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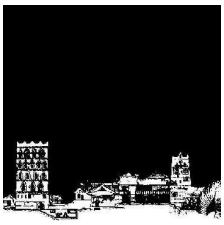

TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS WORKING PAPER SERIES

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TRADITION, VERNACULAR, AND THE EVERYDAY

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

THE HOUSE IS A STAGE: FUNCTIONAL DYNAMISM OF TRADITIONAL TOBA BATAK HOUSES FROM ACOUSTIC ASSESSMENTS

Jonathan Yoas, Irma Subagio

THE HOUSE IS A STAGE: FUNCTIONAL DYNAMISM OF TRADITIONAL TOBA BATAK HOUSES FROM ACOUSTIC ASSESSMENTS

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This study examines the Sitelumbeo-type house of the Toba Batak community in North Sumatra, Indonesia, highlighting its role as a venue for traditional performances during celebrations and rituals. These houses are vital for Toba Batak families during significant life events. Digital modelling and simulations of homes from four villages around Lake Toba reveal that they are often used for music performances while also reflecting village characteristics. The soundwave analysis shows ample sound distribution inside and outside these traditional houses, with space design prioritizing functional adaptability. An acoustic evaluation reveals differences in sound mitigation, reverberation, and loudness between modern masonry houses and traditional styles, which are attributed to variations in spatial layouts. The findings challenge conventional views of modern residences, advocating for a more comprehensive understanding of homes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rituals featuring rhythmic performances are prominent in Toba Batak households, particularly during traditional social and religious ceremonies (adat) in ceremonial feasts. These feasts mark significant stages in the Toba Batak life cycle, including celebrations of birth, wedding ceremonies, housewarming events, the establishment of a new hamlet (*huta*), harvesting, funeral rites (*saur matua*), and exhumation ceremonies (*mangongkal holi*), all of which demonstrate adherence to their traditional law (*adat*).[1] The rhythmic performance is integral to each ceremony and is accompanied by *tor-tor*, a sacred and symbolic dance; without this component, the act is considered incomplete[2].

These rites unite all Toba Batak people across time and space, binding them to their adat as enduring norms and laws despite the arrival of Christianity, which replaced their ancestral beliefs that initiated the customary feasts[3]. Evangelism has a profound, transformative impact on their social life[4], to the extent that being a Batak is often equated with being Christian; yet traditional music and rituals persist. The *gondang sabangunan* rhythmic performances are essential in practicing their *adat*, formalized during celebration feasts (*adat* feasts or *ulaon adat*). Moreover, aspects of this musical heritage have been adapted and integrated into contemporary liturgical music[5].

The performance of *gondang*, like any other form of music (e.g., classical music), is connected to the space in which it is performed, serving as a medium between the instruments as the source and the general audience at ceremonies[6]. With no traces of a specific place of worship found[7], Toba Batak houses and their hamlets became the venues for the rituals, thus acting as the medium for *gondang* performances.

This study examines the impact of traditional *Sitelumbeo*-type houses on sound delivery, focusing on their performance and any acoustic shortcomings or distortions that affect the quality of transmitted sound signals. The elements of the house's shape that transmit and shape sound are simulated, examining the sound characteristics in these interactions, along with simulated measurements based on radiational effects, frequency ranges, and tonality measured in parameters: *Sound Pressure Level* (*SPL*), *Reverberation Time* (*RT*), *Clarity* (*C*), and *Definitions* (*D*)) using digital 3D models with the Pachyderm plug-in in Rhino 3D[8].

2. METHODOLOGY

Digital acoustic simulations assess the spatial quality of these festivals' main venues, precisely the traditional house types, such as a *ruma Sitelumbeo* or *jabu bolon*. The *Sitelumbeo* house type is the ultimate of all three known house types: the *siamporik*, *angkola*, and the converted *sopo* type. The main differences between the house types lie in the size of the front attic balcony, accommodating four to six people, as well as the shape and size of their overarching saddle roof.

