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**Postwar Nostalgia and Japanese Style in the Historic Preservation and
Development of Kishu An Forest of Literature in Taipei, Taiwan**

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Introduction: The Kishu An, the Forest of Literature, and their
Constituencies of Loss

At the end of winding Tong-an Street in Taipei, Taiwan, next to an elevated highway that runs along a dike protecting the city from the floodprone Xindian River, lies a grove of banyan trees which shade a large metal frame shed. The shed protects the ruins of an old three-story building made of concrete and wood, which can only be glimpsed through slats in the high stockade fence that surrounds it (fig. 1). This dilapidated structure, built in the 1920s with a few small post-World War II additions, was originally Kishu An (紀州庵), a nightclub built during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. From the early 1920s to World War II, Kishu An was operated as a branch location of a downtown Taipei restaurant run by the Hiramatsu family, who came to Taiwan during the period of Japanese occupation in order to take advantage of the commercial opportunities made possible by Japan's colonial expansion. The restaurant and nightclub served expatriate Japanese government workers and businessmen, offering reminders of home—freshly prepared fish, *geisha* entertainers, and a traditional Japanese garden. Kishu An also operated excursion boats on the Xindian River, on which guests could drink, dine and even try their hand at fishing.

Today, the tall riverside dike next to the Shuiyuan Expressway is an imposing barrier to waterfront access from Kishu An, and there is little sense of being close to the water. But in the 1920s, the dike was lower than it is today, and also closer to the building, and the highway did not yet exist. At that time, the second story of Kishu An

was level with the top of the dike, and three pedestrian bridges allowed guests to walk out onto the dike from the building and enjoy the view of the river, its floodplain and the distant mountains. They could also watch horse races on a track that was built below the dike. On the opposite side of the building, guests could walk through a long, narrow pavilion and enjoy views of a garden featuring pine trees, azaleas, and camellias surrounding a small pond.¹

Like all Japanese-owned buildings in Taipei, Kishu An was expropriated by the Chinese Guomindang government after Japan was defeated in World War II and renounced its claim on Taiwan. The building became a dormitory housing the families of workers in two government bureaus, and at least two small additions were constructed adjacent to it. The famous Taiwanese author Wenxing Wang spent his childhood there in the 1950s; his 1972 book *Family Catastrophe*, which shocked Taiwanese with its graphic depictions of dysfunctional family life, was based in part on his experiences living in Kishu An. Families of government workers and pensioners continued to reside in Kishu An through the early 2000s even as the building gradually deteriorated and parts of it were lost in fires.²

In 2003, a group of undergraduate students conducting a survey of the neighborhood discovered Kishu An and learned that the city was planning to demolish it to make way for a municipal parking lot. Several of the students joined together with neighborhood residents, who wanted to save the tall banyan trees that had grown up in what was once the restaurant's garden, to form a new organization, the Taipei Chengnan

¹ Yu-qun Lin, "Zai Shuo Yi Ci, Jizhou-an De Gushi (再說一次，紀州庵的故事)," 文訊 (*Wenhsun*) (September 2011): 60–66.

² John K. C. Liu, National Taiwan University, interview by author, July 26, 2012.

Riverbank Cultural Society³, devoted to saving the structure and finding a new use for it. This organization enlisted the help of Wang Wenxing and other authors who had lived or worked in the area and planned a new cultural center on the site, to be called the Kishu An Forest of Literature⁴, that would promote Taipei's literary heritage, drawing upon postwar memories of writers who lived in the area and the many small publishing houses that sprang up in the surrounding neighborhood from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 2011, city government funding was secured for the construction of a new building adjacent to Kishu An to house the literary center, but fundraising had not yet been completed for the restoration of Kishu An itself. The new building houses a teahouse, exhibits about the Kishu An structure and its history, and exhibits and lectures relating to Taiwan's literary heritage. The grounds are used for a variety of community festivals.

The restoration and redevelopment of the Kishu An site can be viewed as exemplifying Jeremy E. Taylor's findings that a new approach to Taiwanese history that emerged in the 1990s, which acknowledges the benefits of or even whitewashes the Japanese occupation period and no longer places China at the center of Taiwanese history, has led to a reevaluation of the meaning and significance of Japanese sites throughout Taiwan.⁵ Taylor identifies three major aspects of the new attitude toward Japanese

³ This is my translation of 台北城南水岸文化協會. "Chengnan" (城南), literally "City Wall South," is an informal name that is sometimes used to refer to the part of Taipei in which Kishu An is located.

⁴ Kishu An Forest of Literature is the official English name and a close translation of 紀州庵文學森林, the Chinese name of the new cultural center. The first part of this name, Kishu An (紀州庵) is a Japanese proper noun referring to the name of the building; the second part of the name, 文學森林, is Chinese and translated into English as "Literature Forest" or "Forest of Literature."

⁵ Jeremy E. Taylor, "Reading History Through the Built Environment in Taiwan," in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: Bentuhua*, ed. John Makeham and A-Chin Hsiao (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

heritage sites: all of these are present in Kishu An. First, Taylor identifies a preference for remembering the past through preservation of physical objects; this is undoubtedly the case with Kishu An Forest of Literature, as the architectural object of the Japanese Kishu An, although not yet renovated, is being actively preserved and has been taken by the new cultural center as its primary identity. Second, Taylor notes that the preference for saving these structures occurs at the level of the local community, rather than the national government. In the Kishu An case, there was local action by students who performed the background research necessary to identify the significance of the site, while the neighborhood was spurred to action by the city government's proposal to turn the site into a parking lot. Taipei City ultimately provided funding for the preservation of the site and the construction of the new building through its cultural affairs bureau. Third, according to Taylor, the trend toward preserving such architecture is connected to the broader trend of "Japanophilia" (*ha ri*, 哈日) on which Kishu An subtly relies to attract consumers and exhibition-goers.

Using Taylor's analysis as a jumping-off point, I have identified three constituencies, which can be conceived as forming a series of three concentric rings, who are served by the adaptive reuse of Kishuan as a historic site and cultural center (see figure 2). Those who are closest to the fight to preserve and adaptively reuse the site—those who documented the original building's history, fought against its demolition, and formed and continue to participate in the Chengnan Riverbank Cultural Society—about 40 people in total—form the innermost constituency.⁶ The second-ring constituency consists of civic activists and neighborhood residents who may participate only

⁶ Yu-qun lin, Taipei Chengnan Shui-an Wenhua Xiehui, e-mail communication to author, August 12, 2012.

peripherally in the cultural activities of the site, and may or may not have strong feelings about the site's history, but still supported its preservation out of concern about saving the banyan trees and the potential negative impact on the quality of life of the neighborhood if the property were redeveloped. Besides self-interested neighborhood residents, this group also includes citywide activists who see the preservation of individual sites such as Kishu An as battles in a broader war to maintain the aesthetic values of green space, trees and low-scaled buildings throughout Taipei. The third constituency consists of the broader public that visits, or desires to visit, Kishu An Forest of Literature and consume the site as a cultural experience involving Japaneseness. Of course, these constituencies can and do overlap; someone concerned with neighborhood green space may also be a Japanophile. But conceived separately, they help explain why the package of qualities that Kishu An Forest of Literature provides to all three constituencies—memory, culture, aesthetics, a sense of place, an experience of shared community—coupled with the project's failure to stir up any significant opposition, has made it, in the words of planning professor John K. C. Liu, a successful adaptive reuse project.⁷ By contrast, certain other well-known historic preservation projects in Taipei, both completed and hoped-for among activists, have been less successful in establishing and maintaining these constituencies.⁸

⁷ John K. C. Liu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

⁸ Notable among these less successful projects is Treasure Hill, in which former veterans' housing dating to the post-World War II era was converted into a gentrified "artists' village." Despite being featured as a travel destination in *The New York Times*, this project has been racked with controversy over the expulsion of many of the original residents and conflicts between artists, visitors, and the remaining residents. Treasure Hill also did not have the advantage of being linked to the Japanese occupation, so it could not draw upon the "Japanophilia" craze or nostalgia for the Japanese era.

