Walking in Colonial Taiwan:  
A Study on Urban Modernization of Taipei, 1895-1945

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Abstract
This study focuses on the spatial transformation of Taipei in colonial Taiwan from 1895-1945, and draws attention to the relationships of the following terms: the colonizer, the colonized and the urban form. The article consists of three main sections: introduction of current scholarship and major debate; discussion on the theories in relation to space and body; Taipei as a case study in light of "city-as-text" and "text-as-city" contributed by both the colonizer and the colonized subjects. The purpose of this article is to probe and to discover whether the construction of such a colonial modernity in Taiwan was a process not anticipated by its contemporary colonized subjects.

Keywords: city-as text/text-as-city; colonial Taiwan; modernization; Taipei

1. Introduction
The transformation of a traditional city into a modern metropolis often involves complicated consequences resulting from the contemporary use of space in many colonized countries. In recent years, more scholars began to reconsider whether the notion of modernity and colonialism was merely a complete adoption from the West. The term, "colonial modernity"\(^1\), has been suggested as a speculative frame to explain the complex relationship between modernity and colonialism. It also seems to imply a conflict between localism and newly merged cultures, and between the traditional and the modern. Taiwan, an island which has experienced a long colonial history supplemented by the Dutch, Spanish, Han Chinese and Japanese, simultaneously encounters issues arising from delineation of an Asian colonial modernity.

With liberation from political pressure, there has been widespread research on colonial Taiwan in the social, economic, political and cultural fields. Since the 1980s, a dispute about when the modernization of Taiwan actually began has heated up among historians. The focal point was whether the Qing governor Liu Ming-Chuan (1836-96) or the Japanese civil administrator Gotô Shimpei (1857-1929) could be acknowledged as the first modernizer of this island. Even though it is widely accepted that the Japanese contributed most to the modernization of Taiwan, the ongoing debates still provide opportunities to reassess the complexity of Taiwanese modernity and its colonial legacy. In addition to the historical debates, it is argued that architecture and urbanism during the period of colonial rule were employed to build a colonial modernity as a process of modernization without subjectivity.\(^2\) Regardless of to what extent architectural planning should be considered as a vital feature in Taiwan's colonial past, it remains an important aspect in evaluating colonial modernity while considering the infrastructures, buildings and civilizing projects in particular.

Building on the aforementioned viewpoints, this article aims to re-examine the meaning of place and space, and will demonstrate and discuss the transformation of certain places in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945). Taking Taipei as a case study, this article investigates three main themes: the relation between space and body; "city-as-text" and "text-as-city".\(^3\) As the capital city of Taiwan since 1885, Taipei extended its political importance as the central base for Japan's southward move to further supplant the Western colonial powers in Southeast Asia.

2. Walking across the Interdisciplinary Terrain
In contemporary urban and architectural discourse, figures which traverse space, such as the literary flâneur\(^4\) and city stroller have become a central motif in the discussion of urban experience (Rendell, 2002:1). The consumption of "space", "body", and "text" can be applied to other fields of knowledge in addition to architectural history. Not being framed by

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a certain discipline, the study of "space" or "place" of a city could be formed from diverse viewpoints by geographers, sociologists, cultural theorists, architects and urban dwellers, etc. (ibid: 2)

The perception of space is determined by the position of the body in space: a man replaces an object in his mind through this perception and the positioning of his body. Yi-Fu Tuan points out that man and the world denote complex ideas, so it is necessary to look at simpler ideas abstracted from man and the world, namely, body and space. For Tuan, "body" should indicate a "lived body", and "space" a "humanly constructed space". (Tuan, 1977: 35)

Lefebvre also considers the issue of space and body. He mentions that Leibniz's space was 'the indiscernible', in order to discern 'something' therein, axes, and an origin, and the right and the left, i.e. the direction or orientation of those axes, must be introduced. According to Lefebvre, it is necessary for space to be occupied by a human body. (Lefebvre, 1991: 169) Other phenomenological approaches also had an impact on the theory of architecture dealing with bodily conceptions of space as 'body in architectural space'. In Heidegger's philosophy of bodily experience, the split between body and mind or object and subject, which was overstated in Descartes' theory, is joined again in terms of phenomenology (Heidegger, 1996).

