Heritage Tourism as Nation-Building: The Construction of National Identity and Historicity in the Tourist Attractions of Taipei and Beijing

Asia

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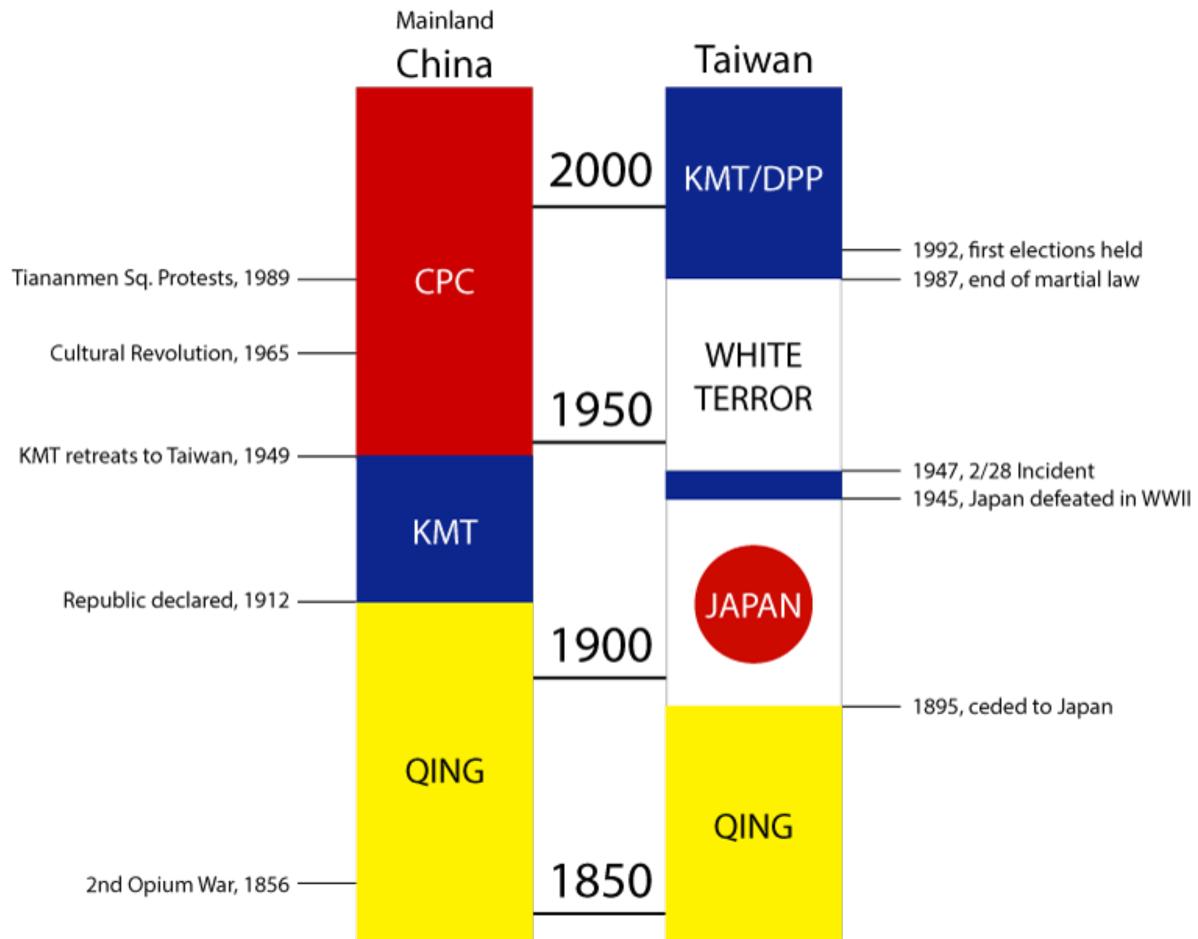
Abstract: Heritage tourism, or tourism to sites which authentically represent the past and present lives of the people of a nation (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2010), is indelibly tied to nationalism, and is an important tool which nations and governments use to collectively construct a national identity and narrative. Nationalism uses an imagined common heritage to construct and unite diverse citizens and construct a single, unified national identity (Morais et al., 2010), so heritage sites are the de facto canvasses onto which the collective national identity is created, synthesized, or confirmed. This is especially important in cases of nations which have experienced upheaval and changes in government and social dynamics, such as mainland China and Taiwan. In order to create a synergized and easily digestible version of a complex history, sites are constructed or contextualized to suit a particular narrative. Those which do not suit that narrative may be destroyed, de-emphasized, or reimagined as a new type of heritage. For this reason, the creation and preservation of heritage tourism sites cannot simply be regarded as a politically inert action; instead, we must consider heritage sites as subject to biased selection and interpretation, whose creators utilize history as a tool to further a particular narrative (Morais et al., 2010). This paper sets out to analyze the ways in which heritage tourism sites have been selectively interpreted in Taipei and Beijing to manipulate and modify ideas of historicity, ethnic identity, and national identity in their citizens.