Although they have differing levels of interest in and consciousness of the site, what binds all three rings of constituencies of Kishu An Forest of Literature together are experienced and imagined collective losses, both historical and potential. It is their divergent consciousness of these losses that separates the constituencies and reveals the ways in which the memories of this site, those of other actual and potential historic sites throughout Taipei, and the collective memory of Taiwanese identity itself are variously being conceived and transformed by multiple groups within Taiwanese society who are involved, in one way or another, with historic preservation. De Certeau notes that a loss of existence, a “lacuna of history” makes it “possible and necessary” to create a collective story.⁹ I would suggest that fear of an imminent loss, or the experience of the beginnings of such a loss, can equally trigger such an impulse. The lacunae involved in the Kishu An story are several. First, there is the actual, historical loss of the Japanese occupation era, which the Guomindang tried to erase from the consciousness of the people through sinicization campaigns in the 1950s and beyond. Second, there is the actual, historical loss of the era from the 1950s to the 1970s when the Kishu An was reused as housing and the surrounding neighborhood became a community of small publishing houses. This era was swept away by the liberalization of politics and the opening to the outside world that occurred beginning in the mid-1970s. Third, there is the potential physical loss of the remains of the site—in particular, the large trees that constitute one of the neighborhood’s few green spaces, but which are also a stand-in for the other small, historical patches of green that dot such sites throughout the parts of the city where Japanese resided, and which are gradually succumbing to redevelopment. On the Kishu An site itself, these

⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 325.

trees were very nearly lost for the construction of a parking lot in 2002. And fourth, as economic integration with mainland China proceeds apace, there is the potential loss of the 1990s conception of “Taiwan”—closely identified with then-President Lee Teng-Hui, as a unique, mixed- and multi-ethnic polity, possibly as much Japanese as Chinese. As an entity that proudly flaunts both the Japanese and local aspects of Taiwan’s history, Kishu An Forest of Literature can be interpreted as an embodiment of the 1990s, Lee Teng-Hui idea of Taiwan. At the same time, in appealing to the constituency of the broader public, Kishu An Forest of Literature emphasizes its connections to the Japanese era. This can be seen in everything from the name of the institution itself, which stresses the Japanese connection by using the term “Kishu An” as the primary means by which the site is represented in signage (see figures 3 and 4), to the emphasis in reconstruction plans on harmonizing the adaptive reuse of the project with its original, Japanese appearance. This suggests that while the loss of the Japanese era is deeply and widely felt, the position of the postwar era is much more ambiguous vis-à-vis what constitutes “Taiwan” in the broader public mind. On the other hand, activists’ historic understandings of the postwar era, and the Kishu An structure’s relation to it, clearly have major significance to the first-ring constituency that rallied around saving the Kishu An. Therefore, it is not enough to say that the preservation of the Kishu An only relies on Japanese-era nostalgia and present-day Japanophilia. Instead, the building’s significance to those who have worked on its preservation is shaped primarily by the postwar meanings that the site and the surrounding area have acquired, but these meanings have not been fully exposed in the redeveloped site as a symbol of Japaneseness directed for the broad public’s consumption.

Repressive Pasts, Feared Futures: Excavating, Preserving and Protecting Nostalgia for “Taiwan”

The constituency that has done much of the writing of this collective story in response to loss is the core group of residents who have formed the Chengnan Riverbank Cultural Society (initially called the Tong'an Forest of Culture Booster Association¹⁰), around what the members have taken to be the history of Kishu An, the building and site; its famous literary inhabitant Wang Wenxing; and the surrounding area's publishing houses which flourished in the 1970s.¹¹ In the act of bringing together and creating a single narrative out of an apparently disjointed collection of past time periods, people and institutions, they are, writing for themselves, as Taipei residents and aficionados of history, architecture and literature, a collective history of the Chengnan area of Taipei that selectively includes elements from the Japanese past, the postwar past, and even the already receding post-martial law time of transition. In the words of Lin Yu-qun, one of the founders of the movement, the historical connection between the architecture and the literature was “coincidental,” but they became associated through the portrayal of Kishu An in Wang Wenxing's novel *Family Catastrophe*.¹²

Although the relationship between the Japanese architecture of Kishu An and the Taiwan literature of the 1970s may be an accident of history in one sense, it is perhaps not so coincidental at all that that Kishu An Forest of Literature is conceptualized around nostalgia for these two highly repressive eras in the history of the island. First, there is the matter of precedent: apart from the use of Kishu An itself as a backdrop in Wang

¹⁰ This is my translation of 同安文化森林促進會.

¹¹ Lin, “Zai Shuo Yi Ci, Jizhou-an De Gushi.”

¹² Lin, “Zai Shuo Yi Ci, Jizhou-an De Gushi.”

Wenxing's novel, there are numerous, longstanding physical connections between the old houses left over from the Japanese period and the postwar period of dissidence and opening up. Although Kishu An itself was appropriated as a residence for civil servants by a government ministry, many Japanese houses, being situated in the area between National Taiwan University (NTU) and National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), were allocated as homes of teachers and students at these universities, some of whom held dissident views and participated in political organization and information sharing. Two notable such houses are the home of dissident Yin Haiguang and the Wistaria Tea House (紫藤廬). The diminutive Yin Haiguang house was a late example of Japanese domestic construction, built during wartime in the 1940s of material salvaged from a former guardhouse at NTU. A philosophy professor at NTU who admired such midcentury anti-statist figures as Bertrand Russell and Friedrich von Hayek, Yin Haiguang was assigned to live in the house in 1956, where he wrote articles attacking the government and later was placed under surveillance and restricted from lecturing or traveling.¹³ The Wistaria Tea House, only a few blocks from Yin Haiguang's residence, was built as a residence during the occupation period and was the home of dissident Zhou De-wei, an economist, after the war. For 20 years, dissident intellectuals frequently met in the house, and after it was converted in 1981 to a Japanese-style teahouse with tatami floors, it became something of a literary salon.¹⁴ The historical trajectories of these and

¹³ "Yin Haiguang House" (Yin Haiguang Memorial Foundation, n.d.); "Tieji You Taibei: Xun Muwu, Fang Da Shu, Zai Xian Lao Taibei (鐵騎遊台北：尋木屋，訪大樹，再現老台北)" (Taibei Shi Wenhua Ju (台北市文化局), May 2005).

¹⁴ "Lishi (歷史)," *Guji Chaguan Ziteng Lu* (古蹟茶館紫藤廬), accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.wistariateahouse.com/main/modules/MySpace/index.php?sn=wistariateahouse&pg=ZC2033>.

other Japanese homes in the NTU and NTNU vicinity have resulted in an indelible association of dissident intellectuals in the postwar period with Japanese architecture.

Besides the physical connections that have long tied together Japanese rule and postwar resistance to the Guomindang, nostalgia for both eras of repression is also intimately connected to the present in psychically powerful ways. Baudrillard, writing in 1970s France, noted that the end of repressive regimes in Europe seemed to result in a particular sense of loss—what he termed the loss of referentials. In the era of relative peace, prosperity and freedom that followed World War II in Europe, a void that had previously been filled by the daily call of duty to and support for, or resistance to, an overweening state could be filled after the defeat of the regimes only by consumerism, leading, he felt, to a sense of nostalgia for fascism.¹⁵ One could, perhaps, make much the same claim of present-day Taiwan. The lifting of martial law in 1987 had two contrary effects: it triggered a cavalcade of localization movements in politics and the humanities; at the same time, information and ideas from previously *verboden* places—including, in particular, Japan, but also mainland China—began flooding into the island. These post-martial law paroxysms have given way to an apparent equilibrium in the current era: freedom and democracy have been used largely to further the consumption of material goods and experiences, consistent with the experience of other advanced industrialized nations. Hence, the changes of the 1990s yielded many more objects, both local and global, that could be consumed, but the new era was, in Baudrillard's words, "traversed by currents, but emptied of references." For those cast into such a void, it is natural to latch onto left-behind remnants of pasts when meanings were more apparent.