The houses are modelled in Rhino 3D software, with the wall and roof shapes generated using an auto-generated algorithm in Grasshopper (see

Fig. 4). This visual scripting plugin generates geometries in Rhino 3D space. Geometry measurements of sample houses in three hamlets of Samosir Regency, located on Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Indonesia, the home of the Toba Batak, were recorded in 2021 and serve as the basis for modelling the acoustic simulation. Acoustic simulations are conducted using Pachyderm components[9] within Grasshopper, enabling a seamless environment for modelling and simulation.

The simulations were in three stages: (1) the general measurements of acoustic variables (a) sound distributions (*Sound Pressure Level (SPL)*) and (b) acoustic quality (*Reverberation Time (RT)*, *Clarity (C_{80})*, and *Definitions (D_{50})*). (2) Visual simulations of soundwave distributions, presented in physical settings when the *gondang* is being played. (3) Comparative simulations with different shape configurations of house elements, including wall and roof shapes. The simulation examines various degrees of inclination in walls and roofs, comparing the resulting variations.

3. SOUND SOURCE: INSTRUMENTS FOR SACRED-CEREMONIAL MUSIC

The *gondang sabangunan* comprises several rhythmic instruments: a set of five approximately tuned drums of different sizes (*taganing* or *taganining*), a large bass drum (*gordang*), a set of four gongs (*ogung*), a percussion plague from a piece of iron (*hesek*), and a melodic instrument made of large conical double reeds, the *sarune bolon*. These instruments are essential for the sacred ceremonial and official music categories of the Toba Batak, which are distinct from the more secular entertainment music[10]. Figure Fig. 1 illustrates the arrangement of musicians and their instruments in a line during a performance. Simon (1985) also classified these instruments according to The Batak and their European Hornbostel/Sachs equivalents into: (1) percussion (*alat pukul*): idiophones, membranophones, and tube zithers, (2) bowed string instruments (*alat gesek*), (3) plucked string instruments (*alat petik*), and (4) wind instruments or aerophones (*alat tiup*). Table 1 outlines the standard instruments used in a *gondang* performance, including their European classification and the expected frequency range.

Fig. 1 The *Pargonsi, Toba Batak musicians, during a performance at a bonggar-bonggar of a house, starting from the* left with a *taganing* player.

Frequency Range of *Gondang* Instruments

Instruments		Equivalent Instruments	Frequency Range (Hz)	
Sarune Bolon	Large conical double reed (woodwind)	*shawm (bassoon)*	60	620
Taganining	Five approximately tuned drums	*drums (toms - timpani)*	60	210
Gordang	Large bass drums	*bass drums*	60	100
Ogung	Four gongs	*gongs*	300	3500
Hesek-hesek	Percussion plaque made from iron	*xylophone*	700	3500

Raja hata (parhata)	Male voice	90	155

Table 1 Frequency Range of Gondang Instruments

The *taganing* player leads a group of musicians and conducts their performance: the *pargonsi* (the music maker). Reported variations of instrument combinations are few, with the expected frequency range of the instruments varying from 60 to 3500 Hz. The tonal characteristics are unique, with distinct separation of the high-frequency range.

The other sound source in typical Toba Batak ceremonies is a male presenter, known as the master of ceremonies or *parhata*. The patrilineal kinship structure and social laws dictate that men lead the ceremonies, and their right to speak is privileged. The speaker's position during the ceremony is typically at ground level and in a designated zone within the interior.

4. SPATIAL CONFIGURATION FOR CEREMONIAL SETTINGS

Purba (2002) further outlines the rules and procedures for conducting ceremonial feasts, as well as Simon's work, along with its adaptations[11]. Their description of the ceremonial feasts suggests a sequential use of space, which is illustrated in section drawings of the house and its surrounding spaces used for the ceremonies (Fig. 2. The spaces are marked with locations of audiences and performers during the event as governed by the adat law.

Fig. 3 illustrates the rules for seating allocation during typical wedding ceremonies within a traditional Toba Batak house[12].

Implications of such spatial order catering for ceremonies as functional requirements see the house divided into three main zones: (1) the interior hall (*jabu*) with the hearth (*tataring*) in the centre, (2) the mezzanine floor level, compartmentalized into two: (a) the inner space (*bonggar-bonggar*) and (b) the outer, balcony-like space (*loting*), and lastly (3) the exterior space adjacent to the front façade of the house: the front yard (*alaman*). The zonal configuration positioned the mezzanine floors in the middle of two opposite ends where the audiences are. It serves as a two-way stage, providing a setting for acoustic simulation.

