

## Chapter One

# The Middle-Class Norm and Responsible Consumption in China's Risk Society

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China's neoliberalization, a process known in China as "reform and opening" (*gaige kaifang*), which began in the late 1970s, has extracted individuals from the social institutions developed in socialism and reembedded them within a new sociopolitical system. The embrace of a neoliberal economic and political system, with all its attendant risks, has forced the development of new governmental and social policies to stabilize China's growing inequality through the conceptual category of the middle class. Within this historical context, life-making and life-building take the form of self-formation but only in such a way that they become measured by the new social norm of the middle class. I draw from my ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing to examine how individuals transform themselves into entrepreneurial subjects through consumer practices and how private corporations play an important role in cultivating middle-class values and shaping consumer behavior. As is the case with other social engineering projects discussed in this book, such as the training of migrant women workers to fit China's neoliberal development (Yan, Chapter Six in this volume), the making of responsible middle-class subjects through consumption is part of the government's larger project of engineering a new society for the future.

### *Neoliberalization, Risk Society, and the Middle Class*

Contemporary Chinese society has been transformed into a risk society, in which individuals and nongovernmental organizations take over responsibilities once assigned to the government. This shift has been tied to China's neoliberalization, the transformation of China from a socialist country to a neoliberal state, which refers to both the Chinese nation-state under a hybrid capitalist-socialist system and to China as a country where economic rationalism penetrates all aspects of society, including domains such as the political and the cultural that are usually incommensurable or incompatible with the economic realm (Ren 2010a). China's neoliberal transformation has occurred largely through establishing a relationship between "reform and opening" and national reunification, two seemingly parallel historical agendas of the socialist state since the late 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The former entails various national development projects addressing the modernization (*xiandaihua*) of the economy, culture, technology, and state-society relationship. The reunification issue revolves around the status of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau.

The Chinese government's reform and opening project has allowed the development of new kinds of productive enterprises that are neither state controlled nor collectively owned. This policy change contradicts both the policies of Mao Zedong's socialist government, which had eliminated all forms of private ownership and their associated productive relations, and the constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ruling party of China founded on commitment to the causes and interests of the working class. To resolve these contradictions, Deng Xiaoping's government declared in 1978 that the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had been a complete failure and had caused chaos in the Chinese state. Deng's repudiation of Mao's legacy opened up possibilities for rejecting Maoist practices (including prohibition of private ownership). Building on this decision, Deng and his successors gradually modified the Communist Party constitution and incorporated key changes as amendments to the national constitution.

In 1998, Jiang Zemin, the secretary general of the CCP and the president of China, asked the party members to propose a theoretical structure for a new system of political representation. In February 2000, he proclaimed the "Three Represents" (*sange daibiao*) in which the CCP represents "the developmental requirement of the advanced productive forces in China," "the progressive direction of the advanced culture in China," and "the fundamental interest of the vast majority of the people."<sup>2</sup> In 2003, the Third

Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China formally incorporated this theory into the revised party constitution. Meanwhile, the Chinese government formally changed its English translation from the Chinese Communist Party to the Communist Party of China (CPC). Therefore, when the Three Represents and property rights became formally institutionalized, the transformation of the Communist Party-led state from a state of the working classes to one of the capitalist class (including the *nouveaux riches*) was completed (Ren 2010b).

Meanwhile, the reincorporation of capitalist Hong Kong into socialist China has done what no other contemporary event could have done: It provided both the historical precondition for and the primary process of China's radical neoliberal transformation. Under British rule, Hong Kong was recognized not simply as a capitalist economy but as one of the freest market economies in the world.<sup>3</sup> The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 that set out the conditions for Hong Kong's return to China called for Hong Kong to retain its capitalist system and a measure of political autonomy for a period of fifty years, a provision commonly referred to as "one country, two systems" (*yiguo liangzhi*) and viewed by the Chinese as a potentially long-term arrangement. This framework was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping during the Sino-British negotiation process. It was extended to create various types of special economic and political zones, enabling the practical coexistence between socialist and capitalist spaces. Thus, the legal framework of one country, two systems, on being translated into political and economic practices in China, shaped the transformation of the Chinese state into a neoliberal state. By casting reunification as an *uncompromisable* issue of national sovereignty, the Chinese government made this a default justification for all political, economic, social, and cultural changes. That is, reunification with Hong Kong demanded the supreme power of sovereignty to act ethically by not abiding by existing (Maoist) socialist norms and laws. Thus, anything incompatible with regaining sovereignty over Hong Kong was to be modified, changed, or rejected—including Maoist forms of mobilizing and empowering ordinary people, political representation of the working class, socialist productive relations, economic policies, and nationalism (Ren 2010a; 2010b; 2012).

The spatial production of neoliberal social space followed Deng's theory of one country, two systems. This is shown by the creation of a series of four special economic zones (beginning in 1980) in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, where nonsocialist systems—not only private markets but also private

controls over the economy and the population—were developed. In 1984, the year of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the government expanded the special economic zone concept to another fourteen coastal cities and to Hainan Island. In the 1990s, many priority development regions and export processing zones were established across the country. In 1997, Hong Kong became the first special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, and two years later Macau became the second. Each region is supposed to operate for fifty years according to its own miniconstitution.

Similar to the idea of the special economic zone is the proliferation of numerous privately controlled zones through urban real estate development projects. Some past and present Communist Party officials and their relatives (for example, Chen Xitong and Chen Lianyu, members of the politburo) could use their access to political capital and networks for accruing wealth in the new economy. For them, neoliberal policies like privatization of land use offered a horizon of freedom to pursue the good life, whether in terms of a “relatively comfortable life” (*xiaokang shenghuo*), in Deng Xiaoping's words, or a lifestyle oriented toward cosmopolitan or international norms. Zhang Yuchen's prior status as the head of Beijing's construction bureau, for example, gave him the opportunity to accumulate vast wealth (Kahn 2004). By contrast, those who lacked access to social and political capital were affected negatively by privatization and the erosion of social welfare institutions. As their life chances were diminished, they become marginalized as subjects in need, whether as landless peasants or laid-off workers.