¹⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 43–44.

Nostalgia for Japanese rule has its roots in the repressive era that directly followed it. For the entire Cold War period, at the same time it was trying to sinicize Taiwan, the Republic of China government was also fighting an assiduous propaganda war against the government that controlled essentially all of historical China.¹⁶ In order to do this, the ROC government had to assert that Taiwan was a staging ground for the retaking of China, while at the same time it had to indoctrinate those living on Taiwan with anti-Communist attitudes. These goals were summarized in the slogan “*fangong fuguo*” (oppose the Communists, recover China).¹⁷ For some Taiwanese facing Guomintang rule, the slogans rang hollow. They were not allowed much of a say in politics, as the government froze the presidency and the national legislative assemblies in place, supposedly for the duration of the “civil war” in China; the Guomintang used its power and influence to sway local elections; and political dissidents were imprisoned.¹⁸ By comparison to the previous Japanese administration, the Guomintang seemed to lack efficiency, honesty and competency, particularly in the early years when the economy was failing.¹⁹ Although the Taiwanese economy would later dramatically improve under the Guomintang, the bitter memories of postwar disappointment at liberation from the

¹⁶ Taiwan itself was a latter-day and peripheral addition to the Chinese sphere, not having been settled by Chinese in significant numbers until the seventeenth century when it was incorporated as a frontier of the Manchu-controlled Qing empire.

¹⁷ B.-y. Chang, “So Close, yet so Far Away: Imaging Chinese ‘Homeland’ in Taiwan’s Geography Education (1945--68),” *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 3 (June 29, 2011): 385–411.

¹⁸ Peter Chen-main Wang, “A Bastion Created, a Regime Reformed, an Economy Reengineered, 1949-1970,” in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray Rubinstein (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

¹⁹ Steven Phillips, “Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945-1948,” in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray Rubinstein (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 282.

Japanese would linger with the political repression that continued for several more decades.

Further, while the Japanese colonial administration had also been a repressive regime, its status as an indelibly foreign regime gave native Taiwanese political leaders the space to develop a constituency of opposition. From the beginning, the Japanese colonizers identified that Taiwanese were “biologically” different from Japanese, and the political organization of the colony was premised on this fundamental difference.²⁰

Taiwanese would not become Japanese, although various assimilation policies would be tried in the 1930s as the colony became more strategically important to Japan. Under these conditions, Japan needed the cooperation of local elites who retained a Taiwanese identity to get things done in Taiwan, and in the 1920s and early 1930s, these so-called “counter-elites” took advantage of the chaotic situation in Japanese domestic politics to advocate for changes in the system.²¹ But after the war, the Guomindang would assert that everyone, refugee from the mainland and native Taiwanese alike, was equally Chinese; further, the so-called *waishengren* who had fled mainland China, being connected with the Guomindang, naturally tended to obtain positions of leadership in government, politics and business. Dissidents were dealt with harshly, and there was little acknowledgement from the Guomindang-controlled government until 1969 of the need

²⁰ Yun-Han Chu and Jih-Wen Lin, “Political development in 20th-century Taiwan: State-building, regime transformation and the construction of national identity,” *The China Quarterly* no. 165 (March 2001): 102–129.

²¹ Phillips, “Between Assimilation and Independence,” 278–279; Chu and Lin, “Political development in the 20th-century Taiwan.”

for locals (*bendiren*) to play a political role.²² As a result, the kind of locally-based political organizing which had been occurring before the war was not much in evidence in the 1950s and 1960s. Advocates of greater local political control tended to be lone intellectual voices rather than powerful local elites, so constituencies of resistance were deeply isolated. Contrasting their treatment at the hands of the Guomintang with that at the hands of the Japanese, some Taiwanese developed a latent admiration for Japan; at least under Japanese rule, there had been possibilities of collective dissent and public space for a Taiwanese identity, whereas this was only possible in very constrained, private spaces under the early decades of Guomintang rule.

And yet, although this nostalgia for the Japanese occupation period arose from repression subsequently experienced under the Guomintang, the literary component of Kishu An Forest of Literature memorializes the loss of this very postwar period. Specifically, it is concerned with preserving the memories and legacies of the publishing houses and journals based in the surrounding few blocks that sprung up between the 1950s and the 1970s, attracted by the proximity of the area to both National Taiwan University and National Taiwan Normal University. When I visited in summer 2012, the entire second floor of the new building was devoted to an exhibition concerning 15 of these small publishers and journals. An article that was written to accompany the exhibition notes that although the Taiwanese remember this time as a period when the Guomintang government was repressive and frightening, the history of the publishing houses in the area surrounding Kishu An reveals that a gradual opening of thought took

²² Murray Rubinstein, "Political Taiwanization and Pragmatic Diplomacy in the Eras of Chiang Ching-Kuo and Lee Teng-Hui, 1971-1994," in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 439.

place over the years, ranging from the publishing of local fiction to Sanmao's translations of Spanish comics in the late 1970s.²³ The exhibition reveals a gradual opening of expressive possibilities, within politically allowable boundaries. For example, perhaps cognizant of its political position in alignment with the West, the ROC government allowed the publication of iconoclastic Western writers such as Sartre, Kafka, Freud and Woolf in the journal "Modern Literature" (現代文學), established by young writers associated with National Taiwan University beginning in 1960. In 1967, a journal called "University Magazine" (大學雜誌) was founded to publish criticism of government policy by young writers; by 1971 it was a forum for a growing chorus of intellectuals demanding greater freedom. The gradual opening-up of thought and the struggle, at first solitary but later collective, to claim rights gave that generation of intellectuals a meaning and purpose, which perhaps seems harder for those whose formative intellectual years were shaped by dissent to find in today's economically well-off, comparatively free Taiwan.

The concern for preserving buildings and memorializing institutions that symbolize Taiwan's postwar era can be viewed in relation to a complex, triangular relationship that exists in political discourse on Taiwan between three entities: the idea of "Taiwan" itself, the Guomintang-led state, and the specter of the People's Republic of China. Throughout the martial law period, and particularly since the end of that period, each of these entities has had a constantly shifting relationship to the others in discourse. In the 1950s, the discourse fomented by the Guomintang sought to align its nation

²³ Wan-lin Zhang, "Wen Ren, Shui An, Yu Jizhou-an: Xunsuo Taibei Chengnan Wenxue Zuji (文人，水岸，與紀州庵：尋索台北城南文學足跡)," 文訊 (*Wenhsun*) (September 2011).

diametrically against the PRC and to suppress “Taiwan.” At the end of martial law, the Guomintang lost its overwhelming power, and those with an alternative view of what Taiwan was attained some power within the Guomintang’s Republic of China, even holding the presidency for a considerable period. During the initial development of the Kishuan preservation movement, the independence-minded Democratic People’s Party held the executive reigns of power, and there was considerable anxiety about the PRC’s reaction to moves toward independence and its ability to control Taiwan. Today, the discourse of the Ma Ying-jeou era is concerned with the strengthening ties between the ROC—which, after an interval of divided government, has once again become an entity more clearly aligned with the Guomintang—and the PRC; the position of “Taiwan” as a not-simply-Chinese entity, while not suppressed, continues to be highly ambiguous but can be set against both PRC and the Guomintang government. Amid the shifting sands of this kind of triangular discourse, historic sites like Kishu An are used by supporters of one side or another to try to establish and shape their own position. In particular, the preservation of Kishu An has reflected the position of “Taiwan” advocates that privileges Taiwan as a unique entity with a history of its own that admits of both Japanese and Chinese influences, and perhaps even favors the Japanese side.

