重演儀式與解構官方歷史

許家維《鐵甲元帥》（2012-2016）及其策略 *

Reenacting Rituals and Subverting Official Histories—

Chia-Wei Hsu's *Marshal Tie Jia* (2012-2016) and Its Strategies

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｜摘要｜

台灣藝術家許家維（1983-）《鐵甲元帥》（2012-2016）三部曲反映台灣當代藝術中的民族誌轉向，也提供了區域文化網絡連結的思考路徑，有別於將民族國家視為整體的模式。本文由「民族誌轉向」與儀式和表演的潛能探討此系列作品。前兩件作品—《龜島》（2012）與《靖思村》（2013）—經由考察蛙神信仰與儀式，以及在馬祖龜島與江西靖思村分別進行演唱和儺舞表演，連結兩個看似無關卻因移民而有共通蛙神信仰的地點。這些跨區域的網絡連結，不僅有別於將台灣或中國視為一體或兩個完全區分的文化體的觀點，亦反省了戰後台灣與中國由國家權力主導的文化肅清。藉由重探民間的文化遺產與記憶，前兩件作品分別挑戰了中國共產黨政府與國民黨政府建構的官方歷史。而第三件作品《神靈的書寫》（2016）則運用當代虛擬科技探索不可見的神靈與其文化精神性本質。本文著重討論《鐵甲元帥》的兩大貢獻：一方面，運用民族誌方法解構由上而下的官方意識形態結構，開拓主體敘事的論述空間。另一方面，強調文化身體記憶與儀式表演的顛覆性潛能—替置與再造—重新打開歷史詮釋的可能。

關鍵詞｜許家維、《鐵甲元帥》、民族誌、儀式、身體記憶

Abstract

Taiwanese artist Chia-Wei Hsu's (1983-) trilogy *Marshal Tie Jia* (2012-2016) echoes the "ethnographic turn" in Taiwanese contemporary art and provides a pattern of cultural networks opposed to the integrity of nation-state. This article discusses these three works from the dimensions of "ethnographic turn" and the potentiality of ritual and performance. By investigating folk rituals and staging performances in Turtle Island (Matsu, Taiwan) and Jingsi Village (Jiangxi, China), the first two works of *Marshal* named after the aforementioned villages—*Turtle Island* (2012) and *Jingsi Village* (2013)—connects two seemingly unrelated locales that share a folk belief in a frog god, a belief that slowly immigrated from China to the Matsu Islands. These cross-regional networking connections, different from viewing Taiwan and China as a whole or viewing them as two separate entities—reflect on the cultural purges by state powers in the postwar Taiwan and China. By revisiting the folk cultural legacy and memory, these works challenge the authority of the official history enacted by the Chinese Communist government and the Kuomintang government in Taiwan, respectively. The third work, *Spirit-Writing* (2016), explores the possibility of capturing the spiritual essence and invisibility of a god by using contemporary virtual modeling technology. This article considers two contributions of *Marshal Tie Jia*: On the one hand, the ethnographic investigation dismantles the top-down structure of official ideology, carving out discursive spaces for subjective narratives. On the other hand, the emphasis of the transformative potentials of ritual performance and bodily memory—replacement and reinvention—reopens the possibility to reinterpret history.

Keywords | Chia-Wei Hsu, *Marshal Tie Jia*, ethnography, ritual, bodily memory

I. Introduction

Taiwanese artist Chia-Wei Hsu's (許家維; 1983-) trilogy of video installations titled *Marshal Tie Jia* (鐵甲元帥; 2012-2016) not only echoes the "ethnographic turn" in Taiwan's contemporary art but also points to the possibilities of how islands like Taiwan could have agency and become a hub for thinking about regional history and memory after the postwar period, possibilities which would signal a shift away from the paradigm set by European or American-centered biennials.[1] *Marshal Tie Jia* consists of three video installations: *Marshal Tie Jia — Turtle Island* (龜島, 2012, 6' 35" single-channel video), *Marshal Tie Jia — Jingsi Village* (靖思村, 2013, 10' single-channel video), and *Spirit-Writing* (神靈的書寫, 2016, 9' 45" two-channel video installation). These three works revolve around issues of immigration, history, and memory across the Taiwan Strait, issues which are rendered through the artist's writings and communication with the frog god — Marshal Tie Jia. This paper focuses on the rediscovering and reinvention of rituals in *Marshal* as an artistic strategy to retrieve folklore memory and narratives, which exposes the unstable structure of official history and the problem of political unification proposed by the Chinese and Kuomintang (KMT) governments, respectively. In tracing the history of the god Marshal Tie Jia across the Taiwan Strait, Hsu accidentally found an interrelationship and similarities between the folk beliefs of the Matsu Islands and Jiangxi. He then expanded these discoveries into a series of collaborations with the local people and mediated communications with the Marshal god. By investigating and restaging folk rituals in *Marshal Tie Jia*, Hsu provides a route to connect the intracultural ties and to examine the diaspora beyond official continental frameworks. I argue that the frog god Marshal Tie Jia and related religious rituals — based on subjective memory and communal heritage — are media to transcend and transform the continent-centered

