The 12th Annual Conference of the European Association for Taiwan Studies
"(In)Visible Taiwan", April 8-10 2015

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FAMILIAR SPACES:
(NATIONAL) HOME IN CONTEMPORARY TAIWANESE TOURIST SOUVENIRS

Introduction

In the late 1980s and during the 1990s, Taiwan embarked on a quest for self-identity; this process has not amounted to the formulation of a coherent, singular, unifying and naturalized national identity, but is still ongoing. There are several reasons behind this open-ended character of Taiwanese national identity, among which are the island's international situation, its uneasy relationship with China, and a polarized political scene with intense electoral competition between parties that work towards different agendas. Many researchers (Harrison, 2009: 58; Lynch, 2004: 513-514, for instance) emphasize the self-conscious and self-reflexive character of the nation-building process in Taiwan as a post-Andersonian project, which borrows both from existing theory and similar experiences in other countries in order to construct a common identity for Taiwan, where a national territory, a government, and a people are already present.

Much has been written about Taiwanese identity; research to date has mainly focused on the political discourse in Taiwan (Wang, 2013; Jacobs, 2005), the academic discourse, especially scholarship on history (Wang, 2005, Lynch, 2004), Taiwanese journalism and literature (Hsiau, 2010 and 2012), student and social movements, or ethnicity (Wang, 2003); it also includes social surveys (Shen and Wu, 2008). My observations conducted between February and October 2014 in Taipei[1] revealed a consistent preoccupation with Taiwaneseness in contemporary popular culture, which formulates a definition of Taiwan that only partly overlaps with other accounts of Taiwanese

1 My research stay at the Academia Sinica Institute of Sociology was possible thanks to a Taiwan Fellowship awarded by the R.O.C. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The present paper presents preliminary findings from my new research project, devised during my stay in Taiwan.

identity in existing research. This definition of Taiwan is consistently present across various kinds of texts: comic books, tourist souvenirs, and recent films. Studies of Taiwanese identity in popular culture, however, are scarce; most of them concern Taiwanese cinema until the 1990s (Yip, 2004; Hong, 2011, amongst others). Some scholars discuss popular practices, such as baseball (Morris, 2011) or local cuisine (Chen, 2008). Very few researchers have so far inquired into the way in which texts of popular culture other than films construct a Taiwanese national identity. Heylen (2013) looks at Taiwaneseness as depicted in recent comic books and political cartoons from a linguistic perspective, and Ye (2010) analyzes personal stories of transition to Taiwanese identity narrated in readers' letters to the editor of *Liberty Times* (《自由時報》). The present paper will focus on tourist souvenirs, which have not made the topic of academic research as yet.

Rawnsley (2014) points out that, due to lack of a consistent public diplomacy strategy and of coordination between government institutions in charge with Taiwan's soft power, official efforts at promoting an image of Taiwan abroad have not succeeded in proposing coherent messages with real international appeal. Moreover, state-conducted public diplomacy is ideologically marked, and thus depends on the ruling party. Ma Yingjiu's administration is more conciliatory towards the PRC than Chen Shuibian's, which is why its soft power activities steer away from political themes such as democracy and instead emphasize Taiwan's role as “preserver of traditional Chinese culture” (170), thus pushing it into China's shade and reducing its international visibility.

The present paper will show how texts of popular culture (the analyzed tourist souvenirs) outside the realms of state institutions and official discourse construct an alternative image of Taiwan for both a domestic and a foreign audience. This process is self-conscious, in that the producers of these texts often explicitly take up the task of defining Taiwan, and self-reflexive, as this definition involves de-naturalization and appears to be an exercise in applying well-known concepts from an international academic discourse on nationhood. Its aim is to make Taiwan visible as an individualized entity by naming the nation, emphatically delineating its territory, and filling it with a multitude of iconic landmarks, everyday sights and familiar objects. The landscapes and objects represented in my research material play several roles: they depict Taiwan as a familiar, homely space, and embody both a specific Taiwanese way of life and a collective memory. What they present is, I think, a reinterpretation of the concept of “community of fate” (命運共同體), which emerged in the late 1980s in political discourse and became popular in the early 1990s, when Lee Teng-hui advocated it in his project of Taiwanization[2]. This reinterpretation moves the focus away from ethnicity towards history, geography and everyday life as basis for creating a sense of

2 For a definition of this concept, see Wang, 2003: 81.

community and solidarity.