Apart from the concept of 'body in architectural space', the discourse on 'body in urban space' was developed gradually: in The City and Imaginary (1993), Donatella Mazzoleni describes how urban space involves relationships activated concretely by the body in locomotion. She defines the city as a lived space involving relationships activated concretely by the body in architectural space. In Heidegger's philosophy of bodily experience, the split between body and mind or object and subject, which was overstated in Descartes' theory, is joined again in terms of phenomenology (Heidegger, 1996).

As proposed by Walter Benjamin in the early twentieth century, the method of reading an urban environment is an involuntary perception in passing, in a state of distraction. Appearing initially in Baudelaire's writing of 1850s Paris, the author redefined the use of flâneur by stating that "observer, philosopher, flâneur—call him what you will;... Sometimes he is a poet; more often than not he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the passing moment..." (Gilloch, 2002: 213). Under Baudelaire's captivating interpretation, as Gilloch later points out (ibid: 212), flâneur thus became "the astute observer and attentive recorder of 'Beauty' in its most minute manifestations." (Baudelaire, 1986: 34) and the most modern form—the "pageant of fashionable life". (Baudelaire, 1965: 118) Moreover, the specific dialectical image of the flâneur was famously featured and introduced by Benjamin examining the role of the flâneur who wanders in the city and collects samples of life in a distracted and unpremeditated form. (Benjamin, 1999: 420)

The flâneur provides Benjamin with a useful device for exploration in urban space and memories created in a place. The spatial practice of the flâneur enabled a spatial exploration of modernity. It is therefore related to a form of looking, observing; a form of reading the city and its population; and a form of reading written texts. Furthermore, the flâneur may not only be an observer, but also a producer: a producer of literary texts, a producer of illustrative text, a producer of narratives and reports. (Frisby, 2002: 29) That is, the flâneur can be considered as an individual (body) walking in the city (space) to read or create narratives about an urban space (text).

3. City-as-Text: Modernization of Taipei

While a city serves as text and a space of multiple meanings, a city stroller may possess multiple identities as a reader, a writer or narrator who evidences any telling modifications and histories of the place. In the case of Taipei, the main discussion focuses on how a traditional imperial city transformed into a colonial metropolis under Japanese governance, viewed from "reader/writer" and the "city-as-text" perspectives.

In 1875, the Qing government established Taipei fu [superior prefecture] with three xian [county/district] and one ting [sub-prefecture] under it. In 1885, Taiwan was proclaimed a province. Originally, Governor Liu Ming-Chuan chose Banka as the seat of his provincial government and planned to build another capital city, Taiwan fu, in the middle of the island as the administrative center. However due to political conflicts and financial crisis, the construction of Taiwan fu was suspended in 1891. Before Taipei fu (the present-day central area of Taipei City) was officially stated as the permanent capital of Taiwan in 1894, the City (together with Da-dao-cheng and Banka) was already regarded and purposely structured as a political and commercial center of Taiwan. A large number of officials settled there and made contributions to the development of the city. (Fig.1.)

Taipei fu underwent urban development twice during the Qing rule. The first phase (1875-1884) was the construction of the city walls, prefectural offices, a Confucian temple, and several public buildings. During this period, a traditional walled city of conventional principles was permanently formed in the Taipei Basin. The second phase commenced during 1885-1895, from the perspective of urban context, Liu Ming-Chuan

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constructed several new paved streets and a drainage system within the city. Open drains were also built along the main streets. In addition, several wide streets built of slate and cobbles were opened up between the city and Da-dao-cheng and Banka (Lo, 1996a: 48). It was during this period that Governor Liu made several attempts to modernize Taiwan. (Fig.2.)

