

Lund University

Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies

Master's Program in Asian Studies

China track

Spring semester, 2011

REMEMBERING THE TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE:
THE TEMPORAL, SPATIAL AND NEGOTIATED DIMENSIONS OF
COMMEMORATIONS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Author: Philippe-Antoine Charbonneau

Supervisor: Marina Svensson

Abstract

Thirty-five years after the massive earthquake that shook the city on July 28, 1976, Tangshan residents still live with the scars of the losses and injuries that were suffered. This case study is about possible recent changes to commemorations and public memory in Tangshan. Firstly, it will examine how the Tangshan earthquake is commemorated publicly through monuments, ruins and at schools. Secondly, it will look at how the collective memory and Tangshan heritage is commemorated privately, including at the new Tangshan memorial park. Thirdly, I attempt to find out how the Sichuan earthquake and the movie *Aftershock*, which was based on the Tangshan tragedy, influenced discourses in contemporary Tangshan's discussions around the 1976 earthquake. Thoughts on the flexibility of commemorations will conclude this thesis.

Keywords: Tangshan earthquake, Collective memory, Commemorations, Sichuan earthquake, Heritage

Content

Foreword	4
Chapter 1 - Introduction	5
<i>1.1 Overview and purpose of the thesis</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.2 Research question</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.3 Methodology and data collection</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.4 Ethical considerations</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>1.5 Disposition</i>	<i>7</i>
Chapter 2 - Theoretical framework: Insights from studies on heritage, memories and commemorations	9
Chapter 3 - Public commemoration in Tangshan: The negotiated functions of museums, ruins and schools	13
<i>3.1 The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Hall: a first place of commemoration</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>3.2 Tangshan's physical scars, ruins, and relation to memory-making</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>3.2.1 The dilemma related to ruins</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>3.2.2 The importance of not forgetting</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>3.3 At School: a starting point for dialogues on memory</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>3.3.1 Teachers: Individual victims of the earthquake as well as public transmitters of information and instruction</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>3.3.2 Lessons learnt: Students' experiences</i>	<i>23</i>
Chapter 4 - Private commemorations: Religion and new spaces for private mourning	25
<i>4.1 Commemorating the dead in Tangshan</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>4.2 The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park: a revival</i>	<i>29</i>
Chapter 5 - Commemoration enhancers	35
<i>5.1 Tangshan reactions to the Sichuan earthquake: Revisiting old memories</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>5.2 The movie Aftershock: Fiction as a space of sharing memories</i>	<i>38</i>
Chapter 6 - Conclusion: Commemoration in a changing society	41
Appendix - Timeline	44
Bibliography	45

List of images

Image 1 - The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial in the center of Tangshan	14
Image 2 - The ruins of the library of the Hebei Polytechnic University in Tangshan	18
Image 3 - The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park in Tangshan	30
Image 4 - Life-size wax figures in the museum of the TEMP in Tangshan	31

Foreword

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Marina Svensson. She was always available to answer my questions despite her busy schedule and her assistance and comments have always been a great help.

I would also like to thank two of my best friends in China, Jinfang and Xuemei, without whom the fieldwork part of this research would have been very difficult. I am glad we have kept contact for over 5 years now and their friendship is priceless.

Not to forget a thought for my girlfriend Ariane Sénécal who accompanied me to China.

Finally, I wish to show appreciation to Monica Lindberg Falk, Director of Studies at the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, who is always there for students.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview and purpose of the thesis

Tangshan is an industrial city in North-eastern China, with a population of approximately 3 million people. It is located in the province of Hebei, about 175 kilometres away from the national capital, Beijing. 1976 was a fateful year in Chinese history: major political events took place, such as the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, while the Cultural Revolution was coming to an end. Also, on July 28, 1976, an earthquake of a magnitude of between 7.5 and 8.2 on the Richter scale struck the city of Tangshan. The death toll was situated between 240,000 and 650,000, while over 700,000 others were injured - although these numbers are being questioned (Chen 2005, p.236).

How do people in Tangshan today commemorate the 1976 earthquake, keeping in mind that it has been 35 years since the earthquake happened? The aesthetics of commemorating earthquakes is not widespread. Most of the commemoration areas, memorials or monuments in China are related to war and are of a national scale, while individual feelings come second. China has undergone immense changes since 1976, but in the past years, two events occurred that placed the Tangshan earthquake back into the spotlight: another earthquake in Sichuan in 2008 and the 2010 release of a movie with the Tangshan earthquake itself as its main theme. Between those two years, China has been active in many official and media-acclaimed celebrations: both the May 4th demonstrations in Beijing in 1919 and the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 were celebrated in 2009 (CHQ 2009a). But 'darker anniversaries' such as the Lhasa uprising in 1959 and the Tiananmen Square events in 1989 were remembered "in an atmosphere of heightened alertness, security crackdowns and official anxiety" (Barmé 2009).

Since "every aspect of a museum, gallery, or heritage site communicates" (Mason 2005, p.200), I investigate how the 1976 earthquake is exhibited, manifested, remembered, produced and presented nowadays using the three methods to study heritage, i.e. discourse analysis, investigating people's attitude and behaviour and exploring the material qualities of heritage (Sørensen and Carman 2009, p.4). Earthquakes have major urban and socio-economic impacts

but studies on disasters do not usually focus on commemoration and how to deal with natural disasters, but are mostly focused on resilience, rebuilding or predicting.

1.2 Research question

My main research question is as follows: What is commemorated in Tangshan, how, and why? Sub-questions are: who frequents heritage sites, how often and for what reason? Are they used for public or private mourning? Are there still ruins? How did the natural disaster in Sichuan and the movie about Tangshan affect people's own commemoration of the earthquake in Tangshan? How have official commemoration practices changed? How have new commemoration and heritage policies in China affected heritage and commemoration sites in Tangshan?

As a working hypothesis, I propose that recent events had positive effects in Tangshan, in the sense that it rendered the earthquake a topic that could be discussed more openly, whether at home or in schools: the Sichuan earthquake was more publicly discussed (due to new media (Xu 2009) and a certain opening of China since 1976) and that gave a chance for people in Tangshan to do the same, while the movie made families get together and talk about it.

1.3 Methodology and data collection

This thesis is mainly a case study, both explanatory and exploratory. The aim of this non-experimental design is mostly exploratory. Discourse analysis is also useful when narratives of the earthquake are analysed.

Thirteen qualitative interviews were held in Tangshan during March 2011. A third of interviews were done in English while the rest were conducted with interpreters, all of them English teachers. The sample was chosen among 3 interpreters' friends, relatives and contacts. I ensured diversity with this snowballing; there is a gender ratio of 8 men and 5 women, an age ratio from 16 to 56 years and people from different social classes (teachers, construction workers

and business men). I also engaged in site visits, participatory observations during museum visits, and have read different types of materials.

1.4 Ethical considerations

My topic has sensitive sides since it deals with trauma: almost everyone who was born in Tangshan lost at least one relative in the disaster. I always bring up the earthquake in an educational or a commemorative dimension. I am more interested in knowing how, when and why the earthquake is brought in discussions and taught than how survivors feel or felt about it. Nevertheless, it happened in many occasions that interviewees volunteered to express more personal memories, which sometimes helped better understand their opinions.

All of my interviewees gave me the consent to publish their names for this research, although I had not required it. To preserve their anonymity, I used their English names throughout the thesis. To the few who had no English name, I gave them a fictive one. At one point, I interviewed a father and his 15 year-old daughter joined the conversation and her comments were relevant. Both of her parents were present at the time and agreed that I should include her comments in this research.

1.5 Disposition

In the second chapter, the theoretical framework will be presented. Recent theories about public heritage, identity, and commemorations in general as well as a focus on China's situation will be explored. Even though public and private commemorations are sometimes difficult to differentiate, the third chapter will concern public commemoration. I will start with a description and an analysis of the main place to commemorate the earthquake in Tangshan, the Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Hall (TEMH). After, I will talk about public ruins in Tangshan. Finally, as schools can foster public and private thoughts and commemorations, textbooks and students' reactions will be examined. The fourth chapter addresses private commemorations. First, it will describe how people privately commemorate the event, depending on their religion. Second, there is a space in Tangshan where people can mourn and reflect more privately, the new

Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park (TEMP), where stands a giant wall with thousands of names of people that died in the earthquake. The fifth chapter will touch on the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. I will compare it with the Tangshan earthquake and elaborate on Tangshan's response to the Sichuan disaster. Also, the 2010 movie *Aftershock* (in Chinese *Tangshan dadizhen*) about the 1976 earthquake, generated emotions among Tangshan's residents and will be examined. I will conclude this thesis by opening the discussion on commemorations and on the importance of maintaining memory alive.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical framework: Insights from studies on heritage, memories and commemorations

Heritage sites are “distinct spaces that make up some of the most familiar and tangible elements ‘of the past’” (Garden 2009, p.271). They have different purposes: an object of study, a means of generating income, a part of a political action and to engender community spirit (Sörensen and Carman 2009, p.3). Mnemonic sites can be material, symbolic or functional (Nora, *in* Lee and Yang 2007, p.15). In Tangshan, there are now a few memory sites that fulfill different functions to varying degrees; one of them opened recently, as an older site was losing its appeal and popularity. These sites are at the same time physical places and cultural constructs (Garden 2009, p.270). Heritage is also a “socio-cultural construction” (Prats 2009, p.76) since it comprises subjectivity on many levels. Heritage’s key word could be ‘preserve’ but heritage is also created and constantly changing (Sommer 2009, p.103). Heritage sites serve both to create identity and to develop a sense of the past (Garden 2009, p.270). In Tangshan, commemoration sites range from museums to memorials and ruins. Heritage can “foster social cohesion” (Peralta and Anico 2009, p.3). There are two main questions about the heritage outputs: “Whose voices should be heard? How can the outputs allow for different voices to come through?” (Corsane 2005, p.9).

In China and especially in Tangshan, voices have been heard, with the construction of a new memorial park. In the years following the earthquake, the focus was more on rebuilding than remembering. Since then, political and social constraints have loosened up: we will see with the Sichuan case in chapter 4 that things are moving faster now. In these two places, heritage has the difficult task of remembering the event and helping everyone cope and make sense of what happened, while dealing with horrifying and massive deaths.