During China's neoliberal transformation, the foundation of Chinese state sovereignty has shifted away from the collective body of the people and toward the individual body of the citizen.<sup>4</sup> The ways in which individuals become socialized as Chinese citizens have changed significantly. Not only are the institutional structures of socialist China disappearing, but forms of practical knowledge, common sense, and guiding norms associated with socialism are no longer legitimate or empowering tools. Increasingly, Chinese citizens are expected to rely on themselves in their life-building process. This life-building process, however, does not presume a straightforward, upward, or progressive trajectory, which is based on a will-have-been of future anteriority (Berlant 2007: 758). Its outcomes are more conditional and contingent. Thus, the neoliberal do-it-yourself biographical process includes not merely positive trajectories but also delayed, regressive, or sidetracked ones.

For example, the socialist work unit (*danwei*) was not only a workplace but also an entire welfare system (Yi Wang 2003; Bray 2005). It provided

employment, housing, child care, health care, and education. However, the neoliberal reforms, especially of the state-owned enterprises that employed the majority of the workers, have systematically reduced the state's welfare function with the withering away of these work units and the social networks formed through them. Some individuals have taken advantage of new opportunities to become active participants in the market. Meanwhile, millions of laid-off workers face new challenges of making a living. Some have been retrained to take temporary and part-time employment, such as domestic help and service sector jobs, while others have become permanently unemployed or underemployed because they are unable to compete either with the growing number of young migrant laborers from rural areas (Pun 2005) or with new college graduates with greater knowledge of the norms of international business and work practices (Ross 2006: 18).

The neoliberal transformation of the Chinese state has led some Chinese scholars to consider its consequences. The Chinese economist Yu Wenlie, for example, mentioned four major problems in 2004:

1. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor presents a challenge to the socialist distribution system (*fenpei zhidu*).
2. The privatization of state-owned enterprises and “state-owned assets” (*guoyou zichan*) damages the socialist “collective ownership system” (*gongyouzhi*).
3. The government's “malfunctioning” or “misbehavior” (*shiwei*) in the market damage the socialist market economic system.
4. “The urban-rural twofold economic structure” (*cheng xiang eryuan jingji jigou*) and the increasing economic disparities among regions damage the balanced development of the national economy. (2004: 20)

These shifts have turned Chinese society from one of the world's most equal societies to one of the most unequal. China has become a risk society in which responsibility for employment, welfare, education, health, poverty alleviation, and environment have become redistributed from government to nongovernmental organizations and from the collective to the individual.<sup>5</sup>

During China's neoliberal transformation, governmental and social policies have shifted from regarding peasants and workers as model citizens to “disadvantaged groups” (*ruoshì qunti*). Their lack of various kinds of capital (political, economic, and cultural), unequally redistributed during the economic reforms (Yi Wang 2003; Li 2003; Xiao 2003), has made them less able

to take responsibility for livelihood, health care, and education. Forming the largest segment of China's population, they are viewed as a threat to the stability of Chinese society in case of a state emergency, such as an economic or political crisis or even a crisis of biosecurity, as in the case of an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) or avian flu. To address these problems of security, government officials, policy experts, and scholars advocate for the growth of a middle class (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [CASS] 2002; Hu 2003; He 2003; Qin 2003) as necessary for balancing the contradictions between economic growth and social stability produced by neoliberal reforms.<sup>6</sup> They attribute a stabilizing power to the middle class in addressing such issues as social inequality, aspirational life ways, and civic discipline. Although the middle class is still statistically small in size, it is anticipated to grow to become the predominant social class so that the pyramidal shape of the present social structure will be transformed into the ideal olive shape (CASS 2002).

The conceptualization of the category of the middle class to address the structural problem of Chinese society has built on an extensive sociological and journalistic literature on China's new class strata since the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Many of these studies were proleptic in nature: representing something that has not yet come into view as if it already existed in fact (Anagnost 1997). This figure of prolepsis suggests the performativity and productivity of all the discourse on the middle class. It also marks the practical development of the middle class as a project involving many actors, including governmental and nongovernmental organizations, corporations, educational institutions, and individuals (government officials, businesspeople, and ordinary citizens). The development of the category of the middle class reflects a fundamental policy change in understanding cultural transformations in China's economic reforms (Ren 2007a).

The middle class as a normative category becomes intelligible through systematic uses of statistical surveys by population scientists, state planners, and government bureaucrats. Among many statistical surveys, the most influential one is carried out by some of China's leading sociologists in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Between 1999 and 2001, they conducted the first systematic nationwide sociological study of China's social stratification since the end of the 1970s. The CASS project, under the full support of the central government, surveyed over twelve provinces and seventy-two cities, counties, and districts. Major "findings" were included in

a 411-page report, entitled *The Report on Social Stratification Research in Contemporary China* (*Dangdai zhongguo shehui jieceng yanjiu baogao*) (CASS 2002) (for an in-depth analysis of this report, see Ren 2010b). A major study like this provides a national standard for developing the category of the middle class through statistical thinking, based on "numerical inscriptions" such as tables, figures, charts, and equations (Greenhalgh 2005: 357).

Beyond abstract statistics, the category of the middle class is primarily used in two ways in popular culture and everyday life. The emerging nouveaux riches (*xin furen*) have a special interest in advocating for the term *middle class*, along with associated concepts such as "public sphere" (*gonggong kongjian*) and "individualism" (*ziyou zhuyi*) (X. Wang 1999; Xue 1999; Luo 1999). They use the term *middle class* to characterize their experience and lifestyle as a "successful person" (*chenggong renshi*), prototypically portrayed by the mass media as a married middle-aged businessman. He wears designer labels; owns a house with a garden; drives a car; socializes in bars, nightclubs, and hotels; plays golf; and attends concerts (X. Wang 1999: 29). He enjoys a "practical existence" (*shizai*) of a comfortable life, the "freedom" (*ziyou*) of consumer choice, a "stylish appearance" (*qipai*), the "prestige power" (*zunyan*) of his wealth, and a "cultivated appreciation for the finer things" (*mei*).<sup>8</sup> Such a celebration of a person's success in achieving middle-class status embraces a cosmopolitan experience at the expense of the Maoist historical experience.<sup>9</sup>

Whether the nouveaux riches and successful people described in the preceding paragraph are proper middle-class subjects is subject to debate. Besides its representation as the experience of the nouveaux riches, the middle class is primarily used as a norm to regulate and discipline behaviors of Chinese citizens to make them become more responsible, not only for the ongoing stability of Chinese society but also for their own success or failure. In the following section, I analyze how individuals who aspire to become middle class develop their responsibility-bearing capacity by looking at a specific context of middle-class consuming practice: the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing. Drawing on ethnographic research first begun in 1996, I show how a private corporation shapes the conduct of consumers and how consumers carefully calculate their responses to this regulation. Their deviations from the plan are tolerated as long as they also contribute to the development of certain capacities for bearing middle-class responsibilities and values.

