COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING AND THE MAKING OF POLITICAL CULTURE

Collective memory can make and break political culture around the world. Representations and reinterpretations of the past intersect with actions that shape the future. A nation's political culture emerges from complex layers of institutional and individual responses to historical events. Society changes and is changed by these layers of memory over time. Understanding them gives us insight into where we are today. Encompassing examples from colonization and decolonization, revolving around the critical junctures of the world wars, this book illustrates how collective memory is produced and organized through commemoration, through monuments, and through individuals sharing stories. Using concrete examples from around the world, James H. Liu shows how different disciplines can come together through shared concepts like narratives and generational memories to provide mutually enriching perspectives on how political culture is made, and how it changes.

JAMES H. LIU is Professor of Psychology at Massey University, New Zealand. His research focuses on social, cross-cultural, and political psychology. He has been influential in the development of Asian social psychology, including an indigenous psychology of Confucianism, and he advocates for psychology as a human science.

COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING AND THE MAKING OF POLITICAL CULTURE

JAMES H. LIU
Massey University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108984737

DOI: 10.1017/9781108985093

First published 2022
First paperback edition 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-108-83352-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-98473-7 Paperback

Contents

Preface

Looking back, it might be fair to describe parts of the writing of this book as writing meta-science. I struggled with the craft of trying to write narrative science about moments in history where the author is embedded as a mote in a sequence the science is intended to encompass. This gives rise to perplexities and paradox. I address these perplexities through a dialectic, involving a tension between opposites, including an inquiry into truth and a quest for harmony. In dealing with perplexity and antinomy in human science, reflexivity is essential.

Human science in the late twentieth century, the time of my enculturation into adulthood, was ill-equipped for such endeavor. The world at the time was dominated by a single civilization that thought itself superior to all others. As one living inside this collective, I recollect reading three books in 1980 that would be central to my future development: Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, Edward Gibbons's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,[1] and Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy*. The first is emblematic of my Chinese heritage. Sima Qian is revered not only for inscribing a new form for the writing of history in China but also for his incorruptible dedication to his family craft.[2] This is written into the history of how that history (the Han dynasty) is remembered. History and meta-history rolled into one. I am grateful to my father, Shu-hsien Liu, a New Confucian philosopher, and my mother, An-yuan Liu (critic and translator), who introduced me to Sima Qian as part of my culturally hybrid upbringing in Carbondale, Illinois.

Reading *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* side-by-side with *Records of the Grand Historian* enabled me to see history as narrative from an early age. But that early age was unreflexive, and relatively unproductive, shaped as it was by the science fantasies of Isaac Asimov. I was fascinated by his

[1] I don't think I got far past volume 2, to be truthful.
[2] His father was also a court historian.

psychohistory, where scientists are able to predict the future course of history through mathematical equations. Trained as a professor of biochemistry, Asimov's psychohistory took the form of naïve positivism, a faith that the laws of natural science could be applied seamlessly (if only we were sophisticated enough!) to human affairs. Asimov's strengths as a writer were not in his ability to accurately describe human nature. In his defense, to this day (in 2021, seventy years after publication of the *Foundation Trilogy*), the causal effects of human agency on changes in human society are not definitively understood.

My own naïvete about philosophy of science (typical of most graduates in sciences and social sciences in the America of the late twentieth century) led me to waste time seeking for solutions to perplexity that cannot be realized in real time. For collective remembering as human science, a dialectical approach involving the reconciliation of opposites is more fruitful than lawful determination. In this dialectic, time, and situating human consciousness and its products (e.g., historical events, scientific theories of these) in the flow of time, the perception of time, and historical trajectories of time, are front and center. Human consciousness is not a finished product; and so, its products and future cannot be determined. But history and collective remembering as products of human consciousness can be opened up for narration, reflection, and reflexive learning to shape better contingencies for the future.

I recollect the real time of my scholarly journey into collective remembering starting on Te Herenga Waka Marae (the hitching post of many canoes), when Te Ripowai Higgins called me and my wife onto the ceremonial green outside the community meeting house at Victoria University of Wellington.[3] Māori culture is inscribed in oral traditions, and in material structures like the community meeting house (wharenui) whose carvings offer genealogical and cosmological connections. These can be narrated to include every person entering into that space, through connections intimate or distant. Thanks to the PhD thesis work of my oldest friend,[4] archaeologist Mark Allen, I was not inclined to treat this first marae visit as a curiosity, but as an entrée into a parallel historical trajectory, where the identity and history of Māori coexist, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes fractiously, with the identity and history of New Zealand Europeans: who colonized them, fought with them, and intermarried with them to produce the foundations of the political culture

[3] My new employer for my first academic job in 1994.
[4] "Warfare and Economic Power in Simple Chiefdoms: The Development of Fortified Villages and Polities in Mid-Hawke's Bay, New Zealand."

of Aotearoa–New Zealand. The symbolic resources provided by history have been important in contributing to te reo Māori (language) rising from near extinction to become part of the lexicon of a growing nation. I am appreciative of Te Ripowai Higgins for sensitizing me to this in the very first lecture I ever heard in Aotearoa, at Te Herenga Waka after she and her students welcomed us onto the marae (as part of a practicum for the students). Māori then and now are engaged with Pākehā (New Zealand Europeans) in a process of decolonization that reinscribes traditional structures like wharenui and marae with new meaning. I am grateful to Te Ripowai's sister Aroha Teepa, who took us on a magical mystery tour through Aotearoa as part of our first summer in New Zealand. I trust that the wind will blow open future roads of blessing for Tūhoe.