“Museums, like memory, mediate the past, present and future” (Davison 2005, p.186) and that makes them crucial sites in terms of education and urban planning. Corsane notes that in museums and other heritage sites, public participation usually goes from inspiration to interpretation (2005, p.3). Interpretation is defined as “a particular set of professional practices designed to engage heritage visitors with the meanings of their encounter” (West 2010, p.4); it will be discussed in sections 3.1 and 4.2. Tangible heritage are physical remembrances such as

monuments while intangible heritage could refer to more abstract concepts like memories (Benton 2010). Museums are the “institutionalized sites of collective memory par excellence” (Lee and Yang 2007, p.14). Even though museums are often seen as objective and authentic, they shape collective memories by selecting what is good to preserve and store, and how resources are interpreted and presented to the public (Davison 2005, p.184). Aesthetics of China’s museums are undergoing changes. 150 million people annually attend the 8000 or so exhibitions in China and those numbers are on the rise (Denton 2005, p.565).

There are two perspectives on collective memory. The presentist perspective states that only the present is real and elements of the past are dependant of the present’s importance and changing circumstance. Memory is then seen as a changing variable. The cultural or traditionalist perspective thinks that the present is no more real than the past. Memory is linked to cultural values and is an independent variable (Schwartz and Kim 2010, p.7). China fits best in the presentist model since its leaders forge a past that is compatible with their current values. Monuments and memorials must always please the public and their government; this is especially true in communist China. In the construction of local heritage, different forces are involved (Prats 2009, p.85) such as pressure groups, the public and the government. The design and content of Chinese exhibitions are “always a process of negotiation between curators and Party officials” (Denton 2005, p.575). However, Chinese museums curators are aware of the latest trends on the international level and have traveled more than their predecessors, and do not necessarily agree with Chinese decision-makers. They are more open and embrace new kinds of displays (*ibid.*, p.574). In Sichuan, in the waiting period for the official earthquake museum to open, a private museum even opened with over 50,000 relics (Mu 2009). This would have been difficult in Tangshan in 1976, for both political and economical reasons.

For the past 10 years, China has been more committed to heritage (CHQ 2005) and this is seen daily. Perhaps this has opened a Pandora’s box, as many are asking for more museums and more memory walls. Today China has over 2000 museums (Denton 2005). New ones are being built every year and exhibitions in existing ones are often changing. Since WWII, China has undergone many social and political changes that are reflected in museums in many ways, although museums remain a tool for the Party to teach their version of history, which is not always necessarily fixed. Denton finds two waves of rising museum numbers in China: the first,

in the early 1980s, was a reaction to the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when the TEMH was built; the second, starting in the 90s after the 1989 Tiananmen events, continues today. The TEMP fits into this second category.

There is a definite relationship between memory and identity (Gillis 1994, p.3). The past has an important role in shaping identity (Sommer 2009, p.108). Memories and identities “are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena” (Gillis 1994, p.3). With time, memories can change and that also affects heritage sites. “Collective memories are distinct from official history in that they are reconstructions from below by people living through history” (Lee and Yang 2007, p.3). The relationship between memory and history is that the latter aims and deals with objectivity while memories are more subjective (Benton and Cecil 2010).

Memories and identities are not fixed as “we are constantly revising our memories to suit our current identities” (Gillis 1994, p.3). People are more likely to do their own “memory work” at their own time and place (*ibid.*), although memories can change with time. Survivors remember what happened but with time, these memories can alter in order to find something reassuring from them, while those who were not there were told stories but those can be contested by others’ memories or by physical evidence (Benton and Cecil 2010, p.10). Memory sites do not have to be physical: it is also possible to share memories after seeing a movie, like it is the case in Tangshan.

Commemoration can be defined as “the process of selecting from the historical record those fact most relevant to society’s ideals and marking them through iconography, monuments, shrines, music, place-names, ritual observance and other products of ‘reputational enterprise’” (Schwartz and Kim 2010, p.7). We will notice later when discussing private commemorations (chapter 4) that these rituals are not pre-determined and followed in the same way by all. “Commemoration mediates the relation between history and individual belief” (*ibid.*, p.15) and is therefore often a national issue. Commemorations assign significance to events and are places of gathering for some to share memories, like the earthquakes museums in Tangshan. Commemoration is more and more done on a personal and local level, where local memory is thus more important (Gillis 1994, p.14), especially for a natural disaster that occurred mostly in one city or region. Heritage and remembrance are not only a matter of museums and other

official sites but are more of a personal nature (West 2010). Thus, heritage and identity are intertwined (Peralta and Anico 2009, p.1). In Tangshan, most residents know people who have died during the earthquake, and that increases a sentiment of belonging.

China is known for remembering key historical dates; dates such as 1919, 1949, 1959 and 1989 “live on in the present, in real lives and real situations” (CHQ 2009b). But not all are commemorated the same way and some, like the events of 1989, are purposely not commemorated - anyone who would try to commemorate them would risk trouble. Other dates have had periods of ups and downs in commemorations. For Tangshan, 1976 has entered the list of essential dates. Disaster areas have also become tourist sites, with citizens interested in seeing ruins and government officials interested in making money of disasters (Bezlova 2009). Like other countries, China is therefore “grappling with how to commemorate the dead without raising uncomfortable questions” (*ibid.*). Commemorating disasters raises several questions such as the implication and responsibility of the government in disasters, the labelling of disasters areas and the choice between rebuilding and commemorating (*ibid.*).

Chapter 3 - Public commemoration in Tangshan: The negotiated functions of museums, ruins and schools

There are many ways to commemorate: some public, some more private, some including private and public aspects. In this section, commemorations with more public connotations will be considered. They include the Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Hall, located in the center of Tangshan, the visible ruins scattered over Tangshan, and the school as a place for sharing and spreading information.

Remembering an earthquake is particular, different from remembering a war for example. First, an earthquake's duration can be measured in seconds or minutes. Second, in a war there are enemies people can blame. Third, memories are not contested like they could be for a war, due to the impact of the natural disaster and the number of deceased and witnesses (although there might be a few questions about safety and predictions).

Individuals remember events differently but it is possible for a group to share memories of an event: this is collective or public memory (Benton and Cecil 2010, p.12). Remembering together is a social act: it keeps memories alive, as memories need to be communicated in order to survive (Benton 2010).

3.1 The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Hall: a first place of commemoration

The link between private and public memories is monuments and in Tangshan, the TEMH, the first memorial to the earthquake built in 1986, fulfilled this duty to begin. It opened 10 years after the earthquake, "which was actually quite fast because it took 10 years to think and gather memories; before we were busy with reconstruction", according to a guide at the TEMH museum (Isabelle 2011). A memorial has a powerful message to give and is meant to be seen by many. The memorial, which includes a monument and a hall, was built in the city center, across the biggest department store in town, which gives it enormous visibility for both visitors and locals. How popular is it and what do their exhibits look like? Were commemorations centered on some topics such as heroism and bravery or more the suffering? How is the earthquake commemorated by the museum? Have things changed recently?



Image 1 - The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial in the center of Tangshan

There was a big demand for the TEMH and the population of Tangshan was happy to finally have a place for them to mourn, discuss and learn about the earthquake.

“Before 1986, some commemorations were held on July 28th on major streets, such as where the memorial is today. I always participated there but then came the TEMH and every year I went there after. I now go with my family and bring white flowers and a picture of my parents with me. The day the TEMH opened, I was there and was able to share my experience with others. But we were not satisfied with the name and still aren’t [in Chinese, the TEMH is literally called ‘The Anti-Earthquake Memorial’]! ‘Earthquake’ alone would be better” (John 2011).

The memorial hall includes a large outdoor monument and a museum. During my visits to the memorial hall, there were a lot of activities, especially on weekends in the space around the monument, often unrelated to the earthquake. That place has become the trademark of Tangshan and this is where people and villagers from outside Tangshan gather to relax. Around the memorial, people are sitting and having a drink, couples are together, tourists are taking pictures and kids are flying kites with their parents. Today, the memorial does not serve as a mourning place, rather as a public recreational space. Four sets of seven stairs (multiplied, they give 28, the day of the earthquake) lead to a giant arm that has fingers reaching up to the sky in a symbol of “everything becomes possible” (John 2011). This symbolism was highlighted by John, but not everyone was aware of it and nowhere was it written.

Outside the TEMH, near the monument, there is a bilingual (Chinese and English) plaque put up in July 1986. The beginning of the text is similar to any introduction about the earthquake in Tangshan, telling the time, place, date and number of deaths and injuries suffered. Then it

praises the 'heroic Tangshan people' who sacrificed themselves and showed the 'communist spirit of selflessness and courage'. We then read about the People's Liberation Army (PLA) coming to help Tangshan 'at the risk of their own lives' and about regional Party leaders coming to comfort the wounded. Statistics are given about the reconstruction and it claims that the 'new' Tangshan is officially rebuilt, just like the phoenix that is reborn. In the last paragraph, it reiterates 'this truth: the Chinese Communist Party is great and the socialist system is superior'. It ends with a dedication: 'We erected and engraved this monument to console the friends and families of the deceased, to commemorate and cite the heroes and martyrs and to inspire and educate the people of today and future generations'. Note that, as for a war, the nationalistic terms 'heroes' and 'martyrs' are present.

When I visited the hall on a Tuesday, there were people in each room. There were no school groups; one group of 10-12 visitors went through the museum quite fast. Usually, there are about 300 people visiting every day, a little less in the winter (Isabelle 2011). There is a projection room with fixed screening times. The museum is divided chronologically. The first floor traces the history of Tangshan since the Kaiping Mining bureau was established in 1878, with emphasis on the earthquake and especially the rescue, the recovery and rebuilding of the city. The second floor is all about the development of Tangshan and future plans for the city. Exhibitions do not change often, but pictures dating from 1976 were recently placed on newer backgrounds. Before celebrating the 30th anniversary in 2006 and receiving President Hu Jintao, the museum closed a year for renovations. There was not much English at this museum, but our guide could speak it. All kinds of people come to the museum, mostly from China and principally around Tangshan. Isabelle, a guide at the museum, often has to deal with different situations:

"When I give tours, there are often teachers, students, children and older people that experienced the earthquake and the elderly often cry during my explanations. People listen attentively and ask many questions. I never cry because I want to show the positive, the beautiful and busy things of Tangshan. It is important to people to come here for the memory and the future" (Isabelle 2011).