### *Responsive and Responsible Consumer Practices*

Themed built environments, such as department stores, shopping malls, theme parks, and specialty restaurants, are spaces designed to produce certain kinds of consumer subjects.<sup>10</sup> This shift represents an international trend toward integrating the combined practices of shopping, entertainment (through cinema, arcade games, and amusement rides), education (through stories and themes), merchandising (through copyrighted images and logos), performative labor (of the front-stage employees), and control and surveillance (of both employees and consumers) (Ren 2007b).<sup>11</sup> Each themed built environment targets a group of consumers presumed to be middle class.<sup>12</sup> The design of the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park targets its visitors as a coherent group who will be transformed by their movement through its space into responsible consuming subjects.

This park is an outdoor exhibition of the life ways of a number of China's fifty-six officially recognized national minority cultures through displays of housing, costume, and performance. In the broader context of the tourist industry, according to its general manager, the park is operated as "a means for distributing culture, linking together knowledge, entertainment, participation, and taste. Not only does it guide tourists to 'look,' but it also directs them to 'play'" (quoted in Zhang Tongze 2001). I argue that the park instantiates the process of middle-class self-formation in three ways: First, it encourages the internalization of the norms that define middle-classness, such as decision-making (consumer sovereignty) and the performance of civility (*wenming*). Second, the cultivation of an appreciation for ethnic minority culture marks a form of cosmopolitanism (a tolerance for difference) for the urban consumer, while also inciting subjects to engage in an ethical relation to an ethnicized Other through charitable endeavors. Third, these practices position middle-classness according to a neoliberal logic of calculation rather than observance of the law, a logic that defines citizenship in terms of entrepreneurial subjecthood.

These aspects of middle-class self-formation constitute a form of biopower: the power to "regularize" life, the authority to force living not just to happen but to appear *in a particular way* (Foucault 1995). At the park, a particular way of living takes the form of active participation in consuming practices. The carefully designed scheme of operations that constitute the park produces the park's visitors as middle-class consumer citizens who

are supposed to possess the values of civility, cosmopolitanism, and morality. Visitors must negotiate the park's policing of space in the form of uniformed guards, walls, gates, warning signs, and other visible and invisible surveillance techniques. Through this process of active negotiation, the visitor as an individual consumer experiences the park as an act of self-making according to the norms defining middle-classness. Entry to the park, in itself, is contingent on the ability of the visitor to pay what might seem to many to be an exorbitant price for a ticket (60 yuan for an adult ticket, about US\$7.50).<sup>13</sup> In this sense, entry to the park engineers a segmentation of the marketplace in which the price of a ticket exercises a form of exclusion. Along with other forms of spatial segregation in urban places, it effects a form of graduated citizenship.<sup>14</sup> Access to these places produces middle-classness first and foremost by being limited to those who can most afford it.<sup>15</sup>

My observation of visitors at the park illustrates these processes of middle-class self-formation. Established in the early 1990s, the park is located to the west of what has since become the National Olympic Center in Beijing. It occupies a total of forty-five hectares divided into two sites.<sup>16</sup> The north site, about twenty hectares, was first opened to the public in June 1994. Development of the south site was completed more recently, in 2001. The cost of construction for the first phase of development was about US\$36.1 million, 85 percent of which came from Taiwan and Hong Kong investors.<sup>17</sup> As described in a brochure, the park "blends the architecture and cultures of Chinese minorities to provide visitors with a unique place to experience the life of the minorities in the metropolitan capital."

At the north site, the park is organized into sixteen life-sized replicas of ethnic "villages," each representing the vernacular housing and dwelling environment of one of China's national ethnic groups (*minzu*).<sup>18</sup> Each village displays artifacts used in daily life, furnishings, domestic architecture, cultural performances, and items for sale, such as food, tea, and souvenirs. Park employees who participate in the cultural performances were hired from their home villages or towns.<sup>19</sup> The principle for constructing each village, as a senior manager told me in 1996, is that of "respecting nature and representing reality." Based on this principle, material for each exhibit was imported from the ethnic area it represents, and construction was carried out by experienced ethnic craftspeople brought to Beijing for that purpose. For example, a dark purple plant that was used for architectural decoration in the Zang (Tibetan) village was brought from Tibet, and a company based in Lhasa did the construction work under the direction of a Tibetan architect.

The use of Tibetan design and materials by a Tibetan construction company "authenticates" the "original flavor" of the exhibit (Xie 1995: 424).

The exhibit of ethnic cultures (*minzu wenhua*) in the park participates in a form of temporality pervasive in Chinese representations of non-Han others that relegates them to a space of tradition outside of urbane modernity.<sup>20</sup> However, the temporality of the park is also marked by a series of monthly "festivals" (*jie*), such as New Year celebrations in January and the Dragon Boat Festival in June. These are composed of both official national holidays and the festivals of different ethnic groups.<sup>21</sup> In the park's operations, however, the celebration of a festival does not strictly line up to the annual succession of months but follows a more practical logic of providing for tourist consumption.<sup>22</sup> The Dai Water Splashing Festival, for example, has been featured as a form of cultural display since the park's opening in 1994. It begins in April when the festival in Yunnan takes place and runs as late as October. The park's management contracts with local governments in Yunnan Province (from either Xishuangbanna Prefecture or Dehong Prefecture where there are concentrations of Dai people) to employ ethnic Dai to perform.

These performances (in the name of a "festival") are scheduled in close coordination with the movement of visitors through the different exhibits, shops, and restaurants. For example, a forty-minute performance is scheduled at the Dai village at 9:30 in the morning, drawing visitors to linger there; another performance is scheduled at 10:30 in the Miao village, a twenty-minute walk away. After watching the second performance, visitors move on to new scenic spots. As they begin to feel hungry around lunchtime, they find themselves arriving at a restaurant in the Buyi village, as engineered by the park management. Many visitors choose to eat at the restaurant, although some either carry their own food or choose to continue their tour of the park. The structure that channels the flow of visitors through the park not only encourages them to consume but also produces a competitive advantage for the park management. Because of its strategic placement, more visitors eat in the restaurant located in the Buyi Village than in another restaurant that leased a retail space within the park. This arrangement reveals the park as a highly structured environment, which overdetermines how it will be consumed. Visitors are positioned as consumers who are directed toward the appropriate modes of economic behavior already set up for them.

