

Labor Sites are like Battlefields: Explore Both Historical Narratives and Collective Memory of the Construction Industry from the Workers' Monuments for Occupational Injuries in Taiwan

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Abstract

This article focuses on the historical inquiry of workers' monuments in construction industry. What kind of era significance and social value are expressed by those monuments usually located in public places, highways, reservoirs, buildings, tunnels, and rail stations? Under the tripartite wrestling from labor, capital, and government, does the workers' monument aim to praise sacrificing for the engineering achievement, or mourn for the dead with reflection? After the lifting of martial law in Taiwan, the major monuments caused by the workers' protests, such as Taipei MRT Divers Disease Monuments and Taipei 101 Partners Monument, are there any differences in the visual presentation and interpretation meanings from those set up in the early years? What is the significance of monuments for the victims and their families? How different is the collective memory from the individual mourning?

I explored the political and economic context of building workers' monument in construction industry by studying historical documents, analyzing the form and content of the monuments, and interviewing the related workers and their families. The preliminary findings is that over 100 years of history in Taiwan modern construction industry are closely connected with the military, and the workers are used to be employed in the war from the army workers in Japanese colonial time to a large number of Chinese veterans after 1949. Apparently, it is said that such as the battle of labor, namely battlefield site.

Following Taiwan's economic development, the construction industry which pursuits the high-tech but high-risk working methods always ranks first in Taiwan's major occupational injuries level, numerous casualties and harms just like a "economic civil war." without bullets. In this paper, I'd like to use the perspective of "like a war" to analysis the set up and display of workers' monuments, and re-create a historical narrative of Taiwan construction industry with workers collective traumatic memories.

Keywords: Workers' Monuments, Occupational Injuries, Collective Memory, Labor Value