

Tourism as Consciousness of Struggle: Cultural Representations of Taiwan

HUI-CHING CHANG
and
G. RICHARD HOLT

□—*This study examines depictions of Taiwan in a variety of discourses about tourism. Taiwan's depictions tend to one side or the other of the traditional-modern continuum and are undergirded by assumptions of political power, particularly that of claiming the right to represent the cultural Other.*

TRAVEL and tourism are often seen as recreational activities, devoid of social and political meaning. Ideally, tourists travel to an unfamiliar locale, experience a different culture for a time, and then return to the workaday world, refreshed and invigorated (Graburn, 1977). Tourists are frequently seen as engaging in a "fun"—that is, "value-neutral"—activity that demands little or no active involvement from visitors and exerts just as little change on them.

Nevertheless, several scholars have suggested that tourism is far more complex (Bruner & Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1989; Clifford, 1983; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1989; MacCannell, 1976). For example, MacCannell (1976) explores the many ways in which the seemingly "harmless" pursuit of "recreation" involves a complex engagement of symbolic representations in which the basic schizophrenia of capitalist culture manifests itself. Elsewhere, Bruner and Gorfain (1984) have used a Bakhtinian framework to foreground a variety of cultural accounts of the tourist site Masada in Israel, arguing that any given account of such a site is essentially dialogic, gaining power from the accounts that oppose it. This clash of competing "voices" that recount a site's "real history" underlies all touristic experience and confirms its complexity.

The contest among the competing "voices" is essentially a contesting for the right to inscribe or represent another culture, a power that traditionally has been granted to the anthropologist/ethnographer (Clifford, 1983). It has been assumed that anthropologists' professional training and experience give them sole legitimacy to describe "correctly" the cultural Other. However, as Crick (1985) argues, ethnography and tourism involve essentially the same practices of symbolic representation: Both attempt to fixate the cultural Other in a specific way. For the anthropologist,

this desire to limit and contain the other culture takes the form of constraints placed upon the ethnographic narrative. As Clifford (1986) notes,

“Cultures” do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship (p. 10).

Just as the culture is selectively manifested to the ethnographer, so is it selectively manifested to the tourist. Both ethnographers and tourists engage in cultural *inscriptions* (not *descriptions*) that lead them to fixate the host culture in a certain way. When one writes to an intended audience, one has in mind the response of the potential reader/listener (Bakhtin, 1986); this potential response acts as a set of constraints interlocking writer, audience, institutional affiliation, and so forth. The need to convince the potential audience is what leads to selectivity in description, so that in a very real sense the values of the *audience*, through the author, are reflected and reinforced (i.e., inscribed) in the ethnographer's or the tourist's representation. This selectivity is further unavoidably informed by the social-political relationship between the representer (speaking, as it were, for the intended audience) and the represented (Clifford, 1986), leading to the possibility that the superior power may choose to dominate the represented culture both literally and symbolically.

Considering tourism as a form of power domination through representation gives rise to a major question: How do the social and political perspectives of both host and tourist impinge upon these choices of representation?

Cultural representations in touristic discourses are power-laden practices employed by particular agents, to address particular audiences, with particular means, to achieve particular goals. Within various types of touristic discourse, alternative representations of the “same” facts are in a state of constant struggle. The tourist-host interaction comprises a highly charged field of discourses in which political and social predispositions are emphasized and exacerbated as they clash for dominance (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1973). Not only is political power reflected in the contact between tourist and host, but the standards chosen to frame cultural representations are inevitably informed by political issues (“political” here referring to differential power distribution among individuals and states). Driven by political agendas, hidden and overt, representation is negotiated and compromised, and continually reassessed.

To illustrate how cultural representation in touristic discourse arises from identifiable political perspectives, here we analyze the case of Taiwan. As we examine Taiwan's historical development and its present ambiguous situation, we show that tourism in Taiwan is an arena for the struggle for domination through representation, particularly as evidenced in contrast to the perceptions of Western tourists.

To detect the complex interacts among these various meanings, we have chosen to compare an official touristic representation of Taiwan (published in English by the government) with two alternative, nongovernmental representations (also in English). The first, *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit*, was written by Crowther (1985) and published by Lonely Planet Publications in Victoria, Australia; the second, *The All-Asia Guide* (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982; 1986), was pub-

lished in Hong Kong by South China Morning Post, Ltd. The intended audience in all three cases is Westerners, but the three guide books have very different sociopolitical goals, and each has a finely tuned awareness of a different potential audience. Both types of difference can be detected in *any* such discourse; thus, rather than seek a common pattern among a "sample" of "representative" discourses, we preferred to explore a few in depth. The important question is not, "Which touristic discourse (guidebook, personal account, etc.) is representative?" but rather, "What awareness of audience and sociopolitical assumptions are manifest in the touristic discourse being analyzed?" If tourism is a form of power domination (Nash, 1977), how do the social and political perspectives of both host and tourist impinge upon these choices of representation?