1 Born in Taichung, Taiwan, Chia-Wei Hsu now lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan. He graduated from the Graduate School of Plastic Arts at the National Taiwan University of Arts in 2010; graduated from Le Fresnoy (Studio national des arts contemporains), Tourcoing, France, in 2016. His projects explore action off screen, historical narratives, and material culture, etc. His works were exhibited at numerous international occasions: 2012 and 2016 Taipei Biennials; 2013 Venice Biennale; 2018 Shanghai Biennial; 2018 Gwangju Biennale, etc.

ideology and history constructed both in Taiwan and China during the cold-war period.

Turtle Island and *Spirit-Writing* were exhibited at the 2012 and 2016 Taipei Biennials, respectively. The former was also selected as one of the featured works at the 2013 Taiwan Pavilion, titled "This is not a Taiwan Pavilion," at the 55th Venice Biennale. *Marshal Tie Jia*'s popularity at these international biennials could be attributed to the geographical typology and ethnographical approach it offers: to look at identity beyond national boundaries and to examine history beyond official historical narratives. Yet the curatorial project of the 2013 Taiwan Pavilion proposed by Esther Lu in 2012, an independent curator working in Taipei, was a controversial one. Selected by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) but criticized by many domestic art critics, the proposal titled "This is not a Taiwan Pavilion" selected two foreign artists out of a total of three to represent a "national pavilion." [2] Responding to criticisms from Taiwan's art circle, Lu asserted that she intended to subvert the notion of a "national pavilion" at the Biennale since the Taiwan Pavilion was not a national pavilion beginning in 2001 when it was forced to become a "collateral event" under the fierce demand from China. She argued, "Let us temporarily release the historical task of Taiwan Pavilion and take a foreigner's gesture to look at our subjectivity." [3] In addition, she hoped that the Biennale could open up the "production of multitude" and allow us to examine how we imagine the political function of Taiwan Pavilion. [4] Furthermore, according to a vignette written by art reporter Yin-Hui Wu, Lu and TFAM defended this project by invoking the German Pavilion's proposal, which featured Chinese artist Ai Weiwei in the same year. This argument implies that choosing foreign artists as representatives for a national pavilion is a global tendency. [5]

2 The Taiwan Pavilion is not a national pavilion due to the protests from the Chinese government in late 1999. The Taiwan Pavilion stood as a national pavilion only in 1995, 1997, and 1999. Located in the Palazzo delle Prigioni, the Taiwan Pavilion is now a collateral event held by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. For the detailed history of the Taiwan Pavilion, see Chu-Chiun Wei, "From National Art to Critical Globalism: The Politics and Curatorial Strategies of the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale," Third Text 27, no. 4 (2013): 470-484.

3 Esther Lu, "This is not a Taiwan Pavilion: A Curatorial Concept," in the exhibition catalog *This is not a Taiwan Pavilion* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2013), 13.

4 Esther Lu, "Open Letter to Friends in the Art Circle," (致藝術界的一封信; first posted on Lu's Facebook page) *ARTCO* 244 (2013): 79.

5 Yin-Hui Wu, "The Taiwan Pavilion Will Feature Foreign Artists in the Venice Biennale," (威尼斯台灣館外籍藝術家出線, English translation of this title cited from Wei, "From National Art to Critical Globalism," 470-484.), *China Times*, 20 November 2012, https://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20121120000441-260115?chdtv, last accessed April 28, 2020.

But Lu and TFAM's apology undermines its legitimacy and cogency by resorting to the framework generated by European countries. [6] In fact, as Pei-Yi Lu points out, European pavilions like those of Germany and Poland invited artists of foreign nationality to grapple with the two countries' historical and political legacies, not to suspend or undo these legacies. [7] Even though some lauded Lu's foray into deconstructing the myth of national identity, many criticized the opaque selection system of TFAM. Sheng-Hung Wang indicates that the perennial and problematic root of this controversy lies in Taiwan's artists' and curators' over-reliance on Biennales as the only internationally sanctioned venue and stage for artists. [8] To sum up, the debate over the 2013 Taiwan Pavilion shows that Taiwan's art circle desires to grapple with the nuances of Taiwan's multiple identities that have been formed in its history and people — including indigenous peoples, citizens under the Japanese colonial regime, citizens under the KMT regime, South Asian immigrants, etc. — instead of skipping those subtleties by hastily adopting foreign perspectives directly to the Taiwan Pavilion. Therefore, I suggest viewing this Pavilion as a tipping point to see how Taiwan's art circle has taken pains to de-terrorize and remap the ways we delineate and imagine Taiwan.

