

Films and TV must tell Taiwanese war stories

Written by Chen Ping-hsun 陳平軒
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Every year when the anniversary of the 228 Incident approaches, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) becomes protective of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石). Its lack of reflection leaves the feeling that there is still a bit to go before Taiwan's democratization process is complete.

One of the reasons put forward by those who refuse to reflect on the old dictator is that transitional justice is detrimental to the economy.

This point of view is unacceptable.

There has long been a lack of films or TV shows that view war from a Taiwanese perspective. War movies by the Central Motion Pictures Co are all about the Nationalist army.

One such film is *Eight Hundred Heroes* (八百壯士) from 1975, which is about the soldiers fighting in the 1937 incident that marked the beginning of the Battle of Shanghai, on whom the veterans demonstrating outside the legislature in defense of their 18 percent preferential interest rate are modeling themselves.

The industry has not invested in Taiwanese war stories because of the KMT's White Terror, which forced an erasure of history and wiped out any traces of the 228 Incident and the following March Massacre. Fortunately, the nation has now democratized and this part of history is gradually being remembered.

Anyone who tries to wipe out history should be taught a lesson as a necessary part of the transitional justice process. Retribution gives people the courage to bring up past events, one example being the well-known athlete Chi Cheng (齊臣) who recently spoke about the 228 Incident's impact on her family.

The positioning of the Incident is of the utmost importance to the development of the cultural industry. From the KMT's criminalization to the heroic activities of those who opposed the foreign government, the Incident is a modern Taiwanese war story.

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Take for example a group in which the industry is beginning to show interest: the guerrilla force in central Taiwan known as the 27 Brigade, which named itself after Feb. 27, the day of the event that initiated the following day's massacre.

War stories relating to the 228 Incident are not restricted to the 27 Brigade. There were also other displays against KMT military forces that are worthy of further investigation, as well as many other stories connected to the March Massacre that should be brought to light.

These events are a treasure trove for films and TV and will only be revealed after transitional justice has been put into practice.

This is why transitional justice is beneficial to economic development: It provides a foundation for the development of the cultural industry.

Modernization is the process of understanding the nation's past anew. Only when the 228 Incident begins to be viewed from the perspective of its heroes will the cultural industry develop a soul and cease serving as a mindless host for fairy tales about the KMT's resistance against Japan.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

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