In this regard it is worth noting that the official tour guidebook represents an attempt by the government to portray itself to potential English-speaking tourists, whereas the two "non-official" guidebooks represent to English-speaking tourists the point of view of writers not committed to portraying Taiwan in a favorable light. Since tour guides are intended not for natives but for visitors, the two non-official guides are directed to those who speak English fairly well. Furthermore, since English occupies the premier position among languages (O'Barr, 1984), these accounts aim at privileged audiences in Western countries (those who speak the dominant language). Such audiences may be presumed to share certain common cultural norms (Benedict, 1934), at least to the extent of recognizing what is meant by the terms "advanced" and "developed." Thus, both the official and the non-official guides, by positioning themselves in regard to a potential audience that shares a common grasp of the grammar and cultural assumptions, must initiate their discourses in the realization of potential conflict. This is why we contend that touristic discourses are in a constant state of struggle: Inherent in the rhetoric of one is a response to the anticipated rhetoric of the others.

To supplement these primary comparisons, we will also analyze questionnaire responses by a group of potential readers of such materials (20 American undergraduate students in the United States). To get a Taiwanese perspective, both toward the "official" account and toward the possibility of visitation by Americans, we conducted extended interviews with five Taiwanese graduate students studying in the United States concerning how they might represent their country to American visitors. Again, we must emphasize that the significance of our analysis does not lie in any judgments about whether any of these informants are representative of tourists and hosts from their respective cultures. Rather, it lies in identifying the possible social and political forces underlying such judgments about tourism. Conjoining all these diverse data sources, we examine cultural representations of Taiwan to show how power relations may be comprised in shaping their content.

We present our analysis in four parts. First, we present a short history of Taiwan and its present image in the West. Second, we depict the struggle over the cultural representations of Taiwan's history. Third, we compare modern touristic representations, with particular emphasis on three key aspects of the touristic enterprise in Taiwan: Chinese culture, aspects of Taipei (Taiwan's capital city), and modern accommodations. Fourth, based on the observations made in the preceding section, we advance an analysis of the power dynamics involved in imprisoning Taiwan between modernity and tradition.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Taiwan is an island located in the East-South China Sea. The Portuguese called it "Ilha Formosa," the "beautiful island," when they arrived in the sixteenth century. Taiwan has considerable experience with framing its culture to suit the preferences of other nations: It has been invaded by the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and French. The Portuguese were driven out by the Ming Dynasty patriot Chen-Kon Cheng in the seventeenth century. Later Taiwan became part of the Ching empire until it was ceded to Japan, under whose occupation it remained from 1895 to 1945. In 1949, the Nationalist Chinese moved to Taiwan and formed a government that has remained in power until the present, as the Republic of China and claims—in opposition to the Communist Chinese government on the mainland—to be the only legitimate Chinese government.

For many years, Taiwan maintained formal diplomatic relations with many countries, including the United States. However, in 1978, with the increasing political power of the Communist Chinese on the mainland, the U.S. government moved to sever this relationship and recognized the People's Republic of China as the only official Chinese government. The United States (and many other countries) have since maintained only informal diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Although Taiwan's international political power decreased considerably in the 1970s, its economic success during the same period has been praised. According to the *Encyclopedia Americana International Edition* (1989), "striking changes have taken place in Taiwan's economic structure since the industrial boom that began in the 1960's. Between 1960 and 1980, industry's share of the gross domestic product doubled, from 26% to 52%" (p. 235). Taiwan is now considered by some to be a developed country, as one of the guidebooks examined here, *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit* (Crowther, 1985), acknowledges. According to this guidebook, Taiwan has undergone a phenomenal transition over the last thirty years, from an underdeveloped agricultural country into a highly industrialized nation. These descriptions confirm that Taiwan is presently in an ambivalent state. Many Taiwanese see their country as "developed" but can remember a time not too long ago when the descriptor "underdeveloped" was imposed.

We administered a questionnaire to a group of American undergraduate students, none of whom had ever visited Taiwan. The first question asked students what they would expect to see if they were to visit Taiwan. Conflicting images were obtained. Some envisioned Taiwan as an industrialized country with many factories and air pollution but with a lower standard of living than in the United States. Others described a traditional country with many side-street peddlers, Oriental statues, and a variety of architectural styles. Others described an underdeveloped country, with poorly educated and poorly dressed people. Still others saw a country of natural beauty, with beautiful beaches and "a lot of green trees on the mountains". Even a nonrepresentative, nonrandom sample of Americans reveals a great deal of diversity of opinion about what Taiwan might be like.

We next asked whether the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements, "Taiwan is an underdeveloped country" and "Things manufactured in Taiwan are generally not very good". Most respondents mildly or strongly disagreed with both statements (though some respondents agreed with the former). Once again, the

diversity of opinion, while not conclusive, is interesting and provocative, further confirming that Taiwan is perceived to be in a state of ambivalence between modernity and tradition.

THE STRUGGLE OVER REPRESENTATION OF TAIWAN'S HISTORY

All touristic representations of a cultural site rely on historical narrative (Bruner & Gorfain, 1984). Nearly every guidebook begins with a historical account, which may be read as a framing consistent with the representer's purposes and based in turn upon his or her perspective regarding a specific audience. The identity of the target audience can be determined in most instances by asking, "Who is writing to whom, and to what purpose?" (Geertz, 1973).

The case of Taiwan clearly reveals the operation of several diverse accounts of the country's history. To exemplify how striking these differences can be, we analyze the accounts of the three tour guidebooks in terms of three issues: (a) the circumstances surrounding the founding of Taiwan's government, (b) the role of Japan, and (c) the relationship between Taiwan and the United States. We point out the discrepancy among the various accounts and discuss the implications of these discrepancies in terms of the political power of the representer.