Earlier I identified that one of the losses around which the Kishu An community is built is the loss of the 1990s transition period, when Taiwan seemed to be moving in a different direction from the Chinese nationalism of the PRC. The concern about this potential loss is based partly in the recent rapprochement between the Ma Ying-jeou administration and the Communist Party of China, and partly on the retention of ROC’s official “one China” position that presumes eventual reunification. It is also rooted in the

fear of and contempt for the PRC that the Guomintang itself stoked over much of its rule, fears which were stirred up in no small measure to try to distinguish itself from the PRC. Feelings toward the PRC can be visceral among Taiwanese: Leo Ching, raised in Taiwan by a Taiwanese mother and a father who fled from the mainland after World War II, has written of his “indescribable fear” as a 10-year-old upon seeing a group of mainland Chinese wearing Mao suits.²⁴ These attitudes have persisted into the post-martial law period. Petrus Liu writes of how contemporary bestselling nonfiction works in Taiwan portray the PRC as subhuman, “lacking education, cultural refinement, and civilized manners.” By contrast, Taiwan is depicted in these works as having attained refinement due to its contact with Western cultures.²⁵ The PRC, cast as a distorted doppelganger of the ROC, is simultaneously conceived as a Chinese polity that has been coarsened by Communism and as one that has not been sufficiently leavened by exposure to Western enlightenment. Therefore, by undertaking cultural actions such as preserving and celebrating historic buildings and a literary past, even if they were constructed by and in the image of an erstwhile enemy (the Japanese), Taiwanese can differentiate themselves from the PRC. Further, if it is partly foreign influences that make Taiwan superior to the PRC, then by claiming a multiethnic identity, Taiwanese can further separate themselves from the PRC.

The anticommunist discourse through which the Guomintang had cast the PRC as the enemy, as frightening, and as less than human also simultaneously relies on and seeks to conceal the fact that the Guomintang and the Chinese Communist Party, and hence the

²⁴ Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), ix.

²⁵ P. Liu, “Queer Human Rights in and Against China: Marxism and the Figuration of the Human,” *Social Text* 30, no. 1 (March 28, 2012): 71–89.

two parties' states, have shared roots. Sun Yat-sen promoted socialism if not Marxism, and he was inspired by the Bolsheviks' success in overthrowing the Russian czarist government.²⁶ In the 1920s the Guomintang would collaborate militarily with both the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union, and Chiang Kai-shek consented to send his own son Chiang Ching-kuo to the Soviet Union for training. The son, who despite briefly renouncing his father as a counterrevolutionary while he was in school in Moscow in the 1920s, would go on to hold high positions in the military and the civil government and would become president of the ROC upon the death of his father in 1975. Chiang Ching-kuo continued to read Marxist literature and make use of his Marxist education as a military leader through the 1940s, leading to rumors in Taiwan that he was a secret Communist.²⁷ Thus, beneath the surface of the Guomintang's strident anti-Communism is the reality that its greatest leaders' identities to the end of the martial law period included Communist DNA. The rapprochement between the current government of Guomintang leader Ma and the Chinese Communist rulers on the mainland seems to echo and reinforce these much earlier ties and common origin that bind the PRC and the ROC together. As if to underscore the threat of PRC-ROC reconciliation, in the context of the new economic and political ties established between the PRC and the ROC, such as the signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) and cross-strait visits by party leaders, more and more ROC residents are identifying in surveys as

²⁶ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 295.

²⁷ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 158, 302.

ethnically Taiwanese, rather than Chinese.²⁸ The rapprochement between the PRC and the ROC governments has thus proceeded while the third side of the triangle, that of “Taiwan,” has continued to assert itself. Thus, locally preserved historic sites such as Kishu An Forest of Literature, which privilege non-ROC and non-Chinese histories, stand within the “Taiwan” side of this triangular relationship against both the ROC and the PRC. The preservation of such sites as symbols of the past asserts that no matter the reconciliation between the PRC and ROC sides of the triangular relationship, the “Taiwan” side remains standing, independent in its view of history, and able to continue to shape its conception of its own identity.

Tensions Between National Identity and Local History in the Historic Preservation of the Kishu An

Describing the 1990s search for a new Taiwanese identity, Shih-San Henry Tsai terms Lee Teng-Hui’s articulation of this identity as “state nationalism,” which he sets against the “ethnic nationalism” that supposedly defines the Chinese nation as conceived by the PRC and the pre-Lee ROC governments. This “state nationalism,” according to Tsai, makes room for multiple ethnicities, including aboriginals, ethnic Chinese who trace their ancestry on Taiwan back centuries, and the post-World War II arrivals from the mainland. Its identification with President Lee suggests that it even makes room for those who identify in some way as Japanese, as Lee himself admitted to doing after his retirement.²⁹ If nationalism on Taiwan is now defined as “state nationalism” that

²⁸ Yoshihisa Amai, “‘Whither Taiwanization?’ State, Society and Cultural Production in the New Era,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2011): 3–17.

²⁹ Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Lee Teng-hui and Taiwan’s quest for identity* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), xi–xiii.

conceives of Taiwan as a place within the larger western Pacific basin, rather than a place within China, opens the door to the possibility of saving historic sites that reflect a non-Chinese, even Japanese heritage, yet still doing so within the framework of nationalism.

Needless to say, this notion of a “state nationalist” discourse is a fragile one, as it implies a certain kind of essentialism: that the nation of Taiwan consists of a fixed set of ethnicities and historic identities, and no more. In its articulation by President Lee, it is implied that the identity was, by the 1990s, pre-existing, dating at least to the late Japanese occupation era (not coincidentally, Lee’s formative years), but that it had been suppressed by the pro-Chinese Guomintang and was revealed after Taiwan’s political liberalization. Considering possible readings of a World War II-era Taiwanese novel, *The Orphan of Asia*, Leo Ching calls into question the very need to situate a debate over fixed identities at the center of inquiry. Rather than examining the novel as a text that treats Taiwan as a nation that is struggling to find a fixed place within multiple identities, Ching seeks to describe the novel as a site of a conscious movement in which identity is continually being formed as the protagonist moves through space and time.³⁰ If identities are conceived as fluid and self-conscious rather than fixed and pre-bounded, then Lee’s state nationalism, like the pro-China essentialism that preceded it, seems less a fixed identity than a moment in time when a particular notion of Taiwan became self-crystallized. The actions of invoking nationalism to preserving historical sites can then be regarded as not only a response to a particular notion of national identity, but also as an act that seeks to capture, preserve and assert an identity at a particular moment, and,

³⁰ Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”*, 194–196.

going forward, to bend the future national identity in the direction of this crystallized earlier identity.

The research report on Kishuan prepared by National Taiwan University for the city government hints at such a possibility, in its suggestion that the site, though appearing “jumbled and chaotic,” in the words of the report, actually manifests a succession of historical time periods, thereby exhibiting a certain historical dynamism that is not bound to one particular time period.³¹ Nonetheless, the reconstruction plans are primarily concerned with restoring the appearance of the Japanese period, as is apparent from the planning principles the report outlines. Upon an examination of these principles, three major concerns emerge: first, to restore both the architecture and the use of the remains of the Japanese building; second, to match the various exterior renovations and restorations with the site’s overall appearance; and third, to harmonize reconstruction with the needs of the proposed reuse. As of 2005, when the reconstruction plan was prepared, the Japanese building was in a very dilapidated condition, and major portions of it had been lost to fires; further, postwar additions had been constructed adjoining its east and south sides. For the reconstruction, it was proposed to restore those portions of the Japanese building that remained standing, but not to rebuild the portions that had already been destroyed. The main body of the remaining Japanese building would remain divided into a series of *tatami*-style rooms that would be used for activities. One of the postwar additions would be retained because, according to the report, the space in the remaining Japanese building was inadequate to perform the functions demanded by the reuse of the site; a further advantage of retaining them would be to manifest a

³¹ “Shi Ding Guji Jizhou-an Xiufu Diaocha Yanjiu (市定紀州庵修復調查研究)” (Taibei Shi Zhengfu Wenhua Ju (台北市政府文化局), December 2005), 8–32 to 8–41.

dynamic sense of time concerning the history of the site. The outdoor portions of the site, meanwhile, were to be restored in a way that matched the appearance of the original Kishu An, while also in harmony with the needs of the adaptive reuse of the site. The plan even spoke of restoring the pond around which the site's banyan trees grew up, while acknowledging that additional excavation would be needed to determine its exact location. In sum, the proposal called for a selective reconstruction of the site, focusing primarily on reusing the Japanese rooms in the remaining building, maintaining the site's Japanese-style appearance, and providing necessary additional space for support purposes.