In the context of Toba Batak hamlets, traditional houses are arranged linearly along an axis in the public yard, known as the *alaman*, facing each other. The boundaries of such hamlets are fortified by high walls or

ramparts made of stone, with bamboo bushes. The *alaman* then becomes a gathering place in front of the houses, with one of the houses acting as a stage and the houses and surrounding walls serving as barriers. According to the Toba Batak kinship rule, only one house can hold a ceremonial event at a time in a hamlet, with other villagers actively participating and playing a dedicated role[13].

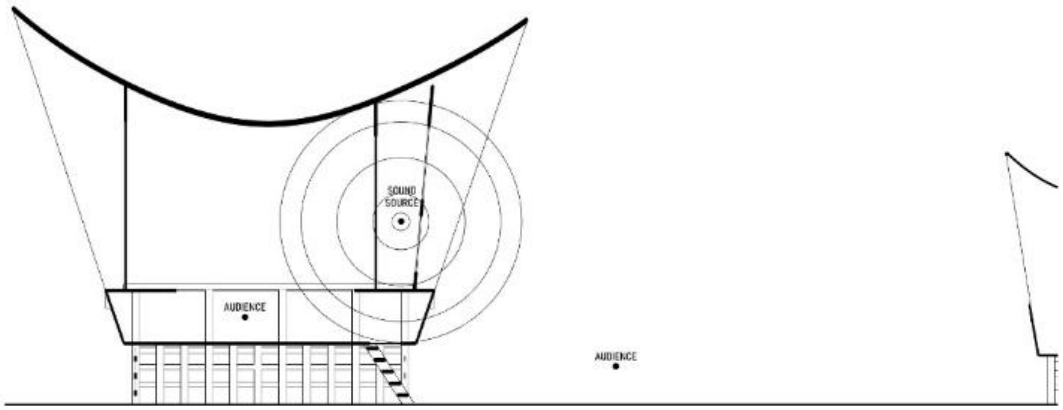
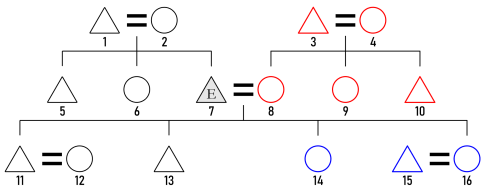
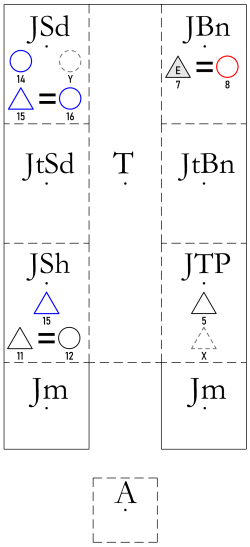


Fig. 2 Staging in a *Sitelumbeo* house, with a *gondang* music sound source originating from the mezzanine level and receivers positioned in the front yard or *alaman*.





Kinship Diagram

E A MALE EGO "E"

MALE FROM "E" LINEAGE *(dongan sabutuha)*

FEMALE FROM "E" LINEAGE

MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

8 INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

MALE FROM "E's" WIFE LINEAGE *(hula-hula)*

FEMALE FROM "E's" WIFE LINEAGE

X MALE OUTSIDER (GUEST)

MALE IN E'S DAUGHTER LINEAGE *(boru)*

FEMALE IN E'S DAUGHTER LINEAGE (including E's daughter)

Y FEMALE OUTSIDER (GUEST)

*color code on an individual symbolizing Batak Toba's three main kinship group *(Dalihan na Tolu)*

Upper Ground Level Seating Plan

JBn	*Jabu Bona*	T	*Tataring*	(the hearth)
JtBn	*Jabu tonga Bona*	Jm	*Jambur*	(utility space (storage or extra living unit)
JTP	*Jabu Tampar Piring*			
JSd	*Jabu Soding*			
JtSd	*Jabu tonga Soding*	A	*Alaman*	(front yard)
JSh	*Jabu Suhat*			