From the tourist's perspective, the participatory experience becomes intertwined with negotiating the carefully structured time provided by the park. If consumption indeed "creates" time and does not simply respond to

it (Appadurai 1997: 27), then how do visitors develop a *new* sense of time—a new temporal relationship between external time and their own personal time—through consuming practices? Visiting a theme park as an activity consumes time; it takes the form of time management. First, planning a trip to the park entails an allocation of time set outside of the rhythms of everyday life. A visit to the park is associated with spending time with family members or friends. Many people visit the park as a group (whether as a family or as a group of friends or colleagues).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, visiting also involves creating a memorable archive by documenting the experience at the park in the form of a photo album shared with others or posted on the Internet (via such sites as Live Spaces, MySpace, and YouTube).

Of course, time is not all that is spent here. For many, particularly those who were drawn to the park on the basis of a simple direction given by a tourist map, a calculation of the monetary value of their time may be necessary. This was the case for a family, I had observed, who had come to Beijing from Jiangxi Province in the summer of 2000. The group included a woman (a schoolteacher in her early thirties), her mother-in-law, her daughter, her sister's daughter, and two boys of other relatives. The total cost of admission for the group was 240 yuan for two adult tickets and three student tickets. The youngest boy did not require a paid ticket because he was still a preschooler. Although the younger woman, who led the group, felt the cost of the tickets to be higher than she had anticipated, she decided to spend the money anyway because they had taken all the trouble to get themselves there. Once inside, they took part in as many activities as possible, visiting all the villages, participating in the festival, and taking photos. The schoolteacher mentioned how pleased they were to see ethnic minority artifacts because they live far away from any ethnic minority region. At the Miao village, she spent twenty yuan to rent Miao costumes for all four children. The children laughed in excitement to see each other wearing the colorful and decorative clothing as the younger woman took photographs of them. In the end, the whole group wanted to be photographed.

A visit to the park is not, therefore, something that everyone can afford. In the case of my informants in this example, the admission was high enough to warrant a careful calculation of costs and benefits. The ability to pay for admission is a privileged one, thus pointing to the ways in which these practices of self-making are exclusionary, but also, as in this case, it can operate as a form of "self-fashioning" for those for whom it also acts as a form of aspiring consumption, one that is not easily affordable. If "self-fashioning"

means “the unscripted, self-reflexive thinking and action that are continuously shaped and transformed by the diverse kinds of knowledge that circulate in the dynamic and globalized Chinese environment” (Ong 2008: 185), it is often an affirmative and positive mode of living (that is, life-building), one that tends to be available only to the privileged. For example, in a visit to Shenzhen’s Window of the World, a group of rural migrant women had carefully saved the price of admission and wore their best jeans and T-shirts so that they could enjoy their trip in the same way as other visitors. Once they were inside, however, they were called out by middle-class patrons as *dagongmei* (rural women migrant laborers) who properly belonged in the factory rather than in middle-class spaces of leisured consumption (Pun 2003: 484–485). This example suggests that rural migrant laborers—who are among the least paid and those who work the longest hours in China—are not normally acknowledged as those capable of self-fashioning. For the visitors in this case, I wonder whether the schoolteacher was willing to invest in the experience, not so much for herself as for the investment in her children’s middle-class mobility.<sup>24</sup> Learning about the ethnic minority cultures on display justified the value of their visit. The cultural value of ethnic minority culture on display is a form of leisured pastime that enriches middle-class identity as a form of educational play.<sup>25</sup> The sign of the ethnic becomes mobilized in capital accumulation and circulated through the reproduction of the tourist body as a consuming body. The photographs that capture these cross-dressed bodies (ethnic Chinese in Miao dress) commemorate a very uneasy decision of having to spend money to spend time in this way. Long after their visit, these photographs will enable them to wrest a value from their purchase again and again. In this particular case, sharing their experience with the absent husband and father of this family group will further extend the experience of their visit as a process of self-making, making their selves both known and knowable (Foucault 1988), in this context, as middle-class consumers.

The time spent at the park is a form of leisured pastime; it is, nonetheless, an instrumentalized time ordered by a logic of consumption. This carefully calculated time synchronizes the time of the cosmopolitan consumer with the time of ethnic minority cultures (in the forms of festivals and exhibitions). This synchrony operates according to a relatively coherent, homogeneous, and teleological trajectory of consumption, aiming at shaping the visitor’s consuming habits in a prearranged manner (for example, the regular scheduling of festival display). However, it is often affected by a visitor’s per-

sonal time, which comes from the rhythms of everyday life outside the park’s instrumental time. The visitor’s personal time is incoherent, heterogeneous, and contingent. It is organized not only by objective rhythms of work and leisure but also by spontaneous moments of daydreaming and pleasure. In participatory consumption in forms such as doing something together with family, friends, or colleagues; learning something about ethnic minorities; and walking around in the park, the visitor often negotiates with the park’s instrumental time through an enactment of personal time as a way to create a temporal consciousness of an exceptional visit.

In such a situation, contingency becomes unleashed as a power enabling a visitor to transgress the park’s instrumental time. As an act of suspending the regular rule of instrumental time, this transgression is an exceptional act, transforming the visitor into a sovereign consumer.<sup>26</sup> In this way, experience at the park becomes memorable. Photo taking, for example, may be practiced as an interruptive activity. When the Zang performers were ready to dance and sing at 9:30 one morning in the summer of 2000, a park employee announced the performance to the visitors through loudspeakers distributed around the park. As a result, visitors rushed to the Zang village. However, according to my observation, quite a few of them did not give their full attention to the singing and dancing. The hot summer weather might have been a factor, but I noticed that most of the visitors were more interested in taking their own photos in front of the performers than in being attentive to the performance. They had spontaneously chosen to confuse two forms of consuming practice: the cultural performance versus the occasional photo-ops already set up for them along their itinerary through the park to commemorate their visit. They refused their role as passive members of the audience by inserting themselves into the performance via the photograph.

A memorable experience at the park also may take on the form of a more active interruption. I mention two examples here, one positive and one negative. A group of twenty visitors from northeastern China arrived one morning at the Dazhao Temple in the Zang village exhibit. One man went up to the second floor and stopped in front of the statue of a Buddha. While holding a water bottle, he bowed to the statue. Afterward, he deposited a few coins into the donation box and said, “This small amount of money conveys my respect to you!” The man’s act of worship suggests that worship in the park is different from what might occur outside. In a normal temple, a worshiper would be either empty handed or holding a joss stick while bowing to a god.