Most of the people I interviewed had visited the TEMH, some numerous times. This can be explained by the fact that this was for many years the only place to commemorate and to learn about the Tangshan earthquake. Julia for instance, went several times: "I've been 4-5 times to the

TEM; twice alone for me to learn more history and sometimes with my son, to teach him some” (Julia 2011).

A popular time to go is on July 28, particularly on anniversary dates such as 10, 30 and 40 years (key dates in Chinese tradition). For many years, there was a ceremony attended by many local people and politicians. John makes it a duty to commemorate the event every year on the day it happened: “I have been often to the TEMH and on July 28th, people put flowers on the ground. I used to come here alone, and then with my family, then with my sister and her 3 old son – I want my son to have early memories of the situation” (John 2011). As time goes by, many participants admitted that more and more they want to include their relatives in their commemorations for the younger generation to share their family’s memory and to learn about their city’s history. Also, the museum organizes special activities: “Every July 28, the museum gives away prevention booklets. TV stations are here and the museum is very busy” (Isabelle 2011). But in the recent years, the TEMH is slowly losing its place as a commemorating site to the more calm and personal TEMP that will be examined in chapter 4.

3.2 Tangshan’s physical scars, ruins, and relation to memory-making

Despite the magnitude of the Tangshan earthquake, there are only a few sites of earthquake debris left today. This raises many questions related to the validity and the interest accorded to the ruins. Ruins are fascinating because they bear the passage of time and visibly carry a history.

3.2.1 The dilemma related to ruins

In March 2010, a Chinese businessman wrote an interesting entry on an online travel review network (Qiángdào 2010). He was sent to Tangshan for his work and was interested in visiting earthquake sites. He explains that the State council had approved 7 sites in 1980 in Tangshan that should be preserved. These 7 sites are a ceramic factory, the library of Hebei Polytechnic University, the former Middle school number 10, a line of three trees displaced by the earthquake, the former Iron and Steel company, the rolling stock plant (the actual TEMP) and

the site of a food factory. His article is interesting because it raises many questions. Among those, should we preserve ruins? If so, what should we do with them?

“Ruins should be kept – there’s room for other buildings! The ruins at the university are a good example of useful ones. They are a good way to visit. I haven’t visited other ones, but I heard of them. Of course if a friend from outside or abroad comes I do not think right away of showing the ruins: I will show good sides, not anything related to the earthquake. But if they want to see them, I will do my best to show them. It is not something I am proud of but it is a thing of our own. It belongs to us, to the next generation also” (Plum 2011).

In this comment, Plum shows that ruin sites belong to everyone, especially to the Tangshan people. She thinks it is good idea to keep them. Even if the earthquake was terrible for all, she does not want to see everything related to it disappear. Plum has only visited the ruins at the university, which is understandable since they are easy to find and are in a fairly calm place. From the beginning, keeping those ruins sounded like a good choice:

“According to me, the ruins at the university were kept 1) for people to see; 2) for study and research and 3) more and more for tourism nowadays (especially the past 10 years). Unfortunately in Tangshan, you have mainly ‘sad memories’. Visitors must see this – as for myself, I have pictures in my head which I will never forget. The young people do not know what it was” (John 2011). This matches two goals of heritage sites mentioned earlier: be an object of study and increase community spirit. John acknowledges that ruins are for local people and tourists to see, while Plum would not think of showing ruins. Perhaps since John had it more difficult, having lost his parents, he wants many people to witness what happened and in a way, share his grief. Ruins should be kept for both the people who have witnessed the earthquake and for those who weren’t there at the time: “The government should take measure to try to protect remains and sites to show it to children so they know 1) what happened 2) how to fight difficulties in their lives and 3) the spirit of the people of Tangshan” (Yvonne 2011).



Image 2 - The ruins of the library of the Hebei Polytechnic University in Tangshan

It is interesting to hear people from Tangshan speaking of tourism now. In 1976 and following years, many would agree that it was ethically too early to visit Tangshan, as some people are doing now in Sichuan. Wars and disasters lead to commemoration and tourism, and this is often called ‘dark tourism’ (Bezlova 2009), a term that associates tourism and sites that have a connotation with death. When is it alright to begin visiting disaster sites as tourists? There are ethical rules to follow when one engages in dark tourism, like keeping a proper behaviour when mourning. The same goes for sites in the West such as Ground Zero or Auschwitz (*ibid.*).

The ruins of the library are a poignant site. They stand today in the middle of the busy Hebei Polytechnic University campus. The library has been left untouched since 1976 and there are a few signs explaining the situation. Ironically, the library’s construction was completed in 1975 and it was therefore considered a modern building, seating 450 people. No one else was looking at the ruins when I visited but most Tangshanese know the location of this site.

Some of the other preserved sites were not intended to be kept as memory sites. Finding them was difficult and there was only little information. In some sites, it is difficult to feel a strong connection with the earthquake: it is often noisy or dirty, and it is difficult to get emotional. The three trees are impressive, as you realize something abnormal happened here at one point, but the site is just there, not prepared for visitors. The same goes for the ceramic factory: the whole interior of the building was being changed and workers did not seem to care that it was a protected building. The ruins of the library and the former Middle school are well taken care of and calm, but do have the pretention to be mourning sites, mostly ‘shocking’ sites.

Sites like the TEMH and the TEMP give meaning to the events since they put them in perspective; they are spacious, peaceful, informative and well-planned. Trying to transform the less-developed ruins into memory sites in the heart of Tangshan is too late now, as the city was built around them.

Curiously, most of interviewees had heard of those 7 ruins, but it did not take long to realize that practically no one had visited these or had a concrete idea where exactly they are located.

3.2.2 The importance of not forgetting

While the majority of interviewees agreed that ruins should be kept, there were some discordant voices when this subject was brought up. Frank, for example, does not believe it is necessary to keep the ruins to remember the earthquake:

“There’s not a lot we can do against natural disasters. We should not forget about the Tangshan earthquake but importantly, we must rebuild the destroyed so that people can recover. It’s important to know that we can rebuild. Earthquakes are frequent and each one is different. Accent should be more on security and prevention than active memory. Museums are only a small symbol of remembering. It is not necessary to leave ruins because it’s in our hearts” (Frank 2011).

Frank was alive during the earthquake so he has visual memories and other souvenirs of what happened. He also witnessed the fast rebuilding of Tangshan. Experts predicted it would take at least 20 years to rebuild Tangshan and it only took about 10. That gave the occasion for urban planners and architects to rethink and improve the city (Chen 2005). Frank’s 15-year old daughter and her friend intervened in the discussion. They disagreed with him, stating that ruins should be left untouched because youth don’t know what happened and if they see ruins, they can at least try to imagine how everything happened in 1976 and how serious it was. It is interesting to see that youth who were raised in a more capitalistic China, where growth is key and construction and development are everywhere, wish to preserve these ruins.

Frank’s opinion is reflected in an article from *China Daily*. On the 30th anniversary of the earthquake, they published an article honouring the Tangshanese: “The miraculous rise of Tangshan in the past three decades is exhilarating. It is a miracle resulting from the combined care, love and strength of the entire nation” (2006). It proudly states that “Today, it is impossible to tell that the city was once a disaster area”. It is seen as a good thing that no one can tell a

disaster happened there. It later adds that “Apart from a handful of sites preserved as reminders of the quake, the city has no visible scars” (*ibid.*). One can wonder by the tone of this sentence if the author would have preferred not to preserve the sites. According to the State Council, the 7 sites were kept “in order to draw lessons from the earthquake and to provide a research base for earthquake science, earthquake-proof engineering, urban construction and science of disaster” (CTEM 2009, p.55). There is no word on commemorating and about public memory. This shows that at the time it was accepted to keep sites for scientific research, in order to learn about natural phenomena and improve life for Chinese people; the emphasis is put on the nation and the collective rather than on private mourning or commemoration. It also shows that in China the hard sciences (geology, seismology) have been preferred over ‘soft’ social sciences (psychology, sociology), and policies have been future-looking more than past-reflecting (although the past is often used for nationalistic purposes). As symbolized also by the TEMH monument, there is a sense that everything can be accomplished with science, even overcoming disasters.

Right after an earthquake, leaving ruins untouched is difficult because of the work of rescuers and local people looking for their belongings. Who wants to continue seeing ruins everywhere and perhaps find human remains? Besides, who should decide and how to decide which ruins to keep? In 1976, Tangshan decision-makers opted to rebuild the destroyed city as soon as possible to forget about what happened. This way of thinking is expressed in Ray and Julia’s words:

“Right after the earthquake and until 2006, the government encouraged us to work right away and to be productive in order to forget. Until then, the earthquake was a tragedy; people wanted to avoid everything related to it. Now science and technology have developed and people can do and want to do more. It is ok to think about prevention, but not necessarily to remember Tangshan’s past” (2011).

This illustrates one of the paradoxes of forgetting and remembering: survivors want to forget to overcome pain and nostalgia (Benton and Cecil 2010, p.17). However, there is the importance of anniversary dates and commemoration rituals for the mind to shift paradigm and to heal. 2006 was the 30th anniversary and it took a generation for some to liberate themselves from the burden of the earthquake. Despite this anniversary and the recent publicity surrounding Tangshan with *Aftershock* and the Sichuan earthquake, some say that it is still more important than ever to discuss the earthquake now: “The earthquake was more in the news recently but the

following generation should not forget. Also, life is easier now in China and people are richer. Therefore, it is even more important now to talk about the earthquake” (Plum 2011).

3.3 At School: a starting point for dialogues on memory

There are ways of ensuring public memories are not forgotten, but passed to the next generation: schools are one of them. What is the role of the school in diffusing information and commemorating the Tangshan earthquake?

Education in China puts emphasis on learning and memorizing more than practice, and Confucian principles on education related to morals and virtues are valued (Leng 2005). Innovation from individual students is not often encouraged. There is a high respect paid to teachers and a crucial importance given to examinations (*ibid.*).