Fig. 3 Interior seating plan on ceremonies as governed by Toba Batak's kinship law

5. SOUND SIMULATIONS

Exterior and interior spaces contribute to different sound field characteristics as mediums. The main difference lies in how sound waves are reflected and bounce back and forth from room surfaces, while sound waves can travel freely in outdoor environments[14]. Particularly in a Toba Batak hamlet, the outdoor space is clearly defined, offering a significantly different setup compared to typical soundscapes. In outdoor areas, space-defining elements are less restrictive, allowing for a broader sound distribution, with distance being the primary factor influencing sound attenuation. Sound in free fields travels in straight lines, remaining undeflected and unimpeded, meaning it is non-reflected, unabsorbed, non-diffracted, non-refracted, and devoid of resonance effects.

In interior spaces, room-defining elements (e.g., walls, floors, and ceilings) can act as reflectors, resulting in a more complex sound field. Reflection from enclosed surfaces influences sound level reduction, which is based on distance, making the inverse square law insufficient to describe the sound field.[15]

Interior acoustic environments vary depending on their purpose. For speech, such as in a voice auditorium, a high degree of speech intelligibility is required. Different requirements exist for musical venues, where the multidimensional nature of various types of music influences spatial design. Ideally, a space should be designed to accommodate a specific type of music, ensuring optimal listening quality[16]. Quantifying optimal conditions for music listening is challenging, as it includes aesthetic and emotional evaluations in addition to human sensory perceptions. This also applies to traditional music, where its composition and melodic structure adapt to the performance environment.

For this study, the musical performance setting consists of two spaces: (1) a semi-outdoor space and (2) an interior space. Following their rituals, Toba Batak performs most ceremonies at the *alaman*, where guests gather to conduct rituals accompanied by timely musical performances. During these rituals, *gondang* serves as the accompanying music while a sacred tor-tor dance takes place. The setting is depicted in Figure 5, showcasing plans and sections of a *sitelumbeo* house in a *huta*. The simulations consider the *huta* boundary (the

fortified stone walls), the flat dirt surface of the *alaman*, and the arrangement of nearby timber houses within the wall fences, which form the exterior setting. The second setting is the interior of the house's front half, as viewed from its longitudinal sections. Angled walls, high-pitched curved roofs, and floorboards, primarily made of timber, define the interior spaces for simulation. The musicians occupy the front *bonggar-bonggar* at the mezzanine level, while the master of ceremony is situated at the *alaman* on the ground level.

6. MODEL SETTING

A shape algorithm is created for the generation of the houses' geometry for acoustic simulations digitally, creating timber posts, walls as spatial boundaries with forged openings, triangular roof frames (*sitindangi*), upper ground and mezzanine floors, front and back fascia, and the roof with overhangs (

