

COMPLETION REPORT

Research Summary

The recent increase in intra-Asia tourism reflects the regional economic developments that have taken place over the past few decades. Tourist practices, which have emerged in East Asia, embody historical complexes impacted by westernization/modernization, war memories, and Cold War ideologies. In particular, the tourism industry in contemporary Taiwan encapsulates a triangular relationship linking Taiwan, Japan, and China, which has taken shape as a product of historical forces. This following investigation intends to focus on the interactions and reciprocal perceptions shared by these East Asian “familiar strangers,” a phrase used to refer to intra-Asia tourists who share certain historical and cultural knowledge about their destinations in East Asia. The encounters of these tourists raise intriguing questions concerning mutual (mis)understandings that originate from a shared East Asian historical and cultural familiarity. When touring destinations situated within the triangle, these tourists are “familiar strangers,” unconsciously driven by mutually shared imaginaries, and often embedded in a web of meanings, which shape individual perceptions.

The Japanese have long been the dominant players in postwar Taiwanese tourism. The dominant numbers of Japanese tourists reflect the stability of Japanese tourism in Taiwan over the past decade, during which tourists have identified Taiwan in a number of ways, more specifically as the “nostalgic Japan,” the “authentic China,” and the “exotic Southeast Asian destination.” It seems to suggest that the Taiwanese have successfully catered to Japanese imaginaries of Taiwan with highly lucrative results. However, the policy shift initiated by the Ma administration in June 2008, represented a movement away from the past trend of catering to Japanese tourists in favor of welcoming tourists from the PRC. This shift, a result of the removal of restrictions imposed upon visitors from “the mainland” after a 60-year rivalry, demonstrated the long-standing power dynamic operating within the triangle. Taiwan has thus provided these East Asian “familiar strangers” a transforming, complicated, and multiple imaginary through their tourism encounters in Taiwan.

This project thus explores the multiple dynamics behind Taiwan’s changing tourism industry and the constructed “historical familiarity” catering for the East Asian tourists respectfully. Through the transnational fieldwork from Sep 2009 to May 2011, this researcher found that flexible strategies of manipulating its Chineseness, Japaneseness and Taiwaneseeness are frequently utilized by Taiwan tourism to present its tourism spots to the East Asian familiar strangers in relation to the shared history and contemporary memories.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

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| Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.) |
| Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.) |
| Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.) |