

# Cultural Values as Instruments for Economic Modernization: Nationalism and Ideology in Taiwan

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**Abstract.** Native commentators on Taiwan's recent industrialization consider culture to be a key factor in the nation's modernization drive. Indigenous writers present Chinese culture as not only economically fit but also morally superior to other nations. Such presentations are based on an idealized view of a Confucian society, which includes assumptions about the state as cultural guide and model. In presenting Chinese culture as a key to modernization, the writers also contribute to certain ideological projects. Legitimation of the government, paternalistic claims on citizens and workers by the state and employers, and the rhetorical war against communism are some of the tacit agendas I discuss.

## INTRODUCTION

Since Taiwan's entree as one of the newly industrialized "Four Tigers" of East Asia, writers from the East and the West have been interested in the cultural component of Taiwan's rapid economic growth. The view that certain cultural characteristics have helped push Taiwan's (and the other Newly Industrialized Countries', or NICs') economic growth is nearly unanimous among native commentators and is sometimes addressed by Western writers as well. The question of why Singaporean, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese intellectuals are more likely than Westerners to cite cultural characteristics as a "cause" of their own industrialization is thought provoking, if seldom discussed in the literature. The necessity of citing cultural causes of development may have to do with both a tradition of nationalistic sentiment and an awareness among East Asians of their growing economic power in the region—ideally attributed to internal cultural factors rather than to other, outside factors.

For both Western- and Eastern-based commentators, the connection between culture and economic development is often quite simplistic, with no recognition of the complexity of interaction that actually enters into mediations between ethical systems and behavior. This simplification arises in part, I will argue, because of the commentators' ideological goals. An idealized view of "culture" has been taken up in other contexts as a hegemonic tool by economically dominant nations, which have portrayed

their own cultures as key to their success, obscuring less palatable factors such as imperialism and colonialism.

The perspective that cultural values, or values in general, underlie economic systems is one common assumption for those who follow the modernization school of development. Thus, it has been claimed that the United States has achieved its economic dominance by virtue of its citizens' values: hard work, thrift and an emphasis on individual achievement (Foster 1960; McClelland et al. 1953). And, by implication, if a nation remains underdeveloped, this stagnation is also due to its citizens' values. Thus Indonesians have been criticized for being too concerned with the survival of the group, Africans for lacking initiative, Latin Americans for having too many children, and so on (K. Li 1988).

The main problem with modernization theory for anthropologists is its ethnocentrism: It offers a perspective on the European model of economic development and arrogantly believes this model to be universally applicable to all nations. The conflation of values with industrialization is a residue of modernization theory's colonialist mentality. Rostow (1956), Foster, McClelland and some Asian writers such as Li imply that their cultures' values are inherently superior to others and that underdevelopment is in part caused by inferior values. This notion assigns the blame for differential poverty levels between nations to cultural factors such as "laziness," and as such is characteristic of a neocolonial attitude of cultural superiority. The writers surveyed here all share the assumption that cultural values are *instrumental* to industrialization, hence I refer to them as the instrumentalists.

### CONFUCIANISM: THE ORIENTAL ALTERNATIVE

My sources are biased in that all have been published in English and represent an elite that I believe may be more conservative than other, nonrepresented voices. Writers such as Tai (1989) K. Li (1988), and Ku (1975) and their colleagues are government administrators, economists, and social commentators who are almost invariably pro-modernization and pro-Guomindang (the current ruling party). Perhaps it is not surprising that the Asian instrumentalists, as an elite group, claim that their cultural strength arises from a philosophy of the elite—Confucianism. Confucianism is rhetorically equated with Chineseness and credited as the source of the people's industriousness and altruistic humanism in both Taiwan and Singapore (Heng and Devan 1992:351). As I will show later, the idea that Confucianism can help create economically fit nations has many ideological goals, including hegemonic positioning of the NICs in the world economy,

stating claims to moral superiority (especially over socialism), maintaining the dominant class and ethnic group's position, and justifying patriarchal discipline of youth and women.

Most of the instrumentalists reviewed here consider Confucianism to be the dominant cultural pattern not only of Chinese societies but of Korea and Japan as well. Yet the degree to which Confucianism is a basis of the three cultures, and which kind of Confucianism, is open to contention. Not only are there important differences in the three cultures, but Korea and China have adopted neo-Confucianism as developed by Chu Hsi in the 12th century, while Japan has rejected neo-Confucianism.