3.3.1 Teachers: Individual victims of the earthquake as well as public transmitters of information and instruction

In many classes, the earthquake is brought up from different angles and point of views. But is talking about the earthquake in school mandatory? Is it discussed in the curriculum and if so, how? Have there been any changes to the curriculum in the past years? When the events of the Sichuan earthquake were unfolding, were there special activities and commemorations at the school?

Some teachers like Yvonne use animations, slide shows and videos to intensify the experience of the subject and make sure that the discussion around the earthquake continues at home:

“As a teacher, I use now a new book (from the recent reform period) where there is a whole unit on disasters. This book is used all over China for English classes Senior 1, 2 and 3. Students are interested in the topic because they have not experienced it. Before we read a chapter on disasters but there was no mention of Tangshan, only of an earthquake that happened in the USA. But I would always bring up the Tangshan one. I’d give them homework (students had to discuss to their relatives about it and then talk about it in class) and would relate my own experience, how serious it was and how the whole China helped” (Yvonne 2011).

The earthquake was never denied by Chinese authorities, but a general understanding of earthquakes seems also to be important. On the first page of the unit of the book that Yvonne is mentioning, *New Senior English for China*, there is a picture of every-day Tangshan and students are asked to imagine what would happen if an earthquake would strike the city and name the only thing they would take if their house started to shake (2009). The next page is devoted to an article recalling the events of 1976, from a few days before the earthquake to the arrival of rescuers afterwards. The emphasis is put on the despair of the population until the last paragraphs bring positive notes with the arrival of the PLA. The next three pages are comprehensive exercises to further understand the article. Next we find a fictive invitation letter where students are invited to give a speech on the opening day of a new park to honour “those who died in the terrible disaster” and “those who helped the survivors” (*ibid.*, p.30). More exercises follow including asking students to discuss “what had to be done to rebuild a city after an earthquake” (*ibid.*). The chapter concludes with an interview with a survivor of an earthquake that happened in San Francisco in 1906.

English teacher Yvonne enumerates specific goals when the subject of the earthquake is on her agenda: “My goals by mentioning the earthquake are for them 1) to know history; 2) to understand there are many earthquakes in the world and we must protect nature and create a better environment; 3) to learn of the spirit of the Tangshan people that overcame many difficulties and 4) to describe and discuss with their relatives so they can learn English words” (2011). For her, it seems the earthquake is a ‘perfect’ subject for a classroom: it touches upon many disciplines (English, geography, history), reaches many levels (municipal, provincial, national; material and spiritual), tackles current issues (environment), forces intergenerational contact (discussion with grandparents), embodies civic education (stresses the value of scientific research, courage) and it is one subject she has lived through, which adds to the power and emotion of the lesson.

It is normal that there is time devoted to the Tangshan earthquake and that teachers add a personal touch. Every respondent who was a teacher related that they add extra information to the curriculum since their school is in Tangshan and most are Tangshan natives. They also adapt to the latest developments in science and give updates, such as including the latest headlines

about natural disasters in the world. Plum, an English teacher who was 8 years old in 1976, often gets emotional:

“As a teacher, I mention the earthquake for grades 9 for a whole week per year and some days for grade 7s. I am sad when I talk about it in class. I ask my students if some of their relatives died in the earthquake. I try to keep my emotions inside but cannot always and my students are then surprised to see me emotional. Since I was alive in 1976, I feel my students are more impressed by my description of the earthquake. Those are true feelings so perhaps students can gain more from that” (Plum 2011).

There could then be a slight difference in diffusing the material if a teacher is a survivor of the earthquake or not. “Since I lived through the earthquake, I tell my students what happened and how I felt. If some teachers were not born, they could invite a survivor – they are easy to find!” (Yvonne 2011). Having lived through the earthquake increases the emotions and a feeling of reality in Yvonne’s classes. Nick, who was born just after the earthquake, admits he will never be able to feel and tell exactly how it happened in 1976, but find good points in the fact that no one in the class was alive then:

“I was not alive during the earthquake so it is difficult to understand how serious it was and difficult for my students to understand the gravity of it because they also did not experience it. But earthquakes are frequent in Tangshan and experiencing a small one can give you an idea of a big one. There was even one once during class! People have different thoughts and feelings if they have experienced it or not. There are more curious about the Tangshan earthquake than other subjects and ask more questions. They ask if the classroom is safe and what to do if an earthquake happens. But there is no difficulty to talk about the earthquake; there are no barriers since we did not experience it” (Nick 2011).

Students appear more alert and interested when the Tangshan earthquake is talked about since it is their city and they probably heard stories about it outside school.

3.3.2 Lessons learnt: Students’ experiences

Steve, a student in grade 11, explains he has often heard of the earthquake in school: “Every term, I hear of the earthquake; mostly in geography, English and history classes. Sometimes they talk about disasters in general and the earthquake is then mentioned. It was stated again when the tsunami happened. I have done homework related to it. When it’s the case, some students are sad but the majority has no reaction, although there is curiosity” (Steve 2011).

Gloria, a current grade 9 student, had to do a presentation on the earthquake in class. Her 16-slide presentation focused on the Sichuan earthquake in Wenchuan and relates the story of a

middle school that was destroyed. Her tone is sad but with many points about hope. She finishes her presentation by writing a short letter to the Wenchuan people and telling them not to despair and that since she is from Tangshan, she knows a little about earthquakes and that it is possible with the help of the Chinese people to rebuild.

The guide Isabelle often has school groups visiting the TEMH. “I see school groups from everywhere – it is a way to teach younger people to love their country and help out (especially in times of troubles)” (Isabelle 2011). Whether this was Isabelle’s personal vision of visitor education or official museum policy, it is interesting to see that the love of the country comes first in her goals. This value of patriotism in disaster times could be a strong characteristic, particularly in communist countries. In China, every situation appears to be a good reason to owe something to the country. This attitude is clearly reflected in the many museum pictures of officials and soldiers showing pride in helping their Tangshan comrades.

A visit to the TEMH is not mandatory in the curriculum as Steve, has been once to the museum but after class (Steve 2011). To mark the anniversary, Steve is often given specific tasks: “On July 28s, I often have to write articles for newspapers at school or learn some information on the web about the earthquake” (2011).

In 2005-06, an ‘earthquake group’ was formed at Middle school number 8 in Tangshan. The group of approximately 20 students and two teachers, which lasted 2 years, organized some extracurricular activities. They collected things and material (from newspapers, etc.) from Tangshan before and after the earthquake. They had equipment to detect earthquakes and did some experiments. The school has a partnership with a school in Lincoln in the United Kingdom and they showed the British delegation sites related to the earthquake during their visit.

We can see that there are different forms of dialogue initiated at school that have personal consequences. Some students also have the chance to discuss events with members of their family, while for others it is a chance to learn in depth the dimensions of an earthquake. In any case, the earthquake serves as a trigger to many things. These public lessons can direct many to reflect on the matter and that can lead to some private commemorations.

Chapter 4 - Private commemorations: Religion and new spaces for private mourning

Commemorative rituals in China are seen as having many goals, such as consolidating solidarity and enhancing emotional energy (Xu 2009). How are commemorations changing in Tangshan over time? In a communist state like China, how much private commemoration is possible? Are new spaces for private commemorations in Tangshan the sign of the rise of the individual in today's China (Halskov Hansen and Svarverud 2010)? Three years after the Sichuan earthquake, a 'poetry' wall (Qu 2011) is already in place, and there are talks of a memorial wall; in Tangshan this took over 30 years (Nddaily 2011).

In those three decades, how did people deal with the trauma on an individual basis and where did they find spiritual solace? Do people only get an emotional outlet during official ceremonies or traditional holidays such as the Ghost festival and Tomb Sweeping Day (in Chinese *Qīngmíngjié*) (Hung 2008)? Who is involved in private commemoration and what forms does it take? Do monuments encourage forgetting or remembering on a personal level (Gillis 1994, p.16)? How involved was the government in providing more personal spaces, considering that commemorations are linked to nationalism? If funeral customs "can transform sadness into happiness" (Jenne 2010), what are venues and rituals in place in Tangshan?

Beliefs, practices and rituals in China have all been influenced by literary belief systems such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Most Chinese believe that the deceased "need money and sustenance, must deal with bureaucrats, and should work (with the help of the living) to improve their fate" (Jochim 2008), therefore they need to take care of the ancestors' afterlife. If good care is not given, souls of the deceased can become ghosts that haunt the living (*ibid.*).

Watson identified nine elements of the standardized Han funeral rites of late imperial China, the influence of which we can see today to varying degrees: (1) a public notification of the death is given by the family; (2) white clothes are donned by family members; (3) the corpse is bathed ritually; (4) food, money and goods are transferred to the dead, often by burning; (5) a soul tablet for the dead is prepared; (6) money is paid for rituals; (7) music is arranged to accompany the corpse and to settle the spirit; (8) the corpse is sealed in an airtight coffin; and (9)

the coffin is expelled from the community (1982, pp.12-15). It is common for families with means to have a family grave or graveyard (Teather 2001, p.195).

4.1 Commemorating the dead in Tangshan

Commemorating the deceased involves a deathscape and a deathspace. Deathscapes can be defined as “the material expression in the landscape of practices relating to death” while deathspace can refer to “the spatialities of death” in a general sense (Teather 2001, p.185). There are two major traditional Chinese festivals where deceased people are mourned: Ghost festival (the 15th night of the seventh lunar month; usually in August or September) and Tomb Sweeping Day (the 104th day after the winter solstice, usually around April 5th). There are a few differences between those two days: Tomb Sweeping Day is a new official holiday in China, whereas Ghost festival is not a holiday but a religious festival not celebrated by all. “I think these kinds of commemorations are becoming more and more important in China. Ghost festival is not an official or traditional day; it is more a folk day. On that day, there is no public talk and the commemoration is done privately in our hearts” (Plum 2011). During Ghost festival, some people burn incense at night or float water lanterns, often symbolically representing the beginning of the peaceful journey to the other world (ChinaVoc 2007), something that is not done on Tomb Sweeping Day.