Discrepant Pictures of Taiwan's History

The first discrepancy concerns the precise nature of the Nationalist government's "move" from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan. According to the official account, *A Glance at Taiwan Republic of China* (Tourism Bureau, 1988), Taiwan was "restored to" Nationalist Chinese control in 1945 when Chiang Kai-Shek led his troops to Taiwan: "Since then, Taiwan has enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and the fastest rate of modern development ever witnessed in the world" (p. 7). The term "restored to" confirms the legitimacy of the Nationalist government's reclamation (like a lost child "restored to" the care of his or her natural parents), the result being "unprecedented prosperity . . . and growth". Another representer, *The All-Asia Guide* (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982), a Hong Kong publication addressed to English-speaking visitors, uses a more neutral tone, stating simply that the Nationalist government "moved to" Taiwan in 1949 (p. 418). However, a third source, *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit* (Crowther, 1985), describes the relocation as "the evacuation of Kuo-Ming-Ton [the Nationalist Chinese party] forces from the mainland following their defeat" (p. 125). These three depictions of the Nationalist government—from the favorable "restored to" to the more neutral "moved to" to the unfavorable "evacuation . . . following defeat"—clearly reflect different political agendas.

The second discrepancy is in how the different sources treat Japan, which occupied Taiwan for fifty years. According to the official guide (Tourism Bureau, 1988), "for fifty years [Taiwan] remained under the yoke of colonial Japanese rule, until the end of World War II, when Taiwan was restored to Nationalist Chinese control in 1945" (p. 7). *Korea and Taiwan* states, "Though hated as colonialists, the Japanese did provide Taiwan with its first major roads, railways and factories thus helping to pave the way toward modernization" (1985, p. 125). *The All-Asia Guide*

(Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982) says that the Japanese were more advanced than Taiwan during the period of occupation, so that the Japanese invasion laid the groundwork for Taiwan's modernization. These three accounts again reveal a progressively more positive attitude toward Japan as a dominating power and a corresponding decrease in positive regard for the Nationalist government's role in achieving Taiwan's "economic miracle": from Japan as providing a "yoke of colonial rule," to Japan as "providing public improvements," to Japan as "laying the groundwork" for the eventual modernization of Taiwan.

A third type of variance occurs among accounts concerning foreign relations between Taiwan and the United States. The official guidebook mentions neither the U.S. recognition of the Communist Chinese government nor Taiwan's departure from the United Nations. However, *Korea and Taiwan* contends that for many years Taiwan was "supported by the United States" but that the United States turned to the People's Republic of China in the 1970s. "Nevertheless, Taiwan's economic success with its US\$31 billion worth of foreign trade annually has forced most countries . . . to tread very warily. Most walk a diplomatic tight-rope between recognition of China and business as usual with Taiwan" (p. 125). In *The All-Asia Guide*, one reads that "The worst blow came on December 15, 1978, with the United States announcement that it would recognize the Peking government and establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China" (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982, p. 480). The guidebook goes on to state that Taiwan's diplomatic standing has declined since 1971, following "its expulsion from the United Nations," and that now "fewer than two dozen nations maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan" but that other countries "are willing to establish economic relations with Taiwan" (p. 480). Here we see a progressive decrease in estimating Taiwan's political power, from an omission of any data on the status of diplomatic relations, to a claim that Taiwan was "supported by the United States," to a reference to the "worst blow" administered to Taiwan with the withdrawal of U.S. diplomatic recognition and "expulsion" from the United Nations. While the second source acknowledges Taiwan's economic power as having forced other countries to maintain economic relations, the third source holds that even this power is subject to the other countries' approval.

The conflicting images of Taiwan typified in the above descriptions are best understood in the context of the writers' political positions and the audiences to whom the discourses of these guidebooks are addressed. In our survey of American students (who may be considered a subset of these audiences of potential visitors), 50% agreed that "Taiwan is dependent upon the United States," and about 80% felt that "The United States has played a significant role in Taiwan's development". Student responses are in line with the accounts provided by non-official Western sources.

Analysis of the Discrepant Accounts

The variations among the foregoing representations indicate how a historical account is a symbolic construction driven by assumptions in the present political context (see Voloshinov, 1973). The official guidebook wants to present a good image to its foreign visitors and aims to present Taiwan in the best (i.e., most powerful) light by using such phrases as "under the yolk of colonial Japanese rule" and

"restored to" Nationalist control. Moreover, it is not surprising that the official guide is the only one to emphasize Taiwan's "economic miracle," to try to position Taiwan in terms of its living standard and its industrial and economic achievements, because these points are crucial to Taiwan's image in the international arena.

The Nationalist government's desire to portray Taiwan positively may seem obvious, but the other accounts also cast the historical image of Taiwan to suit their particular audiences. For example, in *Korea and Taiwan* the author's tone is both somewhat condescending and detached. Taiwan's economic progress is portrayed as a "phenomenal transition," its economic power is such that other countries are "forced . . . to tread very warily," and the bitterness of its people toward the Japanese is acknowledged. Yet the author depicts Taiwan as having been "supported by the United States" and the beneficiary of Japanese public works projects.