The Continued Re-contextualization of Heritage Sites in Taipei

The identity of a modern nation-state is always complex, but Taiwan's is especially so— the country has gone through a number of wildly different hegemonies in the last two hundred years, each with their own unique and sometimes conflicting national identities and values. This has led to several waves of construction, destruction, and re-contextualization of heritage tourism spaces and structures under the Japanese, the KMT, and the current democratic government.

Constructing a narrative of united Chinese culture under the KMT

In the period of martial law under the KMT (Kuomintang, 中國國民黨), 1947-1988, public spaces, tourist destinations, and cultural performances and artifacts were utilized to create a narrative of Taiwan as the continuation of an uninterrupted Chinese civilization (originating on the mainland) going back thousands of years. In order to further this narrative, the KMT enforced a policy of "re-Sinicization" (中國化), or promoting the "return" of traditional Chinese culture, while simultaneously repressing the expression of local indigenous and foreign minority cultures such as Hakka and Hoklo (Morais et al., 2010) and carrying out “de-Japanization” (去日本化) by destroying or altering Japanese structures and replacing Japanese language materials and place names with Chinese ones (Amae, 2011). Where the Japanese had built landmarks such as Shinto shrines in order to create a connection to Japanese religion and culture, the KMT tore them down and built Confucian temples in the same locations. This process of destruction and reconstruction of monuments served as a physical representation of the KMT replacing Japan as the ruling national power, creating a new national narrative centered around these sinicized monuments.

Taiwan and the KMT were also set up in contrast to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in mainland China. This can be seen in efforts such as Chiang Kai-shek’s 1966 Chinese Cultural Renaissance (中華文化復興運動), a campaign created in response to the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China. In addition to other goals, such as encouraging Confucian education and reprinting Chinese classic literature, it included a directives for the construction of

national theaters and opera houses (which would eventually be filled with troupes of government-employed Peking Opera performers), national art galleries to promote traditional painting styles and calligraphy, and for historical relics important to the Chinese people to be preserved (Guy, 2005).

In addition, many landmarks dedicated to Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen were constructed in this era in a neo-classical Chinese style, including Liberty Square (formerly Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall Square), which situated a massive monument and museum dedicated to Chiang Kai-shek at the center of one of Taipei's largest public parks, also containing the massive National Concert Hall and National Theater; the area is comparable in scale and purpose to Beijing's Tiananmen Square. By situating these things together in the center of Taipei, a connection is evoked in the visitor's mind between Chinese architecture and arts and KMT leadership.

Post-colonialism and De-Chiang Kai-shek-ification

Following the end of martial law and slow opening up of the country to democracy in 1988, Lee Teng-hui's government and subsequent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leaders ushered in a new era of "Taiwanization" or "Taiwan localization" (臺灣本土化) with sub goals of "de-Sinification" (去中化) and "de-Chiang Kai-shek-ification" (去蔣化) (Taylor, 2009) - we can see obvious parallels in content and linguistics between these movements and the KMT's cultural programs, with the continued refrain of 去_化, which can be translate as something like "out with ____ culture." In addition, there was a move to preserve and rebuild the Japanese colonial sites which had been destroyed or repurposed under the KMT (Amae, 2011). Whereas under KMT rule