On these two days, most Han people burn paper money, sometimes cut in different shapes. They often carry out this activity where the dead are buried, often at cemeteries or where they keep the ashes, or where the ashes were dropped. For Tangshan earthquake victims, it is possible for people to burn paper money where the deceased was believed to die if the body has not been recovered, or at large intersections (where the dead are thought to be able to circulate free of obstacles). Crossroads are also used if the person cannot travel to the tomb of the deceased. This same ritual is carried out during Ghost Festival but ‘paper clothes’ (items of paper in the form of clothes) are also burnt on that day (*ibid.*). The ritual of burning paper money or clothes (also called ‘Ghost money’ or ‘Joss paper’) is mostly done alone, or sometimes with a small and selected group of people. For many Chinese people, the living have to take care of the deceased by providing them enough cash and material and that way, the dead will render it to the

living: the act of burning represents how goods are delivered to the other world (Oliver 2001). Plum explains how her Ghost Festival day unfolds and the importance of not commemorating alone:

“If I am not in my hometown, I burn paper money always at the same crossroad with my daughter. My husband is never with me because we do it separately since we have different relatives. My daughter participates even if she only saw her grandparents on pictures. She accompanied me since she could walk and she participates actively; for instance she will say a few words. Before my daughter was born, I would go to Tomb Sweeping Day with one sister and Ghost Festival with my other sister since we all lived in our hometown then. I never go alone because it also is a chance for relatives to get together” (Plum 2011).

Commemorating the dead mixes public and private commemoration, especially in this case. Those who knew the deceased have personal images and experiences of friends or relatives that died in 1976. But this feeling is shared by many people on July 28 and going to graves or memorials then is more public. There could be other days when the deceased can be remembered. Charles does so on three occasions: “I commemorate on Ghost festival where me and my wife burn special paper and ‘buy’ clothes to the dead to keep warm during the winter. This day is special because it is a form of contact between the young and the old. I also do it on Tomb Sweeping Day of course. But we also commemorate the anniversary of the deceased” (Charles 2011). As for Plum, she also commemorates during Spring Festival: “I commemorate dead relatives at any moment but specifically on three occasions: 1) On Tomb Sweeping Day, where I go to my hometown; 2) On Ghost festival where I usually stay where I live now because I have to work; 3) On Spring festival (New Year) because we are happy then and want to tell dead relatives that we do not forget them. I go to my hometown because our ash boxes are there, we don’t have a tomb” (Plum 2011).

Since 1979, China has experienced a religious revival. In Tangshan, July 28 has entered the minds of all and more concretely, it now figures on the list of commemoration dates with rituals borrowed from other festivals. “On July 28, I sometimes go to the TEMH. More privately, I will burn paper money and cook special food at a crossroad for the dead, because dead people are free to go where they want there; they can go and cross four directions” (Roger 2011).

As for Julia, she tries every year to visit her family tomb: “My family has a tomb in the countryside at about 20 kilometres southeast of Tangshan. I go there on July 28 or if I am too busy, I burn paper money or clothes at a crossroad because a crossroad is *feng shui*. I admit there

is some superstition involved here” (Julia 2011). *Feng shui* is an old concept in China and of great importance when dealing with the deceased (Teather 2001). It was common to use an expert in *feng shui* “to determine the time, place, and orientation of the burial of a corpse” because of the link between the dead and the living relatives (Jochim 2008).

For Carl, July 28 is also a day for him to commemorate but he is slowly integrating it in his annual days of mourning:

“In our family, to remember, we do the same thing on Tomb Sweeping Day and on every July 28. My parents bring me with some relatives to our tomb in a wide area outside Tangshan. There is a ‘stone board’ with words of wisdom and names of the deceased. We fetch soil to put on top of the tomb and we burn paper money. I am participating in this ritual only since 2010; I was forced to go with my family then. My parents think it’s important for me to continue this rite for a long time. I think I will now do this ritual every time, especially if I have time. I am an adult now and I should remember my grandparents” (Carl 2011).

Depending on one’s culture and religion, commemorations can be different. Honouring and remembering the deceased have public (visits to temples, ceremonies) and private (mourning) aspects. These ‘religious’ practices are carried out by many but not all. Visiting grave sites may or may not be seen as a religious act.

Yvonne is Hui, a member of a Chinese Muslim ethnic group comprising about 10 million people. Her customs are different from those of the Han, the largest ethnic group in China. For example, she does nothing on Ghost festival and Tomb Sweeping Day. She also never burns paper money. Of all the interviewees, only she and Steve were Hui. Honouring the dead for her has religious connotations: “On the 1st day after the Ramadan where we can eat again during the day, I go to the mosque and give money to the imam and to the poor. When I was young, I gave maybe 50 fens but now, I give from 50 to 100 Yuan. The imam then reads excerpts from the Quran. On key anniversaries (1, 3, 5, 10, 20 and 30 years), the imam reads religious sentences surrounded by his students” (Yvonne 2011). July 28 is also a special day for her:

“On July 28, 1977, we moved all the dead relatives from the earthquake together in a tomb in my village. An Islam priest helped and we were relieved to have all the relatives in one place. Our tomb has a different shape than the ones the Han have. Then on July 28, 1978, I sent money to the mosque and to the poor. On special key anniversary years of the earthquake, we invite an imam to recite some Arabic words at the tomb in our hometown. On other years, close relatives might give money but in 2010 for example, I did not do anything special” (Yvonne 2011).

For Muslims, the deceased has to be buried as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours of the death (MBCOL 2011) so the move to the tomb was very significant. It is also possible for her to give money to the poor when, for example, she sees dead relatives in her dreams. She does the same during Spring festival: “During that period, I will give money to the poor, also for the safety of my family. When we celebrate, we want to show the dead that we are lucky to be healthy but at the same time we must show them that we do not forget them” (Yvonne 2011).

4.2 The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park: a revival

We have seen earlier that some ruins, like the Polytechnic University library’s, are ‘better’ than others in serving as a memory site. How do monuments carry the memory of the events they try to represent? How much knowledge or experience does one need to fully appreciate monuments? What is a perfect monument/memorial that can be appreciated by all? One could think that a common denominator could unite everyone (here the earthquake), but if it is too general, could there be a lack of personal representation?

Transforming ruins into a mourning site might seem difficult, but it has been done successfully with the TEMP. In July 2007, an architecture competition was opened to the public for the TEMP and architect Yuan Ye won, inspired by Maya Ying Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington (Li 2010). Initially comprising just the remains of the cast steel workshop of the Tangshan Rolling Stock Plant, it was extended to a park including a wall that opened in the summer of 2009, cheekily called by some the ‘wailing wall of China’, as well as a museum (Xinhuanet 2010b). The wall is 300 meters long and comprises names of people who died in the 1976 earthquake, which gives it an unusually personal touch for China. This wall gives a more private touch to the site. Its dimensions are symbolic: 7.28 meters tall, for the day, and each section is 19.76 meters wide, for the year. The museum, which covers 4000 square meters, opened on the anniversary of the earthquake, on July 28, 2010. On that day, many people came to lay flowers at the bottom of the Wall. The whole site has a style and a personality not shared by most other communist monuments, which are often dry and austere.



Image 3 - The Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park in Tangshan

Individuals remember differently how a significant event happened but collectively, a memory develops, and in the name of heritage, parts of history are expected to be remembered and acted upon by the state, for example in memorials and ceremonies (Benton 2010). In Tangshan, the collective memory developed little by little after the earthquake. When the city was rebuilt, there was a need from the population to have a place where survivors could share and remember their grief, and then came the TEMH.

Managing heritage is no easy task: monuments have to conjure how individuals and groups remember an event, as well as the government's opinion. As time went by, the TEMH became a busy tourist attraction in the center of the town and lost some of its appeal to survivors, especially those in mourning. The need for another monument manifested itself. People still needed to make sense of the past and did not want to forget what happened: one way of doing so was to build another memorial to fulfill the population's needs.

The museum at the TEMP is open Wednesdays to Sundays. There is a service desk that offers different services: they help people find names on the wall and sell souvenirs. Just like with the September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York, they found a system to help people find names (Dunlap 2011). An employee at the desk explained that many students come here but apparently no school tours have yet been organized. Tours from travel agencies come more and more often. On good days, there could be up to 1000 people that come to the Wall. The names on the walls were taken from emails sent by the public. There is room in case some names need to be added. Typical visitors are said to be of three kinds: 1) old people who went through the earthquake and look for their relatives or friends' names; 2) people that come here to learn and 3)

university students that will volunteer on April 5th to help people find names. I was told that most of the people coming here are from Tangshan and its surroundings, although I did not find this to be the case myself. There is also a shop with a few books, either about the Tangshan or the Wenchuan earthquake, and local porcelain plates for sale.

There is a book specifically for the museum's exhibition, and it is bilingual. Both the museum and the book have similar information. The book and exhibition are divided in different chronological themes: before the earthquake, disaster, disaster relief, self-reliance and reconstruction. The major part is devoted to assistance and recovery. The book is mainly composed of pictures and text recalling the difficult times after the earthquake. Nonetheless, one rarely sees someone suffering or crying; most pictures are showing people doing their duty seriously or even smiling. There are sharp contrasts, such as a page showing orphans with big smiles on their face side-by-side with a photo of a woman overwhelmed by events with the caption 'The Sorrowful Survivor', which still has a positive connotation (using the word 'survivor'). Wounded people are often shown with a stoic face.



Image 4 - Life-size wax figures in the museum of the TEMP in Tangshan

The tone of the TEMP book is a little different from what one can read at the actual TEMP. For example, the preface of the book and the introduction to the exhibition share a majority of sentences about the time of the earthquake, help from the PLA and the phoenix metaphor. But instead of finishing with the exhortation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) like at the museum, the book's preface ends with a question and a thought: "How could we obtain the rebirth confidence and the strong wings for flying without the painful experiences? We must record the history and remind our relatives, and honestly express the miraculous of Tangshan phoenix rebirth, which represents our true national spirit" (China Tangshan

Earthquake Museum 2009). This shows a more personal ('remind our relatives') and clearer (the rebirth) commemoration.

