

Bridgescape: A Represented Terroir in Taiwan

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Theme: Narratives of Bridge Construction and Deconstruction

Dan-lan Suspension Bridge is the most important scenic spot of Dan-lan Historic Trail, which was a 50 km-long walking path between Taipei and Yi-lan during Qing period. But along with later Japanese colonial and the Nationalist Party's development, modern roads were constantly constructed, leaving behind the nearly abandoned Trail, with several recognizable suspension bridges left for the purpose of urbanite's resorts. Because the Trail-passed region is hilly and mountainous, complex river systems here appear too circuitous and rapid to sail, and hence comes the densest scene of bridges in Taiwan. However, the bridges are all but destroyed whenever mountain torrents come due to frequent typhoon, so they are repeatedly deconstructed and reconstructed. Nowadays, there remain limited reconstructed juxtapositions of reinforced concrete bridges and suspension bridges, with the latter being historic sites of the Trail, which, on their stele tablet inscriptions or any official tourist campaign, show only when and what township chief accomplish them without mentioning why they need to be preserved. In short, this suggests the bridges are not a "signifier" to narrate their contextualized biographies for cultural tourism, but only "signified" as a reconstructed sightseeing object. Therefore, I argues the bridges need to firstly link to the tea-making histories of the region since Qing till Japanese colonial periods, when and where the Trail was the only Pou-chong (jasmine) Tea Route to carry tea on foot to port and next export to the world. Secondly, they and their related hydrology and topography also link to the recently granted "geographical indication" to this region. Rich biographies as such implicate a meaningful terroir enough to narrate the natural and human histories surrounding the Trail and its suspension bridges. The conceptualized "bridgescape" is thus employed to "see" the terroir by interpreting visual, cognitive and experiential bridges on the special landscape. A field work with walking trails guided and narrated by experienced tea growers will be conducted to re-depict the bridges and the path to represent the Trail.

Keyword: suspension bridge, Dan-lan Trail, terroir, tea