The more negative tone is presented in *The All-Asia Guide*, which offers a picture of Taiwan as much more dependent upon the "more advanced" Japan and upon the United States, which delivered "the worst blow" against Taiwan by withdrawing diplomatic support. This account provides little sense of Taiwan's political or economic power.

To understand why the two nongovernment guides portray Taiwan less positively, we need to consider both the authors of the guides and the political circumstances of their countries. *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit* is written by a Westerner (a Briton who emigrated to Australia) and was published in Australia. *The All-Asia Guide* is identified only as being published by a Hong Kong newspaper. Australia is a Western country in terms of cultural heritage, and Hong Kong, while having a primarily Chinese population, has long been under British control and is typically considered one of the most modern and international cities in the world. Thus the two nongovernment guidebooks are published by two cultures that share predominantly Western norms and values and employ English as the primary language. In these respects, at least, the two guides examine Taiwan's history through lenses fashioned by the modern West.

These similarities suggest four possible political reasons for the nongovernment guides' minimalization of Taiwan's role in fashioning its present-day status. First, Taiwan does not maintain diplomatic relations with either Australia or Britain (under whose sovereignty Hong Kong remains until 1997, when it comes under the control of Communist China). Both Australia and Britain do maintain diplomatic relations with Communist China. The author of *Korea and Taiwan* seems more willing to subscribe to Communist China's perspective on the Nationalist government's break from the mainland government and its move to Taiwan in 1949, perhaps to maintain friendly relations. The more neutral tone adopted by the Hong Kong-based *All-Asia Guide* may be attributed to Hong Kong's delicate political situation. Although it comes under the control of Communist China after 1997, until then its political structure is closer to Taiwan's (both countries are democratic, Chinese, and unaligned with the mainland government).

Second, one should consider the importance of the historical attitude of both cultures (Australia and Hong Kong/Britain) toward the so-called Third World. Australia has long practiced a "White Australia" policy to prevent "colored" immigrants. Moreover, British colonial power prior to World War II exerted control over a substantial portion of the so-called Third World, including several Asian

countries. Thus it is not surprising that the authors of *Korea and Taiwan* and *The All-Asia Guide*, who are writing to English-speaking audiences of similar cultural background and of sufficient wealth to travel, have assumed the privilege of inscribing Taiwan from a superior point of view. The same case could be made for a number of Asian countries other than Japan.¹

Third, political considerations might explain why the two nongovernment guides themselves differ in the degree of negativity toward Taiwan. While Australia may envision a small Asian country in a detached way, the Hong Kong–published guide originates from a country that competes with Taiwan economically (particularly for tourists' dollars). This may account for the Hong Kong guidebook's greater severity in its representation of Taiwan's history.

Fourth, the East Asian region has seen a realignment in political dominance, with the post–World War II emergence of the United States and Japan (occupier of Taiwan for the first half of the century) as the chief political and economic forces. While the United States has been influential in the region since the end of the war, in the past two decades, Japan has emerged as the major exception to the image of “underdeveloped” Eastern nations. Recognizing the power of Japan, the Hong Kong–based authors of *The All-Asia Guide* and the author of *Korea and Taiwan* tend (by omission of censure) to treat Japan's invasion and occupation of Taiwan as more or less legitimate or at least not objectionable. Since Japan qualifies as a “modern” country, it is easy for the authors to portray Japan as “responsible for” Taiwan's modernization. This line of reasoning is equally applicable to the role of the United States, the other dominant power in the region.²

Let us re-emphasize that none of these three interpretations of Taiwan's history is wrong; however, it is naive to assume that the official account is biased politically but that the other two are not. Rather, the goal is to illuminate the institutional authority that stands behind the authors' opinions.

The conflict between these three accounts of Taiwan's present status and its historical development foregrounds the struggle between Taiwan's modernity and its traditionality. In the next section we take a closer look at how three varieties of representation contained in touristic literature define a large arena of discourse in which alternative readings can do battle.

MODERN TOURISTIC REPRESENTATIONS: “TRADITION” AND “MODERNITY”

An introductory passage of the official tour guidebook, *A Glance at Taiwan Republic of China*, provides the following descriptors of Taiwan:

Island Province of the Republic of China
 Treasure Trove of Traditional Chinese Culture
 “Ilha Formosa,” the Beautiful Island
 Crossroads between Northeast and Southeast Asia
 Land of Scenic Wonders and Bountiful Natural Beauty
 Home of a Warm and Friendly People
 World Capital of Gourmet Chinese Cuisine
 Showcase of Chinese Economic Enterprise
 Shopper's Paradise (p. 7)

This short list paints a picture of Taiwan as both an unqualified economic success and as a repository of traditional Chinese culture. We read elsewhere in the official guide that Taiwan is among the "top dozen trading countries in the world and is America's fifth largest trading partner worldwide. It is the second wealthiest nation in all of Asia and enjoys one of the highest living standards in the entire East hemisphere" (p. 9). It is clear that the guide attempts to portray Taiwan simultaneously as both "modern" and "traditional".

There are many other juxtapositions between "traditional" and "modern" in the official guide. For example, there are many pictures of traditional performances in front of modern buildings. In one photograph, a classical dance by Chinese in traditional costume is performed in front of a contemporary building in the "traditional" architectural style, surrounded by a number of modern office buildings.