Holding a water bottle and donating such a small amount of money marked his act of worship as an interruption of normal or conventional behavior.

The eventfulness of this interruption is threefold. First, the bowing is a demonstration (or performance) of belief rather than of faith.<sup>27</sup> Here, belief is maintained as a moral value, despite not being treated as an object of desire, as in institutionalized religious practices. Second, the tiny donation is insignificant, but it is a gesture toward giving, an affective expression of charity, an impulsive act rather than a rational philanthropic effort. Nevertheless, it is considered as a norm of becoming a responsible middle-class citizen in China (CASS 2002: 253).<sup>28</sup> The third dimension of the eventfulness of the interruption refers to the economic value of uselessness and idleness. Because the man has already paid for the admission, his worship and donation become a mode of participatory consumption. In this sense, the two activities reassure the built environment's function as a consuming environment; his acts are productive activities because they actively consume the exhibits. However, their consumption is based on an interaction with a nothingness, whether the "idleness" of the statue of Buddha, which is, in fact, not connected to the actual religious institution of the Dazhao Temple in Lhasa, or the "uselessness" of the donation, which will not be used, in fact, to help the poor but in fact has become a part of the exhibit. Therefore, the eventfulness of the incident is fabricated by a moral demonstration of belief, an affective enactment of middle-class charity, and the production of exchange value out of a disembedded enactment of worship.<sup>29</sup>

A second example focuses on delinquency as an act of self-making. After visiting the temple in the Zang Village, two men in the group decided to go back to the main gate to hire a tour guide. While waiting, the rest walked into a gift shop selling jewelry, T-shirts, toys, books, films, and so forth. The solitary sales clerk was overwhelmed and thus failed to notice that a woman from the group took a brightly colored paper umbrella without paying. Later that day, as the group followed the tour guide past the shop, the sales clerk suddenly recognized the umbrella held by the woman and asked the woman to pay for it or return it. The woman denied taking the umbrella at first, but, due to the sales clerk's insistence, she eventually returned the umbrella to the shop.

In this incident, delinquency is enacted as a form of negative agency. With the redistribution of social responsibility in China's neoliberalization, a middle-class citizen is an entrepreneur, someone who becomes successful in *both* calculating the rules (rather than abiding them) *and* becoming responsible for his or her own behavior. Because the middle-class citizen is

responsible for minimizing social risk, the person is held liable for increasing or elevating risk. The woman clearly miscalculated her ability to flout the rules without damaging her claims to middle-class respectability. The sales clerk did not call the park security guards but, instead, chased the woman and forced her to return the umbrella. This sequence of actions created a spectacle of discipline addressed not just to the shoplifting woman herself but also to the whole group by circulating a norm of calculated self-responsibility as a civic value.

All three practices discussed in the preceding paragraphs—photo taking, Buddha worship, and souvenir buying—are common enough activities. Indeed, the park is set up to invite and authorize visitors to do all of these things. However, this arrangement does not specify how and when these activities take place, nor does it determine which visitor will engage in them. Each visitor normally has a certain degree of autonomy in decision making. When a visitor interrupts a normal activity, however, the visitor begins to reveal whether she or he can be a sovereign consumer. This process of disclosure is critical to the formation of a middle-class citizen, a subject who is capable of becoming responsible for the self *and* for maintaining social order for the Chinese state. The positive outcome of an interruptive activity means that the process of rule calculating (rather than rule abiding) becomes successfully managed. The experience of the visit is made memorable and economically worthwhile. By contrast, the negative outcome of an interruptive activity signals a failure in middle-class self-making, while also operating as a form of disciplinary spectacle. The distinction between the two outcomes marks an important differentiation between being recognized as a self-responsible entrepreneurial subject and individual failure in realizing such a goal.

This differentiation goes beyond the environment of the theme park to being a practice central to urban (re)development across the country. The socialist-era work unit (*danwei*) as the primary structure organizing urban space is being displaced by a new entity defined as "community" (*shequ*). Through community building (*shequ jianshe*) in the form of gated communities, urban planning and real estate development tend to separate self-responsible middle-class subjects (such as educated professionals) from those considered to be incapable of bearing responsibilities (such as workers laid off from state-owned factories) (Tomba 2004; n.d.; Zhang 2010). Therefore, theme parks, shopping malls, and residential gated communities are not simply products in urban development, but they also engage in class production (including the middle class) through the production of architectural space.



### *Conclusion: Chinese Middle-Class Risk Subjects*

Although my ethnographic analysis focuses on situated practices in a themed built environment, it intends to highlight an important link between the spatial production of the middle class and of consumer practices. As economic, social, and political inequalities become increasingly visible in China's neoliberal development, the middle class becomes explicitly a governmental mechanism for balancing between economic development (or capital circulation and accumulation) and social stability (risk management). The production of the middle class as the dominant social strata—a demographic solution to the risks of Chinese state and society—is a social engineering project of making Chinese citizens into responsible subjects. At stake are two ideal types of such subjects: those who assist the Chinese state to manage the risks resulting from neoliberal policies and those who are capable of addressing any risks emerging in their everyday lives, which include the risks of failing to take responsibility for themselves. Under the regime of the middle-class norm, responsible subjects become celebrated and differentiated from both those who underperform and those who mismanage their responsibilities.

One of the major ways through which an ordinary Chinese individual becomes subject to the regulation of the middle-class norm is consumption. Not only does consumption constitute an important domain of everyday life that is inseparable from the economy, but it also underscores the individual's capacity of living with dignity. Issues of "choice," "style," and "taste" mark consumption not simply as a buying process but as a complicated sequence of activities, including but not limited to experiencing, learning, choosing, experimenting, creating, transgressing, accepting, and performing (de Certeau 1984; de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998). Thus, the capacity of addressing these issues is closely tied to the empowerment or disempowerment of subjective agency in the practice of everyday life in an enterprise culture that pins great significance to consumer goods as badges of class position. It is important to note that consumption's self-transformative role cannot be overvalued. Neither can the agency of "freedom" always be positive. Consumer agency may take the form of sovereignty, but this does not necessarily lead to liberty and freedom.<sup>30</sup> In Deborah Davis's (2005) study of the narratives of Shanghai residents who came of age during the 1950s and 1960s and have become successful (that is, earning US\$5,000 per year), the agency of freedom is positive and even revolutionary. In contrast, the migrant fe-

male factory laborers in southern China (Pun 2003; 2005) find their efforts to refashion themselves into consumer citizens to end in failure. A danger of overvaluing consumption's self-transformative role and its relation to the positive agency of liberty is that we may disconnect China's recent development of consumer culture, which includes reconfiguring the relationship between production and consumption, from its historical and global contexts of neoliberalization.<sup>31</sup> Consumption neither guarantees upward class mobility nor does it prohibit class status from falling. Under neoliberal policies of entrepreneurialism and self-responsibility, consuming practice often becomes an adventurous process of discovering insecurities and risks, especially those posed by actors such as monetary regulatory agencies, financial service organizations, credit rating agencies, bankers, accountants, brokers, and their benefactors, in their rule-calculating practices for the purpose of making profits.<sup>32</sup>