Somewhat jarringly in a report concerned principally with restoring Japanese architecture, the word *guangfu* (光復), roughly “shining restoration” or “shining recovery,” is used repeatedly in report to refer to the historical transfer of Taiwan from Japanese rule to Republic of China rule; specifically, those portions of the building added after the war are referred to as *guangfu hou jianwu* (光復後增建物), or “post-*guangfu* additions.” The term *guangfu*, though perhaps meant in a neutral sense in the report, is obviously loaded with Chinese nationalist meaning.³² Its description of the transfer as a “restoration” or “recovery” can be questioned, as the Republic of China—the entity that purportedly recovered Taiwan—did not yet exist when Taiwan was ceded to Japan, and, strictly speaking, during nearly the entire prior period of Taiwan's settlement by the Chinese, the island was governed by the Manchu Qing empire.³³ Yet the report otherwise is largely devoid of nationalist rhetoric. It is concerned instead with a very local history:

³² In this paper, I use the terms “nationalism” and “nationalist” to refer to the ideologies of nationalism. I use “Guomindang” when referring to that political party.

³³ A further indication of the politicization of “*guangfu*” is its entry in a dictionary published in Taiwan in 1990, which provides the following as an example usage: *guangfu dalu* (光復大陸, “Recover the mainland”).

first, the position of the original building itself within the cityscape of Taipei as a Japanese nightclub, and moreover, its subsequent postwar meaning within the context of the surrounding neighborhood as a residence and a green oasis. It makes clear that the site was valued not only for its architecture, but also for its large banyan trees which had grown up in what had been a Japanese garden, and the meaning of those trees to neighborhood residents.³⁴ The emphasis that the report places on local history, while also at least paying lip service to the nationalist concerns, exemplifies a tension between nationalism and localism that pervades the historic preservation movement throughout the world. This tension is perhaps heightened in Taiwan owing to the inherently precarious position of the national government on the island, not to mention the need for historic preservationists to avoid ruffling strong sentiments on any side of the identity question as they seek public and private support.

The report thus mentions the historical importance of the area surrounding Kishu An to Taiwanese literature (台灣文學), but emphasizes the importance of preserving a Japanese style in the reconstruction. In doing so, it reinforces the divide that has emerged in the planning and programming of Kishu An Forest of Literature: while the significant cultural reasons for preservation, relating to postwar literature and the spaces of opening-up and dissent, are acknowledged (and indeed accounted for in the ongoing cultural programming of the site), the physical reconstruction will take on a self-consciously Japanese form and appearance. With respect to the literary scene, most of the emphasis in the report and in other documentation about the site concentrates on the neighborhood, or at most the city. Localism generally prevails.

³⁴ “Shi Ding Guji Jizhou-an Xiufu Diaocha Yanjiu (市定紀州庵修復調查研究),” 9–1.

Historic preservation movements globally contain strains of both nationalism and localism, but there has been a tendency for the discourse of nationalism to predominate, in part because the major sources of funding for preservation, whether from government or private philanthropy, tend to be nationalist in orientation. Tracing the roots of the historic preservation movement in Western societies, Christine Boyer identifies a set of lithographs of 3,000 historic and scenic sites in nine provinces of France prepared as travel guides in the early 1800s as an early stirring of the historic preservation movement in that country; this project, she says, sparked the national government to commission bureaucracies to oversee the preservation of historic monuments throughout the French nation in the 1830s.³⁵ What started as a collection of local images quickly took on nationalist overtones. But preservation of more prosaic urban sites lagged; even in France, writers and photographers who valued urban scenes could do little more than record the vanishing as Haussmann's boulevards tore through the medieval fabric of Paris in the middle of the 19th century. Indeed, the incorporation of city architecture, other than elite monuments such as palaces, cathedrals and city halls, into the general historic preservation movement is a more recent phenomenon, generally traced to an upwelling of locally based sentiment against modernist attempts to replace the local and historic in big cities with generic, globalized cityscapes. One historical event that has come to symbolize this rise in the United States is the unsuccessful uprising by civic reformers and architects against the 1960s demolition of Penn Station in New York City; these protests and the implementation of landmark laws that closely followed them in New York and elsewhere were the culmination of a long battle within elite communities to

³⁵ M. Christine Boyer, *The city of collective memory: its historical imagery and architectural entertainments*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 238–240.

entrench historic preservation in the institutional apparatus of city governments.³⁶ It is not a coincidence that in the United States, this movement finally won its breakthrough successes in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when many midcentury cultural norms were being questioned by those at all strata of society. Yet this 20th-century urban movement has largely merged with the older, more patrician movement to preserve historic monuments and scenic sites (if it was ever truly separate); organizations which arose earlier, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, are now equally concerned with both types of sites, and declare both to be of national significance.³⁷ In doing so, the urban preservationists have also adopted, or at least acquiesced to, the nationalist rhetoric of the historic preservation movement.

If these nationalist values of preservation are deemed important in preservation communities within Western states that have very strong national identities and firm boundaries, then it is perhaps not surprising that they would be fervently embraced in states that are trying mightily to secure their national identities and establish such boundaries—all the more so in a state as insecure as the ROC. In Taiwan, the Guomindang government first began to embrace historic preservation in the early 1980s with the establishment of the Cultural Assets Protection Law and the establishment of the Council for Cultural Affairs of the Executive Yuan. This organization conceived of historic preservation as protecting the national heritage for the purpose of encouraging

³⁶ Anthony C Wood, *Preserving New York: winning the right to protect a city's landmarks* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1–19.

³⁷ A review of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual lists of "endangered" sites reveals that courthouses, city- and townscapes, private homes, battlefields and forts are all given equal billing as nationally significant for preservation. "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places," *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/11-most-endangered/>.

love of country, which it interpreted as meaning those aspects of Taiwan's history that reflected Taiwan as a component of the nation of China. Aspects of Taiwanese history that did not align with this view, such as aboriginal historical sites or buildings left behind from the Japanese colonial occupation, were disregarded.³⁸ But in the 1990s, after martial law was lifted and those who favored local history promoted the idea that Taiwanese were an independent people, encouraged by then-president Lee Teng-hui, a search for historic sites that could reflect a newly conceived Taiwanese national heritage began.³⁹ But as the Kishu An restoration documents suggests, openly identifying a Taiwanese nation may not be something that can be done explicitly in a report on a historic site funded by the city government.

And yet, given the emphasis on the local, the mixed, and the plural of the 1990s Taiwan nationalist movement, and the relative absence of nationalist rhetoric in the report, perhaps it could be said that the intensely localist discourse that characterizes the Kishu An report implies a certain affinity for this movement. At the same time, the preservation movement relies on the Japanese era to mediate between hyper-local history and "Taiwan." Japaneseness, in this sense, has become a stand-in for notions of an independent Taiwanese identity that cannot be articulated directly; because the Japanese occupation era is now far removed in history and Japan, the nation-state, is in no position to assert any claim over the island, it has become safe to talk about Japaneseness on Taiwan, whereas the conflict between partisans of "Taiwan" as having an independent

³⁸ Liang-yi Yen, "國族認同的時空想像：台灣歷史保存感念之形式與轉化 (Time-Space Imagination of National Identity: The Formation and Transformation of the Conceptions of Historic Preservation in Taiwan)," *規劃學報 (Journal of Planning)* 33 (2006): 91–106.