Another, more subtle, juxtaposition between modernity and tradition can be seen in the following quotation:

The human element is perhaps the island's greatest charm. Renowned for their hospitality, the Chinese in Taiwan are a happy and prosperous people who enjoy sharing their traditions with visitors. . . . The pleasure the Chinese take in the art of hospitality is based on a unique Chinese cultural trait known as *ren-ching-wei*, "the flavor of human feeling". It's a traditional human flavor that has become a rare commodity in the modern world of science and technology (p. 9).

Here, Taiwan's citizens are depicted as modern enough to be "happy and prosperous" but traditional enough not to allow prosperity to impede their ability to share their traditions with visitors. Moreover, to make sure the potential visitor sees "human feeling" as a tradition, the transliteration of the phrase from the original Chinese is used: *ren-ching-wei*.

The coexistence of modern and traditional depicted in the official guide is not acknowledged in other guides. In *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit*, for example, the "economic miracle" is depicted as a blight: "problems of over-crowded cities, urban sprawl and pollution have transformed Taiwan out of all recognition and destroyed those unique and intriguing qualities which make Asian countries so popular with travellers" (p. 124). If development exists, the *Survival Kit* seems to suggest, then tradition must suffer; if tradition suffers, then the only attraction for Western attention no longer exists.

Western tourists' hunger for tradition is obvious in the recognition of the implied audience for the *Korea and Taiwan* text. Yet the warning about the threat to Taiwan's "unique and intriguing qualities" raises interesting questions in light of a generalized Western ambivalence toward modernity, which is often highly prized by more "advanced" nations for their own countries but seen as a negative when encountered in travel. To the writers of *Korea and Taiwan*, Taiwan apparently can be either traditional and interesting, or modern and uninteresting; in the official account, the modern and the traditional can coexist.

Why, unlike the other two guides, does the official account emphasize modernity as well as tradition? To explore this question in greater depth, we compare various touristic accounts of specific aspects of Taiwanese life. Of the numerous examples of the discursive struggle between tradition and modernity, we have chosen to look at

three specific contested instances of modern Taiwan's "image": (a) Chinese traditional culture, (b) aspects of Taipei (Taiwan's capital city), and (c) tourist accommodations. In this section, we provide evidence of the contesting nature of these representations, followed by an analysis of how the struggle over these representations reveals underlying political issues.

Chinese Traditional Culture

When Taiwan emphasizes its traditionality, its major tourist attraction unavoidably becomes "Chinese culture". As *A Glance at Taiwan* (Tourism Bureau, 1988) states, traditional Chinese culture is a major tourist attraction:

When President Chiang Kai-shek led his troops to Taiwan, he brought with him the cream of the crop of the vast collection of priceless art treasures housed for 500 years in the fabulous Forbidden City in Peking. This collection of over 600,000 pieces is on permanent display at the National Palace Museum north of Taipei and is the pride and joy of all Chinese everywhere. (p. 9)

Clearly, Taiwan is being depicted in this account as the best place to see "authentic" Chinese culture, authenticity in this case being ensured by the fact that not only did the treasures originally come from the mainland, but they also are the pride of *all* Chinese. This particular representation of Taiwan desires above all to position the island as a place to see authentic Chinese culture, in spite of Taiwan's status as a modern country. As the *Encyclopedia American International Edition* (1989) puts it, "The ROC [Republic of China, or Taiwan] government regards itself as the trustee of Chinese culture, which it believes has been jeopardized if not destroyed on the mainland. It strives to present to the people representative theatrical performances, art exhibitions, and the like, in order to preserve and nurture an appreciation of traditional Chinese artistic values" (p. 234).

The official guide contains a number of other efforts to describe Taiwan as the guardian of Chinese culture. At one point, for example, the narrative reads:

Traditional Chinese arts and crafts flourish in Taiwan today. Calligraphy and painting, martial and medical arts, philosophy and religion, and the sublime culinary arts of classical Chinese cuisine continue to thrive and develop here, giving Taiwan a traditional Chinese ambiance that is impossible to find anywhere else in the world today (p. 9).

These attractions are analogous to the specific stereotypic aspects that most Westerners would immediately associate with a Chinese country: calligraphy, *kung-fu*, acupuncture, wisdom, and Chinese food. The familiar images fit nicely into the potential tourist's expectations. The official guidebook might also have asserted that in Taiwan one could find word processors (instead of calligraphy), soccer and tennis (instead of martial arts), and the mundane irritations of simply getting to work in the morning (instead of ancient contemplative wisdom). But these modern aspects, which are just as much a part of Taiwan's "culture", would not be so interesting to potential tourists. Taiwan must be shown as "traditional" to appeal to visitors who, believing they come from more "advanced" countries, yearn to be put in touch with a "simpler" country of more traditional values, or, at the very least, a culture very different from their own. This interest in tradition is also shared by the

two nongovernmental guides, as indicated by their complaints about the disappearance of those "charming qualities" held to indicate authentic Chinese culture.

To get another perspective on the guidebooks' assumptions about their audience's values and expectations, we asked our twenty American undergraduate students, and five Taiwanese graduate students, which of Taiwan's features they thought might be most attractive to Western visitors. While no claims can be made for the typicality of these results, there is an intriguing similarity among what the guidebooks suggest, what the American students would want to see, and what the Taiwanese would be willing to show them. All five Chinese respondents told us that they would like to introduce Chinese culture to Western visitors. Four out of the five Chinese instantly mentioned the National Palace Museum as the place where the very best of Chinese traditional culture is maintained.