The postscript of the book also differs from the summary of the museum. The book reiterates the "feat of Tangshan earthquake relief and reconstruction" and adds that the new city is beautiful and constantly progressing with scientific development. It ends with a line that shows that Tangshan cannot be destroyed: "Tangshan, the ray of hope ever beamy!" (*ibid.*, p.164). On the other end, the museum finishes its exhibition with an appraisal of the CCP. It states that the CCP is 'the leading core of the rebuilding efforts' and that the feat of the earthquake relief and home rebuilding' left impressions on the Chinese, that they live in a 'comfortable and capable socialist motherland'. That paragraph ends by stating that it is because of the Chinese people, the PLA and the scientists that the rebuilding succeeded. This is a little different from the 1986 plaque outside the TEMH where it clearly states that 'the socialist system is superior'. Perhaps this claim would have had a different meaning today, with the Soviet block no longer existent. It is also interesting to note the word 'comfortable' in the English text: this can refer to the life of Chinese people being easier today than in 1986, and that is presented here as a progress and positive goal.

The exhibit at the museum is quite modern. Everything is bilingual and there are a lot of visuals and artefacts. It is divided by theme but is it entirely about the earthquake, unlike the TEMH, which treats the history of Tangshan before the earthquake. It still has some sort of chronological order. Reconstruction of the city is the central theme and whenever people are represented either on pictures or in dioramas, they are always happy. This could go along the lines of being grateful to the country and especially to the PLA for services rendered. There is an interesting mixture of nostalgia and progress. Mourning, individual memories and contemplation are more appropriately done outside next to the wall, not inside the museum. The museum finishes also with a look on the future of Tangshan with optimism and progress - only in Chinese (just like at the TEMH).

The TEMP looks quite different from other older museums in China, including the TEMH. The displays are different: with dimmed lightning, they use multimedia, artefacts, wax figures and other visuals. The majority of texts are bilingual (Chinese and English) and the general aesthetics are spacious. This goes along with Denton's review and analysis of museums,

memorial sites and exhibitionary culture in China (2005). He claims that although the architecture, location and exhibits of museums and memorial sites always reflect PRC ideologies, not only are aesthetics changing but also some aspects of the content of the exhibitions. Former popular themes such as martyrdom, class oppression and revolutionary ideas are not at the forefront anymore, replaced by themes that represent more recent views and ideologies on work, entrepreneurship, commercial interest and nationalism (*ibid.*).

Denton explains that the challenge curators face today is to find relevancy from old revolutionary themes, such as self-sacrifice, in today's market-oriented China, where self-interest prevail. New technologies are one way of doing it: the use of audio-visuals, dioramas, scenes and miniatures are only an imitation of reality and tend to separate from the authenticity of historical artefacts. New architecture is another way: it prepares the visitor to be exposed to different things inside the museum. Both the TEMP and the TEMH finish with modernization and development projects in Tangshan (in the TEMH, that part of the exhibition looks fairly new and must date from the renovations of 2006.) Interestingly, in the case of the museum at the TEMP, new themes and miniatures and audio-visuals as suggested by Denton are present. But old themes such as martyrdom and the unity of the nation in times of suffering also have their place, as the museum is about an earthquake. The old and new themes are reconciled through success and progress, combining self-sacrifice and self-interest.

Before the actual memorial a private company ran a project authorized by the government in 2006, etching names of deceased in a granite wall for a sum between 800 and 1000 RMB (Li 2010). At one point, that wall had over 10,000 names on it (*ibid.*). As it can often be the case, the first example of such commemorations was private and commercial. The wall is still there today but is longer collecting names and money. It has been replaced by the new wall at the TEMP, where it did not cost anything to include someone's name.

Most of my interviewees had been to the TEMP. Julia took advantage of their services: "I have been once to the memorial wall and my stepmother helped put my mother's name on the wall" (Julia 2011). The need for such a memorial for the victims had been requested by the population for a number of years, according to John (2011). The TEMH fulfilled less and less people's expectations and needs: "We were really happy in 1986 with the TEMH because finally there was a public place for all to remember. It was still not the ideal place because it is not

comfortable and peaceful. The wall is a better place to remember now. People commemorate less and less at the TEMH and go now to the wall. In fact, the next celebration of July 28th will be at the wall, I'm pretty sure" (John 2011).

Places of mourning are therefore not fixed but flexible. People can change their habits of commemorating and mourning if a better place is offered to them. Isabelle, the guide at the TEMH, clarifies the differences between the TEMH downtown and the TEMP, which is about a 5-10 minute drive from the city center:

"The Wall describes more the earthquake itself in details. Ordinary citizens prefer the wall to remember their lost ones. At the TEMH it does not talk only about the earthquake but a lot about the Tangshan history. The TEMH has many purposes. Political and national leaders come here. So the TEMH is maybe not for people who experienced the earthquake; more for the 'outsiders'. But both places are important in my heart because it refers to remembrance and rebuilding (we need one place for each of these)" (Isabelle 2011).

I asked a few people visiting the wall why they were here and how they learned about it. A group of four older men are tourists from outside the region. Another group of four, all in their early 20s, are also not from here. An old man is looking eagerly and anxiously at one of the walls: I learn that his wife died and he is looking for her name. He remarried but still thinks it is important to come and visit. Later I will see him again and the service desk printed him a sort of receipt indicating exactly where his former wife's name is located. A group of 4-5 people are all from Shanghai, except a girl. They did not know about the place, they are here as tourists but at the same time it is a way for the girl to introduce them to her hometown's history. Another group of people is looking for their relatives: they have found 3 out of 5 and they are going to the help desk to help them find the other two.

The TEMP is in general a very good site that has many purposes. At once, visitors can walk peacefully along the wall and reflect about what happened. They can witness ruins, which have another visual impact. They can conclude their journey with a visit to the museum to learn more about the earthquake in general. These advantages reflect Mary-Catherine E. Garden's three guiding principles of the 'Heritagescape': cohesion, visibility and boundaries (Garden 2009).

Chapter 5 - Commemoration enhancers

Recently, the Tangshan earthquake was in the national news for two reasons: an earthquake happened in the Sichuan province in 2008 and many thought of Tangshan then. Also, a fiction movie was released in 2010 which centered on the Tangshan earthquake. How did these two events affect commemoration in Tangshan?

5.1 Tangshan reactions to the Sichuan earthquake: Revisiting old memories

On May 12, 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 8 occurred in the Wenchuan County of Sichuan province. More than 65,000 people died and reconstruction is still undergoing today. In Tangshan, that news resonated like *déjà vu*. Furthermore, in March 2011, there was an earthquake in Japan. These two big earthquakes in Asia made many think of what happened in 1976.

Things have changed since 1976 in China. Some comparisons were made between the two earthquakes: “Due to new media, I heard about the Sichuan earthquake almost as soon as it happened. When I saw pictures of it, I realized how serious it was, but it seemed less severe than the Tangshan one because some buildings still stood up in Sichuan” (John 2011).

While it took 10 years for Tangshan to have its earthquake museum, in Sichuan it was faster. The construction of a public museum began in early 2011 in the Beichuan region and they plan to be done by May 2011 to commemorate the third anniversary of the earthquake (Simard 2011). On the other hand, a private museum already exhibits artefacts from the Wenchuan earthquake (Jianchuan Museum 2011). Private museums reputedly have the ability to change and adapt more quickly since they are not funded by the state and tied to its bureaucracy (Denton 2005). Frank, who went from Tangshan to Sichuan for work following the earthquake, did not visit any museum while there but to him, “the whole town was a museum” (Frank 2011). Today he has personal thoughts on both earthquakes:

“I think we hear about Tangshan more these past two years. Many Tangshan people think the movie was made due to the Sichuan earthquake, but the Sichuan earthquake happened during the filming of *Aftershock*. The government took more care of Tangshan than Sichuan because communication and transport were bad then so no one else could help.

The country was not rich in 1976 and help was slower then. Younger people might think that the Sichuan earthquake was more talked about because it is their generation. People were more shocked and sadder after the Tangshan earthquake than after the Sichuan earthquake. In 76, for political reasons, not many knew and talked about the earthquake outside China, and the government policy was to refuse international aid, but all of China was talking about the Tangshan earthquake. So in a way Sichuan received more attention than Tangshan then because there is money from the USA, Japan and Hong Kong” (*ibid.*)

In Tangshan, reactions did not wait. Right after the Sichuan earthquake, many felt compassion, especially survivors. John, who lost his parents in the Tangshan earthquake, gave money to relief efforts: “I donated 2000 Yuan to the campaign that was raising money for rebuilding Sichuan. I was well taken care of by the government after I lost my parents during the 1976 earthquake; I had nice teachers and a free education. I feel I must repay society” (2011). According to Yvonne, Tangshan has donated a lot to Sichuan, perhaps the highest per person of any Chinese city. She gave 650 RMB in memory of the help she received when she was young in 1976 (2011).

At school, it was a special time for all: “When the Sichuan earthquake occurred, all the students went to the playground and bowed their heads for 3 minutes in silence. The Chinese flag at my school was half-mast. The country’s main website was only in black and white and some computer games were blocked. The whole country did many things like that for 3 days” (Steve 2011). Giving money way also encouraged at school: “I donated 100 Yuan to a campaign organized by my school. My monitor came and picked up the money” (Steve 2011).

Tangshan sent rescuers to Sichuan and some became famous for their initiative: “There was a now-famous group of 12 volunteers that went from Tangshan to Sichuan to help for 20-30 days – they started this without making publicity. Little by little, they became popular. There were more talks about the Tangshan earthquake after Sichuan’s” (Plum 2011).

Some people could not help but feel a little bitterness: “I feel Tangshan’s earthquake was bigger than Sichuan’s, but this could only be a matter of perception. There was a lot of sympathy from Tangshan to Sichuan. For those who experience an earthquake, no reminder is necessary. But people in Tangshan think that if they had the modern tools of today then, it would have saved many” (Roger 2011).

After the tragedy in Sichuan, some people felt they had to do something to help mankind. Julia thinks people are more active now; for example they have watched the movie, there are some TV plays on the subject of the earthquake and they were donations (2011). This resonates with the thought that “historical memory of disasters is important also as an emotional bond between people” (Bezlova 2009). John agrees: “Since 2008, the earthquake is more often talked about. I am more peaceful. I talk more to my kids and I think people have a more active attitude; there are talks about how people can help each other and how we can repay society (i.e. the Red Cross). There is a kindness towards people. The earthquake made people unite: members of a different family formed a bigger one” (2011).