Research material

This research project arose from my own experience as a tourist sightseeing in Taipei. I noticed that alongside souvenirs depicting motifs that Edensor (2002: 40) terms a “national landscape ideology”, i.e. natural or man-made iconic sites already imbued with national significance, cityscapes representing (national) modernity, or folk culture of the aborigines, which are used in many countries, or have been used in Taiwan since Japanese colonial times (see Allen, 2012, 33-35 and 41-43; Barclay, 2010), there are also many objects that aim exclusively at branding the nation (by picturing national symbols, such as the flag) or that present everyday life within the home or the city, images of the past either before or after the Second World War, Taiwan's geography and biodiversity. These objects (postcards, stickers, refrigerator magnets, bookmarks, glass coasters, and so on) are usually[3] produced by private publishing houses or companies more or less narrowly specialized in tourist souvenirs and stationery. Most manufacturers advertise themselves as representatives of local creativity who undertake the task of shaping and promoting an image of their homeland – Taiwan[4]. Some souvenirs bear inscriptions in both English and Chinese, and therefore are presumably intended for both local and foreign audiences. Others are only inscribed in Chinese (sometimes in Hoklo) or depict elements of local culture not readily available to foreign tourists (such as campus folk singer Yang Zujun), and thus are probably intended mainly for Taiwanese tourists or collectors.

The present paper will focus on one aspect of this image – depictions of space in present-day Taiwan. For this purpose, I chose a research sample consisting of 36 items purchased between February and October 2014 at bookstores and various tourist sites and souvenir shops in Taipei.

3 The only exceptions in my research sample are one postcard printed by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and a limited edition EasyCard.

4 See, for instance, the company presentation sections of Miin Gift (miingift.so-buy.com), Milu Design (milu-design.com), or Taiwan Railway Company 台灣鐵道故事館 (tr.net.tw) (last accessed on March 14, 2015).

Theoretical and methodological frame

This paper follows Benedict Anderson's tradition (1991) and considers national identity to be a cultural construct, an “imagined community” of people across a given territory. When analyzing the way in which my research material constructs this community, I shall refer to the concept of everyday nationhood put forward by Tim Edensor (2002) and taken up by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008), and to Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism (1995). There is one important detail, however, that makes the situation in Taiwan different from these authors' accounts of nationhood. All of them speak of established nations, and of a latent national identity, a shared common-sense understanding of the distinct way of life specific to a national community, a feeling of national belonging, which already exist and are maintained in the banal familiarity of everyday life. In Taiwan, however, where the process of nation-building is ongoing, these “flagged” signs of nationhood (Billig, 1995) are de-naturalized and mobilized in a self-conscious effort at constructing a national identity, at defining “*how things are* and [...] *how we do things*” (Edensor, 2002: 19). As postcards and other tourist souvenirs are part of the tourism industry, I shall also quote Urry and Larsen's discussion of tourism, nation-building and commodification of heritage (2011). I consider my research material to be both based on a certain established, universal tourist gaze (a culturally and socially patterned vision, see Urry and Larsen, 2011: 2-3) and to produce a certain kind of gaze (ibid., p. 119) upon Taiwan, to construct its local specificity.

Both Billig (1995: 93) and Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 538) speak of nationhood as both produced and reproduced by means of discursive acts. This assumption also underlies the present paper, which approaches the research material as part of the Taiwanese identity discourse, and the chosen texts as discoursive units (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 4). Discourses are articulated in a diversity of texts and practices. According to Nicholas Green (quoted in Rose, 2012: 198), discourse is “a coherent pattern of statements across a range of archives and sites”. The intertextual nature of discourse and the presence of coherent discourse formations (Foucault, 1972) across various kinds of materials justifies the choice of different kinds of texts for analysis (postcards and other kinds of tourist souvenirs). The research material was chosen according to conceptual relevance, i.e. by employing theoretical sampling, put forward by B. Glaser and A. Strauss and elaborated by Charmaz (96-115). I approach the analyzed items as texts that make meaning in several semiotic modes: visual, linguistic, and layout (Kress, 2011: 54).

