

## **Performing Locality and Identity: Rickshaw Driver, Narratives, and Tourism\***

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### **Abstract:**

The paper examines the fusion of narratives, time, space, and personal identity through ethnographic study of rickshaw driver's performance in the context of "Hutong tour" as a form of urban tourism in Beijing, a cosmopolitan capital city with a long history and rich traditional (both vernacular and high) culture. While tour companies in Beijing are making efforts to market vernacular culture in the modernized ancient city, the study subject rickshaw driver Zhang constructs his own knowledge structure of vernacular culture in the daily practice of urban tourism. Zhang also constructs his own sense of locality and identity in the process of performing personally constructed vernacular culture and national past connecting to the tangible landscape and "scenic spots" in Beijing.

**Key words:** Performance, Rickshaw Driver, Vernacular Culture, Locality, identity

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\* The paper is belonged to the project of BNU, The Daily Life Research of Urban Status Groups (SKZZB2015032) supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, PRC.

In the center of the modernized ancient city Beijing, there is a piece of cultural conservation land which is tourists' must-go place to experience the history of the capital city as a significant part of the national past and the so-called authentic old Beijing culture as a representative sector of the local present<sup>1</sup>. In this are allies the grand Imperial Place, the beautiful man-made lake *Shichahai*(什刹海), the well-known vernacular architecture quadrangles (*siheyuan* 四合院), the narrow alleys between the quadrangles referred to as *hutong* (胡同) in vernacular language, and many other tourist attractions. These sites are the tourism signs and symbols of Beijing/Beijing culture in the local discourses of cultural heritage and urban tourism. In addition to being another form of cultural sign that symbolizes old Beijing, rickshaw drivers who serve the tourists as transportation laborer and often time as the tour guides as well play a role as host, interpreter, cultural medium, and spokesmen of local history and culture in the urban tourism industry.

Based on ethnographic study of rickshaw driver's performance in the context of "hutong tour" in the cosmopolitan capital city with a long history and rich traditional (both vernacular and high) culture, the paper aims to examine the fusion of and the interrelationship between narratives, time, space, and identity in urban tourism. With keen knowledge of vernacular culture and awareness of the significance of the tour space in history, the study subject rickshaw driver Zhang constructs his own sense of locality and identity in the process of performing vernacular culture and historicity connecting to the tangible landscape and "scenic spots" in Beijing. To examine and reflect on the concepts performance, locality, identity in the context of urban tourism, the paper will analyze the performance stage, the personal conscious production and construction of vernacular knowledge system, and the ways rickshaw drivers perform narrative linked to tourist attractions.

Performance theory emerged in the 1960s among the problematization and criticism of text-oriented approaches in the field of folklore studies for ignoring aesthetic and stylistic elements and the human and social factors in the process of narration. Folklore study emerged in the middle of nineteenth century as the study of "popular antiquities" such as the customs and popular literature of the peasants. The early folklorists tended to treat "lore" as though it were separate from "folk". Their study objects were the survivals from the past and the texts of oral literature. Their primary task was to study the form and origin of a folklore item such as a legend, a riddle or a ritual. Such folklore items were regarded as fixed. The social reality and living situation of folklore was generally ignored. Such text-centered study includes the Finnish school of historic-geographic method, the Aarne-Thompson type index and motif-index, and the historical-reconstructional method. American folklorist Richard Dorson criticized that the historical-geographic method as the text-as-item approach didn't deal with the questions "of style and

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<sup>1</sup>The term old Beijing (*lao Beijing* 老北京) conveys different meanings when used in different contexts. It could be a geographical, historical and cultural term, meaning Beijing as an ancient city or local Beijing. It could also refer to local Beijing people with comparison to those migrants from places outside of Beijing. Usually an senior local Beijing person would be referred to as an old Beijing but an old Beijing person is not necessarily to be a senior one.

artistry, of the mysterious processes of creation and alterations, of the influences of national cultures, the social context, the individual genius” (1972: 12).

These exhaustive and exhausting approaches to the study of folklore without considering its situation in people’s life and social reality received critique among a new generation of folklorists who regard folklore as communication and process that are context specific (Bauman 1983, Ben-Amos 1971, 1993, Hymes 1974, Paredes and Bauman 2000[1972]). These folklorists who are labeled by Dorson as “young Turks” developed performance theory in which context is a key concept. Context is defined as “a frame of reference created in order to constitute and interpret an object of attention” and as “the master frameworks that relate nature and society” in a broader sense (Hufford 2003: 146). Among the various categorizations of the different types of context, Dan Ben-Amos claims that the two fundamental kinds of context are *context of culture* and *context of situation*. The context of culture constitutes “the broadest contextual circle,” including “the reference to and the representation of, the shared knowledge of speakers, their conventions of conduct, belief systems, language metaphors and speech genres, their historical awareness and ethical and judicial principles.” On the other hand, the context of situation is described as “the narrowest, most direct context for speaking folklore,” including time and place, the speaker’s age, status, and gender, and style and intonation of the speech (Ben-Amos 1993: 215-218). Contextual analysis involves the strategic manipulation of narratives in what Bauman called “a complex contextual web” (1986: 32) that weaves together contexts of all sorts, including not only the contexts for folklore but also the contexts for ethnography (Hufford 2003: 146).