After Japan took over Taiwan in 1896, the island was divided into three prefectures, namely Taipei (Taihoku), Taichung (Taichû) and Tainan, and one district, Penghu. In 1901, the administrative divisions were again divided into twenty ting. The next major reform of governmental terrain took place in 1920 when five zhou (prefecture) were created, namely Taipei, Xinzhu, Taichung, Tainan and Kaohsiung, along with two ting, namely Taitung and Hualien Port. Hence, Taipei was the capital city of Taiwan. During the Japanese occupation, the Taiwanese administrative districts were modified ten times. On one hand, as far as a Taiwanese would be concerned, this interlocking administrative system meant the insertion of an official Japanese presence at every level of the islanders' lives.

Urban planning in colonial Taiwan reflected its contemporary attitude and the values central to the homeland of Japan. Based on the British "Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act" in 1909, Japan's first urban planning laws, "City Planning Act" and "Building Code within the Traditional Setting", were constituted in 1919. Urban planning, in turn, contributed enormously to the debate on creating modernity in Japan. The experienced Japanese governors of overseas colonies, such as Gotô Shimpei, holding public positions both in Taiwan and Manchuria, once declared that the mission of urban planners was to create a "new age in urban life" by making available solutions to new problems. For him, urban planning was as essential to Japanese modernity as territorial expansion. More significantly, urban planning meant not only a key factor in "creating modernity", but also "concerns for both national security and national identity" (Sewell, 2000:90).

Gotô was more of a pragmatist than an idealist. When serving as Chief of Civil Affairs of Taiwan (1898-1906), he was keen on scientific approaches: by adopting the method initiated by Gotô on the basis of "biological" principles (Yao, 2002:44-47), the Government-General commenced in the early colonial period to develop a visionary project, including erecting magnificent buildings and constructing urban infrastructures, for the governance in Taiwan. Three years after seizing Taiwan, the establishment of the "Taipei Municipal Improvement Committee" within the Government-General in 1898 marked the beginning of the period of the "Planning of Municipal District Improvement and Reconstruction". This project mainly focused on the planning of facilities and physical constructions.

The early improvement in Taipei City commenced with sanitary upgrading, urban disaster prevention and street readjustment. On one hand, the elimination of negative urban factors and the creation of a healthy environment for both Japanese and Taiwanese people were attempted; on the other hand, the colonial authority tried to establish a new order and to improve the quality of living areas. In 1899, the "Building Code of Taiwan" was announced for the safety (fire...
prevention and structure) and hygiene (ventilation, natural light and prevention of infection) of buildings and was then enforced in Taipei City in 1900. In the same year, the "City Planning of Inner Taipei City", which focused mainly on the city within the previous city walls, was announced and can be summarized into several points.

Firstly, the concept of "block" was introduced into the city planning of Taipei and the city was divided into fifty-two blocks. Secondly, the network between roads within the city was reorganized in order to widen the narrow roads constructed in the Qing Dynasty and to prepare in advance for the new drainage system. Thirdly, a location for the office and house of the Governor-General and house of the Chief of Civil Affairs was selected. The decision confirms that certain areas of the inner city became places of assembly for the authorities of colonial governance, which later changed its local ambience. Fourthly, a park, later known as New Taipei Park, was arranged in front of the office of the Governance-General. In addition, another park was plotted outside the city along the northern, eastern and southern sections of the city walls (Huang, W-T, 1998: 65-72).

In 1901, a "City Planning of the Southern Area outside Taipei City" strategy was carried out to meet the shortage of residential quarters in the city due to the increasing number of Japanese business migrants (ibid: 73). In October 1905, the colonial government announced a "Municipal Reform Project for Taipei City" with 720 hectares designed for future urban planning, as it was warned that the population would reach 150,000 by 1929 (Fig.3.). Generally speaking, the plan of 1905, which marked a turning point in Taipei's city development, can be summarized into several ideas: firstly, the authorities decided to replace the city walls with a 37- to 72-m-wide ring-boulevard, well-known as a three-lined boulevard, in which the central part was divided by shade trees into three carriageways, with two walkways on each side. The construction of the boulevard commenced in 1910 and was finished in 1913; additional to the boulevard, new streets were laid out in a grid pattern parallel to the city walls. Several roundabouts were also planned as special "nodes" of new roads and became landmarks in the city; the streets in Da-dao-cheng and Banka were "straightened and superimposed with radical streets at some nodal points" (Lo, 1996: 55; Huang, W-T, 1998: 82-85). With these measures, the previous three-core urban contexts (Banka, Da-dao-cheng and Taipei City) were connected to each other and merged into one city. This reform further expanded the urban scale and contributed to the development of the city.