Naming the nation and defining its territory

Anderson (1991: 6-7) points out that the nation is imagined across space as a community of people who inhabit the same territory. Among the various instances of "flagging" the nation in everyday life, Billig mentions the nation's name, that distinctive label which indicates that the named national community exists and distinguishes it from other similar groups in a world of nations (1995: 73). He also mentions imagining the homeland – a geographical totality that unites actually experienced localities, which is enclosed within national borders (see also Edensor, 2002: 37).

Almost all of my research sample (29 items out of 36) takes the island's name and makes it visible as the name of the nation. The word "Taiwan" in Latin letters, Chinese characters, or both, is conspicuously, and often repeatedly placed on the front or back side of these items. Some folding postcards even engage the purchaser in an interactive game of making Taiwan visible – they provide a sticker with a round logo bearing Taiwan's name in English and in Chinese characters, to be used as a seal before sending, the way shop-assistants seal shopping bags using stickers or sticking tape with the shop name or logo. By joining this game, the purchaser is placed within Taiwan and becomes an agent of branding Taiwan internationally (by sending the branded postcard abroad). Taiwan's name is not employed as simply the name of a geographical locality, but is part of a nation-building project designed with a universal perspective – Taiwan is constructed as part of an international world of nations, a global political order. The name is often accompanied by the national flag, this "conventional symbol of particularity", which, due to its conventional character, is at the same time a "symbol of the universality of nationhood" (Billig, 1995: 85). Thus the state is cut off from any claims to the mainland and identified with the geographical location called "Taiwan". This idea is hammered home to an even greater extent by graphic representations of the national flag as contained within the name (placed inside the character 台). In most cases, it is not the state's official name (the Republic of China) that occurs, but Taiwan, which removes any connection with China. Taiwan's claim to international recognition as a nation is suggested by depictions of the Taiwanese passport.

Taiwan's name does not occur only alongside the national flag, but is also frequently accompanied by the island's map. The map is usually given as a contour only, which reinforces the idea of a self-contained and bounded geographical entity above regional divisions. Name and map are visually displayed as organically interrelated – the phrases "台灣最美麗的角落"and "Most beautiful corner

in Taiwan"[5] form the island's overall shape in a series of postcards. One postcard is even exclusively dedicated to this geographical totality and its name; it consists of as many as 29 stickers with Taiwan's map in various sizes and colours. The postcard imprints Taiwan's shape in the viewer's sight both with and without these stickers: after detaching them from the postcard, their trace still remains as a contour. This postcard also contains 19 other stickers with the island's name, either placed over the map or separately.

The national territory, the nation's name, the state, and the people are shown as bound in unity on one sticker which works as quintessential illustration of the basic definition of nationhood (quoted by Billig,1995: 74, among others). The sticker displays Taiwan's various names, including its official name as a state and its English acronym (Taiwan, Formosa, Republic of China, R.O.C., 台灣, 寶島, 蓬萊仙島, 福爾摩莎, 中華民國) in dark red and blue, arranged in the rectangular shape of the national flag, also given below as such. On top of this image, there is an utterance that constructs a national community, which in the English version is identified with the national territory: "I come from...", where the letter "I" is exchanged for the island's map. The sticker thus functions as a performative utterance: it positions its user as a national subject who makes a national statement, and constructs Taiwan as national home. The homely character of this space is pointed at by means of the words 蓬萊仙島 and 寶島, which establish an affective bond between the utterer ("I") and Taiwan thus pictured as a heaven. The use of "Formosa", on the other hand, is a political statement of local (as opposed to Chinese) consciousness.