The mentoring I received from colleagues at Victoria University of Wellington, especially Sikhung Ng, Colleen Ward, and John McClure, made this journey into a new culture one of balance with discovery. Their guidance and friendship were matched by the enthusiasm of my many students, from PhDs to first years, who shared their learnings with me, and some of whom contributed their expertise to joint publications. Aotearoa–New Zealand was the place where this book came together. This book would not have been possible without you.

Other places that have contributed to the historical trajectories constructed here go back to Taiwan,[5] my place of birth, and, by extension, to China, the place where my parents were born. Professor Yang Kuo-shu's advocacy of indigenous psychology was an inspiration to me, and I also thank Hwang Kwang-kuo and Huang Li-Li, who helped energize in me a rediscovery of cultural heritage. The cross-straits relationship may be fraught, but thanks to steadfast colleagues in China like Liu Li, Xie Tian, and Zhong Nian, I have been able to move freely in my professional life between these two shores. The Asian Association of Social Psychology, my organizational home, connects them in a harmonious web of social relations dedicated to mutual understanding and peace, which includes Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, India, and many others (see https://asiansocialpsych.org/, especially its mission statement).

The United States of America, the adoptive country of my childhood and youth, is more universalistic in its orientation toward social science than is Asia. My PhD in social psychology at UCLA was therefore rooted in general theories of intergroup relations, passed on to me through the

[5] Taiwan, not coincidentally (from my perspective), is where the ancestral DNA of Māori can be traced.

mentorship of Marilynn Brewer and Jim Sidanius. I'd also like to express my appreciation for Jim Wertsch and Roddy Roediger, who have been steadfast keepers of the flame for collective remembering, and bridge builders between individual and collective memory.

In Europe, the work of Serge Moscovici looms large in my thinking, even though we met in person only once, at Evora. His ideas lay important parts of the foundations for the research on history and identity I have conducted over the course of a quarter century. In this work, there are three colleagues I must thank above all others. Denis Hilton, Janos László, and Dario Páez, thanks for navigating with me the currents of making a social representations approach to collective remembering! It is not a coincidence that all three spent most of their careers in Europe, where every hill, valley, and mountain is a subject of collective remembering, and has an identity associated with it. Their love for history has transcended disciplinary boundaries, and the friendship and guidance they have offered were many and varied. I dedicate this book to Denis (for whom the glass was always half full rather than half empty) and Janos (whose quick actions when I was having a stroke saved my life from much damage). They have passed away, leaving a huge void in the area. My best wishes to Laurent Licata, Rosa Cabecinhas, Michał Bilewicz, Orsolya Vincze, and Tibor Pólya, who with many others carry the work of Denis and Janos to the future. For Dario Páez (the fastest psychologist in the West complementing me as the fastest psychologist in the East[6]), may you have many more years of health and good cheer. If human science is an open system, where new ideas and new social formations come into being, then there is much of these three gentlemen inscribed into whatever is new in this book. Denis, Janos, Dario, may you continue to stimulate dialogues that bring rich new ideas into being for years to come.

While any mistakes in this manuscript are my own, it has benefitted from close readings by two of my current PhD students, Sarah Choi and Evan Valdes.[7] Seven terrific anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press encouraged me to read more widely and deeply in the literature than ever before. The chapter on Israel–Palestine, and Aotearoa–New Zealand, which was the most difficult to write, benefitted from readings by Michael Blue and his son Adam, Fouad Bou Zeineddine,

[6] At least in terms of talking speed when under time pressure at a conference.
[7] I have not mentioned other PhD students because to include some while leaving out others would not be a sign of gratitude but neglect. Thanks to you all, my former students, may you continue to learn and grow!

and Maata Wharehoka. Like crisscrossing waves in a field, your perspectives have intersected in the words of Chapter 9. I pray they may in some small way bring us and those connected to us into greater peace and harmony in the future.

Massey University has been my institutional home since we moved to Auckland in 2015. In Tamaki Makaurau we are never far from the beach, and I liked this especially as COVID-19 put us into lockdown through periods when I was researching and writing this book. Finally, to Belinda, Brianna, Jeff, and An-yuan, and my cousins and uncles and aunties, thanks for being in a collective with me, for a time that we surely will remember.