In reality, the increasing population of Taipei City proved to be far beyond the prediction in the City Reform Plan of 1905; in 1920, the population of the city was already 148,652, and reached 237,866 in 1930. Hence, urban expansion was urgent, so a survey was carried out by the colonial government in 1930-1. In 1932, an expansion plan for a Great Taipei City was officially announced to construct a city with grids of avenues and parks on the basis of the previous plan of 1905, (Lo, 1996: 60; Huang, W-T, 1998: 95).

"The Great Taipei City Plan" of 1932 demonstrated that large-scale grids were imposed on the east area of the City for its expansion (Fig.4.). These grids were...

Issued in 1937, "The Taiwan Urban Planning Ordinance" and its regulations included three main parts – urban planning, land consolidation and building management (Huang, W-T, 1998: 100–1). Apart from section No. 4 which was added by the Japanese, the actual physical content of the 1937 project was almost the same as the British Act of 1909: 1) streets, roads and other ways, and the closing, or diversion of existing highways; 2) buildings, structures and erections; 3) open spaces, private and public; 4) the preservation of objects of historical interest or natural beauty; 5) the sewerage, drainage and sewage disposal; 6) lighting; 7) water supply; and 8) ancillary or consequential works". (Ashworth, 1954: 189, cited in Hsu, M-F, 1992: 56)

In brief, the main concern of this Ordinance was to differentiate urban functions. According to the Ordinance, urban land was categorized into residential, commercial, industrial, science, beauty, fire-prevention and pleasure areas (Hsu, Y-C, 1993: 104-5; Lo, 1996: 60). Of these, the commercial and residential areas were subdivided into several subcategories. For commercial areas, these were: 1) city centre, composed of official, public buildings and business buildings; 2) shopping area, including Da-dao-cheng, Banka and the areas behind Taipei Station; 3) pleasure area, "specialized in carnal recreation, segregated from the normal urban area, and located in the southwest of Banka" (Lo, 1996: 60). Residential areas were subdivided into three categories: the area most accessible to the working places; the area most accessible to daily goods, including the City, Da-dao-cheng and Banka; and the quiet, fresh and sanitary areas, located in the suburbs.

In order to implement this Ordinance efficiently, a workshop was held in 1937 to train relevant administrators to handle the practice of city planning in Taiwan. Since then, fully developed ideas and practices for city planning, initiated in the West, have been more comprehensively introduced into Taiwan.

In contrast to the series of planning charts organized and carried out by the colonizer, another viewpoint of "text-as-city" could be taken to rethink about the interaction between the colonized and the colonizer.

4. Text-as-City: Wandering in a Colonial City

Through literature and newspapers, the dialogue between the individual (the colonizer and the colonized) and urban space (the boulevards, department stores and arcades) in the colonial period represented thoughts in relation to real-and-imagined space, text-as-city. It was obvious that there was no racial and cultural affinity between the colonizer and the colonized. These two bodies would naturally experience and imagine in different ways when viewing and walking in the same urban context. In addition to Gôtô Shimpei, Ide Kaoru (1879-1944), the Director of the Construction and Maintenance Section of the Civil Administration Bureau of Taiwan, was not only a viewer but also a "contributor" to the process of Taiwan's modernization during the colonial period. In his "The Beauty of Taipei" (1929), Ide depicted Taipei as a modern and beautiful city, "If we keep improving Taipei, I am confident that this rare and lovely city can achieve the goal of a model of an ideal city."