At any rate, Asian scholars have criticized Western interpretations of Confucianism, including Max Weber's. Weber (1968) said that Confucianism lacks an internal tension that creates the desire to transform the world. Many scholars of Confucianism have noted that in fact one important tenet of the philosophy is that one must attempt to improve humanity (Tai 1989:13). Not only did Weber incorrectly view Confucianism as "lacking" in key elements necessary for capitalism, such as a transformative motivation, but Weber (and later modernization theorists) claimed that only one type of capitalism can exist — that based on individualism. A major point made by Tai and his colleagues is that the form of capitalism that has flourished in East Asia is based on concern for one's human relationships, not on individualism (Tai 1989:15; W. Li 1989; Wong 1989). This emphasis on human relationships, supposedly a virtue of Confucian societies, is the "Oriental alternative" to Western individualism.

For Tai and others, East Asian culture is exemplary not only because it has enabled industrialization but also because of its superior ethics (Ku 1975). He writes that "The Chinese do not attempt to achieve economic success at the expense of human relations" (Tai 1989:15). This statement conveys a sense of righteousness, implying that, in contrast to the West, which is blinded by the desire for profit alone, Chinese development has always placed concern for people first. Concern for human relations is central in Confucian philosophy and is embodied in the concept of *jen*, which has been variously translated as benevolence, humanity, or human-heartedness.

Yet is this concern for human relations always placed before economic goals? Taiwan's record with businesses overseas suggests not. In the late 1980s, after labor costs began to rise on the island, manufacturers moved industries to where labor costs are lower. Labor-intensive industries were transplanted to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Moore 1990a:84), as well as to mainland China. Taiwanese businessmen take advantage of cultural and linguistic ties by networking with Chinese

communities, especially those that share the Minnan dialect (Moore 1990a). While Southeast Asia welcomes investment and jobs, Taiwanese business practices have not been ideal. After Taiwan's watchful control of multinationals in its own country, it is ironic that Taiwanese suffer from a "bad image" in dealing with their neighbors (Handley 1990:87). Complaints include underpayment and mistreatment of local employees, disregard for environmental laws, and an emphasis on short-term investment (as opposed to Japan's emphasis on long-term investment in Southeast Asia).

In addition to exporting its industries abroad, Taiwan has "imported" workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and China (Moore 1990b). By ignoring regulations about undocumented workers, government and business keep the door unofficially open to exploitation of these workers. Moore writes that: "Legalising the workers would increase the burden on social services, while deporting them is problematic and unpopular with local businessmen." As in the United States and Western Europe, companies take advantage of undocumented workers' illegal status, paying them lower wages than indigenous workers would accept and keeping working conditions below par. Reports of poor treatment of overseas workers does not mean Taiwan's industrialists have been more "benevolent" towards native workers. Later I will present examples of the all-too-familiar exploitation of Taiwanese factory workers by Taiwanese owners and managers.

I do not doubt that *jen* in Taiwan and a Confucian-based idea of loyalty in Japan have influenced many aspects of development in those countries; Tai correctly mentions the impact of a Confucian ethical system on business organization and human resource development (1989:16, 25). For example, Confucianism has sometimes influenced the development of a paternal relationship between employers and employees and has certainly been influential in the fervent devotion to education in East Asia. However, empirical evidence contrary to Tai's ideologically motivated presentation shows that *jen* (benevolence) is not as omnipresent as Tai suggests.

Most of the workers in Taiwanese factories are young women (Kung 1984:109). For example, in the Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone, 80 percent of the workers were women, and 60 percent of those workers were teenagers (Cumings 1987:74). Factory work is typically identified with obligations to repay one's family for the cost of being raised (Kung 1984:110). Young female factory workers help their natal families by relieving the family of the costs for their own support (Diamond 1979). Typically they also send remittances home and sometimes save money for their own dowries. Money sent home may be used to support the education

of younger brothers. Workers often live in spartan dormitories and work six days a week plus overtime, in exchange for wages that are "at the bottom of the heap in world scales" (Cumings 1987:74).

