

Democratizing the political culture:

A series of festive events in Taipei in the post-authoritarian period

University of Tokyo, Interdisciplinary Information Institution, Doctoral Program, Hsiao, Min-Yue

1. Aim

Political culture related to democratic consolidation has received attention with the increasing crisis among newborn democracies. Nevertheless, most studies are rare to explain how a democratic culture can emerge from an authoritarian circumstance, either regarding democratic culture as a natural result of elections, or emphasizing socio-economic structural features instead of inspecting on the transformative process. Hence, this study attempts to analyze a series of festivals in the post-authoritarian Taipei in the 1994 for the sake of illustrate how a change in political culture can be achieved via specific festive deployment.

2. Data and methodology

This is a case study that a series of festive events were held by city government in 1994. Based on different types of historical materials, including newspaper, governmental reports, and biographies, it focuses on the symbolic/discursive level (logo, slogan, etc.) as well as the material level (festive deployment, time-space, etc.).

3. Results

According to the literature in sociology and anthropology, a festival is concluded as a framework of guiding symbolic actions in a specific time-space. Hence, the historical event is analyzed along three dimensions: symbols and discourses, time and space, festive deployment and practice. Two complementary deployments are significant: 1) “tampering” the authoritarian meaning of time and space and 2) the encounter of “represented people” and “actual people” by means of guiding people’s gaze and by loosely enhancing people to experience the new community through bodily festive practice.

4. Conclusion

The instability among newborn democracies highlights the prominence of democratic culture. By inspecting the transforming process of a political culture from authoritarianism to democracy, this study provides a detailed analysis on the mechanism of a cultural transformation via specific festive deployment. It complements the deficiency in the origin of democratic culture in the scholarship of democratic consolidation.

References

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