The island's contour is not always given only as such, but sometimes is also depicted as an enclosure suggesting national unity. In one case it works as a frame that sets off national symbols such as the plum blossom, Taiwan's national flower, and brand national products – bananas, pineapple, tea, pineapple cakes, deep-fried chicken and bubble tea. In two series of postcards, Taiwan's map, with the administrative divisions marked on it, works as a showcase for an island-wide tour – each postcard displays on the face side a view from a certain locality, pinpointed on the map placed on the postcard's back side. Such depictions are reminiscent of the panoramic, bird's-eye-view colonial maps from the 1930s, which show the island's natural beauty and its modern progress (Allen, 2012: 37), maps from the late 40s, the 60s and 70s, which reflect the government's promotion of tourism, or the trips across the island depicted in two films, Bai Ke's *Descendants of the Yellow Emperor* (1956) and Li Xing's *Brother Wang and Brother Liu Tour Taiwan* (1958), discussed by Hong (2011: 43-52). Colonial maps and maps related to the KMT government's tourism-related project would depict not only the island, but also Japan, Korea and Manchukuo

5 All inscriptions quoted throughout this paper are in the language(s) in which they occur in my research material.

(Japan's other colonies) or mainland China's coast. In the above-mentioned films, travelling across the island functions as a pretext for introducing a (Han) Chinese version of nationalism. On the contemporary postcards, however, Taiwan is depicted separately, without any links to territories other than the archipelagos administered by the R.O.C.; the only space of reference for nationwide travel is that delineated by the R.O.C. borders.

Iconic sites, mobility across space and quotidian landscapes

The role of travel to key natural and cultural sites in producing a sense of nationhood is discussed by Urry and Larsen (2011: 147), who trace the origins of this practice to the mid-nineteenth century, when the Great Exhibition took place in 1851 at London's Crystal Palace, followed by other similar grand-scale tourist events organized in other countries during the next decades. The mid-nineteenth century also marked the beginning of travel to see major scenic spots, pieces of architecture, exhibitions and other texts that embody or testify of national cultural achievements. My research material not only delineates the national borders as discussed in the previous section, but also proposes such established kinds of travel destinations: the landscapes of Mount Ali, the Taroko Gorge, the Queen's Head at the Yeliu Geopark, the Confucius Temple in Tainan, Taipei's Grand Hotel and Taipei 101, among others.

According to Urry and Larsen, “the [tourist] gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs” (2011: 4-5), of natural landscapes and unique artifacts which act as signifiers of pre-established notions about an essentialized national or regional character (pp. 4-5 and 15-16). Edensor (2002: 39-40 and 45-46) also mentions ideologically and emotionally charged natural sceneries and man-made iconic, emblematic sites which act as synecdoches for entire nations. Alongside postcards specifically celebrating Taiwan's natural beauty and a general urban modernity in photographs thereof (not taken into consideration for this project), another frequent presence on the market were postcards and sticker sets that collectively represent natural or man-made sceneries from various localities around Taiwan or from the Taipei area, not by means of photographs, but in the form of drawings, sometimes highly stylized, composed of a few simple elements that highlight their characteristic traits; all such illustrations are accompanied by captions which identify and locate them. The Twin-Heart Fish Trap in Qimei (Penghu), is represented as two blue, interconnected bumerang-like shapes, with the two characters for “Penghu” inside; the sunset at Danshui is depicted as a circle above three wavy lines, with the caption “淡水夕陽 / Tamsui Sunset” on the back of the postcard; Fort San Domingo (identified as such on the reverse) is a red

square with a crenellated top line, a small rectangle for the turret and two black shapes for a door and window. Moreover, the same objects are repeatedly depicted in exactly the same or in a very similar form, on different items coming from the same or different manufacturers. The graphic simplification and the reiteration of similar patterns establish a visual convention that induces a certain way of viewing places and marks them as brand logos for various cities or areas in Taiwan. This visual strategy turns actual sceneries into signs and emphasizes their iconicity, thus producing them as objects of a tourist gaze in search of typical, national sites (this latter fact is reinforced by the presence of Taiwan's name and of the national flag on top of the sticker sets).