Marshal Tie Jia offers an example of an alternative way to think about Taiwan's identity and subjectivity beyond a national political entity. Hsu's excavation of folk rituals at different locales seeks to connect heterogeneous time-spaces (the post-Cultural-Revolution Jiangxi and the post-KMT-regime Matsu Islands)and to look at the cultural interrelationship by blurring the political boundaries. The artist interviewed local people and sought to elicit those subjective stories so as to dismantle the ideological violence of the top-down structure imposed by shifting regimes — in *Marshal's* case, the Communist Chinese Party in China (1949-, CCP) and the KMT led by Chiang Kei Shak's family in Taiwan (1949-1988).

6 See the series of articles about issues of the 2013 Taiwan Pavilion in the journal ARTCO 244 (2013), 64-99. Chu-Chiun Wei's article explains the shifts of Taiwan's position at the Venice Biennale from 1995 to 2013, see Wei, "From National Art to Critical Globalism," 470-484.

7 Pei-Yi Lu, "Kidnapped by Imaginary International Trends," (被想像的國際潮流綁架) *ARTCO* 244 (2013): 82-83.

8 Sheng-Hung Wang, "The Monopolized Knowledge, and the Representational Mythology of the Taiwan Pavilion," (被壟斷的知識，與台灣館的再現性神話) *ARTCO* 244 (2013): 80-81.

Hsu's artistic praxis that returns to endemic networks, clans, communities, and rituals, aptly corresponds to the Taiwan-organized biennials' trend in the past decade. [9] The goal of *Marshal Tie Jia* is by no means to seek authenticity or historical truth through orature or documentary. Instead, like Hsu's other works (e.g. *Haui Mo Village*, 回莫村 , 2012) that I will delve into later, his ethnographic investigation complicates the single version of official history, revealing the potentiality of memory that may be excluded from the history. It is also worth noting that the artist transforms folk rituals — Min opera sing and exorcising dance — into performances and represents these rituals on screen. I suggest that the transformed ritual performance opens up the potential to see how memory and history can be reevaluated in postwar Taiwan and China.

Previous scholarship has mostly focused on three dimensions in Chia-Wei Hsu's artistic projects: the hybridity of national identity, the fictional narratives, and the mise-en-scène in his videos. I would like to briefly review the literature on memory and identity here to help unpack the following discussion. Esther Lu argues that Hsu intends to use "reality" to "shake official history." Hsu's appropriation of historical context and transformation of scenes rearrange the relationship among history, memory, and imagination. But Lu's argument reduces this inter-relationship into a dichotomy of "reality-fiction" and focuses on how action and a participatory process can transform "reality," which may simplify the force of ritual/performativity and conflates bodily memory with cognitive history. [10] Highlighting the metaphorical slippage of Taiwan's national imagination in *Marshal*, art critic Hsing-Jou Yeh dubs Hsu's approach as a methodology of "island" and notes that this methodology necessarily arises from Taiwan's "island-nation" geographic setting and its mixed identities, which have been formed under shifting regimes in Taiwan (Qing Dynasty, the Japanese colonial period from 1895 to 1945, and the KMT regime

9 Jow-Jiun Gong, "The Development of Ethno-poesia: An Observation of Ecology of Visual Arts in 2016," (民族誌詩學的開展：2016 視覺藝術環境觀察) *Artist* 500 (2017): 146-153.

10 Esther Lu, "The Surrealistic Action between Imagination, Memory, and History: Exploring Chia-Wei Hsu's Artistic Practices," (想像、記憶與歷史間的超現實行動：探許家維的藝術實踐) *Artist* 472 (2014): 192-197.

after 1949). [11] I will discuss this argument in the third part.

In the following, I will further examine the artistic strategies and potentiality of bodily memory and ritual in *Marshal Tie Jia*. Chia-Wei Hsu's political-geographic and ethnographic approach opens up a new way to counter the official historical narrative built upon the integrity of either "the People's Republic of China" or "the Republic of China". This approach implicates a list of strategic reactions: using village/island as a hub to delineate the historical trajectories of cultural interaction and immigration; adopting the network approach to deconstruct the continental and orthodox Han cultural view, and reinventing performance from an ethnographic investigation to reveal the unstable structure of history. The artist offers a bird's-eye view of an expansive regional scope in East and Southeast Asia, instead of fixating on the subjectivity of a nation-state.

II. Ethnography as Artistic Strategy

The ethnographic turn in contemporary art has been discussed extensively by scholars and artists from both disciplines. The earliest uses of "the ethnographic turn" started from James Clifford and Hal Foster. [12] In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), Clifford challenges the narrow and confined academic conception of ethnography and proposes that it could be adopted as a mode of critical inquiry. He redefines ethnography as "a hybrid activity, thus appears as writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, as subversive critique." [13] Clifford's expansion of ethnography to interdisciplinary fields echoes artistic practices beginning in the late 1960s. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz observe that artists in the 1990s

11 Hsing-Jou Yeh, "Taiwan off Screen: On the Narrative-Action of Hsu Chia-Wei's 'Marshal Tie-Jia,'" (作為畫外場的台灣島——談許家維與「鐵甲元帥」的敘事行動) *ACT* 56 (2013): 10-16.