The American respondents agreed. Asked to rank-order eleven different "things to do while visiting Taiwan", 81% placed "visiting sites reflecting cultural heritage" and "watching cultural performances and activities" at the top of their lists, but modern sites and activities were ranked very low among their preferences. Although the quest for authentic Chinese culture remains ubiquitous among Westerners as well as Chinese, the manifold views of traditional Chinese culture can be more clearly seen by examining images of Taiwan's capital city, Taipei.

Images of Taipei

According to the official guide, Taipei is the administrative seat of the Republic of China and the economic and cultural center of Taiwan. Like Taiwan as a whole, Taipei is described as a modern city that at the same time retains its classical Chinese elements.

This relatively benign depiction is not, however, shared by the Western-oriented guides, which choose to focus almost exclusively on "tradition," and in a peculiarly limited sense of "exoticism" and "underdevelopment." *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit* acknowledges Taiwan's industrial development but contends that Taipei is "probably one of the plainest and ugliest capital cities in the area" (p. 146). The author goes on to state that there are only five "remarkable" sites worth seeing in the whole city. The nostalgic past is definitely to be preferred to the "plain and ugly" present engendered by industrial development, and sites not "authentic" enough to have preserved the traditional are to be avoided.

However, even if tradition (by the guidebook definition) is discovered in this selective appropriation of signs—even, that is, if the guidebook is willing to admit the possibility of modernity and tradition coexisting—the exotic and underdeveloped past is still to be preferred by tourists to the ordinary, developed present. For example, *The All-Asia Guide* (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982) begins its section on Taipei with a description of *Wan-Hwa*, the city's oldest area. We read that the "proliferation of noisy markets, shops selling temple accoutrements, herbal medicine stalls and houses built in the old architecture style hint at the roots that underlie Taipei's increasingly modern exterior" (p. 493). This image, with its suggestions of visually and aurally chaotic street activity, certainly fits much more closely to the Westerner's stereotypical image of an underdeveloped country. We are shown not "scientific" medicine but "herbal" treatments, dispensed not from

shops but from the more primitive-sounding "stalls". The placement of the images tells a story, too: More prominently placed at the beginning of the sentence is the nostalgic past, with the offhand reference to modernity reserved for the end. Moreover, the term "increasingly modern" suggests a development that is in the process of being achieved, but not yet actualized. Thus, the definition of "tradition" in *The All-Asia Guide* diverges from the official guidebook's definition, which focuses on the pride of Chinese in their "treasure trove" of cultural objects.

The discrepancies in accounts of "tradition" are perhaps best exemplified in depictions of Taipei's night markets, which feature a variety of traditional Chinese culture and therefore attract a considerable number of foreign visitors. Of the numerous night markets in Taipei, *A Glance at Taiwan* has chosen to describe the *Jao-Ho* street night market: "To the east are over 100 stalls which sell fresh fruit, ready-to-wear clothing, toys, souvenirs. . . . On the west side are 40 stalls which specialize in all sorts of traditional Chinese snacks. . . . The central part of the market features various Chinese folk arts" (p. 52). The picture presents an image of tradition without a suggestion of awkwardness, underdevelopment, or primitiveness. Instead, there is a strong emphasis on varied activities that can be enjoyed for their own sake and that serve as acceptable examples of Chinese culture: not just "fruit" but "fresh fruit"; not just traditional handmade clothing but "ready-to-wear" clothing (suggesting mass production); not just folk practices but "folk arts." Thus, the official guide shows the *Jao-Ho* night market not simply as something different for the Western tourist but as a valuable cultural heritage that Chinese can appreciate and take pride in.

In contrast, *The All-Asia Guide* focuses on the *Hwa-Hsi* night market, nicknamed "Snake Alley" because of its notorious snake-killing performances. According to *The All-Asia Guide* (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982), Chinese believe that "consuming snake soup of blood-and-bile mixtures will improve eyesight and general health" (p. 493). Later, a picture of "Snake Alley" is more clearly drawn: "In the night market along this street, open-air foodstalls, hawkers, fortune-tellers and snake vendors compete for attention in a sideshow-like atmosphere that caters to strong-stomached adventurers" (p. 493). The traditions depicted here suggest underdevelopment and even backwardness. Tourists may be titillated into thinking they are exploring new and threatening territory: *Hwa-Hsi* is for the "strong-stomached adventurer"; people don't sell things, they "hawk" them; the atmosphere is freakish, like a "sideshow"; the "native" vendors, not unlike carnival performers, compete for the attention of the visitors; the foodstalls are "open-air" (i.e., possibly unsanitary); "fortune-tellers" pander to the superstitious and backward; and so on.

Apparently, some Taiwanese share the official guide's concerns. In response to the question "What would you show to Western visitors?" all five of our Chinese respondents immediately mentioned the night markets as representative of Taiwan's culture yet different enough from Western culture to be interesting. Nevertheless, all five respondents also said that the night market would have to be "clean" or "sanitary"; otherwise, they thought they would lose face with Western guests. These informant accounts, while not appealing so strongly to traditionality as the official guide, nevertheless reflect some of the same concerns about promoting a positive image of Taiwan. However, our Chinese informants are motivated by the

desire to present the best possible night market to Western visitors, while *The All-Asia Guide* chooses to emphasize and dramatize the Hwa-Hsi market, which might be an awkward choice for our informants. The respondent answers demonstrate a careful management of the nation's image that is not found in the Western tour guides.