However, not all the tourist sites displayed on the imaginary travel map of Taiwan in my research material are equally conventional in character. Except for world-famous sites that would indeed list high in rankings of "must-visit" places in Taiwan, there are also numerous objects that do not seem too susceptible of attracting crowds of tourists – the Lanyang Museum in Toucheng, Yilan County, the Longteng Bridge in Sanyi Township (Miaoli County), the Jiantan MRT station in Taipei, the steel bridge over Dajia River on the Hou-Feng Bikeway in the Fengyuan District of Taizhong, the Taizhong Park or the EcoARK pavilion of the 2010 Taipei Flora Expo. Some of them (such as the Longteng Bridge, the Dajia River bridge and the Taizhong Park) are listed as cultural heritage assets or historical sites, representative as local tourist attractions; others, however, were only recently built (the Jiantan Station in 1997, and the EcoARK pavilion in 2010). Their presence in my research material could be explained by a need to increase the number of sites on Taiwan's national tourist map, to emphasize the richness and diversity of Taiwan's national culture and to increase the visibility of lesser localities by constructing them as attractive tourist destinations.

It is not only iconic sites from different locations over the island that are featured in my research material, but also various objects related to the railways, which bind these locations together and make them accessible within an islandwide transportation network. The railways are a recurrent motif not only in my whole corpus of research material[6], but also in other texts of Taiwanese popular culture, such as films released during various periods: the already mentioned *Descendants of the Yellow Emperor* (1956), Liang Zhefu's *The Last Train from Kaohsiung* (1963) and *The Early Train from Taipei* (1964), or Hou Xiaoxian's *Dust in the Wind* (1986). As Hong points out (2011: 46-47, 54, 57-58, 122), trains in these cinematic works can be read as emblems of modernity, economic and social change, geographic movement and movement in time. The railway system also

6 The railways are also promoted by tourist souvenirs depicting the past; as they do not refer to contemporary Taiwan, these texts were not taken into consideration for the present paper. Many (but not all) such souvenirs are designed by the Taiwan Railway Company 台灣鐵道故事館, a manufacturer that specifically focuses on the island's railway culture (see http://www.tr.net.tw/about.asp; accessed on March 23, 2015).

gives rise to a sense of connectivity that aggregates separate localities into a national spatial imaginary, and to a sense of regularity and simultaneity across the "homogeneous, empty time" mentioned by Anderson as a constitutive feature of nationhood (1991: 22-36). My research material depicts railway stations (Xinzhu and Sandiaoling), railway tracks of Pingxi Line in a photograph on a postcard, and a station name plate, of the kind present at each railway station across Taiwan, reproduced as a refrigerator magnet. The standardized looks of such plates emphasizes nationwide uniformity; they place the current station between the previous and the next one while also stating the exact distances that separate them (in this case – Songshan station, which comes 3.5 km after Nangang and 6.4 km before Taipei station), thus picturing them as nodes within a larger network.

Railway stations and plates with station names are not popular tourist sights (except among fans of railway culture[7]), but are part of the banal landscapes of everyday life. Such mundane, quotidian sights are ubiquitous in my research material. According to Urry and Larsen (2011: 12-17), the tourist gaze is based on contrast between its object and the observer's everyday living and working environment, on a search for difference, for the extraordinary, the unfamiliar in other times and places. It is also characterized by an incessant anticipation of things new and different, which causes readiness to accept anything as a potential attraction, as long as it is presented as such. These two authors also speak of the anti-auratic and anti-hierarchical character of postmodernism, of a trend for local vernacular styles and unfamiliar aspects of social life hitherto considered to be familiar (ibid., p. 16, 98-99, 124). Edensor, on the other hand (2011), speaks of national identity as grounded in familiar, everyday spaces and objects, habitual performances, and shared representations, which provide a reassuring sense of stability and groundedness and define the specific way of life of a certain national community. This shared sense of "how things are" and "how we do things" (p. 19), is usually unreflexive, and becomes conscious only occasionally, when certain factors (such as travelling abroad) upset the continuity of these familiar routines, or when they are considered to be under threat. The designers of the texts I analyze employ a strategy that consists in de-naturalizing such everyday spaces, objects, habits, experiences and representations as described by Edensor, in a self-conscious effort to define Taiwan. This de-familiarization of the familiar is legitimized and made readily acceptable by placing it within the framework of tourism, in view of the expectations that the tourist gaze implies.