12 Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, "The Ethnographic Turn—and after: A Critical Approach towards the Realignment of Art and Anthropology," *Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie Sociale* 23, no. 4 (2015): 418-434.

13 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 13.

developed various ethnography strategies and most of them attempted to create defamiliarized perceptions or challenge institutional authority. For example, American artist Fred Wilson rearranged the Maryland Historical Society Collection to interrogate the museum as a knowledge provider in *Mining the Museum* (1992). [14]

In "The Artist as Ethnographer?" (1996) Foster traces the turn to anthropology and ethnography in art history since the early twentieth century. [15] According to Foster, the artists and ethnographers on the left who intended to transplant ethnography to other fields expected that the political subversion to the mainstream bourgeois culture would always happen "elsewhere," "outside" of the system itself. Therefore, looking at "alterity" (otherness) is a means of reflecting and recasting self. However, as Foster points out, this early paradigm in art, especially in Surrealism in the late 1920s and early '30s, falls into the danger of "ideological patronage." [16] Moreover, criticizing James Clifford's proposition of applying ethnography to art and other cultural fields, Foster argues that Clifford idealized artists as reflexive figures.

However, since the early 1960s, artists have reversely fetishized ethnography, for this discipline takes culture and the everyday as its object and stresses on contexts and fieldworks of the object. Thus, conceptual art, performance, and body art in the 1960s gradually turned their focuses on how to build "a discursive network of other practices and institutions, other subjectivities and communities." [17] But Foster expresses his concern of these burgeoning artistic genres. Since even if this trend (especially site-specific art and collaborative art) attempts to retrieve authenticity through fieldworks and to subvert institutions from the outside, the commissions of museums would exploit the site-specific properties — e.g. social relations, tourism, etc. — and turn these effects into spectacles within the capitalist system.

14 In their article, Grimshaw and Ravetz analyze Christian Boltanski's *Inventory of Objects Belonging to a Young Woman of Charleston* (1992), Coco Fuso and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *The Year of the White Bear* (1992), and James Luna's *The Artifact Piece* (1987-1990) as well. See Grimshaw and Ravetz, "The Ethnographic Turn—and after," 422-423.

15 Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, edited by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), 302-309.

16 Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" 303.

17 Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer?" 305.

Reflecting on Foster's argument from his curatorial experiences, art critic and philosopher Jow-Jiun Gong contends that although the ethnographic approach contains the danger of projecting on the cultural other, it helps to restore the endemic experience and cultural heritages of Taiwan. Most importantly, fieldworks diversify the patterns and the contents of Taiwanese contemporary art, and assist to address issues of postcoloniality and subjectivity in Taiwan.[18] The artistic fieldworks and collaborations between artists and community prod viewers to contemplate individual experiences, folk memory, and fragmented identity scattered in postcolonial Taiwan. Specifically, Gong views Chia-Wei Hsu's approach as "ethnopoesia, or anthropoesia," as proposed by anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, which means to discover narrative structure and cultural logic through the process of field investigation. Ethnopoesia is a strategy that focuses on "the endemic historical experiences, rather than the grand framework of the nation-state." [19] In addition, Gong points out the latent problem of exhibiting ethnography on South-East Asian contemporary art scenes (e.g. the 2016 Singapore Biennale, *An Atlas of Mirror*) is that they overly visualize and objectify subjects, flattening the curatorial narratives. [20] Therefore, for Gong, to "return to the scene as the *mise-en-scène* in ethnography" is a way to avoid the reductive narrative of curation. [21] By returning to the historical sites or the locales where rituals took place, Hsu's ethnographic investigations and reorganizations of the community not only take issue with the official history but also complicate the gaze between western curators/audiences and the artworks, rituals, and performances made by non-western artists.

18 Jow-Jiun Gong, "Contemporary Art, Ethnographer Envy and Its Danger," (當代藝術，民族誌者羨妒及其危險) *Artist* 483 (2015): 138-143.

19 Gong, "The Development of Ethno-poesia," 146-153.

20 Gong, "The Development of Ethno-poesia," 149-150.

21 Gong, "The Development of Ethno-poesia," 149-150.

III. Ritual and Its Potentiality: *Marshal Tie Jia* (2012-2016) and Bodily Memory

In order to better reveal the potentiality of transformation and reevaluation of history, I suggest investigating the "performance" of bodily memory and narrative in Hsu's video installations. This potentiality is embedded in the investigation of the immigration of the frog god and the restaged rituals in *Marshal Tie Jia*. In other words, what Hsu offers is not merely a representational and collaborative form concerning the marginal status of Taiwan. [22] Instead, the quasi-fictional and ethnographic components of *Marshal* lead the narrative toward an open structure, instead of a stable and self-enclosed one. [23] The emphasis on the god summoning ritual in Marshal also shows the crucial relation between ritual and memory: rituals preserve cultural memory of a certain time-space but they could be re-written by posterity or immigrants over time. When a certain ritual is performed again, the elements, narrative, or order of the ritual could be rearranged or altered due to its context and purposes; therefore, restaging rituals bears the transformative potential.