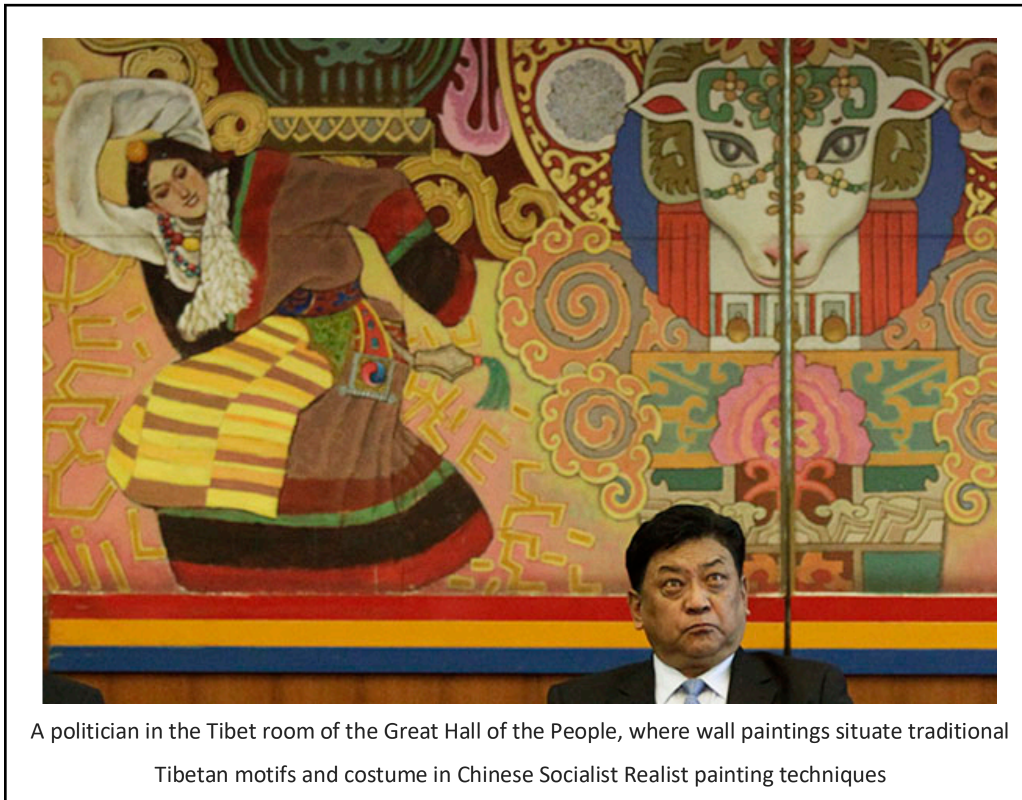
monuments and institutions were constructed with the purpose of evoking Chinese qualities, under democratic control (1990's to present), the nation shifted toward the creation of tourist sites and monuments which emphasized Taiwan's multicultural nature. Although multiculturalism may seem at odds with the project of creating a unified national identity, "a unified national identity can be created in a diverse country because *diversity itself* becomes an aspect of national identity" (Pretes, 2003). This can be seen in the development of new attractions in Taipei, such as the Taipei City Hakka Cultural Park (constructed in 2009), as well as the re-building or re-contextualization of existing monuments, such as Nishi Honganji Square and Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall.

Nishi Honganji Square, which was constructed during the Japanese era as Buddhist monastery, was restored in 2013 to serve as a tourist attraction. The official Taipei tourism website claims that the square was "jointly constructed by Japanese and Taiwanese Buddhists from 1904 to 1912," and has been "transformed into an urban attraction and extension of the fashion-forward, buzzing Ximen neighborhood" (Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government.) Much like the KMT's construction of Liberty Square, the DPP's restoration of Nishi Honganji is meant to further parts of their preferred version of Taiwan's national myth: by drawing attention to sites of Japanese heritage in Taiwan, and emphasizing Taiwanese-Japanese collaboration (as opposed to mentioning the colonial oppressions Taiwanese people may have faced at this site, such as being forced to attend Japanese temples against their will (Amae, 2011)), they forward the idea of Taiwan as a multicultural (and not solely Chinese) nation. And by making a connection between the monument and the trendy, modern shopping district of

Ximending (sometimes called the "Harajuku of Taipei" or "Shibuya of Taipei", comparisons evoking two internationally popular clothing and cultural districts of Tokyo), they connect Taiwan's current economic prosperity and vibrancy with this multi-cultural version of Taiwanese history in the visitor's mind.

Another interesting re-contextualization is that of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and the square surrounding it, which was renamed Liberty Square in 2007. Much like Beijing's Tiananmen Square, this plaza saw the rise of many popular protests in the 1980s and 90s. Unlike Tiananmen Square, however, where this protest history is downplayed, the name Liberty Square emphasizes it, re-situating this historical site as a place important to the Taiwanese democracy movement, rather than a reminder of the period of KMT rule under Chiang Kai-shek. In both cases it functions as a heritage tourism destination, but for two very different kinds of heritage. The Hall itself has also undergone changes: while a permanent collection dedicated to the life of Chiang Kai-shek remains, the majority of the exhibition space is now dedicated to exhibits of local history and art, as well as foreign exhibitions, ranging from Warhol to Ghibli. In addition to the annual National Aboriginal Children's Painting Competition, the Hall also frequently features exhibitions by or about Taiwanese aboriginal peoples (Lin, 2018).