### The Factory as Family and the Filial Worker

Yet elite apologists like Tai create a different picture. He writes that because of the familial social atmosphere in a Chinese factory: "Oriental workers are willing to work hard, labor for long hours and to receive relatively low pay" (Tai 1989:20). Does a "familial" description really capture the atmosphere of a Taiwanese factory and the exploitation of the Taiwanese worker? Far from it, as ethnographers who have done extensive work in Taiwanese companies have detailed (Arrigo 1984; Kung 1981, 1984). Kung and Arrigo found that factory workers did not expect special treatment from their employers, nor did they feel particularly loyal towards their current place of work. In fact, the workers often transferred jobs because they felt the managers were too strict or demanding. As one woman told Kung: "Well, in any case, factories are all the same; they all use people" (1984:120).

Tai and other elites construct an image of the docile, hard-working Asian in part to justify low wages and poor conditions. The instrumentalist argument has great significance here in the construction of power relations. One implication is that pressure from the workers to improve conditions is not necessary, as the employer, in a paternalistic fashion, will take good care of his workers, alleviating the need for unions. Another implication lies in the portrayal of the "loyal" worker: He or she has a familial relationship to the company and will not challenge management. The assumption that workers and management (or owners) have in *practice* had the same interests in Asia or anywhere else in the world is not supported by actual experiences.

The loyal Asian worker is a rhetorical construct, but there are also some examples of company loyalty in practice that seem relatively strong compared to Euro-American norms. Self-perception and cultural rhetoric are intertwined in complex ways. For example, a survey of Taipei-dwellers reveals that respondents indeed view themselves as "diligent" and "long-suffering" (Hsiao 1986).

### A National Family

Tai also makes the case that the Chinese see themselves in a sense as part of one family. For Tai this familial nation began thousands of years ago,

when geographical immobility was the rule. In modern times, Tai sees proof of the continuation of this worldview in the Chinese term for nation, *guojia*, or "state family." Tai's characterization of "the Chinese," like classical ethnographies, focuses on a shared worldview, rather than contradictions or anomalies within society.

As the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has noted, such timeless, holistic cultures are in fact created in order to contrast with the positively evaluated "progress" of the West. The imaginative creation of cultural holism played into the ideological role of classical ethnographers—including colonial control of "distant" people (Rosaldo 1989:30-31). Thus a view of China as unified yet stagnant becomes a foil for the perceived progressive and modern West.

Ironically, Tai and indeed most of the other "native" commentators whose work I am concerned with also view East Asia as a homogeneous, unchanging whole. Like Weber, Tai takes an abstract philosophical system, Confucianism, and assumes that the philosophy directs individuals to such an extent that the behavior of entire societies is determined and predictable. Of course, Tai's attempt to present Chinese culture as holistic does not have the same ideological goals as the classical ethnographers, but I argue that they are similar. Rather than create an image of an "other" to be dominated, Tai and his colleagues contribute to Taiwan's image as a dominating culture.

On one level, the image is of a culture that dominates internationally. For example, Tai cites the economists Hofheinz, Jr. and Calder, whose Cold War-inspired rhetoric plays upon fears of the East Asian (economic) aggressor. For Tai, Hofheinz, Jr. and Calder's concerns about this unsuspected aggressor plays nicely into his construction of Chinese culture as a unique power that led East Asia to its relatively new position as a threatening economic competitor (Tai 1989:12). Tai and the other instrumentalists are jockeying for a cultural and ideological position that has been held exclusively by Western nations in modern times: that of cultural and economic standard-bearer, whose characteristics can and perhaps should be modeled by other Asian nations that aspire to higher standards of living under capitalism.

To return to Tai's contention that the Chinese see themselves as part of one family, this view can be understood on different levels in the context of Taiwan—mainland China relations. First of all, the notion of one, big Chinese family plays into Taiwan's official policy of reunification. Reunification has been one of the main platforms of the ruling Nationalist Party (the Guomindang) and is the focus of national identity for this

conservative party and its followers. The Guomindang, originally a Leninist Party, has called for national unity ever since it ruled mainland China in the tumultuous years of 1928-1937 (Jeans 1992:3). The war against Japan, conflict with the Communists, and warlords on all sides prompted the GMD to pursue a totalitarian, repressive policy of one state ideology and one party (Jeans 1992). With the victory of the Communists in 1949, the GMD fled to Taiwan, where it declared itself the representative government of all China. Until the 1989, elections publicly voicing support for Taiwanese independence was grounds for imprisonment for sedition (Clark 1991:489). The main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, runs on an independence platform, which most voters rejected in the 1991 elections. It appears that most Taiwanese still identify enough with mainland China to support reunification.