In teasing out the relationship among performance, history, and memory in circum-Atlantic areas, theater historian Joseph Roach underscores that the pivotal role of performance in memory as performance is where selective memory and what he calls "surrogation" takes place, and thus is where culture reinvents itself. His argument suggests that rather than being seen as a continuity, memory and history are a sequence of selection and reinvention. Anthropologist Victor Turner's observation buttresses Roach's argument: "To perform is thus to bring something about, to consummate something, or to 'carry out' a play, order or project. But in the carrying out, I hold, something new may be generated. The performance transforms itself." [24]

22 Lu, "The Surrealistic Action between Imagination, Memory, and History," 192-197.

23 Chen Kuan-Yu and Chia-Wei Hsu, "Meaning Revealed in Latent Structure: Hsu Chia-Wei Discusses His Work *Marshal Tie Jia*," (意義來自於把隱藏的結構掀開：許家維談〈鐵甲元帥〉) *Modern Art* 164 (2012): 40-45.

24 Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Stories about Them," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 160.

[24] Performance, as a bodily enactment and collective production, reinforces the quality of "restoration" and the potential of "transformation" in the ritual or memory that already preexists. Building on the work of performance studies scholars, Roach concludes that there are three social functions of performance: restoring a behavior (Richard Schechner), enacting actions against other potentials (Richard Bauman), substituting for the preexistent (Joseph Roach). [25] It is, therefore, from an anthropological perspective that performance has the possibility of transformative, bodily enactment and the ability to make visible something that was previously invisible.

The production of *Marshal Tie Jia* grapples with processes of immigration, adaptation, and transformation of religious rituals and memories across the Taiwan Strait and examines how performances could become a site for investigating alternative historical narratives. Here I use memory as a counterpart to history so as not to conflate these two notions or set them as counterpositions, because history and memory are both generated under a certain social context. But compared to the hegemony of official history, memory oftentimes belongs to a group of people, or community, which allows anecdotal, plural, or alternative interpretations. Memory is the site where bodily performances and customs have been restored in different vehicles and reenacted recurrently, whereas history, related to other linguistic modalities such as the archive, has been enacted by political regimes or authorities. Articulating the intertwined relationship between "embodied praxis" of memory and identity, Diana Taylor calls our attention to the nuance of bodily practices: "Embodied expression has participated and will probably continue to participate in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre- and postwriting." [26] Therefore, she explains, "Instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about

[25] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

[26] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 16.

them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description." [27] Invoking Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault's discussions on archive, Bill Bissell and Linda Caruso Haviland have turned their attention to the "body as archive" and examined how the body could store and retrieve memory by excavating and re-performing the archives; thus, renewing them as fluid historical narratives. [28]

The project of *Marshal Tie Jia* emerged after Hsu made *The Story of Hoping Island* (和平島的故事, 2008). *Marshal* was initially conceived as the sequel to *The Story of Hoping Island*. [29] Both works grapple with the fragmented memory of Japanese postcoloniality and the image of the island. In the 12-minute-40-second video *The Story of Hoping Island*, Hsu uses his grandmother's Japanese voice-over to tell a fictional story about excavating an enigmatic creature, Ni-Ku, in a Japanese shipyard in Keelung, Taiwan, under the then-colonial government's command. The video starts with a view of an island and then shifts to the shipyard but these images are constantly interrupted by sparkling white screens. The intermittent and crystalized quality of sounds, along with images, are analogous to the fragmented and nebulous memory of the elder Taiwanese generation who formed their identity under the shifting regimes in Taiwan (Japanese colonization, 1895-1945; Chiang's KMT regime, 1949-1988).

In an interview, Hsu states that one of the intentions of *Marshal Tie Jia* is to reveal the "latent structure" that might challenge imposed official historical frameworks set up by the CCP or the KMT governments. [30] The artist started his project from bodily memory and the power of folk belief. Incarnating and transcending from a frog to a spirit, Marshal Tie Jia was born in the Jingsi Village, Jiangxi (mainland China), around a thousand and four hundred years ago. It was believed that Marshal

27 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire,* 16.

28 Bill Bissell and Linda Caruso Haviland eds., *The Sentient Archive: Bodies, Performance, and Memory* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2018), 9.