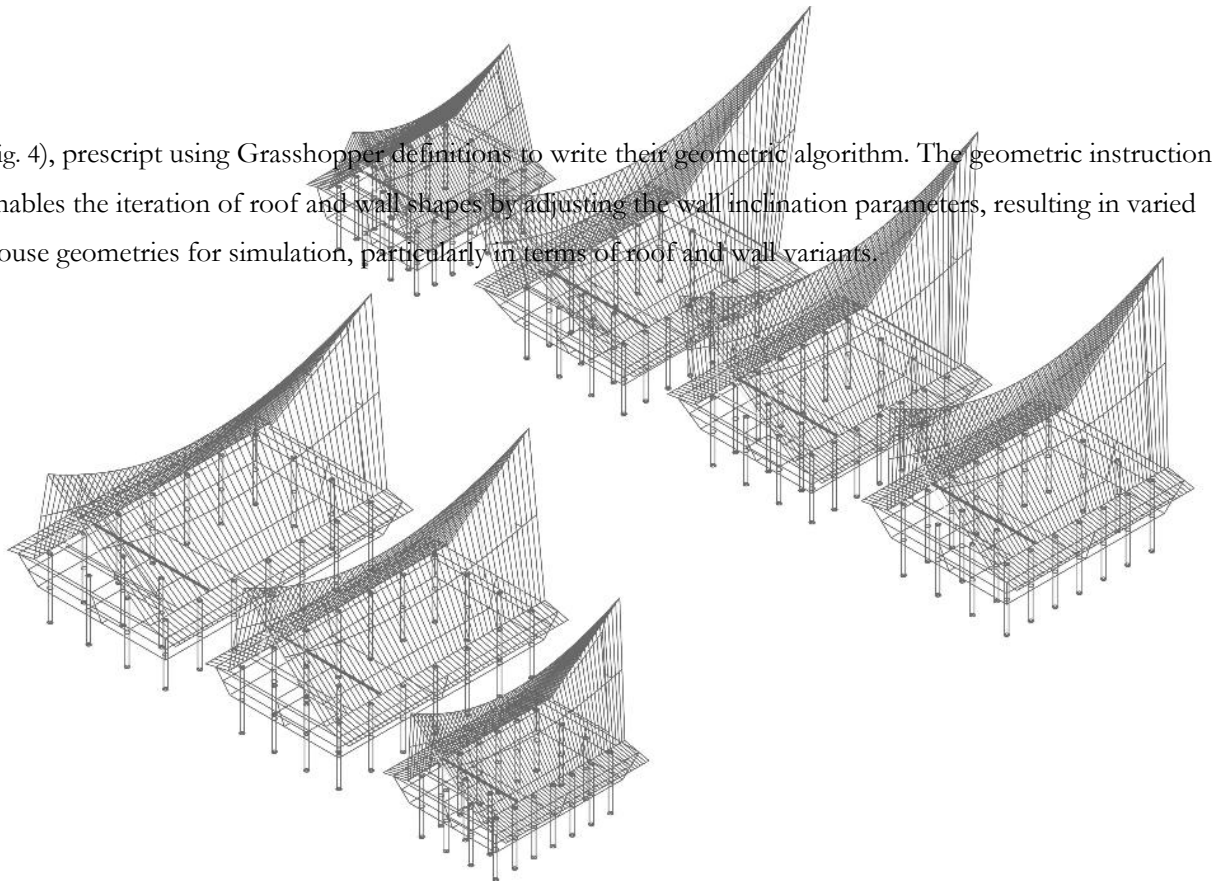


Fig. 4), prescript using Grasshopper definitions to write their geometric algorithm. The geometric instruction enables the iteration of roof and wall shapes by adjusting the wall inclination parameters, resulting in varied house geometries for simulation, particularly in terms of roof and wall variants.

Fig. 4 Digitally generated models of *Sitelumbeo* houses from two hamlets in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia

Digital models are set into two conditions (see Fig. 5): (1) outdoor, with musicians seated at the front attic and audiences standing in front of the house in the front yard (*alaman*), and (2) indoor, with the master of ceremony placed at "JtBn" zone and audiences according to the seating rules during ceremonies (

Fig. 3). For both conditions, the wall and roof shapes follow the resulting geometry produced by the shaping algorithm, which changes wall inclinations based on fieldwork data: minimum = 60° (house sample C09), median = 71° (house sample A01), and maximum = 82° (house sample C08), and a model based on the median house sample A01, excluding the roof, as the basis.

Outdoor listeners are arranged in a three-by-three-point grid, covering the area where ceremonies took place in the front yard, the *alaman*, and spaced 2 meters in the X and Y directions (Fig. 5). The sound source is represented at a point hovering 1.2 meters above the mezzanine floor, with its actual height varying depending on the height of the floor (H1 + H2 in our measurement table, Table 2). Wall and roof elements are the main spatial configurator for setting the acoustic simulation.