Of course, the things which are not emphasized may be as telling as the things which are. Take, for example, the Cíhú Mausoleum and Park in Taoyuan, West of Taiwan's capital of Taipei. Despite being the final resting place of Chiang-Kai Shek, one of the major figures of Taiwanese (and Chinese) national history, this site is rarely (if ever) advertised in tourism publications aimed at foreign or domestic tourists. Cíhú has also become the site of another unique



A politician in the Tibet room of the Great Hall of the People, where wall paintings situate traditional Tibetan motifs and costume in Chinese Socialist Realist painting techniques

attraction: it is the repository of a large portion of the nation's collection of Chiang-Kai Shek statues, which were once a fixture of all public institutions, from hospitals to schools. Now that Taiwan has begun re-constructing its identity as a modern, democratic nation—and attempting to put the years of violence and repression connected to Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT party, known as the White Terror, in its rear-view mirror—these statues have mostly been relegated to Cíhú Park, creating surrealist dioramas such as Chiang Kai-Shek delivering a speech to a rapt audience of other Chiang Kai-Sheks. Taiwan is far from the only country to have adopted this practice; several post-Soviet states across Europe contain similar repositories of leaders.[1]

The Maintenance and Revitalization of Communist Heritage Sites in Beijing

[1] To name just a few examples: Grutas Park in Lithuania (also known as Stalin World), the Alley of Leaders in Ukraine, Memento Park in Hungary, and Fallen Monument Park in Russia.

"A public museum in China is seldom about the past… It is about the current image of the party and how the party wants itself to be seen." (Johnson, 2011)

In Beijing, however, the outlook is quite different. Despite a shifting political and economic landscape (that some consider post-socialist or even post-communist), China's communist heritage is not only a subject of preservation but of modern narrative-building. While the West largely associates Tiananmen Square with the pro-democracy riots that took place there in 1989, it has long been a center of Chinese heritage tourism and nationalist identity construction, and to this day plays an important role in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s construction of a narrative of China's history.

Originally the entrance to the Forbidden City, and the dividing line between Beijing's common and privileged classes, it was re-contextualized by the CCP as a people's paradise of art and learning: here can be found not only a collection of original Socialist Realist statues that have been relocated in so many other countries, but several monumental examples of Communist architecture and sites of constructed historicity: the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong[2], where visitors can still catch a glimpse of the famous leader's preserved body in a glass casket; the National Museum of China, which exhibits relics of Chinese art and daily life from every era alongside the massive centerpiece exhibit, *Road to Revival*, a highly idealized narrative of the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power; and the Great Hall of the People, where visitors can tour the rooms where several government bodies continue to meet yearly, and observe conference rooms dedicated to every province of China (including Tibet,

[2] In marked contrast to Taiwan's cooling relationship with Chiang Kai-shek, Mao, and his body, remain a central element of Chinese heritage tourism products.

Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao) and decorated in that province’s local style. (On the outskirts of the Square can be found several other national institutions, including the Numismatic Museum, Police Museum, and National Center for the Performing Arts.)

Like the landmarks of Taipei, Tiananmen Square has been a part of many different (and sometimes conflicting) narratives of national identity. Under the Ming and Qing dynasties, Tiananmen Square was part of the Forbidden City, the seat of imperial power in China. The square itself was "reserved for special events held by the royal court, and commoners were not allowed to enter" (Ichikawa, 2015). It therefor represented the idea not only of national power, but of a national power that was separate from and above the common people. Under the rule of the Republic of China, the square was opened formally to the public for the first time, and hosted military parades on National Foundation Day (Ichikawa, 2015), becoming a symbol of the Republic of China’s military conquest over the monarchy.

Under communism, it became a powerful symbol of yet another nation-state, when Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People’s Republic of China there in 1949. In the context of the communist era, the opening of Tiananmen Square represented not only the Republic itself, but the idea of opening up spaces which were previously the exclusive purview of the bourgeoisie to all citizens—a re-distribution of cultural wealth and heritage to the people. This narrative was reenforced through various monumental Communist constructions undertaken in the following decades, including the addition of the Monument to the People’s Heroes in the center of Tiananmen Square in 1958, the Great Hall of the People in 1959, the Museum of the Chinese Revolution in 1950,

and Mao Zedong Memorial Hall in 1977 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2019). The People's Hall is particularly interesting in terms of constructing historicity; the inclusion of localities like Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao (which at the time were all independent countries) alongside the provinces of the PRC, with no delineation made, implied not only that these were provinces of an equal standing to the others but that their leaders had a place in the government of the PRC. It also creates a historical myth going forward; as China continues to seize or take over these territories, it can point to their initial inclusion in Hall of the People as "proof" that they have always been part of China.