Performance theory leads ethnographers’ attention to the specific situation and individual performer of the text as well as the broader socio-cultural context of the performance. The lore is associated with rather than divorced from the folk as collectivity and communality began to give its way to individuality and innovation. Furthermore, context approach inspires folklorists to reflect and reevaluation the writing of ethnography as the contextualized product of folklore study. The theoretical and methodological significance of their new perspective and approach has been shown by the contemporary works (Bauman 1986, Bauman and Briggs 2003, Foley 1992, Hufford 2003, Noyes 2003).

Performance study subject shifts from fixed texts to living process. Performance connects verbal texts to the nonverbal attributes of the performing subject and the surrounding settings. Performance is intersubjective and context dependent. Bauman elaborates the relationship between performance and context: “Oral performance, like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning, and functions rooted in culturally defined scenes or events—bounded segments of the flow of behavior and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation” (1986: 3). The context is significant for the understanding of why certain communicative skills are applied by the performers and why they are effective in conveying the messages to the audience. Folklore needs to be studied and understood in relationship to “real people create, reenact, reframe, and reconstitute culture in social life” (Feintuch 2003: 4).

New research models and methods are developed for the study of folklore as performance. Dell Hymes was one of the pioneer scholars that connected speech to social relations and promoted the contextual study of expressions and communications. Hymes proposed “ethnography of speaking” as a more contextualized way to study and understand how people talk. Hymes believed that studying the actual use of language in its context could help the researcher better understand the patterns of the language. He developed a model called the SPEAKING model to aid fieldworkers to document and analyze the use of language in context. The acronym SPEAKING refers to the eight factors that would have actual effects on the speech: setting and scene, participants (including the speaker and the audience), ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities (forms and styles of speech), norms, and genre (Hymes 1974: 53-62).

Bauman proposed a slightly different categorization of the numerous situational factors that interplay with performance: “1. Participants’ identities and roles; 2. The expressive means employed in performance; 3. Social interactional ground rules, norms, and strategies for performance and criteria for its interpretation and evaluation; 4. The sequence of actions that make up the scenario of the event” (1986: 4). Folklorists might not strictly follow the categorizations in their own research; since performance analysis is commonly used in folklore today, contextualization has become the norm in ethnographic research.

Stage is another essential concept related to performance theory in the study of tourism when referring to issues such as authenticity. Stage refers to the constructed space with framed boundaries that separate it from the rest of world (MacCannell 1973). The space segregation is produced by human agents and institutions through means such as contextualization, entextualization, detextualization, and recontextualization. When traditional cultures are staged, they are usually extracted from people’s daily life experience and the day-to-day context. Their forms may be altered and their meanings may be re-interpreted. For instance, particular sections of a festival such as ritual dance might be singled out, rehearsed, and performed on stage or in other spaces that are not the original context for the dance (Ozturkmen 2005). Likewise, particular local tradition or custom might be singled out from people’s daily life and be integrated into rickshaw drivers’ touristic narratives.

In the new trend of emphasizing specific person and context in subjects such as folklore and anthropology, recent research of tourism to some extent shifts away from the impact of the hierarchical structure and turns to the study of how local people create and negotiate culture within the context of tourism (Erb 1998). Culture has long been regarded as a determining force that forms and conditions human beings and institutions (Benedict 1934). However, Human beings are the reflexive and interactive agents who activate and excise cultural production and reproduction. Therefore, culture need to be examined in terms of how individuals produce, sustain, perceive, and experience it. As for built space such as touristic space, as Robert David Sack states, “being in the world is being in, and constructing, this personal sense of place, with ourselves at the center” (1992: 11).

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How does touristic space as built space relate to people's understanding of time, history, the meaning of the world and themselves? On one hand, built space transmits to our times "important experiences of the cultural and historical past" (Hamm and Jalowiecki 1990: 9). Thus it provides people with stable and conservative objects and elements to understand the past, the present and themselves. On the other hand, when the situation is different from those of our ancestors and what's inherited from the past fails to meet people's current need or is inadequate in explaining the current problems, modification and even new invention are made basing on symbolism formed based on the historical symbols and current resources and situations. It is a process of "generating new meanings and decoding existing ones" (Anderson and Gale 1992: 4). The phenomenon is also called "the invention of tradition" or "inventing traditions" by Eric Hobsbawm.