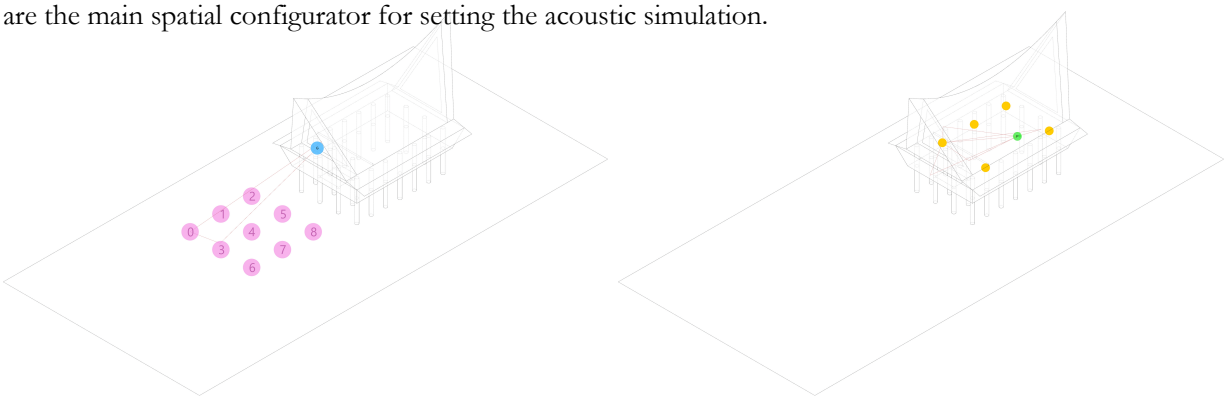


Fig. 5 Simulation setup for sound source and receivers in (1) exterior setting and (2) interior setting.

House Measurements by Type - *Sitelumbeo*

Huta in Samosir					W (m)	L (m)	Ratio (L/W)	Wall Inclin. (deg.)	H1 (m)	H2 (m)	H3 (m)
A01	Lumban Suhi-suhi	*Huta* Raja	***HR***	***3***	4.20	6.20	1.48	**71**	1.43	1.14	3.63
A02			*HR*	*4*	5.32	10.00	1.88	74	1.61	1.19	4.59
A03			*HR*	*5*	6.23	10.60	1.70	**71**	1.52	1.39	4.85

C06	Sianjurmula-mula	*Huta* Ginjang	*HG*	*1*	5.63	7.68	1.36	**71**	1.59	1.40	5.43
C07			*HG*	*2*	5.42	7.18	1.32	67	1.54	1.31	5.67
C08			***HG***	***3***	5.32	7.09	1.33	**62**	1.52	1.40	5.45
C09			***HG***	***4***	4.40	5.80	1.32	80	1.31	1.33	3.30
		MAX			6.23	10.60	1.88	**82.00**	2.16	1.97	5.67
		MIN			4.20	5.54	1.25	**60.00**	1.31	1.14	2.70
		MEDIAN			5.32	7.27	1.35	**71.00**	1.53	1.40	4.72
		AVERAGE			**5.10**	**7.54**	**1.48**	**71.65**	**1.58**	**1.44**	**4.43**
		Rounded up			**5**	**8**	**1.5**	**72**	**1.6**	**1.4**	**4.4**

Table 2 *Sitelumbeo* house samples geometric measurement for acoustic simulation setup

7. SIMULATION PARAMETERS

The simulations provide an overview of the sound wave as modelled to analyze sound distribution and measure acoustical characteristics: *Sound Pressure Level* (*SPL*) for outdoor settings and the addition of *Reverberation Time* (*RT*), *Clarity* (C_{80}), and *Definitions* (D_{50}) for indoor settings.

Reverberation Time (RT)

Reverberation is the phenomenon in which waves remain in space after the sound source has ceased emitting sound. This fundamental characteristic enhances the quality of speech and music in enclosed spaces[17]. *Reverberation Time* (*RT*) is measured as the time required for sound energy to decay by 60 dB from its initial value at termination[18]. It is modified by the total sound absorption properties of the building components in a room and the room's volume. Materials with better absorption values contribute to a shorter time of sound energy depletion. A greater volume of a room means fewer sound waves impacting the room's surface, resulting in slower soundwave decay or a higher *RT*, following the formula:

$$RT = (0.16\ V)/(\sum A)$$

Where V is the room volume (m^3), and $\sum A$ is the total absorption in the room in metric Sabins.

RT may vary in different positions within a room setting. The space and the venue then became important mediums, producing variations of *reverberation time*. Thus, mapping the *RT* values can modulate a room's sound field behavior.