In terms of national space, Edensor mentions the unremarkable places of shared, daily activities (work and recreation, shopping and services), streetscapes and motorscapes, styles of housing,

7 The frequency of railway motifs suggests there may be such a niche tourist trend, or community of interest, in Taiwan; however, the existence of this phenomenon and its potential Japanese connections are at present only a working hypothesis in my research project.

garden ornamentation or home decoration, local flora and fauna – all those recurring, serial features of space that facilitate a sense of homeliness nearly everywhere across the nation. The perception of such spatial elements is not cognitive, but sensual, experiential and participatory, grounded in bodily dispositions and patterns of use embedded in memory, which give rise to an affective sense of place that deepens in time as one grows up and lives in a certain locality. This affective bond is emphasized by inscriptions that construct the utterer as a local inhabitant and a national "I": "Taipei, sweet city of mine" and "我愛國貨". My research material features photographs and drawings of both familiar spaces as such and numerous objects that populate these spaces as signs of Taiwan. Although in some cases textual information anchors these sights and objects in particular localities (the West Central District in Tainan, Songshan railway station, Pingxi, Hengchun township in Pingdong county, and so on), they do not have any specific visual traits which mark them as unique – they are elements and arrangements of space encountered all over the island (especially in urban areas). They are sometimes accompanied by inscriptions that emphasize their generic character, and at the same time specify the (national) geographical area within which they occur: "台灣夜市", "Taxis in Taiwan", "Scooters on the streets" (with the "Taiwan" logo next to the inscription).

The spaces pictured in the analyzed texts are examples of a mundane, vernacular aesthetics, radically different from the conventionalized images of urban modernity usually depicted on postcards. Some of them are simply commonplace: street views with high-rise office buildings covered in mirror tiles, vertical shop signs, traffic lights and signs, and busy traffic (buses, cars, yellow cabs, small-sized blue trucks, scooters), a small, local Earth God temple, night market scenes and betel nut stands with star-shaped rotating neon signs outside. Other landscapes, however, are rather the opposite of quality, orderly urban design. There are bird's eye views of apartment blocks, chaotically built, of various sizes and crowded into each other, with water tanks, TV aerials, illegal extensions and pigeon cages on top, rooftop gardens, iron bars in the windows, air conditioners hanging outside, laundry hung out to dry and odd objects stored on balconies. There are also street views with tangled electric cables and low, dilapidated buildings, plaster peeling off walls, exposing the bricks underneath. The Taiwaneseness of some of these landscapes is already established: "betel nut beauties" in their glass booths figure in both Western and Taiwanese media as trademark feature of the island's cities and countryside, and night markets are mentioned in most tourist guides. Apartment blocks of the kind described above may be less of a local brand, but their Taiwanese specificity has been remarked, by Zhu Tianwen among others, who in her short story *Fin de siècle splendor* mentions "roofs […] covered with illegal structures built with corrugated iron", describes this architectural style as typically Taiwanese ("different from the West and again different from Japan"), and attributes its lightweight character to the local climate (1995: 444-445).

Apart from whole street scenes, some of which already work as signs of Taiwan, my research material also depicts many individual objects that recur as serial features of quotidian landscapes, and are thus promoted as national trademarks: buses, yellow cabs, scooters, name seal and bubble tea shop signs, pawnshop signs, outdoor signs for foot massage parlors, dentists, opticians, HeySong ads, alcohol and tobacco retailer signs issued by the Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation, still to be found on the streets, and objects present in many Taiwanese homes, such as the Datong rice cooker.