Second, the mainlander-dominated government of Taiwan has ruled according to assumptions that follow from the state-as-family notion. When the defeated Nationalists came to Taiwan, they brought traditional ideas of political culture with them. For the nationalists, filiality defines the role between the ruler and the loyal subjects (Cohen 1988:164). The ideological construction of a filial subject in China has developed in the last millenium based on the concepts of an imperial "mandate of heaven" and Confucianism.

The idea that the emperor descended from gods was institutionalized by 500 B.C., prompting scholars to invent divine genealogies for noble families (Eberhard 1950:48). In modern times, political parties have promoted a cult of their leaders, as in the promotion of Sun Yat-sen and the Chiangs as "National Fathers" of Taiwan (Cohen 1988:164). Meanwhile, the notion that citizens should be filial to the current national father is supported by Confucian precepts, as in the statement attributed to Confucius, "insubordination is more reprehensible than brutality" (Weber 1968:579). Confucian notions of filiality clearly support the status quo: the male elite, which on Taiwan is represented by the dominance of ethnic mainlanders. While Confucianism has been expropriated by instrumentalists such as K. Li (1988) and Tai (1989) as the moving force behind economic success, Grieder describes how historically Confucianism has been a tool of class domination:

Confucianism was...a curriculum of moral education, aimed at propagating certain social and political norms. As such it was also an elaborate, highly developed and durable system for monopolizing the social and political benefits derived by a minority from the mastery of the essential skills of literacy (Grieder 1981:226).

According to Cohen, the mainland political culture (forcefully transplanted to the island by the Guomintang Party) is at odds with the political culture developed earlier on Taiwan. Perhaps a legacy of their frontier days, freedom and consent of the governed are important political qualities for native Taiwanese (Cohen 1988:165). While consent of the governed may still be an important quality for Taiwanese, Cohen does not address the effect of the Japanese in constructing the island's political ideology. Like the mainland Chinese, the Japanese colonists imposed the concept of the nation as family, whose members should demonstrate filial loyalty (Cumings 1987:56). Although most Taiwanese look back on the Japanese period with revulsion, the colonialist influence on island politics and administration was extensive (Gates 1987; Kublin 1973). In any case, the Guomintang has tried to weaken manifestations of "Taiwan Consciousness," mainly through the suppression of Taiwanese and other local dialects and the promotion of Mandarin (Cohen 1988:165-166).

### **Patriarchy and the Social Order**

Confucianism, as a philosophy and to varying degrees in practice, entails particular relationships between the individual and the state and between the individual and her or his family. The class, age, and gender lines of the hierarchy are spelled out in the traditional litany: "Emperor must act as an emperor; ministers, ministers; fathers, fathers; sons, sons" (Wong 1989:123). High social rank and age dominate low social rank and youth, while women need not "act" at all—merely obey. To Taiwanese elites these culturally defined roles have been instruments for industrialization. For Wong (1989), East Asians' adherence to their proper social responsibilities comes from a "sense of social discipline" that helps to achieve both "social harmony" and "progress." As he presents it, if everyone performs their proper role the result is peace and prosperity. Yet who disciplines whom in order for peace and prosperity to flow? Discipline implies someone whose desires are curtailed; in East Asia, these are the young and women.

A look back to ethnographies of factory life on the island reveals that Wong's idealized vision is shattered by the experience of working women. As I mentioned above, most of the workers are young women, many of whom have given up education beyond primary school in order to begin supporting their family financially (Kung 1984). Kung described the experience of 19-year-old Wang Su-lan, who very much wanted to go on to lower-middle school but instead started working. She gave all her monthly earnings from her job sewing collars onto shirts to her mother, who explained that Su-lan was not allowed to continue in school because

the family needed the money. Su-lan's mother felt that even though her daughter could get a better job with more education, "once a girl marries, she belongs to other people" (Kung 1984:112). Su-lan's younger brother is the only sibling to continue past primary school. Su-lan definitely fulfills her role as a filial daughter but to do so must sacrifice her own future.