Often monuments and memorials are built to increase national unity. In the case of Tangshan, it was a little bit the case, as the whole country was aware of the disaster and many came to help from different parts of China. But the unity was built more on a shared identity on a local level. Interestingly, the Sichuan earthquake brought up memories of the Tangshan earthquake and these emotions made some people talk. This is the case of Carl:

“My mother’s account of 1976 is special. She was working that night doing physics experiments. She went outside to fetch water at her work and saw blue lightening. Electricity lines fell apart and then the earth shook. A co-worker tried to go back inside and she convinced him not to do so. A rope hurt her neck and she was bleeding and thought she had to go home but her parents would not be proud of the bleeding. She found her house demolished and almost went crazy. I was very sad hearing this story. I heard it for the first time a few days after the Sichuan earthquake – it started as a casual conversation with my mother but she was emotional by what happened in Sichuan and that made her tell me her story. We were both crying” (2011).

For Charles, connecting with people was a direct result of the Sichuan earthquake: “After the Sichuan earthquake, I communicated with middle school teachers in Sichuan through Internet to form some kind of cooperation between them. We had technical discussion and wanted to focus on what happens just before an earthquake. I still occasionally talk to them” (Charles 2011).

When Frank was in Sichuan to help rebuild the city, he received a warm welcome when people learned he was from Tangshan: “When people in Sichuan learned that I was from Tangshan, they were pleased and showed welcome and appreciation. I was happy to help since Tangshan received good help in 1976” (Frank 2011).

Plum visited Sichuan shortly after the earthquake. Once there, she was very emotional: “My husband worked in Sichuan to help rebuild the city and I felt a strong connection with Tangshan while I was there visiting him. I saw that *Aftershock* was screened there and I got very emotional” (Plum 2011).

5.2 The movie Aftershock: Fiction as a space of sharing memories

In July 2010, a movie was released that told the tale of a mother who had to decide between saving her son or daughter after the earthquake. She chooses the son but the daughter is later also rescued and adopted without the mother knowing. Years later, the family reunites.

The Tangshan earthquake was the subject of a few documentaries before this film. A more critical documentary on the Tangshan earthquake was done in 2009, *Buried*, where the author states that there were warnings about the Tangshan earthquake that were ignored (Kraicer 2010). This shows that there exists an unheard discourse related to the earthquake in Tangshan. But that documentary reached a smaller audience, while *Aftershock* was seen by millions of people.

The movie was a hit in China and even worldwide, making it one of the most popular Chinese movies of all time. It was jointly produced by the Huayi Brothers, China Film Group and the municipal government of Tangshan and directed by Xiaogang Feng. It was partly filmed in Tangshan.

How did the viewers of the *Aftershock* movie feel watching the movie and has their perception of their city and the earthquake changed? In which context people have seen it? Did the movie help people deal with their memories and how? It has been said that “some survivors believe the film is a proper tribute to the dead, but others fear the experience will just revive old traumas” (Xinhuanet 2010b). When *Aftershock* was adapted from the original novel to a screenplay, the angle switched from a dark tone to one filled with hope (Jenne 2010). Some say (*ibid.*) that, while very emotional and worth watching, the movie missed out on delicate political and social aspects of the earthquake. The earthquake itself is only mentioned in the first 30

minutes of the movie but its consequences are seen throughout the movie. In the end, the movie ended with a record of local sales (*ibid.*).

Here again, public and personal commemorations combine. Some saw the movie alone, some with their families or by attending a public premiere. The premiere screening was held in Tangshan on July 12, 2010: it was held outside in the Tangshan stadium and around 10,000 people attended. Before this event, the director laid down flowers at the wall of the TEMP (Xinhuanet 2010a). Julia was at the premiere and recalls the ambience: “I had an invitation from the Tangshan government; a classmate of mine works there and knew me and my story about losing my mother during the earthquake, a story I only started to tell others recently. I went with my stepmother and my son. My stepmother did not cry but I did. But I was not shocked because facts are worse than it was on screen, according to my stepmother” (Julia 2011).

Most of my interviewees saw the movie, but not all. The student Steve did not see it because he thought it was too serious (2011). None of the teachers I spoke to had shown it in class, claiming students were too busy with exams. The English teacher Yvonne and all of her family had not seen it because she heard the movie is not ‘real’ (2011). As for Plum, it is more difficult to explain: “I only saw parts of it. It is hard to say why. Maybe because I am afraid of emotions and also because the parts I saw on TV might be enough to know the whole story! But I was interested in everything surrounding the movie (interviews, etc.)” (Plum 2011). Two weeks later, interested by my research, she had seen more parts of the movie on TV but still not in its entirety.

Reasons differ as to why people saw the movie: “I cried many times during the visioning of *Aftershock*. I saw it twice at the cinema with a friend. The main reason I saw it is because the director is famous. But I thought it was the story of only one family, which does not represent everything about the Tangshan earthquake” (Carl 2011). Same thing goes for John: “I saw *Aftershock* many times and thought it was real and I cried. First I saw it at the cinema with my wife and kids and she was shocked (she is not from Tangshan). It was important for me to have my family there with me because I experienced the earthquake, not them. After, I saw it three times at home (I bought the DVD). Scenes and characters seemed very familiar to me” (2011).

Some were impressed by the resonances between the Tangshan on TV and the real Tangshan: “It caused me some emotion because it partly looked the old Tangshan (old equipment, old doors). At the factory they all spoke Tangshanese even the main actress (who is not from Tangshan, she is the wife of the director) had the accent so I was very surprised” (Plum 2011).

With the recent exposure of Tangshan, it is also the collective memory of the Tangshan earthquake that is changing. Due to the movie, everything that surrounded the earthquake of 1976 was invigorated and there were dialogues amongst survivors and between relatives and friends. Memorials and monuments are not the only places where such dialogues can happen as art and fiction in general can also act as another emotional releaser as this movie shows. Every Chinese student learns about the earthquake at school but now being put on screen, it adds another layer of knowledge, more visual and emotional. The 1976 Tangshan earthquake has further entered the Chinese memory.

For those who lived through the earthquake, talking to their children is one of the first ways to ensure that the memory will live on. It is also a way to communicate between members of a family and a way for survivors to share their experience and relieve some tension about difficult souvenirs: “I often tell my three kids about the earthquake; I bought them books also for them to learn by themselves. I want them to know how hard my experience was and I want them to keep my spirit alive” (John 2011).

Chapter 6 - Conclusion: Commemoration in a changing society

The Tangshan earthquake was a terrible disaster people try both to forget and to remember. Since 1976, Tangshan is closely associated with the earthquake and, ruins, earthquake monuments and memorials are being visited by locals as well as by tourists. Even if visitors did not lose relatives or acquaintances in the 1976 earthquake, they can relate to the loss of friends and relatives in general, as death is a factor of unity.

In this thesis, I have introduced the commemoration practices and the forms they take in Tangshan today. I presented how the earthquake is perceived and commemorated in more public ways such as at schools and through monuments, and also in private ways such as at home and at a memorial where the individual is more in focus. I also surveyed opinions on a recent movie about the earthquake and about the Sichuan earthquake of 2008.

My hypothesis was that recent factors such as the building of a new memorial, the movie and the Sichuan earthquake made people be more open to discuss the Tangshan earthquake. Indeed, these new events all increased pride, recognition and confidence in Tangshan, and at the same time created spaces for public and private talks. Commemorations depend on the socio-political context; 1976 China is very different from today's China. We can see more spaces for commemorating, and more ways of commemorating nowadays. The former official post-disaster discourse of heroism, nationalism and rebuilding is being challenged today by individuals who are voicing demands on to have more private spaces to commemorate. In China, the government has its say on museums and public memory sites. However, people's expectations and needs are changing. How far and for how long can a country control public memories?

Commemorations vary from person to person and from city to city and unanticipated events like earthquakes open the path for new ways of commemorating. While history writing is a constant search for facts, each individual remembers events in a certain way and this will define how they will commemorate privately and collectively. But memory could be an "antidote to history" (Benton and Cecil 2010, p.20) in the sense that physical structures may never reach the power of inner memories. There are also other unexpected factors such as the Sichuan earthquake that add to the set of pre-existing collective memories of disasters. It gave Tangshan residents more possibilities to speak about their own disaster and created concrete or abstract

bonds between Wenchuanese and Tangshanese people. Some were so moved by their reawakened personal memories that they opened up to their families. The movie *Aftershock* had similar effects and showed that a movie could also be a memory site on its own.

In this thesis, I have also witnessed divergence in opinions connected to the age of my interviewees. Topics such as the presence and utility of the ruins, the pertinence in seeing *Aftershock* and the variety of reasons why people commemorate brought up different reflections. Everybody has different memorabilia, heard many stories and has read information on the earthquake. This process of learning is happening in the classroom and at home today and this will forge the memories of younger generations. Through time, people will frequent memory sites and maybe ask for different places of commemorations if they themselves change or if the society around them changes.

There is room for further analysis of many questions raised in this thesis. Firstly, it would be interesting to better explain how a person or a population can go from wanting to forget a natural disaster to wanting to remember it. In Tangshan, this switch seems to have been made around 2006, for different reasons. It is therefore after this date that a movie could have come out and that a new memorial site could have been built. Is it only time that can let people reach peace with themselves, now able to tackle the subject? What role do official and ideological changes and related socio-economic factors play? What function do monuments and memorials play in this field?

Secondly, it took a relatively long time for Tangshan to get its first museum and later a more personal memorial such as the TEMP. At last, politicians listened to the population's demand to build a better memory site and it has become a main tourist site. Why is it that the people in Sichuan already have a museum and a 'poetry' wall, three years after their earthquake? Is that too early? To what extent does it reflect changes in Chinese society and how disasters are treated today? The fact that people already are asking for memory sites and that they are indeed built reflects a change. People are still not able to obtain everything they ask for, and for instance those questioning safety conditions of school buildings prior to the earthquake are being harassed. Although the government still has a strong say today in building and managing commemoration sites, there are more possibilities for individuals to open private museums and

engage in more individual commemorations practices, as well as engage in debates over the 'proper' forms and practices of commemoration. What do these changes tell us about China today?