We should also note that Japanese literature reflected the observations and thoughts collectively and individually of its contemporary Japanese authorship. Some of the Japanese writers had visited or stayed in Taiwan; some had never been to the island and portrayed "their" Taiwan out of imagination (Long, 1954). Japanese writing on colonial Taiwan is generally categorized into two modes: exoticism and realism. Among them, Haruo Sato (1892-1964) was a famous writer of exoticism, and Nishikawa Mitsu (1908-1999) grew up in Taiwan and represented the style of realism.

In Benjamin's opinion, the city could be seen as text, while in contrast, he also proposed the theory "text-as-city". (G Walsh, 1997: 182) In a similar way to Benjamin's writing, the passages and images of selected novels produced during the Japanese occupation constituted a vast volume of "text-as-city". In this discussion, the author uses a triangulation to express the relationship between the colonizer, the urban form and the colonized (Fig.5.). When the urban becomes the "text-as-city", the boarder-line between "reader" and "writer" is blurred. The depiction and image of Taipei are "representational spaces" containing real and imagined spaces.

![The Urban Form](image)

**Fig.5. The Interaction of the Three Terms**

Under the specific historical conditions of their emergence through the lens of imperialism, the colonial officials attempted to beautify urban images in Taipei and other cities in Taiwan. As for the non-official Japanese writers and painters in Taiwan, they were usually criticized by the colonized people for the fact that they did not see the real urban life and therefore their depiction of the land was counterfeit and phantasmagoric.

On the contrary however, native Taiwanese writers composed with their telling vocabulary a more realistic portrait of their contemporary life during the colonial period. For example, Zhu Dian-Ren's (1903-1949)
"Qiu-Xin" (A Letter in Autumn, 1936) and "Dao-Du" (An Island City, 1932) and Wang Shi-Lang's (1908-1984) "Shi-Zi-Lu" (A Cross Street, 1936) directly described the individual observations and private feelings of an intellectual or an anonymous youth, in the process of modernization under Japanese rule.

As written in "Qiu-Xin", "Go to visit the Exhibition in Great Taipei... What they said was not the previous street names in Taipei... is it possible that Taipei has changed so rapidly?"; Zhu Dian-Ren's "Greater Taipei" also discussed how a colonial city was transformed from a traditional walled city. Through the character Mr. Dou-Wen, a scholar and adherent of the Qing Dynasty, Zhu aimed to present in his fiction the conflict between the traditional and modern as well as the past and present. While Zhu's Mr. Dou-Wen was an adherent of the former regime and a visitor from another village in Taiwan, Wang Shi-Lang's "Shi-Zi-Lu" (A Cross Street, 1936) described a young office employee’s life in the colonial city. In his first passage, Wang drew a picture in which an anonymous "he" was gazing for a long time at the hats displayed in the shop window in front of a department store. With the new style of window display and the feeling of freedom to wander around, it was not only a new shopping experience, but also a modern life fresh to the Taiwanese. Although there certainly was a boundary between the two "bodies", the colonizer and the colonized, the things they viewed and documented while walking in the city provided invaluable pieces of the real-and-imagined space during the colonial period.

During the colonial period, to some extent, urban planning in Taipei echoed Haussmann’s plan in Paris, as well as other influences from Germany and England. Although on a much more moderate scale than those in Paris, which was regarded as "the chemical site of the proliferation of phantasmagorical forms" (Gilloch, 2002:125), the emergence of the boulevards, exhibition halls, department stores and the complexes of street houses with arcades in Taipei had become a whole new urban image for Taiwanese people. Therefore, for the locals, walking in the city became a private experience of "spatial explorations of modernity", which was different from the experience of seeing with a colonial, public "eye" (Frisby, 2001:23-4).

After the city walls were torn down in 1905, the grid system and three-lined boulevards became the main features that made Taipei City different from that of the Qing period. Gradually, walking on the walkways became a common experience for many inhabitants of Taipei. The gates became freestanding objects in the middle of a void for moving people and vehicles and turned into monuments as historical remains. As Lo pointed out, "the ritualized threshold for ‘entering’ turned into a silent mark for ‘passing.’ It became a fragment of memory reminding the city of what was lost, a preserved ruin signifying what had disappeared" (ibid: 174). With newly-built boulevards, elliptical-shaped roundabouts, isolated gates, parks and new public buildings and the museum, a picture of modern urbanism was created, revealing the intentions of the colonizer to build a successful colonial city, a new Taipei.