Heng and Devan's (1992) perspicacious analysis of state control of fertility in Singapore illustrates the essentially patriarchal nature of Confucianist ideals, both in rhetoric and in practice. Rhetorically, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, like Taiwanese elites, attributes Singapore's economic success to Chinese culture. For Lee, Confucianism not only legitimates his own authority, but also provides ideological tools for "the efficient working of state corporatism and multinational capital" (Heng and Devan 1992:354). That women of "no education" (mainly Malay and Indian) had more children than educated women (mainly Chinese) was the fault of women's uncontrolled sexuality and a threat to the nation's efficiency. Policies were implemented to encourage educated women to have children and to discourage uneducated women from having more than two children; hence, the Confucian ideal of a patriarch perfecting his "family" (here the nation) became a reality for the women of Singapore.

### **The Power of the True Chinese Culture**

In Taiwan, the Guomindang and mainlander elites also legitimize their dominance by exploiting the question of cultural heritage. Taiwan has consciously represented itself as the last island of true Chinese culture, as communism has ravaged traditions on the mainland. Li quotes a U.S. official who says that "the mainstream of Chinese culture now flows on this island," which for Li is the reason why so many scholars come to Taiwan (K. Li 1988:164). There is some truth to Li's presentation—the Communist Party has led ideological attacks against Confucianism and religion. While Maoist ideology has traditional roots, Communism has perhaps led to more radical cultural changes than Taiwan has witnessed (Potter and Potter 1990).

It may be impossible (and probably pointless) to decide which China is more "Chinese." I would like to point out that Taiwan's leaders have ideological reasons to present themselves as the heirs of the purest version of Chinese culture. On a political level, claiming cultural purity legitimates the Guomindang's goal for reunification: a united China, under the Guomindang. On a social level, claims to cultural continuity help construct the image of Taiwan as an economic miracle by virtue of Chinese culture.

The claim to standard-bearer and model is expressed by K. Li, who, as I mentioned, is a member of Taiwan's bureaucratic elite:

I would like to suggest that, by virtue of the role we perform and of our cultural heritage, we are in a unique position to contribute to the strengthening of international economic relations and to the enhancement of world prosperity (K. Li 1988:110).

Li is making a call for an enlarged role for Taiwan in world economic affairs, typical for a nation with a strong, expanding economy. Li's attention to Taiwan's special role and "culture heritage," however, must be understood in light of a divided China. The People's Republic of China is an implicit challenger to Taiwan's "unique position." In fact, on a practical level, the threat posed by the PRC has been one of the Guomindang's primary legitimizing forces (Clark 1991:489). The Guomindang has used the islanders' fears of a Communist takeover to justify their monopoly on power, martial law, and other repressive policies. In addition to a divided China, another important backdrop to the positioning of Chinese culture as a model by virtue of its economic fitness is the centuries-old perception that the Chinese lagged behind the West in economic and technological development. The Chinese have long believed themselves superior to all other nations. Any other peoples they encountered were termed "barbarians," while their own county was the Middle Kingdom, the physical and spiritual center of the world. Yet when China encountered European traders, whose advancements in technology and economic acumen in the imperialist project enabled them to dominate China's seaboard politically and economically, it suffered a humiliation that still reverberates.

Although education and technology are still perceived to be more advanced in the West (Harris 1991), Taiwanese have been quite conscious that this disparity is changing. An article in the popular press notes proudly that a petrochemical plant turned away a foreign consultant who was to direct the reconstruction of the plant for \$4,000,000, employing local technicians instead. The project was to be under Dr. Wu Cheng-ching. The author states that Dr. Wu's achievement "has changed the attitude of Chinese investors who are no longer under the illusion that Chinese engineers are inferior to Western engineers" (Anonymous 1978). One might assume that this "illusion" must be almost completely dispelled by now, as large numbers of young Taiwanese who obtain advanced technical degrees in the United States are heavily courted by business and government to return to Taiwan. Yet the memory of being quite far from the West's (and then Japan's) level of technology is still compelling, prompting

Taiwanese commentators to slip into self-congratulatory rhetoric at times. On the other hand, the public at large seems to be more self-conscious of a perceived negative image of Chinese culture than self-congratulatory. A survey of Taipei-dwellers found that 65 percent of the participants thought that foreigners believed Chinese to be "backward, unscientific and not law-abiding," and 72 percent thought that steps should be taken to improve Taiwan's international image (Hsiao 1986:11).