There is a process of perception and interpretation in people's understanding of touristic space. The meaning of the built space and objects relies on their intended message being effectively transmitted and communicated to human agents. Tourists as the person who confront with the space or objects are the receivers of the message. The interpreter/transmitter of the message could be individual human agents such as tour guides or social organization that is constituted by human agents such as tour companies. For effective communication, the human agents, by individual or through social organization, should articulate the message to be understood. Hamm and Jalowiecki points out that there are three conditions to guarantee the effective transmission of the message send by the space: "a code available to interpret the meaning of the object, understanding the syntactic context, and functional or pragmatic reference to the object" (1990: 10). It should be noticed that the symbol itself is not confined and stable. "Symbols condense message and carry multiple meanings, offering some ambiguity in meaning" (Stoeltje 1992: 270). And the feature of "ambiguity in meaning" allows the space for the message transmitter to re-interpret the symbols based on the current situation and context.

Performance theory and context as the key concept in the theory and method incorporate the social dimension so as to "understand persons in performance generating texts and giving and finding meaning in their lives" (Titon 2003: 78). It directs researchers' attention to the study of communication, interaction, strategic manipulation of tradition, and relationship between groups. In contemporary works, the terms in performance studies such as context, contextualization, decontextualization, recontextualization, and contextualism have broad socio-cultural, political, and academic implications (Bauman 1986, Bauman and Briggs 2003, Ben-Amos 1993, Hufford 2003).

One important aspect of performance study is the negotiation of identity among performers regarding the change of contexts. The performers have a sense of the surrounding situation and adjust their attitude and position in performance and in society. In *Story, Performance, and Event*, Bauman studies the narrative variation and shifting contexts of a traditional storyteller, Ed Bell, who used to tell stories around the campfire or at the fishing camp and later becomes a recognized public performer. Bauman finds that Ed Bell is aware of the new context and his new identity as

a public figure. When he tells stories on public occasions, he tells them in a new manner that is appropriate to “the settings that sustain his identity as a storyteller” (1986: 105). Folklife festivals and other institutional programs for the public presentation or representation of folk arts provide folk artists with new opportunities for exercise their artistic skills (probably in a fuller scale). However, their arts and lives may also be transformed in the process (Bauman 1986: 106).

In the modern world of technology, tradition is often presented/represented in mass media, in festivals, and in displays and performances before tourists. Ben-Amos suggests that the performance of folklore in such contexts involves “self-reference, drawing attention to its own traditionality.” These productions, events and performances, which are often criticized as spurious or inauthentic folklore. Thus, the concept of context has challenged folklore research in traditional societies and in modern settings. It extends “the idea of folklore into new context,” inspiring folklorists to engage in the analysis of the display of traditionality that has new cultural, political, and sentimental implications and meanings (Ben-Amos 1993: 220). The introduction of context to ethnographic studies enhances our awareness of broader issues such as authenticity, meaning, power, identity, and representation that closely related to the studied objects in social reality. When more energy is devoted to the study of heritage and tourism, the context itself becomes a subject of folklore and anthropology studies (Hufford 2003). This study of rickshaw driver's narrative in urban tourism mainly draws on performance theory in its attempt to explore the various social, cultural, ideological, political, and economic implications in the touristic practice.

## RICKSHAW DRIVER'S PERFORMANCE STAGE

Beijing, especially the central part of the city, is rickshaw driver's performance stage. As a touristic destination, the cosmopolitan city is a fusion of what Bernd Hamm and Bohdan Jalowiecki(1990) called economic rational-utilitarian-space, political space, and ideological-symbolic-expressive space. Beijing has been the capital of China for a long time and developed unique high culture and vernacular culture, which become recourses for tourism industry. In addition to the various national-level political, economic, and cultural institutions, the city is also know for its cultural heritages such as the Forbidden City and the quadrangles. According to the official statistics, in the year of 2014 alone, the city as the political, cultural, and economic center of China attracted more than 4 million tourists (Beijing Statistical Information Net: 2014).

In the last three decades, Beijing has undergone dramatic changes after the Reform and the Open Door Policy in 1978. To accommodate the enormously large number of migrants coming to the city to pursue job opportunity and better life, most of the old buildings such as quadrangles are torn down and replaced by tall apartment buildings. Many local people leave their one-floor traditional houses and move to newly constructed apartment unites. Modern subways and cars become popular commute transportation tools. The sounds of traditional instruments and bird singing are replaced by the noises of cars and rock music in bars.