³⁹ Taylor, "Reading History Through the Built Environment in Taiwan."

identity and those of the One China perspective is still very much ongoing. So we are left with a report that justifies the significance of the site in terms of local history while arguing for the preservation of a style that is identified over and over as national—that of the Japanese nation.

Coming to Terms with the Japanese Legacy: An Opening for a Neighborhood Preservation Agenda

The city government report's sidestepping of the nationalism question is suggestive the need of Kishu An Forest of Literature and its advocates to appeal to as wide a range of constituencies as possible; like other historic sites, it has had to receive support and funding both in the initial preservation stage and to ensure its continued maintenance and protection. In a city where land is at a premium, historic buildings must avoid becoming so-called *wenziguan* ("mosquito halls")—a term that has emerged to describe structures preserved for historic reasons but for which no profitable use has been found.⁴⁰ The preservation of Kishu An and other similar Japanese historic sites connects to and is supported by broader agendas of neighborhood quality of life whose advocates do not necessarily concern themselves directly with the issues of identity that pervade historical discourse in Taiwan, but nevertheless have taken advantage of the revaluing of Japanese historical sites to advance particular visions of neighborhood and civic life.

Any intervention in the physical environment of Taipei or most other places on Taiwan must come to terms with the overwhelming Japanese legacy. The Japanese footprint looms large in Taiwan's physical development: the layout of the cities, the highway network, the railway network, and the system of ports were all planned and

⁴⁰ John K. C. Liu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

implemented during Japanese rule.⁴¹ The planning of Taipei's system of boulevards was substantially the work of the Japanese civil administration. Thus, the Japanese nature of Taiwan's constructed environment is apparent in the physical forms that its residents inhabit. There was an attempt to "sinify" the island after World War II, and although Taipei and Taiwan's other cities were transformed in the postwar years, the form the reconstruction took was more the result of expediency than of any attempt at sinification. The physical patterns established during the colonial period and those that survived from earlier times remained in place. The city plan of Taipei was updated building on rather than completely disregarding the colonial plans; for example, plans for future parks made under the Japanese administration were being realized as late as the 1990s.⁴² Streets were renamed to signify places in China, but Japanese government buildings, including the most prominent public building in Taipei, the Presidential Palace, were simply repurposed rather than destroyed, as in Korea. The effect overall was a semantic rather than a physical sinification. The failure to wipe out the physical traces of the Japanese occupation left plenty of extant Japanese sites available for re-evaluation after the martial law period ended.

During the 1990s transition period, architects and planners began to take an interest in certain older buildings that were constructed during the Japanese era. These buildings are often described in Taiwan as "Japanese style," which is a confusing term because it refers to a range of building types, not all of which appear to the untrained eye to be designed in a Japanese mode. First, many, though not all, of the public buildings in

⁴¹ Harry J. Lamley, "Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945 : the Vicissitudes of Colonialism," in *Taiwan: A New History*, 2nd ed. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007).

⁴² Yomi Braester, *Painting the city red: Chinese cinema and the urban contract* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 190.

Taiwan dating to the occupation era were constructed in a so-called hybrid style which incorporates both Japanese and Western elements; effectively, this was a style that asserted the Japanese nation while often utilizing Western forms.⁴³ Perhaps the most prominent hybrid building is the Presidential Palace, the large scale and form of which are related to Western prototypes, but which incorporates many Japanese elements in the design, including the shape of the building when viewed from the air; like its counterpart in Korea, the form of the building is in the shape of the character which symbolizes Japan in both Japanese and Chinese. Another well-known example of such building is Wude Hall in Tainan, which was a martial-arts academy. Although at a casual glance, the Presidential Palace may appear more “Western” and Wude Hall more “Japanese,” both share design elements in common which mark them as Japanese-western hybrids—for example, the very prominent, rounded portico element centered above the main entry on Wude Hall is echoed in a similarly shaped element just below the central tower on the Presidential Palace. Japanese-era buildings in older districts of Taipei which have lately been preserved as tourist attractions such as Dihua Street (迪化街) also display exterior embellishments of this style, while their basic form is that of modern, Western-style storefront commercial building.⁴⁴ The hybrid buildings may be contrasted with other Japanese-era public buildings such as the National Taiwan Museum, which were designed in a purely Western mode.⁴⁵

⁴³ C. Wendelken, “The Tectonics of Japanese Style: Architect and Carpenter in the Late Meiji Period,” *Art Journal* (1996): 28–37.

⁴⁴ *Taipei Li Shi San Bu: Mengjia, Dadaocheng* (台北歷史散步：艋舺，大稻埕) (Taipei Shi: Yuan liu chu ban gong si, 1990).

⁴⁵ Jonathan Reynolds, Barnard College, interview by author, October 18, 2012.

In addition to the public buildings and commercial buildings which are in Japanese hybrid styles or explicitly in Western styles, Taiwan's architectural heritage dating to the occupation era includes many smaller, residential buildings that are less identifiably Western in form, though, like the more prominent hybridized public architecture, they do include Western elements; the interiors are sometimes a mix of Japanese *tatami* and Western formal rooms. Nonetheless, to most casual observers they likely appear thoroughly Japanese, and they were designed to mirror to contemporary domestic architecture in Japan, which was quite different in design from the traditional Chinese residential architecture that had previously dominated Taiwan.⁴⁶ In Taipei, these buildings were constructed throughout the areas of the city in which Japanese lived. They are typically one story in height, though larger examples exist; are detached from surrounding buildings, have gardens on all sides, except where the building line is adjacent to a street or alley; and are located behind high privacy walls. Kishu An is a somewhat unusual member of this class, being a commercial building that was constructed in the domestic style. This villa-style architecture still provides some Taipei blocks a unique flavor, distinguishing them from the clusters of bulky five-story apartment buildings that characterize much of the city's postwar development. At the same time, many of these homes have been neglected since World War II and are in varying states of disrepair. Considering Taipei's shortage of space, that the buildings have not yet all been demolished and replaced by larger, modern buildings is a testament to the byzantine politics of land ownership in postwar Taipei, where various government

⁴⁶ Huey-jiun Wang et al., "Evaluation of Designs for Reuse of Japanese Style Houses in Taiwan," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 9, no. 1 (May 2010): 117–124.

agencies laid claim to the buildings expropriated from the Japanese at the end of the war and use of them as housing was granted to civil servants and pensioners. It was not until recent years that the Republic of China government began to consolidate its holdings into a single agency, which has sought to sell many of these properties for real estate development.⁴⁷ Kishu An, having been made a dormitory in the 1950s for government workers, was among the buildings whose demolition was delayed by wrangling over land ownership.

While the hybrid-style buildings looked plausibly European and as such could attract preservation interest earlier on by dint of their association with Western culture, many of the domestic buildings that were more obviously Japanese in style had to await the 1990s for reevaluation. Conveniently, these Japanese-style residences also had qualities that were evaluated favorably by neighborhood activists, architects and planners seeking to mitigate the increasing building density of the city of Taipei. Since World War II, the rapid population increase in the city has resulted in the construction of midrise apartment buildings throughout areas that were formerly relatively low in scale and density. More recently, these apartments have begun to be supplanted by even taller buildings, taking advantage of the demand for housing and concentration of wealth in central Taipei. The new buildings reach skyward, providing views for their occupants and maximizing the number of units on site, while sacrificing the ground floor to automobile storage. (Older buildings generally had stores and workshops at ground level.) For activists and architects, retaining Japanese domestic buildings is a way to retain the more traditional, human-scaled street scenes they favor. A movement of architects and

⁴⁷ Zhang Wei-xiu, National Taiwan University, interview by author, July 30, 2012.

planners arose in the 1990s to preserve these those buildings that they identified as “Japanese style”; this movement succeeded in having a guide to such dwellings published by the City of Taipei Cultural Affairs Bureau but considers its overall efforts to save the housing as only marginally successful.⁴⁸