An earlier claim to the power and truth of "Oriental" culture comes from Ku Cheng-kang, who was among those who planned an Asian Cultural Center in Taipei to "promote Oriental culture" (Ku 1975:1). Like the Alliance Francaise, the British Council, the American Center, and other publicly-funded cultural representatives around the world, the Asian Cultural Center has ideological goals: to present a nation's culture as unique and interesting, thereby legitimizing the existence of the nation, and to present its system as an alternative to other systems of political economy, in this case a presentation of capitalism as a superior alternative to socialism. Ku makes the latter goal clear, as he sees Oriental culture as "a spiritual stabilizing force very much needed for...freedom, democracy and peace in Asia" (Ku 1975:1). The implicit reference here is to the PRC, which has made suppression of religion a policy since its inception. Like Tai, Ku claims that Chinese culture has not changed substantially since its beginnings, when the great philosophers Lao Tze and Confucius lived and taught, about 500 years before Christ. This claim is indisputably false when looking at changes in family roles in the last 50 years alone, not to mention the influence of other Asian and Western cultures over the centuries. Yet in making this claim Ku rhetorically asserts that a culture that could survive unchanged since 500 B.C. must be true and powerful.

In 1966, a state-sponsored "movement" to promote the true Chinese culture was begun by President Chiang Kai-shek: The Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement. Chiang's renaissance was explicitly a response to Mao's Cultural Revolution (Y. Chen 1975:27). The Renaissance Movement was also consciously built on Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People"—*San Min Chu I*—nationalism, democracy, and social well-being. Here we see an example of the local articulation of the global ideoscape, as Appadurai (1990:299) terms it. Appadurai notes how certain key words, often originating during the Enlightenment, are taken up by local political and cultural economies where they serve indigenous political goals. In Taiwan, the primary goal has been the ideological use of a cultural image: a "free" China (nominally a democracy), united (in nationalism) by good intentions (*jen*) that will resist "the forces of Communism that are bent on world conquest and human enslavement" (Y. Chen 1975:27).

More recently, "Han culture" has been invoked as the key to Taiwan's destiny to industrialize and prosper.<sup>1</sup> For K. Li, it is the "Han culture, with its heavy emphasis on hard work, frugality, and allegiance to the state" that has enabled economic growth not just in Taiwan but in the other NICs and Japan as well (1988:124). Li's assertion that it is Han culture that enabled economic growth is a form of cultural hegemony that no doubt Koreans and Japanese would find offensive. The implication that Chinese are more hard-working than other peoples is also a hegemonic strategy, one reminiscent of Americans' claim that the United States owes its economic success to Protestant values and an achievement orientation (Foster 1960; McClelland et al. 1953; Rostow 1956). Simply stated, for Li East Asian economies have grown faster than other economies because of cultural factors. Although he mentions that colonialism and uneven distributions of wealth hampered development in Latin America and Africa, culture had an influence too. In Latin America, Catholicism and ensuing high birthrates constitute major impediments, according to Li. Meanwhile, Africans have been "unable to develop a spirit of drive and initiative," and "many African farmers have shown little interest in producing a surplus for the market" (K. Li 1988:124).

### Social Consciousness

What about the claim that Chinese culture is ethically superior, in addition to its economic fitness? The question of social consciousness in East Asia is controversial, and not only because practice does not always match philosophical ideals. Perspectives on whether such social consciousness exists even on an abstract level vary, from unrealistic idealizations of how socially conscious East Asia is to reformist critiques on its absence. Martellaro (1991:85), for example, believes that Confucian values that emphasize harmony and altruism rather than competitiveness have helped unite individuals to support common causes, one of which has been industrialization. Kim (1980:8), on the other hand, speaks of a growing "dehumanization" and calls for Koreans to develop a social consciousness. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that one group of commentators, including Tai and Martellaro, have taken the philosophical ideal of *jen* as a universal ideal and as reality in practice.

Human relationships are emphasized in East Asia but oftentimes according to a rather strict division between those individuals one knows and cares about and those outside of one's immediate social network. For those individuals who share a relationship ties may be used for mutual advantage. For example, the maintenance of personal ties, or *guan xi*, has

served a well-known function in the maintenance of business ties (Hsu 1981).