29 Chia-Wei Hsu, "Marshal Tie Jia and Me," (鐵甲元帥與我) *ACT* 69 (2017): 98-105.

30 Chen and Hsu, "Meaning Revealed in Latent Structure," 43.

protects fields from devastation by droughts and insect damage. During the Qing dynasty, the spirit was transmitted by early immigrants to the Matsu Islands (Turtle Island is one of Matsu islands). On Turtle Island, the local people built a temple enshrining Marshal Tie Jia in 1876, accompanied by a banyan tree. Even though Marshal has been worshipped by the Matsu people until today, the original two temples, in Jiangxi and Matsu, were torn down for political reasons and military purposes, respectively. The former, located on the Wuyi Mountain, was dismantled during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The latter was demolished by the KMT in order to build an outpost on Turtle Island from which to surveil the military actions of the CCP. The surviving temple is on another Matsu Island, Qinbi Village, where the villagers have been consecrating and asking oracles from the Marshal up to the present day. Initially, the artist planned to film on Turtle Island for his other projects and asked for the official permission to do so. The prefectural government, however, told him that because this island is administered by *Marshal Tie Jia*, he had to ask the approval from the god. Eventually, Hsu changed his work into a long-term negotiation with the spirit, and collaborations with villagers in Qinbi and folk performers in Jiangxi.

The ethnographic work and ritual performances can be divided into three phases: the return to Turtle Island with the Marsal's sedan and his psychic interpreter; the fieldwork tracing the origin of the frog god culture and the exorcising dance in the Jiangxi region; and the communication with Marshal in order to digitally model his first temple in the studio. In the first phase, Hsu found out that Matsu did not undergo the Japanese colonial period as the Taiwan Island did (1895-1945) under the Treaty of Shimonoseki. He realized that not until the KMT took over Taiwan in 1945 had Matsu been politically and culturally tied to Taiwan because of its strategic location. Accordingly, Hsu changed his direction to reconstruct the temple model on

Turtle Island. However, the Marshal did not approve of this proposal. Hsu ended up scaffolding a chroma key setting and filmed his alternative plan instead, retouching the video afterward. The beginning of *Turtle Island* shows an interior space of a small temple. Sitting in front of a wooden table, the old performer Huang Yen-Yen sings a nearly extinct limerick in Min opera and plays pai gow (牌九), a traditional Chinese gambling game. In Taiwanese folk religions, gods appreciate operas, such as Min opera and glove puppetry. Therefore, staging something theatrical is a way to thank and reward gods. These celebratory performances are enacted on significant religious dates, the birthday of the gods, and festivals. The artist, by reenacting the sung performance of Min opera, metaphorically shows his respect to Marshal Tie Jia. According to the artist, this enactment transforms the small Turtle Island into a large physical stage. [31]

31 Chen and Hsu, "Meaning Revealed in Latent Structure," 45.

Matsu was historically and culturally closer to mainland China than Taiwan before the immigration of 1949 because of its geographic proximity. After Chiang Kei-Shak took over Taiwan, Matsu was incorporated as part of the jurisdiction and military frontier of the Republic of China in Taiwan (1949-). Therefore, these hub islands, situated between Taiwan and China, with their history rewritten by the KMT government and unknown to most Taiwanese people, have served as a grey zone for the artist to bridge the conflicted identities set by two rival governments — CCP and KMT. In addition, the notion of an "island" has to do with the identity and contour of Taiwan as an island/state. As Hsing-Jou Yeh states,

> ..."Taiwan" is not only the settled reality in the parenthesis or the frame but also a parallel field that situates itself in other places, waiting for clarification, definition, and invention. From *Marshal Tie Jia—Turtle Island* to *Jingsi Village*—the slippage of the "Island-State" from Taiwan's texture is

> revealed as the artist starts his project from the "Island," and is accidentally materialized in the gesture of "leaving Taiwan." [32]

The key point here is not only how the artist constructs an "island" as a stage to perform the semi-fictional scene but also how the artist thinks the memory and history of Taiwan could be reconsidered beyond the seemingly fixed national border.

The second phase of the *Marshal* series, that traces rituals and performances about frog god religion, was carried out in *Jingsi Village*. The second video — *Jingsi Village* — was shot in the video's title town. Following a man dressed as a general, several villagers depart from a courtyard, parading the streets at dusk. The villagers walk through the narrow alleyways and stoned-paved streets in this small town. Finally, these villagers, holding torches, arrive at their destination — a riverside. The sky is now fully dark. On the stage beside the riverbank, the masked general dances Nuo Wu (儺舞), or the exorcising dance, accompanied by the simple rhythmic beats of drums and Chinese cymbals. Nuo Wu is a traditional folk ritual, prevalent in the Jiangxi region in China. But during the Cultural Revolution, anything related to religions or idolatry was criticized publicly, swept away, and strictly banned. The Socialist government and its Red Guards (i.e. the young mass militant students) despised those cultures, rituals, and customs, regarding them as legacies of the "old society," belonging to feudalism and its elitism. This cultural overhaul eliminated the most elite and quintessential parts of traditional Chinese culture in order to achieve the goals of its class-struggle. The Red Guards publicly humiliated and railed against intellectuals, people on the right, wealthy families, and privileged people (known as the Five Black Categories), smashed art and cultural objects, burned theatre props and costumes, and finally exiled privileged people to Laogai, or reform through labor. Myriads of cultural customs and rituals were banned and became almost