Excessive reverberation can impair speech intelligibility and affect the perception of music. It isn't easy to separate musical judgment from the acoustic quality of the space, and different types of music and instruments have unique acoustic requirements. A longer *RT* can lead to a lack of *definition* and *clarity* in music,

as well as a loss of intelligibility in speech.

Clarity (C)

A direct sound is associated with a soundwave that reaches the listener within 50 to 80 milliseconds. *Clarity* (*C*) is then defined as differences in dB of the sound energy a listener receives as direct sound or within 80 milliseconds minus the reverberant energy (the entire energy arriving after 50-80 milliseconds). When a sound energy is more significant than that of the later sound that arrives, a discrete note in a musical composition will stand out, giving the music a sense of 'clarity' rather than 'muddiness'. The mathematical definition of clarity is formulated as follows:

C_{80} = 10log (E_80/ (E_∞-E_80)) dB

C_{80} measurements are related to RT, with longer RT resulting in a proportionally smaller C_{80} value. A C_{80} value between +1dB and -4 dB is considered acceptable[19]

Definitions (D)

Definitions (D) measures a listener's ability to understand or define a sound as a percentage division of received sound energy at the first 50-80 milliseconds by total acquired energy:

D_{50}= (E_50/E_∞) %

D_{50} is a standard parameter used to evaluate speech clarity in a room. Values within the D_{50}>50% range illustrate good speech clarity.

Sound Distributions and Sound Pressure Level (SPL)

Soundwaves propagate in all directions through a medium, typically losing energy. In open air, like simulated at the Toba Batak front yards, the inverse square law dictates how soundwave energy from a point source decays, approximately 6 dB, while waves from a linear source decay at 3 dB for each doubling of distance. The intensity of sound is inversely proportional to the square of the distance in a free field. The presence of other elements in the sound propagation medium will reduce sound energy by its material characteristics.

The sound pressure level (*SPL*) is used to measure the distance a sound wave travels from its source. From several points of measured *SPL* around a sound source, sound propagation behavior can be mapped

depending on the location of the element, its shape, and its material. Here, the unique shape of the Toba Batak house's elements and the properties of the material contribute to sound distribution, in addition to the mapping of the *SPL* distribution.

The loudness of sound is measured by its intensity, which is the amount of energy passing through a unit area. In practice, the sound pressure is measured, not its intensity. Both are interchangeable as both illustrate the quantity of sound waves. *Sound Pressure Level* is a logarithmic representation of sound pressure. Technically, an *SPL* measurement is performed by placing different sound level meters at various distances from the station points to a sound source. One then mapped the differences in sound level as it was received at each distance point. At the source, a pink noise signal is given to microphones at different positions for recording analysis. *SPL*, as with other acoustic parameters, is digitally simulated in this study.

8. SIMULATION AND FINDINGS

Room shapes significantly contribute to the distribution of sound. In the case of the Toba Batak *Sitelumbeo* houses, its saddled roof inclined walls, and elevated floor planes create interior shapes that facilitate speech delivery. The extended overhangs act as sound reflectors, directing sound waves from the source to the targeted listeners in the front yard (*alaman*). The resulting soundwaves characterize the sound delivery indoors and outdoors, observed from (1) *Reverberation Time* (*RT*), (2) *Sound Pressure Levels* (*SPL*), (3) *Clarity* in C_{80}, and (4) *Definitions* in D_{50} of indoor sound simulation (Fig. to

Fig. .) and the sound pressure level (SPL) of outdoor simulation. For a conference room where speech is a primary focus, a shorter RT of 0.85s < RT < 1.30, with a definition value of D50 ≥ 65 and clarity C50 > 6 dB, is preferred compared to a space designated for music performances, where 1.30 < RT < 1.83 and Clarity -2 < C80 < 4[20].