Although the new face of the ancient city fits the nation's promotion of modernization and evokes the citizens' pride, the fast development of the city has gradually distanced people from traditional ways of life. Beijing people, especially those so-called old Beijing people, while excited about the city's modern development, also suffer from the feeling of being uprooted and restless. As Oakes perceives in his study of tourism in China, "the sensibilities of modernity are paradoxical: a wary faith in progress accompanied by a melancholy sense of loss, a need to recover a sense of authenticity and repair the ruptures of modernization even while realizing that such ruptures create whole new landscapes upon which we must live and from which we must derive meaning" (1998: 22). Eventually, it results in the nostalgic yearning for folk life and traditional culture. Thanks to the fast economic growth since the Reform and Open Door Policy, this nostalgic sentiment about the past has spreaded in not only Beijing but also the entire country. Under such circumstances, tradition becomes a readily available commodity in tourism development. And the central part of Beijing city including the Shichahai areas where traditional architectures and old Beijing life in hutong has been relatively well preserved become popular tour sites in the nostalgic sentiment orients tourism industry.

Hutong is the vernacular term for alleys in Beijing. It is formed by rows of traditional residential houses called quadrangles on both sides of the alley. Quadrangles are traditional one-floor residential houses in Beijing that are built with rooms on the four sides, and thus form a courtyard in the middle. Hence hutong also refers to a traditional residential area. There used to be thousands of hutong in Beijing. As stated before, because of the process of modernization and urbanization most hutong have disappeared and only several hundred have been preserved. Among all the hutong areas in Beijing, Shichahai is one of the best preserved and most famous. Shichahai is on the north of the Forbidden City surrounded by modern buildings on the other three sides. Shichahai Lake is the name of three connected artificial lakes in the area. The preserved quadrangles were built in the area along the lakes. The unique landscape of the lakes and vernacular architecture is exploited as Hutong Tour in which many rickshaw drivers show tourists around the lake and the residential area.

Rickshaw as a form of transportation tool is symbolized in the tourism industry. In the early twentieth century, the rickshaw was the dominant transportation in Beijing. In the 1920s, there were more than 20 thousand rickshaws in Beijing. And pulling rickshaw became an important way of making a living for many citizens at that time. The passengers usually were the middle and higher-class citizens, such as government officers, journalists, businessmen, and students. It was cheap and convenient as Beijing at that time was not a very large city. Rickshaw drivers drew attentions from various social circles and people often encountered records, reports, investigations, and literary descriptions of rickshaw drivers.

After 1949 when Beijing became the capital of the People's Republic of China, the government got rid of rickshaws and constructed a new system of transportation. In the 1990s, the rickshaw was revived as a touristic image. The pulling rickshaw used in the old time was transformed into the more efficient bicycle rickshaw. In modern Beijing, the rickshaw is no longer a way of

transportation for common citizens. Rather, riding a rickshaw has become an exotic and nostalgic experience for tourists. Nevertheless, the revival of the tourist rickshaw at the end of the twentieth century has a close connection with the pulling rickshaw at the beginning of the twentieth century. Due to the prevalence of rickshaw in the history of Beijing and its representations in literatures and social media such as movies, the rickshaw has become an image and symbol of old Beijing for tourist consumption. Riding a rickshaw becomes a way of experiencing old Beijing for tourists. The rickshaw is revived and accepted as a touristic image of Hutong Tour in the context that Beijing have become a modern cosmopolitan city and the rickshaw is regarded as the symbol of old Beijing.

The so-called of Hutong Tour is said to be emerged from a photographer's photo album *101 Images of Hutong*, which was published in 1990 and soon gained great popularity. *101 Images of Hutong* records and presents the landscape and daily life in Shichahai hutong area. After the publication of the photo album, some individual tourists asked the photographer, who is a local resident, to show them around the hutong area. In 1994, the successfulness of the book and the requests of the individual tourists inspired and encouraged the photographer to start the first company that promotes Hutong Tour. Despite disapproval from the Traffic Department, who fears that rickshaws may disturb the traffic, Hutong Tour program gained support from various other governmental departments such as tourism department in the city, which is crucial for its establishment and development. Like the photo album, Hutong Tour soon gained popularity among tourists. Later, many other tour companies also borrowed its idea and joined in Hutong Tour.