Viewing the city outdoors and seeing it from indoors could be quite different. Walter Benjamin was the first to recognize the arcade as a phenomenon of the century and to view it in context in his "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1935). In Taiwan, a similar form to the arcade is called Ding-A-Ka in the Taiwanese dialect, which literally means a roof supported by pillars. In fact, it was not until the late Qing period that the concept of the "arcade" was formed. In 1903, the term Ding-A-Ka in Taiwanese, together with the sidewalk under the eaves in Japanese was officially named to indicate a spatial form like an "arcade" (Hu & Hsu, 2003:98).

Since the City Reform project was announced and implemented by the Japanese colonial government, the spatial design of the rebuilt streets of Taipei changed significantly. While the exclusively Western style physiognomy was introduced to the city center, the façades in Banka and Da-Dao-Cheng mixed the Western style with some traditional figurative motives, such as auspicious floral and animal patterns. This represented the capacity of adapting traditional praxis. Although conforming to the prevailing new mode, indigenous properties could still be retained, which sometimes were demonstrated through other outlets (Lo, 1996:93). Most importantly, the connection of the sidewalk under the eaves on the ground floor formed a continuous passage, the street arcade, for the pedestrian's to walk and roam.

In "Shi-Zi-Lu", through the voice of his fictitious character Mr. Zhang, Wang Shi-Lang expressed his attitude regarding the modernization of the city under colonial governance, he wrote: "The atmosphere of the end of this year is already heavy enough... Look! This is the heart of the island city. Inside it, the prosperous areas like Ei Cho and Kyoumachi are packed with people roaming on the crowded streets, arcades and inside the stores. The temporary canopies in the shops and arcades were decorated beautifully and brightly. Generally, there are hats, neckties and cosmetics in the stores. In the clock shop, various styles and sizes of the goods are displayed."

At the end, he shifted to an outdoor scene in Da-Dao-Cheng: "Ding-Qiu opened his eyes with admiration and astonishment. Glancing right and left, he looked at Da-Dao-Cheng, a Taiwanese settlement is transformed to a modern city. For several years, there have been tall buildings everywhere. Moreover, the application of lighting makes the night the bright daytime...Ding-A-Ka and shops here are as jam-packed as those in the city center. In the crowded streets, people are wandering in a sea of lighting and electricity. (Fig.6.)"
Gofukuten (also known as gofukuya), shops selling fabric for kimonos and obi, were generally regarded as the institutional predecessors of department stores in Japan. Learning from the Western department store, Japanese vendors adapted the new concepts of merchandising strategies in the midst of Japan's swift urbanization, which necessitated new centers of economic activity for relocated populations. Founded by Eiji Shigeta in 1932, Kikumoto Department Store was the first department store in Taiwan built in Sakaemachi, Taipei (Fig.7.). Located at the corner of the street and designed as a six-story reinforced building (seven stories with the watchtower), Kikumoto Department Store was known as the highest building to adopt the elevator (known as liu-long) in Taiwan at that time. While elevators helped to encourage customers to shop in the upper floors they also effectively mobilized the shopper’s gaze through the commodities. Kunihiko Habu (1937:496) wrote about the glamour of this store: "There were all kinds of commodities on display in Kikumoto Department Store. In order to fascinate a large number of customers, the goods in the department store were merchandised in pleasant presentation. With many local people coming, the number of visitors reached more than one thousand per day".

In the folk poem, "Taipei Zhu-Zhi Ci" by Li Teng-Yu (1895-1970), a well-known Taiwanese doctor in Da-Dao-Cheng, once praised Kikumoto Department Store: "The majestic building with its seven floors has sufficient and various goods displayed inside the spacious store. One is considered not as a customer, but as a roamer, taking the elevator with other roamers."