K. Li recognizes that the application of ethics such as *shu*, or magnanimity, is usually limited to specific people one knows, not extended to strangers (1988:375). The lack of a wider social consciousness, coupled with Taiwan's industrialization, has led to severe problems with traffic, pollution, and waste disposal. Li, like Kim, decries Taiwan as "a 'normless' society," lacking a moral code for relations with those outside of one's circle of acquaintances (K. Li 1988:377). Anthropologist Li Yi-yuan puts it more poetically: "warmth and courtesy, for a Chinese, gradually fade out like the ripples on a pond the more distant the relationship is that he has with someone" (in Hsiao 1986:10). Li Yi-yuan calls for an addition to the traditional five human relationships (father-son, brothers, friends, husband-wife, ruler-subject): a new relationship between the individual and the community. What is most strikingly different from American assumptions about community involvement is the high degree of accountability to which Li holds his compatriots.

#### THE STATE AS A CULTURAL GUIDE

Rhetoric on culture in Taiwan is heavily influenced by ideas about the role of the state in directing society. Two master assumptions underlie such rhetoric: 1) that the state has a right to construct and guide social attitudes and practice and 2) that it is possible for the representatives of the state to have an effect on practice. The political values in Taiwan, at least as exemplified by the sample of elite spokespeople I survey here, seem to favor moral advice and discipline. When Li Kwoh-ting writes about the principle of an individual-community relationship, he actually offers moralistic directives to put the principle into practice, including "Never wasting public property and never yielding to the temptations of avarice and corruption" and "Preserving orderliness in all communities and eliminating urban blight" (1988:379-380). Yet Li's call for social action continues the long tradition of Chinese ethical philosophers.

One influential classic that addresses the relationship between the individual and the state is the *Great Learning*. This essay gives "eight steps" for applying the Confucian principles of altruism and conscientiousness, one of which is supporting the "national order" (Chan 1963:84). The assumption that has been incorporated into modern rhetoric is that the people share common interests and that the state has a role to play in defining those interests and in detailing how they can be met by the citizens. The relationship here is expressed succinctly by K. Li: "The people should

be loyal to the state, and the state must exercise its power to care for and protect the people" (1988:378). Li's statement could very well be made by a Communist Party official in the People's Republic, and indeed rhetoric in the two countries draws on a common heritage.

The Chinese culture heroes of the past, the great philosopher-kings, have had modern manifestations in the form of Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek, among others. In their role as philosopher-kings, Mao and Chiang engaged in cultural construction through their speeches and writings. Given the mythic role of the philosopher-king in China, perhaps their views would be taken more seriously by a Chinese audience as ideals to be lived up to, compared to the cynical appraisal of political rhetoric by citizens of Western nations.

In Taiwan, Chiang's ideas about society and politics were formative in the narrative of cultural ideology. As noted above, Chiang's promotion of a Chinese cultural renaissance was part of the ideological war against the People's Republic. When Taiwan was forced to withdraw from the United Nations in 1971, the need to again surround the nation with the protective cloak of cultural superiority was great. Ku wrote:

Each individual should strive as a forerunner of Oriental cultural renaissance and a pioneer in the anti-Communist campaign of self-salvation and mutual salvation. All of us will together stamp out the sources of Communist evils and see to it that Asia grows with freedom, democracy, peace and prosperity (1975:17).

Cultural concepts Ku draws on here include the ethic of self-cultivation. The sage, or gentleman, strives to cultivate himself, his knowledge, his talents, his skills with people. This ideal is translated by Ku as "self-salvation," the religious idiom adding to the feeling that Chinese culture is under spiritual attack by Communism. The tone and language bear a remarkable (if ironic) resemblance to Communist Party rhetoric in the PRC.

Anagnost (1990:16) has written about state-sanctioned cultural ideals on the level of practice in the People's Republic. Party organizations include a "social ethics appraisal committee" and "civilization committees." Anagnost gives excerpts of stories from the mass media in the PRC, in which "backward" individuals are transformed through the efforts of neighbors and party officials into "law-abiding" participants in the community (1990:21). While Taiwan might not have such overt public direction of values, the similarities in the discourse flowing from the two different political systems are striking. The People's Republic master narrative is

“progress toward socialization”; Taiwan’s is “progress toward capitalist industrialization and modernization.” Yet for both societies the state presumes to offer moral directives to guide progress toward these goals. Anagnost notes that interpretations of these stories of moral exemplars can vary: Some people may believe the stories, some may be cynical. Perhaps the state has not become quite as delegitimized in Taiwan as on the mainland, but no doubt many on Taiwan would also view state rhetoric on values with a cynical eye.

