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2016a), namely, something that seems to be a source of external embarrassment, but that for insiders forms part of their common sociality.

Heritage, as a platform on which memory is performed, easily reflects and evokes nostalgia. Nostalgia is not visible all the time but rather needs to be activated in certain moments. When people enter a heritage site or when they look at certain objects from the past, this may enhance their memory and nostalgia for the past. Thus, stimulating people's senses in this space addresses my third question: how do people understand the past through heritage as a form of cultural memory that represents and reconstructs the past within a larger society? Memory, nostalgia, and heritage interact with each other in a space. Memory helps us understand how social and individual lives have changed, and such changes bring up nostalgia, which demonstrates how a memory reflects an intimacy with a place. Heritage can be viewed as a platform linking memory and nostalgia, and it evokes local people's attachment to the past and to a place. Besides object that embody heritage, other forms of heritage — like rituals, music, and dance — are more likely to represent memory, like commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. And the reason is that some forms of heritage can be inherited and pass from generation to generation. This is also how social memory can be sustained. When we deal with heritage issues, we first need to ask whose heritage, which is similar to the question of whose nostalgia. We then need to ask what heritage brings to the local community, and this can help us reflect on the conflict between the local community and the authorized heritage discourse (AHD).

Concepts of heritage and heritage practice may vary from generation to generation. We can observe the break created by the official government approach to heritage and a break in the memory chain linking one generation to the next. A break in affective relations also means a break in the transmission of knowledge. Can nostalgia be inherited? An answer to this question would require us to investigate the differences and similarities of nostalgia over the generations and the various ways of evoking the past. Heritage affords a space in which our memory and nostalgia can interact. Historical buildings, monuments, objects, performances, rituals, songs, skills, and many other elements remind us of who we are and how we identify ourselves.

Conclusion

As soon as people arrived at this exhibition, they entered a nostalgic field. The officials and the public shared nostalgia here. The officials used historical photos and objects to evoke memories of the socialist past, and the individuals also remembered and yearned for the past when they saw such objects. The exhibition's purpose and the objects chosen to go on display highlighted the glorious history of socialism and the spirit of collectivism. This also invoked individuals' nostalgia for a past with the essentials of security, solidarity, and dignity provided. Individual and collective memories infused together in this moment. Nevertheless, a sense of pride is only one affect present in nostalgia.

Pride also evokes a sense of loss, which emerged here from personal encounters because of the social changes; nevertheless, this aspect of the past, which the officials pass over, is the source of people's complex sense of nostalgia.

Through a detailed description of the exhibition, I have shown here how heritage practice offers a space in which textile workers can recall and reflect on the past, associating it with their resilience in the present. I have unpacked working-class people's self-expression and their complex nostalgic emotions linked to the past. This can make working-class memory come alive and continue. Although working-class people are not familiar with official narratives on "industrial heritage," they can tell their own stories about the past and understand the connection between the past and the present in their own way. These are effective ways for working-class people to express their class history and values as embodied in the process of social change.

The collective memory and emotions can be reproduced through various forms of representing the past, including events, people, or places considered worth remembering. In the case of the exhibition, the local government emphasized the historical value of the textile town by using concepts such as achievement, honor, and reputation. The local government made links to other glorious moments by using words such as "endeavor," "dedicate," and "strive" to connect the individual and collective levels. This aimed to foster a sense of pride and reproduce a sense of belonging even though the collective no longer existed. The links the local government made echoed individuals' memories of their previous experiences working and living in the factory community because it helped them to recall the past and feel nostalgia toward the security and dignity of being working-class people. There was significant consistency in the official narratives and individual expressions of the past as people reproduced collective class memory and heritage together.

Although individual memory overlapped with official narratives about the past, working-class people's emotions and nostalgia are more complex than the official narrative's uses of the past. What working-class people seek is not a sense of belonging as featured in the official narratives; instead, they wanted to remember what they had gained from the past and what parts of the past were essential to them. The people, place, and community that constitute working-class heritage are always neglected and excluded in official narratives (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011: 2). Even though the official narratives applaud certain individuals' meritorious deeds, they also emphasized the symbolic meaning of collective achievements rather than ordinary working-class people's work and life. In particular, the laid-off workers' precarious situation and suffering was excluded as a topic because the officials were reluctant to confront it. This reflects how the government builds a monument for celebrating or remembering an event, people, or other unique things. The logic here is that the official government wants to fix time in order to make a singular history, which Herzfeld referred to as "monumental time" in his ethnography of a Cretan town (Herzfeld 1991).

Working-class people and the official government shared a sense of nostalgia here. Even though they presented a similar way of remembering the past and wanted to go back to the glorious heydays, the meaning of this nostalgia was not the same. Did the official government realize that what the people were longing for was exactly what the government had destroyed earlier? The authorities have more

power to use the past, define history, and control the direction of public opinion. Are working-class people aware of this? Some are immersed in their recollections of the past, but others are conscious of it from how the nostalgia intertwined with the reality they are now experiencing.