In his Diary of the Master of Shuichu Residence, Zhang Li-Jun (1868-1941), a Bao-Zheng (a district head), described what he saw when visiting this department store: "When going to the fourth floor by elevator, I saw many men and women of every class coming and going for lunch in this packed restaurant…Then, ascending to the sixth floor, it is a place for serving ice and a relaxing time. Looking down at the wide streets and tall buildings of the city from here, I felt that even the Governor-Generals' House was not as tall as the building of the department store." (Fig.8.)

Extravagant interiors and new styles of presenting commodities created a "dream world" where "imaginative desires and material ones" were joined together in a new environment (William, 1982: 65). Therefore, Kikumoto Department Store was widely regarded as Taiwan's first "window of modernization" under colonial rule.

However, the passage from Wang Shi-Lang's "Shi-Zi-Lu" may in a way reflect the attitude of middle-class or even lower-class Taiwanese when wandering or standing in front of the large display windows: "Standing in front of the glittering large display window, he has been looking at the hat on display steadily and hesitating for a long time. In the soft light, that hat was like a charming lady waving her hand to him… Therefore, he did not care whether the monetary reward he received was enough to pay for it or not. Raising his head, sticking out his chest and shrugging his shoulders, he strode into the store..."

To be precise, the urban context was regarded as the site for walking and displaying, and the moving body...
as another site for viewing and experiencing. Through literary texts, the real-and-imagined space was further explored between the two "sites."

5. Conclusion

In this study, the author attempted to discuss two ideas, city-as-text and text-as-city, by reviewing the urban transformation under Qing’s rule and Japanese occupation. Through the first-stage (1875–1884) and second-stage (1885–1895) constructions, the Taiwan Governor Liu Ming-Chuan adopted the modern approaches and methods of Western science and industry to carry out a series of plans for modernizing Taipei in its City. Seized by Japan in 1895, the city improvement of Taipei based on Gotô’s "biology politics" (Yao, 2002:44-47; Chang, 2003:198) and the urban plans were latter carried out in Taipei. Their approach revealed the intention of the colonial government to lead the island into a "new age of urban life." (Sewell, 2000:90) Through these successful operations, the traditional walled-city of Taipei was given a new urban context, progressing further towards the modern world.

In the "text-as-city," the text becomes a place in which the stroller wanders around and a space to be read. The strollers, including the colonizer or the colonized, were both readers and writers. From the viewpoint of colonialism, the imperial governors attempted to beautify or fantasize urban images of Taipei in their account. In contrast, the colonized Taiwanese writers tend to speak of the "real-and-imagined" places and private observations of the world they lived in.

In summary, from the perspective of "city-as-text", Taipei appeared as an open and expansive panorama, ruled by the ideas of the colonizer. The urban transformation was a project of building colonial modernity, a process of modernization without subjectivity — the colonized. However, when wandering in the "text-as-city", the action in motion may in a way coincide with Benjamin’s flânerie that indicates a new readership of the space, in which urban forms like arcades and shop windows become refreshing vocabularies and telling stories for the city strollers, the colonizer and the colonized. Departing from the traditional viewpoint, the author’s case study of Taipei exemplifies the theoretical models of "city-as-text" and "text-as-city", which re-defines the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. It also demonstrates the significant and proactive role of the colonized subjects in the construction of a colonial modernity.

Notes

1) See the discussion on "colonial modernity" in Barlow, Tani’s Formations of colonial Modernity in East Asia. (1997:1-7).
3) The terms of "city-as-text" and "text-as-city" are originally borrowed from the conclusion of Graeme Gilloch’s Myth & Metropolis— Walter Benjamin and the City (1997: 181-184).
4) The term flâneur in French originally means "stroller" or "loafer". Charles Baudelaire developed a derived meaning of flâneur—that of "a person who walks the city in order to experience it".
5) Being and Time was first published in German in 1927 as Sein und Zeit.
6) The Arcades Project, which Benjamin worked on for 13 years before his death was originally given the title Das passagen-Werk (first published in 1982) mainly on the subject of the Paris arcades.
9) The original text of Zhang Li-Jun's description of Diary of the Master of Shuicha Residence.

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