32 Yeh, "Taiwan off Screen," 11-12.

extinct during this long-term, excruciating process. The Cultural Revolution is an example of an expunging of memory and cultural legacy. Nevertheless, what was not washed away by the CCP agenda were both physical ruins and bodily memory. In a scene of *Jingsi Village*, the camera pans over a wall scribbled with the slogan: "Cherish lives. Oppose cults." (" 珍惜生命，反對邪教 ") Ironically, a big-character advertisement is also painted on the wall reading: "Millions of people are using [China Mobile]. Believe in the masses, I choose China Mobile." (" 幾億人都在用。相信群眾，我選移動。") The juxtaposed propaganda and commercial slogan manifest the wane of socialism and the wax of capitalism.

In addition, while investigating the roots of Marshal in Jiangxi, Hsu accidentally discovered the linkage between the frog general and Nuo Wu. In his conversation with a Chinese professor who studies folk religion, Hsu realized that the image of the frog god had been recorded and reified in ancient Chinese mythology, represented as Kui Xing (魁星 ; Chief Star), one of the star signs and the god mastering literature. [33] From this sense, Kui Xing and Marshal Tie Jia are consanguineous in Daoist and folk religion. "Perhaps the journey is a trail of excavation," Hsu writes. [34] He recounts the experience of visiting Jingsi Village:

> This blighted town was flourishing in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD). Although only children and seniors live here now, one can discern past prosperity from the tattered high walls of mansions' courtyards. Regrettably, after the Cultural Revolution, there are walls covered by paint and graffiti everywhere. Theatre troupes and frog god belief were all condemned as "cow demons and snake spirits" [meaning quixotic and evil beliefs]. [35] The troupes were forced to disband. Masks and costumes were burned overnight. Old memory was

33 Hsu, "Marshal Tie Jia and Me," 98-105.

34 Hsu, "Marshal Tie Jia and Me," 98-105.

35 The term "cow demons and snake spirits" originally came from Daoism. Mao Zedong (1893-1976) resuscitated this term as a political call for targeting and cleansing China of his political enemies in the Cultural Revolution.

36 Hsu, "Marshal Tie Jia and Me," 102.

erased by the force of modernization within just a few years. [36]

Hsu ended up investigating the extinct Nuo Wu troupe in Wuyuan, Jiangxi. He met an associate head of a troupe who remembers the stories of the elders. They decided to recast the masks, reassemble the troupe, and recruit villagers to restage the ancient ritual. [37] In the Nuo Wu reenacted by the troupe, the avatar, holding an ink box and a big brush in hand, quivers, spins, and writes in the air. His dancing gestures, along with the musicians and the spectators, compose a scene of invoking the folk customs before the Cultural Revolution.

[37] Hsu, "Marshal Tie Jia and Me," 102.

The third video *Spirit-Writing* (2016) explores the telepathic communication between the artist and Marshal Tie Jia. Turning the studio into a space of evocative ritual, the artist communicates with Marshal Tie Jia via four bearers , and one of them is the psychic interpreter. This telepathic ritual is traditionally enacted when ordinary people seek oracles from a god relating to personal or public affairs. This time, Hsu asks Marshal to help reconstruct the original temple and the surroundings — the destroyed temple on the Wuyi Mountain. The artist filmed a two-channel video : one screen shows the evocative ritual, while the other projects the processing of the 3D model synchronously.

During their communication, the artist reverently asks Marshal whether the models of the temple and landscape in the Wuyi Mountain are verisimilar or not. The bearers oscillate their sedan collectively under the guidance of the god and use the wine-dipped leg of the sedan to collide with the credence, making sounds and writing the god's characters on it. The psychic interpreter reads the characters and translates Marshal's oracle to the artist. During their back-and-forth negotiation, the screen showing the 3D model not only represents the movements of the sedan

(without its human bearers), but also delineates the virtual architecture of Marshal's temple, vegetation, and the mountain. It is, therefore, a non-human spiritual space. To maintain virtuality and spirituality, the artist deliberately draws the temple and environment only with grids and skeletons, instead of applying skins of textures on objects to make the scene more realistic. However, in the conversation between the artist and the spirit, Marshal complains that the virtual quality on the screen does not resemble his sedan, meaning that his psychic movements are not authentically rendered. Hsu responds to Marshal that this virtuality parallels the intangibility of the spiritual world. As a result, the grids and skeletons bridge a quasi-authentic communicative process to the god, mirroring the spiritual world and rendering Marshal's invisible but felt presence.