What the activists emphasize about the importance of saving the older Japanese dwellings is that those sites had the benefit of providing open space, trees and gardens on private property (see figure 5), whereas postwar construction generally covered the entire lot with a building, squeezing out any possibility for vegetation. As Taiwan, especially the area of Taipei between NTU and NTNU, has become wealthy, greater attention has been paid to the urban landscape, and today it is not uncommon to find articles in Taiwanese magazines extolling these historic Japanese dwellings as providing green oases in the cityscape.⁴⁹ In the case of Kishu An in particular, crucial in galvanizing the residents of the surrounding area to activism on behalf of saving the site was a city proposal to remove the tall banyan trees on the site in order to construct a neighborhood parking lot.⁵⁰ The importance of saving the trees themselves to the whole preservation effort is reflected in the name of both the initial preservation organization, the Tong’an Forest of Culture Booster Association, and in the name of the new cultural center, the Kishu An Forest of Literature. Trees are crucial to preservation movements involving other such sites, as well. For instance, a cycle-tour brochure of Japanese architectural sites produced by the Taipei City Cultural Bureau with the cooperation of preservation

⁴⁸ Zhang Wei-xiu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Si-ying Wu, “Supu Jiawu, Xinling Huayuan (素樸家屋，心靈花園),” *Youji Shenghuo* (有機生活), July 2012, http://www.organic-magazine.com/read.php?N_Id=74; Xin-yi Chen, “Bringing Old Japanese-Style Houses Back to Life,” *Taiwan Panorama*, April 2012.

⁵⁰ Zhang Wei-xiu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

activists gives near-equal billing to the houses and the trees, as exemplified in its title, “鐵騎遊台北：尋木屋，訪大樹，再現老台北” (“Tour Taipei by bicycle: Search for wooden houses, visit tall trees, recreate old Taipei”). Further emphasizing the connection to trees, the title also plays up the “wooden” aspect of the houses’ building materials, while deemphasizing their Japanese heritage.⁵¹ (The few lines of English text on the cover of this brochure are less poetically circumspect, referring openly to the buildings as “Japanese colonial houses.”) For environmentally-minded residents and activists, then, the work of preservation groups such as the Taipei Chengnan Riverbank Literary Society attached a cultural value to the site which thereby provided a method to preserve a green space that might otherwise have been destroyed. It is fitting, then, that some of the funding for the preservation and planning movement was provided by a philanthropy initiative of a real estate firm, which would no doubt be aware of the importance of green space to neighboring property values.⁵²

It is important to recognize that the reevaluation of the Japanese period in Taiwan’s history that took place in the 1990s provided an opening for those who were concerned about the built environment to make this argument for preservation, and the ties that such sites have developed to popular culture has provided a way for them to sustain themselves. It would probably not have been possible to openly make the case for preserving Japanese houses and structures such as Kishuan without the changes that occurred in attitudes toward the Japanese occupation generally. However, the general acceptance of the Japanese era as a legitimate and valuable part of local history has come

⁵¹ “Tieji You Taipei.”

⁵² Yu-shan Ye, “Baocun Yundong Yu Chengshi Zai Fazhan: Yi Jizhou-an Ge’an Wei Li (保存運動與城市再發展：以紀州庵個案為例)” (Master’s Thesis, National Taiwan University, 2005), 6.

in part because Japan is removed enough from present-day political concerns so as to no longer be threatening; further, it gives Taiwan something of a national style without wearing the name. The attention paid to Japanese architecture in recent years makes for a striking contrast with early postwar development, associated entirely with the Guomindang era, that also has some of the human-scaled qualities that advocates value (and, unlike the Japanese buildings, is generally not hidden behind walls) but has had more difficulty finding and maintaining constituencies of support. I discuss this contrast further in the conclusion to this paper.

Conclusion: Japanophilia, Taiwanophilia? Felt and Unfelt Losses in the Postwar Landscape

All historic reconstruction is an act of simulation, of making the nonreal appear real by the act of creating a simulation of some time in the past and asserting that that simulation is real. Christine Boyer identifies this process as analogous to that of theatre, noting that architecture is “a kind of artificial memory device” for spectators of the urban scene.⁵³ Indeed, these simulations are particularly powerful as symbols when they take the form of architecture because their solidity and occupation of a discrete chunk of land—“real estate”—at once heightens the illusion of reality and also limits imagination by making it difficult for the spectator to conceive any other possible realization on the site. As a piece of the built environment, the reconstruction of the Kishu An is still one step removed from this level of simulation, in that it has not yet been completed. But Kishu An Forest of Literature, the cultural center, already excavates the past to present for retrospective spectatorship two contiguous eras of comparative struggle on the island:

⁵³ Boyer, *The city of collective memory*, 74.

the latter part of the Japanese occupation era, and the 1950s-1970s era of Guomindang control at the height of the Cold War. Yet while the latter era more richly informs the preservationists' understanding of their actions in restoring the site and building a cultural center, the Japanese era is clearly favored in the Kishu An's presentation of itself to the broader public. It would probably not have been possible to openly make the case for preserving Japanese houses and structures such as Kishu An without the changes that occurred in attitudes toward the Japanese occupation generally. Since 2008, the Guomindang has retaken the reigns of government, and has attempted to institute more China-centric education into the school curriculum; this move has sparked speculation that the pendulum may swing back toward sinicization and away from the positive views of the Japanese occupation era.⁵⁴ But with the movement to preserve Kishu An and other such sites now firmly ensconced in neighborhood activism and, more broadly, these sites having taken their place in Taiwan's and Taipei's popular culture, the likelihood of such a return seems questionable. The loss of the Japanese past is a loss that is firmly felt by a wide spectrum of society that remains eager to consume Japanese cultural products.

Tellingly, it is this loss of and longing for Japan that Kishu An Forest of Literature and its reconstruction plans exploit to try to build a broader public constituency. The "Japanophilia" phenomenon in Taiwan since the 1990s has been much remarked upon; in the sphere of popular culture, Japanese entertainment has become wildly

⁵⁴ Yoshihisa Amae, "Pro-colonial or Postcolonial? Appropriation of Japanese Colonial Heritage in Present-day Taiwan," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40, no. 1 (January 2011): 19–62.

popular.⁵⁵ The Japanophilia has also touched the more elite spheres of activity, not only through preservation of such buildings as Kishu An, but also through preservation movements concerned with other, less functional artifacts of Japanese rule such as Shinto shrines; further, native cultural products also imitate the Japanese style.⁵⁶ Shuling Huang even identifies Taiwanese television programs that were filmed in Japanese-style buildings in Taiwan to establish a Japanese look.⁵⁷ Kishu An Forest of Literature reveals evidence of “Japanophilia” materially not only through the planned restoration of the original Japanese building, but through the teahouse in the newly constructed cultural center and a replica of the original building which is given pride of place in the lobby of the center. At present, the old building is in a state of utter disrepair, hidden at ground level by a tall stockade fence and from above by a protective metal shed, and the gates cannot be unlocked without special permission from the Kishu An Forest of Literature administrators (see figure 6). By hiding the building away, the administrators encourage the visitor to imagine what it might be like based on the exhibits and consumption opportunities offered in the new building.

The teahouse operated within the new building admittedly straddles a somewhat ambiguous position. It offers Taiwanese tea and the sort of food and drink that is popular in Taipei’s many cafes (themselves a blend of Japanese, Western and Chinese influences), including some items that are readily identified as Japanese (for example, certain fish side dishes), but also other items that are emphatically not considered Japanese in the public

⁵⁵ Shuling Huang, “Nation-branding and Transnational Consumption: Japan-mania and the Korean Wave in Taiwan,” *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 1 (January 27, 2011): 3–18.

⁵⁶ Taylor, “Reading History Through the Built Environment in Taiwan.”