The touristic fame of Hutong Tour is based on folk life and vernacular tradition, which have become marketing targets for travel industry in the context of modernization, globalization, and urbanization in China. The planner and promoters exploit the local tradition as tourism product. Hutong, as a symbol of traditional life in Beijing, meets the needs of nostalgia-driven tourists and profit-driven promoters. Hutong and hutong life provides tourists with perceivable landscape and objects that can be experienced and consumed with people's intention to and purposes of enjoyment, relaxation and learning. At the same time, it is the experienced, perceived, and imagined space for rickshaw drivers' touristic narrative and performance basing on their experience and perception of the destination as well as the tourists imagination of the destination.

## KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

Although most rickshaw drivers are not formally trained as tour guides and do not have official certification for tour guides, most professional tour guides, rather than introducing the sites by themselves in Hutong Tour, rely on rickshaw drivers' narrative of local knowledge. Rickshaw drivers as tour guides and transportation labor play an important role in old Beijing tourism industry. However, little attention has been paid to them in the study of tourism. To tourists, tour guides act as the hosts and the spokespeople of the tourist sites. They are in direct contact with the tourists and engage them in the local culture and community in an interactive way. In the case



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of Hutong Tour, rickshaw drivers play the role of tour guide while taking tourists around the very central part of the grant city on rickshaws. They, as the representatives of the cultural insiders, interpret and convey the local knowledge for the outsiders.

In this paper, I focus my study on one rickshaw driver with the family name of Zhang to examine how the rickshaw driver constructs and establishes a system of local knowledge and the process of cultural reproduction on personal level before and in the process of his touristic performance. I met Zhang even before I started my study of urban tourism and rickshaw drivers in Beijing. I was a volunteer guide for foreign donators to a no-governmental organization that helps disabled children. A group of rickshaw drivers were hired by the organization to show the donators around and Zhang was among them. Zhang was in his late 50s. He was a fun, easy-going, enthusiastic and sincere person and we soon became good friends.

Zhang is an “authentic” old Beijing because he was born and grew up in a quadrangle in Shichahai area with strong Beijing accent. When he graduated from primary school, the Cultural Revolution began. Thus it was hard for him to continue his study in middle school because of the political movement. He went to southern China and then Mongolia with his father to work at building construction sites. After coming back to Beijing, he had been a welder for thirty years before he became a rickshaw driver. In late 1990s, China carried out a new round of economic reforms on the national scale and millions of workers lost their jobs. Zhang was one of the victims of the reforms. His wife had passed away years ago and he had to support his daughter and mother by himself. He found Hutong Tour to be an opportunity to be self-employed. He bought a rickshaw with his savings and joined in Hutong Tour program.

Zhang’s job is to ride the bicycle rickshaw and to introduce Shichahai area to tourists, whom he calls his guests. As a means of earning a living, Zhang regards the payment as one significant aspect to evaluate his job. In order to “do a good job” and get payment from his guests, Zhang must become a good narrator and performer with knowledge of the vernacular culture and interactive skills that would entertain, enlighten, and impress his guests.

As a native, much of his vernacular knowledge was acquired in a traditional manner that is, through transmission in local community. He is acquainted with the quadrangles, the anecdotes of famous persons living in the area, folk beliefs, and local customs in the process of growing up and living in the neighborhood. The knowledge he obtained as an insider set the basis for his construction, reproduction, interpretation, and reinterpretation of vernacular knowledge and tradition. And the role of rickshaw driver, which requires introduction of local knowledge and tradition to tourists on a day-to-day basis contributes to transform him from a passive tradition bearer into an active tradition bearer.

In addition to the local knowledge Zhang acquired in local daily life, Zhang worked hard to learn and incorporate elite narrative and literature of local and national culture. In addition to adding materials to and enriching his touristic narrative, Zhang believes that elite culture would enhance the authority and credibility of his narrative. China has a long history of admiring and

worshipping elite culture produced by writers, officials, and experts. Zhang hopes that part of his narrative can reecho what the tourists have learned from books about Beijing, which he believes would become evidence that proves what he says comes from reliable sources.

Zhang received limited formal education from primary school. He acquired most of the elite culture after he started his career as a rickshaw driver. He made good use of every chance and resource he could get. He has a very old small radio. He said he often listened to the radio programs that introducing Beijing culture. He was listening to the radio for learning and education rather than for entertainment. He also communicates with other rickshaw drivers when they are waiting for tourists on the street. Rickshaw drivers are learning from each other in their daily chats. Sometimes they have difference opinions and they would try to persuade each other or go back home and find more evidence to prove what they said was correct.