All these representations of everyday landscapes turn mundaneness (and even ugliness) into an extraordinary spectacle (in Urry and Larsen's terms), and make up an image of Taiwan that contrasts with the refinement of classical Chinese culture promoted in the state discourse of public diplomacy. The unpretentious character of this image of Taiwan is sometimes directly formulated, and so is the emotional attachment to such homely spaces: the description on the back side of a set of bookmarks mentions "親切的俚俗象徵 / kindly vulgar symbols", and a sticker set labels several items as "台客專用". The concept of 台客 connotes a lowly subculture, which (albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner) is raised to the rank of high culture: the four characters 台客專用 are written in red and placed inside a square frame, which makes them look like a traditional or official seal.

Places and objects with stories to tell: constructing a national heritage

In Anderson's account, the national community is imagined as an unique entity not only across space, but also in time, with its own past and future destiny; constructing the nation also implies writing a national history (1991: 11-12). This history is not written once and for all; as Billig states (1995: 71), "nations often do not typically have a single history, but there are competing tales to be told. […] Different factions, whether classes, religions, regions, genders or ethnicities, always struggle for the power to speak for the nation […] national histories are continuously being re-written, and the re-writing reflects current balances of hegemony". During the martial law period, national history in Taiwan was that of China. Within a general trend towards de-sinification and Taiwanization, the 1980s ushered in a self-reflexive process of re-writing national history (Wang, 2005; Chang, 2004). This preoccupation was noticeable in the political, academic and educational spheres, but was also reflected in popular culture (such as the New Taiwan Cinema). The tourist souvenirs here analyzed join in the struggle over the articulation of national history, alongside those voices that uphold the reconstruction of historical continuity, the need to reestablish links between

Taiwan's various historical chapters erased by subsequent political regimes[8].
Edensor (2002: 45) mentions how ideologically loaded, emblematic sites which "constitute ceremonial points of reference" function as evidence of the past (commemorate important events in national history), or celebrate the nation's modernity and progress. At the same time, he also points out that various accounts of the nation overemphasize its past and future advancement, while neglecting the present, "the everyday, which is […] equally important in establishing a sense of national identity" (p. 19). The tourist souvenirs I analyze feature both kinds of places – emblematic sites and quotidian landscapes, allotting even more space to the latter than to the former. However, it is not only the former kind that connote the past, but the latter as well. The presence of less famous sites and the de-naturalizing of mundane spaces and objects may come as a surprise to the viewer, and make him/her wonder about the reason why they are singled out. Thus, my research material encourages what Urry and Larsen (2011: 20) call an "anthropological gaze", one which interprets sights and sites "within a historical array of meanings and symbols".

Therefore, these tourist souvenirs not only uphold the memory of places, but are also repositories and activators of collective memories – they formulate a national heritage in which every period in Taiwan's past has its place. The Tainan Confucius Temple was built in 1665, under the rule of Zheng Jing, Koxinga's son. Other sites are related to the Japanese colonial period: the Longteng Bridge dates back to 1906, Xinzhu train station – to 1913, the Pingxi railway line was completed in 1921 to serve coal mining. The Datong rice cooker, mass produced since 1960, which ushered in a "kitchen revolution" of electric appliances, symbolizes Taiwan's economic miracle; taxis and scooters were introduced in the same decade. The Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall and the Ci'en Pagoda at Sun Moon Lake were built in the 1970s and embody the China-centered national identity promoted in the Jiang era. The MRT Jiantan station, a prize-winning architectural project incorporating elements of the traditional Chinese dragon boat, was built in 1997. The Taipei 101 (2004) is an iconic site of Xinyi District, a modern downtown area and site of the new City Hall since 1994, when Chen Shuibian became mayor. The EcoARK pavilion was built in 2010 of recycled PET bottles and examplifies modern, sustainable architecture.