### CONCLUSIONS

Tai’s and others’ insistence that modernity in Japan, or China, or Korea is not and will not be the same as modernity in the West is a point very well taken and an important counterpoint to the still-dominant view that modernity is, by definition, Western civilization. I agree that for East Asians social role fulfillment, for example, is more important than individual fulfillment when compared with Western values. I also agree that the relative importance of social links outside the self makes for a particular relationship between individuals and their jobs, their employers, and the state. There are many cultural factors that have shaped the development of East Asia, some shared between the different countries of the region and others not.

While the instrumentalists have many excellent points to make about the unique characteristics of development in East Asia, I find their arguments problematic in two ways. First of all, the instrumentalists (like many anthropologists) draw direct parallels between abstract philosophy—be it Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism—and human behavior. The overriding importance some instrumentalists assign to Confucianism in particular should be tempered by a recognition of contradictions in the Chinese ethical system and by examples from actual behavior, especially behavior related to the social pressures of industrialization. Contradictions, change, and adaptation (or resistance) not only complete the picture of culture but make possible a cultural critique.

Secondly, underlying the Asian instrumentalists’ argument are some problematic assumptions shared with modernization theory: that Chinese (and Japanese and Korean) culture is superior to other cultures and that the East Asian ethical system should be a model for others to follow. These ethnocentric assumptions, as I stated earlier, are part of the hegemonic rhetoric of the region’s elite spokespeople. It seems that, as in the West, achievement of economic dominance necessitates the construction of an ideology of cultural superiority, specifically of cultural values as instruments

for capitalist economic development. This ideology often contains anti-Communist rhetoric as well. East Asia, according to Tai, has succeeded economically by virtue of its cultural strengths while socialism has failed, which implies a weak sociopolitical strategy (Tai 1989:27). Tai significantly excludes the People's Republic of China from this discussion. The existence of the PRC, however, is no doubt one reason why Tai feels it is necessary to claim the superiority of Han culture over socialism.

Beyond rhetorical posturing, what has been the response of the Taiwanese to rapid industrialization? A curious mix of pride in modernization (understood almost entirely in terms of the Western experience) and dismay at the new materialism and other perceived ills seems to characterize an ambivalent response to changing values and behavior. For example, Wei sees modernization as generally positive, as people become more self-determined and find more choices available to them (1973:440). Yet Wei also notes that generational conflicts have appeared, as children reject being treated by their parents as possessions whose primary value is economic. Yang found similar trends, yet from his point of view all of the changes have been positive (Yang 1981). For instance, Yang notes a new emphasis on achievements rather than moral cultivation (1981:268). People have a more active and easy-going nature, compared to the previous "shy and suspicious" nature he says once characterized Chinese people (Yang 1981:268-269).

It appears that within less than a decade opinions about cultural changes have become less positive. In the survey mentioned previously (reported in Hsiao 1986), respondents describe Chinese as materialistic, individualistic and neglectful of spiritual values. Other writers bemoan increasing commercialization and consumerism in Taiwanese society (K. Chen 1988; L. Li 1991). While describing such commercialization as "inevitable" because Taiwan cannot avoid the capitalist path, Li recommends a solution common among the instrumentalists—state intervention. She writes that "government, society and cultural workers should reduce the ill effects of capitalism and keep the profit motive to a minimum" (L. Li 1991:95).

For many native commentators, cultural traits are instrumental to economic growth. But there is also the assumption that society can actively shape cultural traits and that individuals have conscious control over these "instruments." Deeper underlying assumptions about national unity and perfectibility inform the philosopher Shen, who, in writing about the Information Age, advises that:

To readjust the informational concept of our people, correct the bad inclination of utilitarianism, strengthen the creativity of our own culture...and further strengthen the self-consciousness of the people and humanistic discipline, we must first get rid of the shortcomings and develop the good points of the culture and integrate the characteristics of the informational age (Shen 1988:79).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Han culture refers specifically to the formative period of Chinese culture during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to A.D. 220) and more generally to an idea of a "pure" and continuous Chinese culture (and race) unpolluted by any "outside" culture. The connotations associated with "Han" or "Chinese culture" will vary with context.

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