Zhang's financial condition would not allow him to buy books. Thus he took advantage of his daughter's old textbook. He once showed me a stack of history books he used for self-education. Those were his daughter's middle school and high school textbooks. Zhang said he studied them even harder than his daughter. He memorized the contents which are relevant to Hutong Tour and Beijing culture and he took very detailed notes with maps and illustration sketches. Although the studying process is hard, Zhang is very proud of himself. He said,

*I memorized everything (on the book)... It was hard. My brain was not as good as the young. Sometimes I had to read the materials for more than seven or eight times. And I had to take care of my old mother at the same time.*

*I am eager to learn. I think I am emulous. That is inherited from my father. I want to be the best when I take up something or I wouldn't even do it. Everybody should have the spirit. You cannot do a good job if you don't have the desire to be better than others. No matter how hard it was, I kept learning. The history and culture of Beijing is enormous. It is splendid. You have to work really hard or you won't learn a lot. And it is a shame if you don't really know your stuff.*

*It is really important to know your stuff. People would look down upon you if find out that you make things up. If the guests think your narrative is good, it means they are approving your work and ability. Then you deserve the tips. I won't take the money if I don't do well in my job. I don't ask for money. I earn it.*

The personal motivation is clearly and strongly expressed in Zhang's own words. Behind the hard work there was motivation of personal and economic appeals. There was desire for approval of one's ability from the audience and self-satisfaction of being a distinguished tour guide and performer. There was also pursuing of being correct and authentic. And it also involved the issue of work ethic. In Zhang's mind, the service quality should match with the payment. And to be qualified for being a rickshaw driver in Hutong Tour, he needs to be well prepared and knowledgeable about local culture and tradition so as to efficiently play the role of a cultural tour guide. Through the rickshaw driver's daily practice as well as his individual will and efforts,

vernacular culture and national history is accumulated and constructed for touristic presentation and consumption.

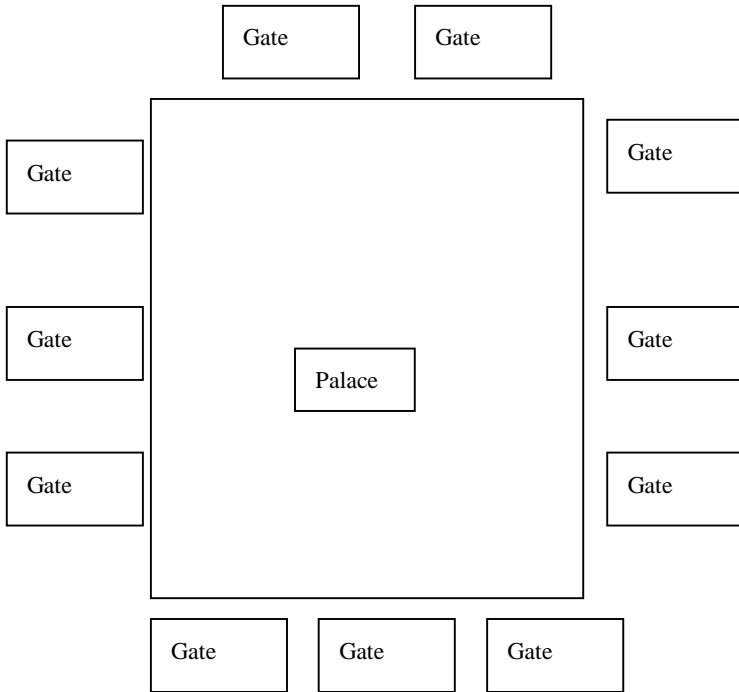
## PERFORMING VERNACULAR KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY

Shichahai as a geographical-cultural location sets the stage for the rickshaw driver's touristic performance in Hutong Tour. There are certain routes around the lakes and among the allies in the residential area that have been developed as tour routes, some are designed by tour companies and some are individually chosen by rickshaw drivers and tour guides. The rickshaw driver performs as he takes tourists from one "scenic spot" to another along the routes. For Zhang, his usual route is Guanghua Temple—Yaer Hutong—Wanghai Tower—Prince Shezheng's Masion—Song Qingling's Residence—Yangfang Hutong—Liuyin Street—Fu Jen University—Prince Gong's Masion—Lotus Market—Juxian Building—Yingdian Bridge. The route includes various scenic spots, including religious space, architecture relating to the Qing Empire, old educational institute, residential neighborhood, and natural sceneries. The Rickshaw driver may perform on the rickshaw while driving tourists passing along the route. He may also stop and get off the rickshaw to spend more time introducing particular touristic attractions. He relates geographical knowledge, historical knowledge, folk custom, folk religion, foodways, folktales, and anecdotes to the many scenic spots passed by during the tour. His touristic narrative is a performance that grounds vernacular culture on tangible landscape and objects.