Some of the featured sites are historical palimpsests, and thus tell stories of reinterpretation (Edensor, 2002: 47-48) and displacement (Allen, 2012: 188). Fort San Domingo was first built by the Spanish in 1629, but was later destroyed; the present structure was erected in 1644 by the Dutch. In 1683 it was taken over by the Qing, and since 1868 served as British consulate, before it

8 This need was recently emphasized by Taipei mayor Ke Wenzhe in his electoral speeches, such as the one of March 2, 2014; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xz6o7Q22wM&feature=youtu.be (accessed on March 27, 2015), and by writer Yang Cui in her preface to Lin Lijing's comic book, 《我的青春、我的Formosa》 (Yang, 2012).

was retrieved by the R.O.C. government in 1980. The Red House at Ximending, Taipei, was built in 1908 by the Japanese as entrance to a public market; it was used as a theatre and cinema after 1945, and now hosts representatives of the creative industries. The Dajia River bridge was initially a railway bridge completed in 1908; the tracks were dismantled in 2004, and the bridge is now part of the Hou-Feng Bikeway. The Presidential Office Building in Taipei, featured on a sticker with the inscription “總統上班”which emphatically locates state power on the island, is also a symbol of displacement of the Japanese colonial government by the KMT authorities. The Yuanshan Grand Hotel is the acme of Nationalist nostalgia for Chinese architecture, erected on the original grounds of the Taiwan Shinto Shrine. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum opened in 1983 and stands on the former site of the U.S. Taiwan Defense Command. But perhaps the most interesting story in terms of the approach to national history in my research material is told by the postcard showing a bird's eye view of present-day West Central District in Tainan. This area has the longest history of Han Chinese settlement in Taiwan, and many of Tainan's heritage sites from various historical periods are clustered there. However, what the postcard shows is not conventional tourist attractions, but a rooftop view of an ordinary residence area in all its mundaneness. The juxtaposition of such an image with such a place name conveys the same message about Taiwan that is to be found throughout my research material. The definition of Taiwan is grounded in a present standpoint: Taiwan is the present result of local geographical conditions and (to a greater extent) of various historical experiences (including historical ruptures) and cultural influences in different periods. The national community thus imagined (the Tainan postcard emphasizes the idea of a close-knit “community of fate”) may be described as postmodern, as it draws its present specificity not from an autochtonous tradition, but from acknowledging all those other identities and outside influences whose combination has formed a unique entity.

Conclusions

The national imaginary in the tourist souvenirs analyzed above emphatically focuses on Taiwan as national territory, on emblematic sites and vernacular spaces within it, which by their historical connotations construct a multi-layered national heritage. It seems that such an articulation of Taiwanese identity is as ideologically marked as the official soft power programme discussed by Rawnsley (2014). Its presence in tourist souvenirs may be the outcome of the DPP government's emphasis on the creative industries (instead of KMT's high culture) and on boosting domestic tourism (Chang 2004: 6). It may also be the embodiment of an oppositional discourse outside the

political mainstream[9] and the overly commercialized mainstream media, which emerged in the context of public anxiety over re-sinification during Ma Yingjiu's presidency (Hsiau, 2012: 6-10) and over perceived threat from China. By using the word “Taiwan” to name the nation represented by the R.O.C. government, my research material seems to uphold the issue of “two Chinas”. The vernacular character of Taiwaneseness as constructed in it seems to position it within the 本省 ethnic group, as it connotes a stereotype of Hoklo culture promoted by the post-war mainlander government. Yet on the other hand, the analyzed texts do not seem to aim at taking antagonizing political or ethnic sides, but instead reflect a preoccupation with formulating and promoting Taiwan's subjectivity (Lynch, 2004) in a way that would have broader appeal. It embraces lowliness, but in matters that concern the whole island and its population, and not only the Hoklo. It points out not only the Japanese colonial past, but other chapters in history as well, including Chiang Kai-shek's rule and the Chinese identity still present nowadays in Taiwan. However, it also shows the latter to be only part of a more complex whole. Whether this is due only to the need to please the public inherent in commercial, popular culture, or to other reasons as well, remains to be established at a future stage of this project.

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9 The image of a political mainstream shaped by state education promoting a China-centered idea of nationhood, and the necessity for grassrots efforts towards Taiwanization, are present in historian Zhou Wanyao's preface to Lin Lijing's already mentioned comic book (2012: 10).

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