Unlike Taipei, Beijing's shift toward the modern era has been less of an about-face than a consolidation. In 2003, The Museum of the Chinese Revolution was combined with the earlier National Museum of Chinese History (originally constructed under the Republic of China in 1913, and open only sporadically since then—it was closed, for example, during the entire decade of the Cultural Revolution) to form the National Museum of China. The centerpiece of the museum is a massive permanent exhibition called *The Road to Rejuvenation*, a carefully edited history of China from 1840 to the present. The enormous exhibit, spanning five exhibition halls and containing over 2,220 objects, was designed to show "the glorious history of China under the leadership of the Communist Party" (Beech, 2011). What is not included in the exhibit are several of the more controversial events of the communist era: the Anti-Rightist movement, in which intellectuals who disagreed with the Party faced purges, with many sentenced to hard labor or even execution; the Great Leap Forward, an attempt to move the country from an agrarian to industrial society which lead to what was possibly the most deadly famine in

human history (estimates range anywhere from 15-43 million casualties); and, possibly most ironically, the Cultural Revolution, in which the Party enacted a nation-wide campaign of destruction against pre-Communist heritage sites and artifacts (Denton, 2014). By placing this significantly-edited version of history in the middle of Tiananmen Square, a site of a palimpsest of meanings for China and the world, the Party is literally situating its own nationalist narrative at the heart of this site of heritage. The transformation of Tiananmen Square into a tourist site, and a site of tourism specifically for Communist heritage, is a direct method of narrative reclamation—reclaiming the narrative of China's history from the imperial class and giving it to the common people.

Conclusions

Both Taipei and Beijing have used heritage tourism sites to formulate specific nationalist narratives about the history and identity of their nations over the past century. While the narratives emphasized have been wildly different, the techniques utilized have often been the same: for example, both utilized at various times the technique of destroying heritage structures representing a narrative antithetical to their own and replacing them with ones better suited. In Beijing, this was the demolition of original imperial buildings and gates in Tiananmen Square to make way for monuments and museums to the Communist cause, shifting the heritage value from one of imperial significance to the Ming and Qing to one of significance in the history of the People's Republic. In Taipei, it took the form of destroying Japanese-built Shinto temples and replacing them with Confucian ones. They also share the technique of adapting heritage sites of previous powers to fit their own narrative: in Beijing, the adaptation of the National Museum of Chinese History, constructed by the

Republic of China government, into a museum which centers the history of the Communist party; and in Taipei, filling the exhibition spaces of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, a monument dedicated to a leader who sought to de-emphasize aboriginal culture and Taiwan's uniqueness from the rest of China, with art shows highlighting aboriginal and Taiwanese works.

However, their approaches have diverged over time. While heritage sites in modern Taipei have been selectively maintained, augmented, or reinterpreted, sites of Communist heritage in Beijing have largely retained the same narrative since their construction, with little room offered for reinterpretation or competing narratives. Beijing's goal is creating a consistent narrative of Party rule over time, which highlights positive aspects exclusively. And although Beijing has made strides toward reconstructing heritage sites of the pre-communist era[3], the main goal of the Party's tourism development wing remains the maintenance of sites of Communist heritage (Wall & Ning, 2017). Taipei, meanwhile, has become interested in maintaining and restoring heritage sites from a variety of eras, and creating a new national narrative for the modern era that distances the Taiwanese national identity from the one constructed by the authoritarian government which ruled only a short time ago.

Both of these cases demonstrate the importance of heritage tourism sites to nationalism and national identity—and, conversely, the importance of nationalism in

[3] Although it retains a very tightly circumscribed narrative- see, for example, the controversial restoration of the Old Summer Palace, which the Party has undertaken in order to "highlight Western atrocities" (Wang, 2005) (referring to the destruction of parts of the palace by European powers during the 1800s). No mention is made of the additional destruction that occurred during the Cultural Revolution.

determining which heritage sites should be maintained and how they should be framed and interpreted. Heritage sites have the capacity to continually remind citizens who visit of the national narratives on which their sense of identity and belonging is based (Park, 2010), which makes it an important means of creating and reinforcing a national identity. Rather than sites of inherent meaning, heritage sites are selected and given particular meanings by the people and governments who interact with them, and in turn, they give the people who visit a way in which to connect with and reaffirm their nationalist and ethnic identities.

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