Song-Yong Sing argues that this figuration of epiphany renders the invisibility of Marshal both accountable and visible. [38] In addition, Po-Wei Wang analyzes the performances, images of the god, arguing that *Spirit-Writing* is an action rather than a narrative. He analogizes the spontaneity of the bearers' collective movement with automata. [39] The invisible power which drives the movements of Marshal's sedan resembles a cybernetic mechanism. The artist deftly uses the mechanistic connection between the human body and technology to contrast what is figured and enacted in this spiritual ritual — the vibrations of the sedan and the handwriting on the table — with what is sacred and therefore cannot be seen — the body of the god. Although Marshal is the commander who gives the framework, contradictorily, he is not physically present. The Marshal delegates his force to his avatars, the bearers. However, the artist also delegates his craftsmanship/creativity to the mere skeletons and coordinates in the 3D model. The chroma key in the studio, Wang states, provides the stage for Marshal to exert and show his force in his absence. [40] Temporality also plays a significant part in *Jingsi Village* and *Spirit-Writing* because

38 Song-Yong Sing, "The Drive of the Oracle: On Chia-Wei Hsu's *Spirit-Writing*," (神意驅力學：論許家維的〈神靈的書寫〉) *Artist* 497 (2016): 148-151.

39 Po-Wei Wang, "The Power of Images: Documentation and Narrative in Hsu Chia-Wei's Spirit-Writing," (形象的力量：許家維《神靈的書寫》中的紀錄與敘事問題) *Modern Art* 184 (2017): 12-16.

40 Po-Wei Wang, "The Power of Images," 14.

these two works attempt to trace back to a longer temporal scale in opposition to the recent postwar history. Contrary to the sweeping and immediate purge of cultural heritage in the 1960s, the reenacted rituals are transformed and accumulated over time. The virtual setting of the re-presentation of the temple implies that the fictional and untouchable past parallels the spirituality of the god.

IV. Conclusion

By rediscovering and reenacting three rituals related to Marshal — rewarding the god, the exorcising dance, and the spirit-writing — Hsu strategically uses performances as actions to flip the top-down structure of histories enacted and imposed by shifting regimes, both in China and Taiwan. However, the goal of rediscovery and reenactment is not to confirm an alternative narrative and a set of facts or to consolidate those memories. Rather, it is through those uncertainties and oscillations — the negotiations between the god and the artist, between the interpreter and the artist, and in the collaborative work between the artist and villagers — that the potentiality of ritual is fulfilled: to accumulate bodily memory over time and to enact alternative surrogacy to the official history.

Like Hsu's previous work *Haui Mo Village* (2012), *Marshal Tie Jia* focuses on small villages but stretches to a broad and hidden cross-regional history that has not yet been well-addressed by the governments. *Haui Mo Village* focuses on stories of a single legion of KMT troops and their descendants who were sent to the frontier in Thailand and Myanmar after 1949. In the project of *Haui Mo Village*, Hsu asked the children in the village to interview Atthaphon Sae Thian, the chief priest of

the parish orphanage and church. The chief priest was an intelligence officer who had continued collecting military information for the KMT until the 1970s. This forgotten group, until today, does not have a nationality (only Thailand's temporary resident designation) and any contact with their relatives in China or Taiwan was once forbidden. Their participation in this project raises a broader Cold War regional and relational issue. Jow-Jiun Gong considers that Hsu's artistic practices have the potential to write an alternative narrative that is outside of the state apparatus. Gong writes:

> Filming itself is a real spot of action. From the perspective of *mise-en-scène* in ethnography, every filming is a temporary working community. For the local community, this action is a present event, rather than parts of the past. This action informs the roles of the children interviewers and the interviewee Thian, the artist's position, and the ambiance. [41]

Instead of interrogating history from the standpoint of a stable Taiwanese identity, Hsu uses the framework of "island" or "enclave" as hubs connecting different time-spaces, thereby revealing the fragmentation of memory and the construction of history.

Invoking Jacques Derrida's notions of "supplement," "trace," and " différance," Chantal Mouffe puts forward the idea of "constitutive outside" that views identity as always already shaped by and oscillating between identity and otherness, an "identity-difference" dynamism. [42] She highlights that "the creation of identity often implies the establishment of a hierarchy: for example, between form and matter; essence and contingency; black and white; man and woman." [43] In the context of Taiwan and China, however, identities become competing notions among

41 Gong, "The Development of Ethno-poesia," 149.

42 Chantal Mouffe, "For a Politics of Nomadic Identity," *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, ed. George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and Tim Putnam (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 104.

43 Chantal Mouffe, "For a Politics of Nomadic Identity," 104.

multiple identities: the Han Chinese (early immigrants or later after 1945), Japanese Taiwanese, indigenous Taiwanese, new immigrants from South Asia, among others. These hybrid identities constitute conflicted forms of awareness and hierarchical priorities. In other words, the shifting regimes taught people to identify themselves as Chinese or Japanese, while negating other nuances. Under such circumstances, the constitutive identity of native Taiwanese (both early immigrants or indigenous peoples) has been bracketed out. Chia-Wei Hsu's *The Story of Hoping Island*, *Marshal Tie Jia*, and *Haui Mo Village* remind us that identities and memory as the constitutive outside are often haunted and self-justified by regimes for their ruling legitimacy.

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