The struggles between "tradition" and "modernity," and between two disparate conceptions of "tradition," are further exemplified in accounts of Taipei's night life. The official guidebook portrays Taipei's night life as both traditional, with easily accessible cultural performances, and modern, with "the full range of contemporary style nightlife, including multi-media discos with laser shows and supersonic [sic] sound systems, cozy pubs with draft beer, and trendy new restaurant/bars styled on those in New York, Paris, and London" (p. 53). The comparison to these Western metropolises is a clear attempt to enhance Taipei's status by associating it with fashionable locations. On the other hand, visitors are also advised to "soak up" Taiwan's traditional performances.

But *The All-Asia Guide* (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1982) also offers a considerably darker, less appealing image: "Apart from dining, entertainment available in Taipei tends to be oriented towards the single male. . . . Taipei is also famous for its girlie restaurants . . . [like] Japan's *geisha* houses and South Korea's *kisaeng* houses" (p. 489).

The official tour guide and *The All-Asia Guide* present two totally different pictures of Taipei's night life. One is modern and energetic, the other exotic and sexual. Neither account is solely valid, since all representations are only partial. However, the official guide's motive in not mentioning prostitution is just as apparent as *The All-Asia Guide's* failure to highlight modern and sophisticated entertainment. Prostitution is a thriving business in many countries, and many guidebooks are more than willing to provide information on such activities to potential visitors; what is important is the context in which a particular account is chosen. The description in *The All-Asia Guide* is a micro-level manifestation of the desire to possess another culture through possessing its individual members.

Modern Accommodations

The distinction between traditional and modern is again demonstrated in accounts of accommodations. Modernity means that acceptable accommodations are available to the tourist who wearily returns at night from "soaking up" the "traditional" culture. "While organized tourism presents an adventurous experience of the 'other' during the day", Buck-Morss (1987) observes, "it returns people to their cultural womb of cleanliness and order to eat and to sleep" (p. 203).

There are several indications of a desire to satisfy the two contradictory demands of tourists. Pictures presented in the official guide, for example, invariably show first-class hotels, restaurants, and places of entertainment that only the rich can afford. In this account, we again see that modernity not only enhances the political status of Taiwan but also entices foreign visitors by assuring them that modern accommodations will be available. *The All-Asia Guide*, on the other hand, devotes an entire section to detailed information about whether buses are air-conditioned, where to make reservations, services provided on the trains, and the standards of

hotel accommodation. As all travelers know, such touristic information is the rule rather than the exception. It is only in regard to the issue of modern living accommodations that the official guide and the Western-oriented guide concur on the importance of Taiwan being a modern country.

Once tourists leave their hotel, however, they expect to step back through a gateway to the past. They are no longer interested in seeing the modernity of Taiwan; they want the exotic, the unusual, the unknown, the different—in short, they want, as Said (1978) has suggested, the mysterious experience of encountering “the Orient”. In the case of Taiwan, ambivalently situated between modernity and tradition, the touristic enterprise testifies to the double standard imposed upon the country: What the potential English-speaking tourists want to “see” in Taiwan is different from what they want to “live” in Taiwan.

The common theme throughout the contrasting accounts of these three important aspects of life in Taiwan is the struggle between Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese representations. In short, in the official guide, “modernity” and “tradition” are *both* sources of pride for Chinese. In Western-oriented guides, however, “tradition” is to be played with, while “modernity” is to be lived. The next section explores the political assumptions underlying these struggles over meaning.

THE DILEMMA OF MODERNITY AND TRADITIONALITY

MacCannell (1976) suggests that tourism is a social activity in which the quest for authenticity reveals much about how modern people see more “traditional cultures”:

Modern values are transcending the old divisions between . . . the “developed” and “third” worlds. The progress of modernity (“modernization”) depends on its very sense of instability and inauthenticity. For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler life-styles. In other words, the concern of moderns for “naturalness,” their nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual and somewhat decadent, though harmless, attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs. They are also components of the conquering spirit of modernity—the grounds of its unifying consciousness. (pp. 2–3)

According to MacCannell, moderns implicitly equate an “earlier period” and “other culture.” The other culture exists not on its own terms but as an analogue to the past. If the tradition of an “underdeveloped” nation is lost, the modern’s past is lost with it.

MacCannell’s argument is insightful, but it leaves open the issue of how political power serves to fashion touristic discourse. The very notion that different degrees of authenticity can be sought in different parts of the world verifies the different levels of political power inherent in the tourist transaction. Only those from nations with superior political power are permitted to dominate the other country by exercising judgments about the validity of that country’s culture through the seemingly innocent venue of tourism. The visited country has thus become fixated, to remind the modern tourist of the past. It is frozen in a timeless space so that modern tourists can move from *their own* present to *others’* pasts. The “traditional countries”, unwilling or unable to thus fixate themselves, become an object of criticism for more “developed” nations.