As stated before, performance is contingent on the audience and the context. The structure of Zhang's narrative is both formulaic and flexible. Based on the knowledge system he built, his narrative is constrained within what's already in his mind and the form is structural for the purpose of memory and repeatability in daily practices. At the same time, the rickshaw driver encounters different tourists with different backgrounds and expectations. And the work situation also changes day to day. Zhang has to flexibly cope with the audience and the situation. Usually, Zhang starts his narrative the introduce of the layout of the Beijing to provide a geographical and cultural overview and the broader setting for Shichahai area:

*Let me sketch the map of Beijing for you. When Beijing was designed as the capital in Yuan Dynasty, the designer Liu Bingzhong designed eleven gates for the city rather than nine gates as we know today. Two gates on the north border and three on each of the other three sides. In Ming Dynasty, the city expanded for five kilometers on the south side and the expanded area is called outer city. The city is symmetric with the Palace in the center.*

Based on Zhang's description, tourists can easily draw the map of Beijing in their mind as following:



After the sketch, Zhang goes on with more detailed and vivid description:

*In Yuan Dynasty, the emperor asked Liu Binzhong to build the city. Liu Binzhong began to design the layout of the city. It was hard. He couldn't think of any idea. One evening, he dreamed of Nezha (a child god who has three heads and six hands). He thought Nezha wanted to show him how to build the city. Thus he set three gates on the south, the west, and the east of the city, and two gates on the north. The layout represents the three heads, six hands and two legs of Nezha. Shichahai was a landmark for the design of Beijing. Liu Binzhong drew a line that is tangent with Shichahai Lake. It is the symmetrical line for the Palace, the Tiananmen Square, the Temple of Heaven, and the Temple of Earth, and every other important building in the city. We may say that Shichahai existed before the city of Beijing.*

In the narrative, geographical knowledge is merged with history and folk tale. And the geographical locations are also turned into signs and symbols. The rickshaw driver and the tourists' shared knowledge of the Palace, the Tiananmen Square, the Temple of Heaven, and the Temple of Earth are the landmark signs selected to visualize the narrated map of Beijing. Compared to plain geographical knowledge, the imagined map with signs and symbols along with the history and folk tale conveys more profound diachronic space culture. The weaving of geographical and historical space would more easily bring national and cultural identification

among the tourists who learn a lot of the national historical knowledge in formal education and in daily life.

The local tradition is grounded in the city landscape and interwoven with elite culture in Zhang's touristic narrative. When Zhang and his guests arrive at an alley called *Yaer Hutong* (*Yaer* 鸦儿 means a crow in Chinese), he would stop the rickshaw in front of Guanhua Temple. With his rickshaw and his guests settled, he points to a name board on the wall of a quadrangle and tells a legend about the name of the *Hutong*:

*This alley is Yaer Hutong. It wasn't called Yaer Hutong at the beginning. How did it get the interesting name? Long time ago, a baby was abandoned here by his parents. A crow saw the baby and fed him. The crow rescued the baby. People in the city were moved by the deed of the crow so they named the alley Yaer Hutong. Well, animals and men have things in common. The story tells people to do good deeds. This building is Guanhua Temple. The doctrine of Buddhism is kindness and mercy.*

With the story telling, Zhang directs his guest to Guanhua temple and naturally transit the topic to the history of the temple, knowledge of Buddhism in China and its relation to Buddhism in Hindu, as well as former emperor's attitudes toward Buddhism. Much of the information was found in the books he read. Following the historical context, he leads his guests' attention to the temple itself. He introduces the decoration of the front door and the architectural structure of the temple. He also tells his guests activities held by Guanhua temple and living religious custom in Shichahai area. On the first and the fifteenth of each month by lunar calendar, people go to the temple to pray and provide sacrifice to the Buddhas. July 15<sup>th</sup> by lunar calendar is Ghost Festival. The monks of Guanhua Temple pray for the so-called wild ghosts (ghosts that don't have family members to give them sacrifices) and at night people put lotus lanterns on Shichahai Lake to guide the lost souls.

In the narrow hutong in front of Guanhua Temple, tourists experience the expansion of space and time through Zhang's narrative. Zhang takes his guests back to history thousands of years ago and temporarily engage them in that life. He tells them the local legend they would normally not hear as outsiders. He also informs them about the folk belief and festival activities practiced by local people. His narrative greatly enriches the meanings of the hutong and the temple, which is that they are not only a part of the city landscape, but also an expression of vernacular culture and local and national history. And the expression is realized through the rickshaw driver's narrative.