Thirdly, we can ask ourselves if the earthquake monuments in Tangshan will still be relevant in a few generations. Disaster monuments are not widespread but like other monuments, they can lose some of their importance as time goes by. If, according to some, modern societies may have lost some memories compared to traditional societies where rituals, poetry and other forms of oral tradition perpetuated them (Benton and Cecil 2010, p.21), will then monuments and other artistic pieces one day be the sole bearers of memory and the only memory recallers? Like everything, monuments and memorials are adapted to fit socio-political changes. For how long a monument is relevant, how it can best conjure public and private memories, and what it needs to continue being a place of interest, are questions that need to be further explored.

Appendix - Timeline

1976 July 28: At 3:42, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 on the Richter scale (estimate) strikes Tangshan, Hebei, China. At least 240,000 people are killed.

1976 July: China announces it will not accept international aid.

1976 July-August: Thousands of helpers are sent from all over China to help Tangshan.

1986 After 10 years of reconstruction, Tangshan is proclaimed officially rebuilt.

1986 July: In the center of the city, the Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Hall is constructed to commemorate the victims and the rescuers.

2006 July: For the 30th anniversary of the earthquake, Tangshan commemorates with a visit from the President.

2008 May 12: A 7.9-magnitude earthquake strikes the province of Sichuan, killing at least 68,000 people.

2009 Another memorial site is built in Tangshan, the Tangshan Earthquake Memorial Park, a bit outside the city center.

2010 July: A movie about the Tangshan earthquake (*Aftershock*) is released.

Bibliography

Barmé, Geremie R., (2009) “Anniversaries in the light, and in the dark”. *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 17, March 2009.

Benton, Tim (2010) “Introduction” in Benton, Tim ed. *Understanding Heritage and Memory*. New York: Manchester University Press.

Benton, Tim and Clementine Cecil (2010) “Heritage and public memory” in Benton, Tim ed. *Understanding Heritage and Memory*. New York: Manchester University Press.

Bezlova, Antoaneta (2009) “China ‘Disaster Tourism’ Policy is Newest Subsidy to Devastated Areas”. *The Huffington Post*, May 27th 2009.

Chen, Beatrice (2005) “Resist the Earthquake and Rescue Ourselves: The Reconstruction of Tangshan after the 1976 Earthquake”, in Campanella Thomas J. and Lawrence J. Vale eds., *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

China Daily (2006) “Tangshan's miraculous rise”, China Daily, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2006-07/28/content_651558.htm (accessed 10. February 2011).

China Heritage Quarterly (2005) “Editorial: China’s new commitment to heritage”. *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 1, March 2005.

China Heritage Quarterly (2009a) “Editorial: The Heritage of Commemoration, Part I”. *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 17, March 2009.

China Heritage Quarterly (2009b) “Editorial: The Heritage of Commemoration, Part II”. *China Heritage Quarterly*, No. 18, June 2009.

China Tangshan Earthquake Museum (2009) *1976 Tangshan Earthquake*, Beijing.

ChinaVoc (2007) “Ghost Festival”, <http://www.chinavoc.com/festivals/ghost.htm> (accessed 8. May 2011).

Corsane, Gerard (2005) "Issues in heritage, museums and galleries: a brief introduction" in Corsane, Gerard ed., *Heritage, Museums and Galleries, an Introductory Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Davison, Patricia (2005) "Museums and the reshaping of memory" in Corsane, Gerard ed., *Heritage, Museums and Galleries, an Introductory Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Denton, Kirk A. (2005) "Museums, Memorial Sites and Exhibitionary Culture in the People's Republic of China". *The China Quarterly*, 183: 565-586.

Dunlap, David W. (2011) "Constructing a Story, With 2,982 Names", *The New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/nyregion/on-911-memorial-constructing-a-story-name-by-name.html?_r=2&hp#h\[\]](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/nyregion/on-911-memorial-constructing-a-story-name-by-name.html?_r=2&hp#h[]) (accessed 5. May 2011)

Feng, Xiaogang (2010) *Aftershock* [Motion Picture], China: China Film Group & Emperor Motion Picture.

Garden, Mary-Catherine E. (2009) "The Heritagescape", in Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig and John Carman eds., *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*. London: Routledge.

Gillis, John R. (1994) "Introduction" in Gillis, John R. ed., *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Halskov Hansen, Mette and Rune Svarverud (2010) *The Rise of the Individual in Modern Chinese Society*. Copenhagen: NIAS.

Hung, Chang-tai (2008) "The Cult of the Red Martyr: Politics of Commemoration in China". *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43:2, 279-304.

Jenne, Jeremiah (2010) "Aftershock and the legacy of the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake", Jottings from the Granite Studio, <http://granitestudio.org/2010/08/02/aftershock-and-the-legacy-of-the-1976-tangshan-earthquake/> (accessed 11. February 2011).

Jianchuan Museum (2011) "Introduction", Jianchuan Museum, <http://www.jc-museum.cn/> (accessed 16. February 2011).

Jochim, Christian (2008) "Chinese Beliefs", Encyclopedia of Death and Dying, <http://www.deathreference.com/Ce-Da/Chinese-Beliefs.html> (accessed 8. May 2011).

Kraicer, Shelly (2010) "Shelly on Film: Tremors and Traumas: Notes on Three Chinese Earthquake Movies", Dgenerate films, <http://dgeneratefilms.com/shelly-kraicer-on-chinese-film/shelly-on-film-tremors-and-traumas-notes-on-three-chinese-earthquake-movies/> (accessed 12. February 2011).

Lee, Ching Kwan and Guobin Yang (2007) "Introduction: Memory, Power, and Culture" in Lee, Ching Kwan and Yang, Guobin ed., *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memory in Reform China*. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Leng, Hui (2005) "Chinese cultural schema of Education: Implications for communication between Chinese students and Australian educators". *Issues in Educational Research*, 15:1, 17-36.

Li, Yanhui (2010) "A people's architect", *Global Times*, <http://beijing.globaltimes.cn/people/2011-04/607283.html> (accessed 15. May 2011).

Libo, Wang (2009) Buried [Motion Picture]. China: Wang Libo.

Mason, Rhiannon (2005) "Museums, galleries, and heritage: sites of meaning-making and communication" in Corsane, Gerard ed., *Heritage, Museums and Galleries, an Introductory Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Mu, Cong (2009) "Private quake museum opens in Sichuan", *Global Times*, http://china.globaltimes.cn/top_photo/2009-05/429895.html (accessed 4. May 2011).

Muslim Burial Council of Leicestershire (2011) "Attending a Muslim Funeral - A Guide For Non-Muslims", <http://www.mbc.org.uk/FuneralProcedure/AttendingaMuslimFuneralAGuideForNonMuslims/tabid/110/language/en-GB/Default.aspx> (accessed 8. May 2011).

Nddaily (2011) "Monument to remember the name of each" (author's translation), <http://gcontent.oeeee.com/6/d1/6d19c113404cee55/Blog/3a4/eead0b.html> (accessed 13. May 2011).

New Senior English for China (Student's Book 1) (2009) Beijing: People's Education Press.

Oliver, Anthony (2001) "Paper replicas of consumer objects are burnt as offerings to the dead at Ching Ming", Eye Magazine, <http://eyemagazine.com/feature.php?id=126&fid=556> (accessed 7. May 2011).

Peralta, Elsa and Anico, Marta (2009) "Introduction" in Peralta, Elsa and Anico, Marta eds., *Heritage and Identity: Engagement and Demission in the Contemporary World*. New York: Routledge.

Prats, Llorenç (2009) "Heritage according to scale" in Peralta, Elsa and Anico, Marta eds., *Heritage and Identity: Engagement and Demission in the Contemporary World*. New York: Routledge.

Qiángdào (2010) "Tangshan earthquake site visits", <http://www.ilvping.com/travels/linetip-id-11654.html> (accessed 2. March 2011).

Qu, Xiong (2011) "China unveils poetry wall to commemorate 2008 massive earthquake", CNTV, <http://english.cntv.cn/20110429/104489.shtml> (accessed 13. May 2011).

Schwartz, Barry and Mikyoung Kim (2010) "Introduction: Northeast Asia's Memory Problem" in Barry Schwartz and Mikyoung Kim eds., *Northeast Asia's Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simard, Valérie (2011) "Le séisme du Sichuan entre au musée", La Presse, <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/voyage/destinations/asie/chine/201101/10/01-4358666-le-seisme-du-sichuan-entre-au-musee.php> (accessed 12. February 2011).

Sommer, Ulrike (2009) "Methods used to investigate the use of the past in the formation of regional identities", in Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig and John Carman eds., *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*. London: Routledge.

Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig and John Carman (2009) "Introduction", in Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig and John Carman eds., *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*. London: Routledge.

Teather, Elizabeth Kenworthy (2001) “The case of the disorderly graves: Contemporary deathscapes in Guangzhou”. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 2:2, 185-202.

Watson, James L. (1988) “The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites: Elementary Forms, Ritual Sequence, and the Primacy of Performance”, in James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

West, Susie (2010) “Introduction” in West, Susie ed., *Understanding Heritage in Practice*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Xinhuanet (2010a) “Emotional premier for *Aftershock* at site of Tangshan earthquake”, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-07/14/c_13399049.htm (accessed 20. February 2011).

Xinhuanet (2010b) “Tangshan watches ‘Aftershock’ with apprehension, respect”, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/entertainment/2010-07/13/c_13396476.htm (accessed February 5. 2011).

Xu, Bin (2009) “Durkheim in Sichuan: The Earthquake, National Solidarity, and The Politics of Small Things”. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 72:1, 5-8.

Interviews

Anna (A retired teacher). Notes taken during the interview, March 14, 2011.

Carl (Mathematics teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 10, 2011.

Charles (Physics teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 27, 2011.

Frank (Auditor for the municipality of Tangshan). Notes taken during the interview, March 12, 2011.

Isabelle (Guide at the Tangshan earthquake Memorial Hall). Notes taken during the interview, March 8, 2011.

John (Accountant in a private company). Notes taken during the interview, March 5, 2011.

Julia (Physics teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 10, 2011.

Nick (Geography teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 18, 2011.

Plum (English teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interviews, March 4 & 28, 2011.

Ray (Physics teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 10, 2011.

Roger (School administrator in a middle school). Notes taken during the interview, March 14, 2011.

Steve (Student in grade 11). Notes taken during the interview, March 6, 2011.

Yvonne (English teacher at a middle school). Notes taken during the interviews, March 13 & 29, 2011.