In responsive and responsible consumer practices, the middle-class norm becomes disseminated to the individualized process of life-making and life-building. In this practical context, it is practically impossible to speak of a set of consistent characteristics that positively constitute the ideal middle-class subject. At the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing, participatory consumption is an individual-based process in which a visitor becomes a consumer and makes and builds her or his life by bearing certain responsibilities in capital accumulation and risk reduction. My ethnographic analysis highlights three important consumption-related issues that link middle-class self-formation to the risks in China's neoliberalization. First, consumption marks a distinction between those who can consume and those who cannot. For this reason, the status of the middle class achieved through consumption is indeed a *class* position. Social stratification marked by the middle class becomes inseparable from certain structural issues, especially unequal opportunities caused by unequal access to resources (economic, political, and cultural). It is also made possible by the involvement of a series of actors, ranging from organizations (government, nongovernmental organizations, corporations), individuals (the nouveaux riches and ordinary citizens), and different ethnic groups (the ethnically Chinese Han and China's ethnic minorities).

Next, one important expression of taking social responsibility is helping others, especially the poor or those facing devastating incidents such as earthquake, famine, and flood. As the Chinese government has shifted its responsibilities for addressing social and economic problems to nongovernmental

organizations, corporations, and individuals, charity and philanthropy have become popular mechanisms in recent decades (Ma 2002). The rapid rise of charitable organizations in China, for example, shows a general shift from government-funded welfare to charitable work by individuals, corporations, and nonprofit organizations (Shue 1998; Chen 2004). In Chinese media, the richest members of society are called on to demonstrate their social responsibility by participating in philanthropy.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, ordinary Chinese citizens, especially college students and urban professionals, are encouraged to undertake the work of generosity, whether through donation or voluntary work. Under neoliberal conditions, however, charitable work operates in a lateral way: It surely raises funds for charitable purposes from as many people as possible (that is, not merely from wealthy populations), but it is unfolded as a politics of rerouting personal, corporate, and governmental responsibilities.<sup>34</sup>

In leisure and tourist contexts, some aspiring middle-class subjects often voluntarily take on the responsibility of monitoring other middle-class subjects. The incident of disciplining the woman who tried to take an umbrella without paying for it at the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park might be small, but it is related to nationwide efforts to make Chinese tourists behave more civilly. Both domestic and international news media in recent years, for example, have frequently published stories about successful mainland Chinese citizens traveling overseas, whether as students, shoppers, business people, or tourists. Some compare the spending habits of Chinese shoppers with Americans, Japanese, and Germans in the post-World War II period, while others discuss the impact of their behaviors in the host countries. One major issue repeatedly raised is about the uncivil behavior of Chinese tourists.<sup>35</sup> In September 2005, for instance, pictures and reports of mainland Chinese tourists spitting, sprawling on the ground, allowing their children to urinate in public, and smoking in prohibited areas at Hong Kong's newly opened Disneyland triggered scathing criticism in the Hong Kong, mainland, and overseas media. This event underscores the ways in which middle-classness is defined as a cultural category in terms of the new norms of civility and responsibility for the actions of one's self. Chinese middle-class commentators on this news story argued that their fellow citizens need to improve their "human quality" (*suzhi*) by changing their old habits and learning to conduct themselves in a more civil manner.<sup>36</sup> China's tourist industry and the Chinese government responded by launching a series of campaigns to promote courteous behavior. In September 2006, the China National Tourism Administration released two detailed lists of behaviors recommended for

the civilized Chinese traveler, one addressing domestic travel and the other for overseas.

With the proliferation of new media such as the Internet and mobile media, Chinese netizens in recent years have developed a popular practice called "human flesh search" (*renrou sousuo*). Although it is mainly used as a popular way to expose corrupt officials, it may also be used to reveal any ordinary person's life history, especially his or her personal or private matters such as marriage, sex life, and leisure activities. The deployment of the spectacle as a means to communicate the norm of calculated self-responsibility becomes common. Online uses of images often are intended to embarrass offenders, whether individually or collectively. In the 2007 Green Woodpecker Project that curbed public spitting, its leader Wang Tao posed action shots on his website to humiliate offenders. The Shanghai World Exposition in 2010 is the latest international event that has generated numerous discussions about the behavior of Chinese visitors. The popular Chinese website Tianya.cn has even launched a special public forum devoted to the Shanghai Exposition. Since late April 2010, when the public was first allowed to visit the Exposition, pictures and reports of bad behavior have appeared on the website. Early reports focused on how panicked the crowd behaved. By July, reports and photos often addressed delinquent visitors such as those pretending to be disabled by using a wheelchair to bypass other visitors waiting in a long line. To manage the crowd, the organizing committee decided in September to allow some visitors to use one or two hours to serve as "little Chinese cabbages" (*xiaobaicai*), volunteers whose job is to both assist visitors and monitor their behavior.<sup>37</sup> Those visitors whose bad behavior is captured and circulated in public via the Internet will be held accountable for as long as their records are kept online.

Entrepreneurialism, a practice critical to middle-class self-formation, may enable one's success, but it may also lead to delinquency, marking social differentiation in relation to capital accumulation and risk reduction. As neoliberal policies promoting the individual's do-it-yourself biographical process are widely implemented, calculating (rather than abiding) rules and laws becomes an integral part of self-enterprise. Consequently, as in cases of memorable visits to the theme park, life-building through self-fashioning may become positive if the enterprising subject successfully exercises calculation. But it also may become a negative process, whether deferred, regressive, or sidetracked, when the exercise of calculation is recognized as a delinquency,<sup>38</sup> as in the case of the tourist stealing an umbrella at the ethnic theme park. In

this situation, instead of a project of future anterior (anticipating the coming of the future), this form of life-building accumulates risks and liabilities to social prosperity of one sort or another. In governmental and social policies, the middle class as a responsible figure is an abstract idea. It is only in the practice of everyday life that a citizen may discover whether he or she can claim middle-class status and thus not be subject to the kind of social scrutiny that applies to the "disadvantaged groups."<sup>39</sup> Ironically, this discovery is, nonetheless, made at the expense of the rules and laws that regulate the social order. Therefore, the normative bifurcation of the life-building process into positive and negative directions through acts of transgression underpins neoliberal social differentiation.