⁵⁷ Shuling Huang, “Nation-branding and Transnational Consumption.”

mind (such as beef noodle soup). Yet the spirit of an emphatically Japanese teahouse elsewhere in Taipei is undeniably echoed in the Kishu An teahouse: the Wistaria Tea House mentioned earlier, which occupies the first Japanese domestic building to be officially declared a landmark by the city government in the 1990s. The Wistaria, which offers tea in a traditional Japanese *tatami* setting, has been identified since the early 1980s with Taipei's literary and cultural scenes. Following in the example set by the Wistaria, Kishu An's more casual and contemporary teahouse is part and parcel of its attempt to establish literary bona fides. If the Japanese building is restored according to the plans set forth in 2005, then the similarity to the Wistaria will be even more explicit, as the Kishu An will have *tatami* spaces available where food and drink can be served, just as the Wistaria has. Fittingly, if the plans are followed, the food-preparation and other back-of-house operations will be situated within the remaining postwar martial-law period additions to the Kishu An building.

The current site reveals evidence of "Japanophilia" even more conspicuously through a newly constructed model of a Japanese residence the new cultural center displays in its lobby (see figure 7). Given pride of place on the main floor of the new building is a model of the dwelling described in *Family Catastrophe*, created by a student at National Taiwan University.⁵⁸ This model shows an unambiguously one-story wooden Japanese dwelling, incorporating characteristic Japanese features such as windows with multiple screens and an entry threshold that requires one to step up in order to enter.⁵⁹ Although the original dwelling that inspired the model was located within a larger building that was originally a nightclub, the model is depicted as a single dwelling in a

⁵⁸ John K. C. Liu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Reynolds, Barnard College, interview by author.

detached building, surrounded by stones, plastic flowers and bonsai, suggesting rurality. Rather than being hidden behind a tall wall characteristic of the Japanese-style dwellings in Taipei, the model is screened along the edge of its “site” by a rough bamboo fence with large gaps between the slats. This depiction matches the description of the house in Wang Wenxing’s *Family Catastrophe*, suggesting an attempt on the part of the cultural center to identify itself with the novel as much as with the actual building on its site, which is much larger and structurally of concrete construction. In a way, this manifestation of the novel’s depiction of the building further heightens the Japaneseness of the hoped-for reconstruction, because it conforms to the archetype of an isolated Japanese house, one story, surrounded by vegetation, and constructed of wood, rather than the more complicated actual Kishu An which, after all, was a much larger building and a nightclub, albeit in a scenic setting (see figure 8). The preservation of Kishu An as a historic site has allowed this particular manifestation of Japaneseness, always present in Taiwan’s self-conception as witnessed in such works as *Family Catastrophe*, to assert itself in physical form. One imagines that future visitors will be able to walk around the outside of the restored Kishu An—treading on the original Japanese-era stepping-stones, no less, according to the city government plans—and imagine themselves standing in that yard—their feet firmly in Taiwan, and yet also in Japan.

If the place of the Japanese era in Taiwan’s self-conception now seems to have found relative stability and security, that of the postwar martial-law era has not. Aspects of the martial-law era have been lionized by economists and Guomintang partisans, condemned as unjust and repressive by intellectuals and Taiwanese small-n nationalists,

and dismissed by scholars for their supposed visual blight.⁶⁰ Yet Kishu An is undoubtedly a place not only of nostalgia for the occupation era but also, through its commemoration of the literary heritage, for the postwar, martial-law period. As a place-based movement that commemorates not only the individual site of the Kishu An, but also the publishing legacy of the broader neighborhood, it is also implicitly praising the postwar built environment as creating spaces where a subtle form of resistance could develop. Ironically, it is this underappreciated Taipei urban fabric, with a space for a workshop or storefront under every three- or five-story apartment building, that is under threat in the contemporary city, with the insertion of luxury, fortress-style apartment buildings which, like many of the Japanese-style dwellings, lurk behind blank walls, but do not provide much in the way of trees and greenery to soften their impact (see figure 9). Apart from unique environments such as the veteran's housing of Treasure Hill, the potential loss of this fabric has so far not attracted significant attention from planners or activists, much less society at large, perhaps because it remains so ubiquitous.⁶¹ An as-yet unanswered question is whether it will ever be possible for the postwar urban fabric that gave rise to spaces of uniquely Taiwanese dissent to come to be valued by as many constituencies as Japanese structures such as the Kishu An. The association of the postwar fabric with a regime that many still find threatening suggests that it may be difficult to develop the necessary constituencies for such a "Taiwanophilia" preservation movement.

⁶⁰ For example, see the description of modern Taipei in Joseph Allen, "Reading Taipei: Cultural Traces in a Cityscape," *Harvard Studies on Taiwan* 3 (2000): 16.

⁶¹ Zhang Wei-xiu, National Taiwan University, interview by author.

Figures



Fig. 1: Part of the remains of the Kishu An building beneath its protective metal shed. The visible portion of the building beneath the shed is a postwar addition. Photograph by author.

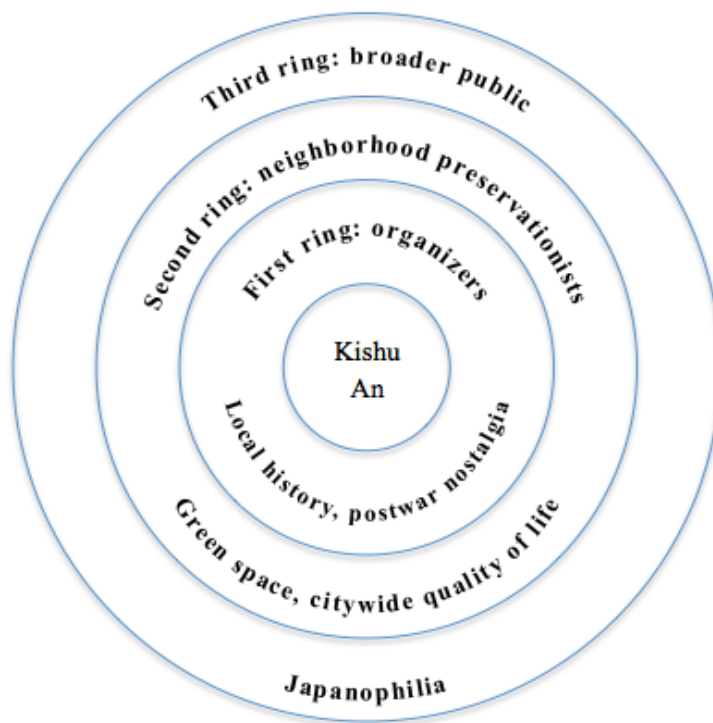


Fig. 2: Kishu An Forest of Literature's constituencies and their interests depicted as concentric rings.



Fig. 3: The new Kishu An Forest of Literature which opened in 2011. The characters for “Kishu An,” a Japanese word, are printed in much larger type on the sign than those for “Forest of Literature.” Photograph by author.



Fig. 4: Directional sign identifying the Kishu An Forest of Literature as simply “Kishu An.” The English emphasizes the green space with the word “Park,” absent in the Chinese. Photograph by author.



Fig. 5: The low-rise, vegetated cityscape of remaining areas of “Japanese-style” houses in Taipei. Photograph by author.



Fig. 6: The condition of the Japanese-style Kishu An building in summer 2012. This view of the interior is not accessible to most visitors to the site, and it is impossible to get an overview of the remaining building which is surrounded by the trees and the stockade fence. Photograph by author.



Fig. 7: The Kishu An Forest of Literature's model of Kishu An as based on the description in *Family Catastrophe*. Photograph by author.



Fig. 8: The main wing of the actual Kishu An, likely in the 1990s, before the front portion of the building was lost to fire. Reproduced on an exhibition board in the Kishu An Forest of Literature. Photograph by author.



Fig. 9: The contemporary Taipei streetscape. In the 2000s, large luxury apartment buildings (left) are encroaching on the shopfront urbanism of earlier periods (center). Photograph by author.

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