As the representative feature and a symbol of old Beijing, quadrangles are the one of most important scenic spot in Shichahai. Zhang is obviously aware of the significance of the vernacular architecture both to the city and to tourists' expectation of the city. He spends decent among of time to introduce the structure of the residential houses and explain the cultural and symbolic meaning of quadrangles. There is no particular quadrangle Zhang selects to be introduced. With many quadrangles located along the tour route, the selection is made depending on Zhang's

strategic arrangement of the tour and particular situations such as the tourists' demands. Nevertheless, most of the chosen quadrangles are well-maintained big houses. Zhang's introduction begins from the door which the tourists directly encounter:

*Please have look at the door. There are four doornails on the higher part of the door. It symbolizes the status of the house-owner. The more doornails on the door, the higher the house-owner's status is. People talk about marriage according to status. In the past, a man was supposed to marry woman who had equal status to his. A man from a house of four doornails should marry a lady from a house of four doornails. So that they could be well-matched in social and economic status.*

*Behind the door there is a screen wall. Do you see the sculpture of two dragons on the wall? It means luck and prosperity. It brings good luck. It is a culture of our nation.*

*There are two trees in front of the door. The trees have meanings. They are locust trees. People planted the trees when they built the house. If you cut the trees, you would know how many years since the house was built from the tree ring. The trees and the house are related to each other. It also expresses people's love for home. No matter how far away people are from home, they will miss their home and family (the pronunciations of "locust tree 槐" and "miss 怀" are the same in Chinese).*

Vernacular architecture and folk culture are interpreted, reorganized, integrated, narrated, and consumed in the touristic practice. Grounding his narrative on the tangible and perceivable objects—the door, doornails, the screen wall, and the trees, Zhang creates a nostalgia-driven world of traditional symbols—the traditional way of matchmaking, the decoration of folk art, people's longing for luck and prosperity, and their love for their homes and families. Folk life is exploited and romanticized to meet tourists' nostalgic yearning for traditional culture and folk life. The narrative is oriented by the tourists' nostalgic sentiment but it is Zhang who manipulates historicity and locality as contemporary resources in tourism narrative. Thus, tradition is renegotiated out of concern for economic exploitation and local touristic image. As Raymond Williams noted, when "tradition" is evoked, "what we have to see is not just 'a tradition' but a selective tradition: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a preshaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification"(1977: 115). In Zhang's case, the narrative composed of personal selected and interpreted tradition is intermingled with various personal factors:

*Frankly speaking, I don't think earning 100 Yuan is the same as earning 50 Yuan. It is not merely a matter of income. More importantly, it shows your ability and skills to do the job. I sometimes make a deal with my guests: "You are taking my rickshaw. I will tell you about this place. If you think I have done my job well and you enjoy me showing you around, you pay me for that. If you think I didn't do my job well, you can walk away without leaving me a penny." I get money each and every time. Why? My guests enjoy what I tell them. I am quite happy about it. It is kind of achievement. I am proud of it.*

The ability and skills to effectively selecting and integrating knowledge and tradition relating to Shachahai and Beijing as touristic space not only brings financial income for Zhang, more importantly, it brings the personal fulfilling feelings of one's efforts and abilities being recognized and praised. Both the economic factor and the emotional factor play a significant role in motivating Zhang's touristic oral performance.

## CONCLUSION

The paper aims to study the context and the subject of oral performance in tourism and examine the characteristics, the form, and the significance of oral performance in tourism. The author first introduces Shichahai as the performance stage in the context of modernization in Beijing and then explores the personal construction of vernacular knowledge and identity for consumption. The illustration and examination of Zhang's touristic performance shows us that the rickshaw driver's oral narrative is complex and comprehensive performance. Through the performance, the personal construction of the past and the conscious production of locality within a certain space are processed by Zhang with his personal motivations in the context of urban tourism.

Zhang makes great efforts to construct an integrated, nostalgic, and shared tourism narrative. He exploits historicity as a contemporary resource. With his personal interpretation of a chosen past, he interrogates the relevance of the past in local everyday life so as to develop entertaining, educational, and consumable performance to meet tourists' desire and expectations. At the same time, the narrating history, the expression of identity, and local life stories are embedded within a local landscape and tangible heritage.

In his book *Consuming Places*, John Urry claims that places are restructured as centers for consumption, visually consumed, literally consumed (to consume what people take to be significant about a place, such as history, building, and environment), and "it is possible for localities to consume one's identity" (1995: 1-2). In the case of Hutong Tour, these four dimensions of consumption are practiced through the multiplicity of actions such as personal construction of vernacular knowledge, oral performance, cultural expression, and economic behavior. Zhang's service is purchased and consumed by tourists. His folklore tourism narrative is an integrated performance of constructed vernacular culture for the tourist consumption of the national past and local present. Zhang's performance expands and romanticizes the time and space of the perceivable tour attractions and contributes to evoke tourists' imagination of the past and the local, nostalgia, and national pride.

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