## Notes

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1. Many economists of China who have studied the process of China's economic transformation during the Deng Xiaoping era (1978–1997) argue that the transition to market-oriented system is characterized as gradualism, a developmental process based on a series of experiments (for example, Bramall 2009: chapter 10). Missing in their studies is the understanding of the way in which national reunification in general, and Hong Kong's return to China in particular, becomes inseparable from economic transformation.

2. See "Jiang Zemin zai Guangdong kaocha gongzuo qiangdiao, jinmi jiehe xin de lishi tiaojian jiaqiang dang de jianshe, shizhong dailing quanguo renmin cujin shengchanli de fazhan."

3. Hong Kong's economy has generally been ranked very high by the four major international economic indexes of free market practices and competitiveness, the *Economic Freedom Index* (jointly published by the Heritage Foundation and the *Wall Street Journal*), the *World Competitiveness Yearbook* (published by the Interna-

tional Institute for Management Development of Lausanne), the *Global Country Forecast* (published by the Economist Intelligence Unit of *The Economist*), and the *Global Competitiveness Report* (by the World Economic Forum, based in Geneva). From 1996 to 2007 the *Economic Freedom Index* consistently ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest economy. Milton Friedman (1998), the world's leading neoliberal economist, argues that since the end of World War II Hong Kong has been the only world economy close to his ideal of a private free market system.

4. Elsewhere I discuss the relationship between sovereignty, the state, and the people (Ren 2010a: xi–xv).

5. Here, risk is both real and imagined in relation to the future of the state (see Beck 1992; 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Lash 2003).

6. In this sense, the middle-class norm is inseparable from the governmental discourse of human capital on *suzhi*, as examined in detail by Yan (2003) and Anagnost (2004).

7. For a systematic examination of these studies, see Anagnost (2008a).

8. Wang Xiaoming vividly describes this lifestyle:

Among tens of thousands of matters in the world, money is the most important. Lots of money in his pocket defines "practical existence"; once having money, he can do whatever he wants to do and buy whatever he wants to buy. This is the meaning of "freedom"; spending generously, treating money like dust, attracting beautiful young women, this is the meaning of style or "respect"; wearing expensive and luxurious clothing, following fashion trends, this defines beauty or "aesthetic quality." (1999: 34)

9. A number of important studies have affirmed this. Jing Wang's critical study of "Bobo" (bourgeois bohemians) argues that marketing professionals construct the middle class through their cosmopolitan taste and lifestyle rather than through their structural class position (2005: 532–548). Deborah Davis's study of housing consumption among Shanghai residents reports an explicit connection between their embrace of economic success and their rejection of historical memories associated with the Cultural Revolution (2005: 692–709).

10. In recent years, for example, more than 400 large malls have been built in China. Currently, five of the ten largest malls in the world are in China, many of which are created by real estate developers. In the context of the global economy, these malls show that the Chinese are more like consumers than producers. Thus, a *New York Times* reporter proclaims: "Retailing and real estate are radically altering the face of China, and opening the door to the possibility that soon China may not simply be the world's factory, it may own the world's shopping space" (Barboza 2005).

11. For an excellent analysis of the phenomenon, see Bryman (2004). See also Ching-wen Hsu (Chapter Two in this volume) on the production of a shopping street in Taiwan for a comparable development elsewhere in East Asia.

12. The strategy of market segmentation is used to divide mass markets into smaller market segments "defined by distinctive orientations and tastes, each to be sold different products or even the same product packaged and marketed in totally different ways" (Cohen 2006: 56). In the United States, the spread of this practice in the late 1950s paralleled the development of themed built environments (especially shopping malls and theme parks). Both played an important part in the historical development of the middle class in the United States (Cohen 2006).

13. This is based on the currency exchange rate in 1996. Until recent years, the monthly salary of an ordinary Chinese urban citizen has been below 500 yuan.

14. The term *graduated sovereignty* comes from Aihwa Ong's discussion of how populations are differentially governed in Southeast and East Asia (1999; 2006).

15. In June 2006, when I surveyed more than eighty Chinese publications on theme parks in the past decade through Wanfang's digital database, the high price of admission was often mentioned as a major problem by industry analysts and experts.

16. I learned during my fieldwork in 1996 that this tract of land was acquired in the early 1990s when Chen Xitong, a standing member of the politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, was the mayor of Beijing. Chen was charged with corruption in 1995 and given a sixteen-year jail sentence.

17. The rest of the funding came from various organizations, including government organizations in charge of administering land use, environment regulation, and sanitation. The park's general manager Wang manages the park's operations. Her husband Bai (the son of a former mayor of the city) is the chairman of the board, and he is in charge of planning and development. In addition to managing the park, Wang also works with scholars, especially folklorists, ethnologists, and urban planning experts. She was elected as a vice director of the Ethnological Society of China. In 2002, she worked with private business people in the tourist industry to establish a nationwide nongovernmental organization titled "Chamber of Tourism All China Federation of Industry and Commerce" (see their website at [www.tcc.org.cn/](http://www.tcc.org.cn/)). A few years ago, the park launched a website ([www.emuseum.org.cn/](http://www.emuseum.org.cn/)) to provide updated tourist information in both Chinese and English. In 2008, she became a member of the Eleventh National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

18. The sixteen national ethnic groups included in the park are the Zang ("Tibetan"), Qiang, Jingpo, Hani, Wa, Miao, Yi, Buyi, Dong, Hezhe, Dauer, Ewenke, Elunchuan, and the Korean, Taiwanese Aboriginal, and Dai cultures. There are fifty-six national minority cultures in China altogether. The cultures that are included in the park represent the ecologically diverse areas of China's borderlands.

19. As I found out in my fieldwork, the company hires these performers through three channels. First, it contracts local (that is, county or prefecture) commissions for ethnic affairs to select ethnic performers. Second, the park managers, with the help of local government, go to a village to hire people on site. Finally, the company may contract a local performance troupe to perform at the park.