The desire to search for "authenticity" may explain why there are conflicting touristic representations of Taiwan. This is what permits the author of *Korea and Taiwan: A Travel Survival Kit*, for example, to downgrade the "economic miracle," complaining that modernization has changed Taiwan "out of all recognition." One may legitimately ask, "recognition by whom"? Not by the people of Taiwan, who have witnessed the changes, but by a Western author whose idealized conception of what it means to be a Chinese country somehow has been violated. One senses that Taiwan can redeem itself only by returning to its traditional (i.e., underdeveloped) status.

In response to this quest for traditionality, *A Glance at Taiwan* noticeably emphasizes the historicity of Taiwan's cultural practices. The obvious, commercial explanation for this emphasis—the one most often advanced by Westerners—leaves too much unanswered. The origin of the struggle over political power lies in the struggle over the meaning of "tradition". Through its touristic discourse, the West aims at inscribing Taiwan as underdeveloped, while the Chinese government bases its definition of "tradition" upon its claimed status of being heir to 5,000 years of Chinese history.

While the government may stress traditional Taiwan for commercial reasons, the commercial demand itself constitutes a form of colonialism. The East has long been an object for the West to consume as a contrived image: exotic, primitive, culturally specific, and mysterious. It is against this inscription that the discourse of the official guidebook is struggling (Said, 1978).

Forcing a culture into the straitjacket of a defined "past" serves to fix cultural Others in a "timeless present", confining them to a place that cannot change, or cannot change as easily as the representer's culture. This may prevent Taiwan (in the eyes of Western tourists, at least) from achieving full modernization as long as it continues to respond to the West's demand for traditionality and authenticity—two conceptions that usually conflict only when the touristic transaction brings them forcibly together.

This first level of struggle is confounded and intensified by a second issue, that of modernity. The key to this imposition lies in the origin of the vocabulary we assume when speaking of a given country's degree of development. "Modern", "developed", "developing", "underdeveloped" and "industrialized" originated with and are continually defined by the dominant political power. Tradition is a semiotic construct that has meaning only when used as a tourist attraction. Traditionality does nothing to help Taiwan position itself *vis-à-vis* the world's political structure. Taiwan remains caught between responding to a resurrected form of the older-style imperialistic ideology—Orientalism—shaped by world history and power distribution, and trying to stabilize its own uncertain status in the current world political structure. Whether "modern" or "traditional", both standards are still dictated by the West. The strain of trying to live up to this double standard is evident in the discourse of the official literature.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has shown how different varieties of touristic discourses with the common aim of representing the cultural Other are in fact driven by overt and

covert political assumptions. While it is sometimes assumed that political domination is exerted primarily through military and economic power, such domination is equally to be found in the symbolic means by which individuals and groups choose to represent cultural Others. This symbolic domination may be more powerful because audiences tend to accept such representations uncritically.

This is particularly noticeable in the venue of tourism, which by definition directs its appeals toward those with sufficient income to visit other locations. It is for this reason that we must attend to which cultural characteristics are chosen to be selectively represented to these comparatively powerful individuals. The example of Taiwan clearly demonstrates that a country's history, customs, and other components of its identity are subject to the controlling interests of those who choose to represent them and possess the political power to do so.

Although we have focused on touristic representations here, our conclusions concerning the power and the danger of partial representations may be as applicable to all depictions of the cultural Other, whether found in television, film, ethnography, newspapers, or personal accounts. We believe that the field of tourism and these other areas constitute extremely rich arenas for future investigations of the struggle among cultural representations. □

NOTES

¹To take one of many possible examples, consider Malaysia. A 1976 Fodor's guide (Klaar, 1976) observes, "The political influence of the British on the sultans [during the period 1824–1942] consisted mostly of advice on economic matters and intervention in interstate squabbles. Moreover, the British presence kept the Dutch away and also settled the disputes with the Siamese over the northern states" (p. 325). The role of Malaysians in this period of prosperity and peace is hardly mentioned. And again, in Spitzer (1990), one finds the inevitable reference to a nation trapped between modernity and tradition: "Part of the intrigue of visiting Malaysia is to witness a society in transition from traditional to 'modern' [of the two terms, note which the author places in quotation marks], with all the benefits and problems attendant to that" (p. 115). Here, too, no account is offered of the role played by Malaysians in the process of modernization. In the 1986 edition of *The All-Asia Guide*, Japan's occupation of the country is treated extraordinarily mildly: "The Japanese took control of the area from the time of their invasion in 1942 until September 1945" (p. 326). Japan's eventual ouster is not mentioned.

²In tour guides written by U.S. authors, Taiwan is granted equally little autonomy. For example, *Fielding's Budget Asia* (Spitzer, 1990) notes that "the Chinese hard-work ethos and billions of dollars in past American aid [italics added] have modernized Taiwan to the point that it is difficult to find much left that is traditionally Chinese" (p. 164). Regarding the role of Japan, one volume of the Insight series, *Taiwan* (Reid, 1990), written by a team of American freelancers, calls the Japanese occupation "Tokyo's Triumph" (p. 38), noting that "Taiwan moved rapidly into the modern age under the tutelage of Japan" (p. 39) and implying that the cessation of Japanese control following World War II led to political chaos (p. 43). An article by an American correspondent (Hoard, 1976) situates Taiwan solely as a factor in Japanese plans: "Japan's possession of Taiwan was the realization of a long cherished ambition and the island was looked upon as a prospective base for expansion into the South Seas, and future granary for the Japanese people" (p. 204).

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