20. The representation of ethnic minorities reflects how the Han (ethnically Chinese) construct a relation of the self to the other. Scholars such as Gladney (1991), Harrell (1995), Oakes (1998), and Schein (2000) have discussed issues on nationalism and internal colonialism in representations of national minority cultures. My concern here is to examine multiculturalism more generally as a mode of middle-class consumption.

21. This structure makes up an annual cycle of festivals: New Year celebrations (January), religious activities representing Zang (Tibetan) Buddhism (February), Chinese Woman's Day (March), the Dai Water Splashing Festival (April), the Qiang Hill Worshipping Festival (May), the Miao Dragon Boat Festival (June), the Hani Kuzhazha Festival (July), the Yi Torch Festival (August), the Jinpo Song Festival (September), the Wa New Rice Festival (October), the New Year celebrations of the Buyi and the Dong (November), and a sports exhibition representing the peoples of the north (December).

22. To make a monthly festival flexible, the company considers two major factors. First, the availability of ethnic minority performers is a factor determining a festival theme. During my 1996 fieldwork, for example, there were festivals representing the Miao, Dai, Qiang, Dong, and Yi. In July 2000, Zang, Jingpo, and Dai festivals were featured. Another important factor is sponsorship for special events, such as national celebrations, visits of Chinese or foreign officials, and national and international meetings and sports events. When a special event takes place, the regularly scheduled programs are modified mainly because the event usually brings in more revenue. On July 11, 2000, for example, the Preparatory Committee of the Twenty-First International University Sports Games to be held in Beijing from August 21 to September 1, 2000, came to the park to inspect whether the park might be a suitable site for the closing ceremony. During the event, managerial staff and performers curtailed their regularly scheduled programs to receive the officials of the committee.

23. This ethnographic observation of mine was confirmed by park staff members.

24. For a discussion of how aspiring middle-class professionals invest in their children's middle-class mobility, see Anagnost 2004.

25. For a detailed discussion of how leisure becomes an important domain of citizenship, see Jing Wang 2001a.

26. According to Carl Schmitt, "Sovereign is he who decides on the exceptional case" (2005: 5). Sovereignty emerges as a decisive issue only in a state of exception. A sovereign must decide what is a state of exception *and* must make the decisions appropriate to that exception. Decision in a state of exception must be based on the quality of the deciding person not on any existing rules and laws.

27. "Faith," according to Alain Badiou, belongs to the territory of truth; it refers to the fidelity to truth (the indiscernible) that always leads to the creation of a hole within a claim about truth. Thus, it is faith rather than belief that constitutes a truthful subject (2003 [1997]: 74).

28. This practice of charity cannot be considered as a gift of grace, which refers to the granting of a gift, charisma (*kharisma*), to the ethical subject who is faithful to truth. That is, becoming a subject faithful to truth does not follow any laws and thus cannot take the form of a reward or wage (Badiou 2003 [1997]: 77).

29. Here, I use the word *nothing* to mean the emptied and the disembedded. What is emptied and disembedded is the symbolic meaning or aura of the exhibit. However, the operation of the park as a commercial environment creates exchange value out of the emptied and the disembedded. The acquisition of information or knowledge about "ethnic culture" at the park becomes the accumulation of emptied and disembedded artifacts.

30. See Berlant (2007) for a clear elaboration of the negative agency of sovereignty in neoliberalism.

31. One example is that overemphasizing consumption's association with freedom would lead to a reading of China's consumer culture merely as an example of the transition from socialism to market society (in which consumption substitutes for production), a process that mirrors what has taken place in the West. A consequence of this understanding is that it disconnects what happens in China from the present process of neoliberal globalization, of which China has been an important player (Harvey 2005; Ren 2010a). For a good example of this reading, see Zukin and Maguire (2004: 189–191).

32. Consumption merely extends the process of exploitation that begins in the productive process. This situation applies both to cosmopolitan and disenfranchised subjects (Ren 2012).

33. For example, the Shanghai-based *Hurun Report* Group ranks the philanthropic activities of individuals and corporations every year. See the organization's website at [www.hurun.net/](http://www.hurun.net/).

34. For an excellent case study of charity that involves the participation of the masses, see King (2006).

35. For a summary of these problems, see an article originally published by the *Beijing Morning News* (Beijing *Chenbao* 2006).

36. These arguments were posted in a public forum on the [hainan.net](http://hainan.net/). Many original news articles and photos were reposted at the site. See <http://home.hainan.net/New/PublicForum/Content.asp?idWriter=0&Key=0&strItem=funinfo&idArticle=89696&flag=1>, retrieved in March 2007.

37. *Xinmin wanbao*, October 2, 2010, pp. A1, A7.

38. Gary Becker, a major figure in formulating economic neoliberalism, argues that delinquency can be calculated as a neoliberal value in self-formation (1992). In fact, as Ren has shown, delinquency in popular culture is historically tied to neoliberalism (2005).

39. See, for example, Gary Sigley's (2006: 492) discussion of the divide in neoliberal governmentality between those who embody the new model of citizenship and those who must be taught.

## Chapter Two

# Miraculous Rebirth

## Making Global Places in Taiwan

CHING-WEN HSU

It was a hot summer afternoon in 2002. The shops in downtown Kaohsiung had just opened, and people were beginning to filter into the New Kujiang shopping district, but it would take another few hours for activity to pick up on the street.<sup>1</sup> Standing on the side of the road, Mr. Liao, a member of the Committee for Development in New Kujiang, took refuge from the heat in the cold air escaping from an air-conditioned shop.<sup>2</sup> Looking through a veil of smog, he voiced his concern about the trees: "They're ugly. They look like those trees outside of the municipal cultural centers." The man had wanted to see a different style of landscaping lining the streets to create a promenade that, he had hoped, would be "like the streets in Austria." Instead, all he could see were short trees with upright branches, small leaves, and no flowers. To him, they were entirely too predictable and uninspiring—everything the shopping district in the largest urban center in southern Taiwan was not supposed to be. He had envisioned a New Kujiang that would be trendy and alive. In less than fifteen years after its emergence, New Kujiang had indeed become a popular shopping destination for young people in southern Taiwan. Nonetheless it had not quite developed the elegance that Mr. Liao had envisioned. Now he hoped that, if only New Kujiang could get the right kind of trees (and a little more help from the authorities), everything would work out as planned. As Mr. Liao imagined a shopping district simulating

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