Indoor reverberation time (RT) is short due to its configured shapes, as well as material properties and air gaps resulting from the construction of timber planks that made the overall house. While the roof and wall angles alone do not contribute positively to short RT value, the overall volume does. The roof angle, combined with a more significant proportion of width and length, contributes to a larger volume, extending the *RT* for 0.2-0.3 s, as exhibited in house sample C08. *Clarity* (C_{80}) value difference of more than 6 dB indicates the interior's functional superiority as a medium for speech delivery rather than for musical performances. The average *Clarity* (C_{80}) value in sample houses at Huta Ginjang (houses C) is similar to that in houses at Huta Raja Lumbansuhi-suhi (house A01), despite its roof angle being the median between the other two, but with different proportions and house shapes. —*definitions* (D_{50}) values of sample houses closer to 100%, which renders speech well for indoor use. *SPL, RT,* C_{80}, and D_{50} concurrently contribute to good

indoor sound delivery, particularly in the medium and low frequencies that characterize human male voices for speech.

While in outdoor, *RT*, C_{80}, and D_{50} values are insignificant, the sound pressure levels (*SPL*) exhibit an equalizing pattern of sound distribution. All houses with Toba Batak roofs distributed sounds from receiver points in the first row closer to the sound source throughout the last row of receivers with less deviation. The sound pressure levels (*SPL*) are maintained around 1.5 dB to 2.5 dB, with an equalizing effect. The role of the roof in this phenomenon is contrasted to a house without a roof simulated using house sample A01 with its roof hidden. Without the roof presence, receiver points in the middle column (2nd column) received higher *SPL* values than those flanking on the sides (1st and 3rd columns). The sound distribution is even with the roof's presence. A similar phenomenon is occurring with the receivers in rows, with the front, 1st row, of receivers receiving similar *SPL* values as those at the back, 3rd row.

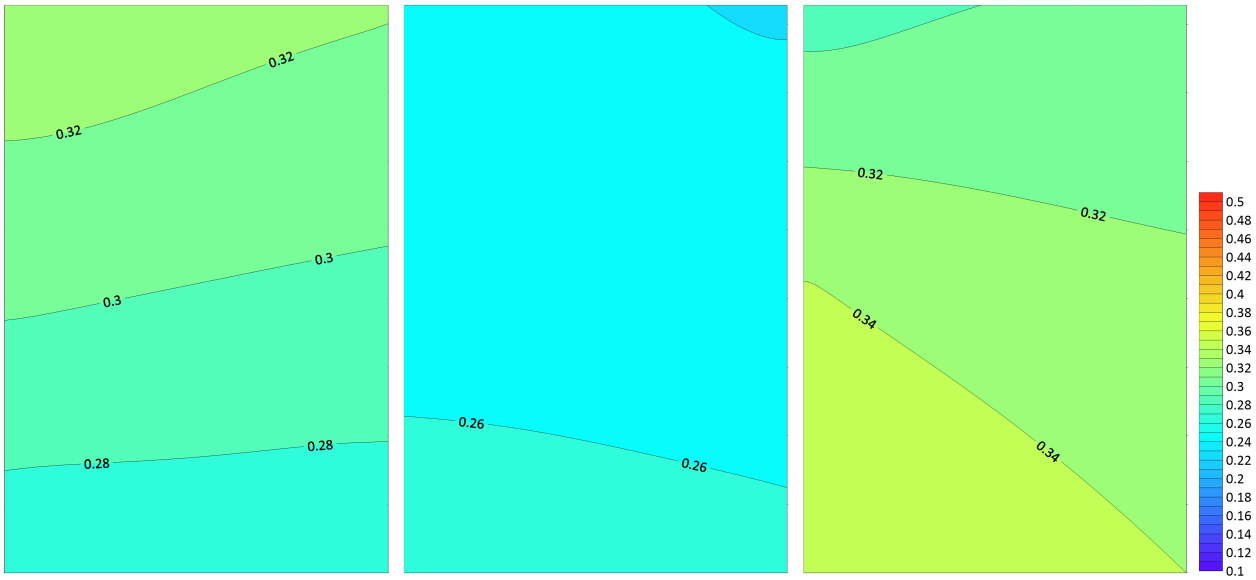


Fig. 7 *Average Reverberation Time* (*RT*) of sample houses (minimum, median, and maximum geometric proportion; the rectangle represents the house's interior plan).

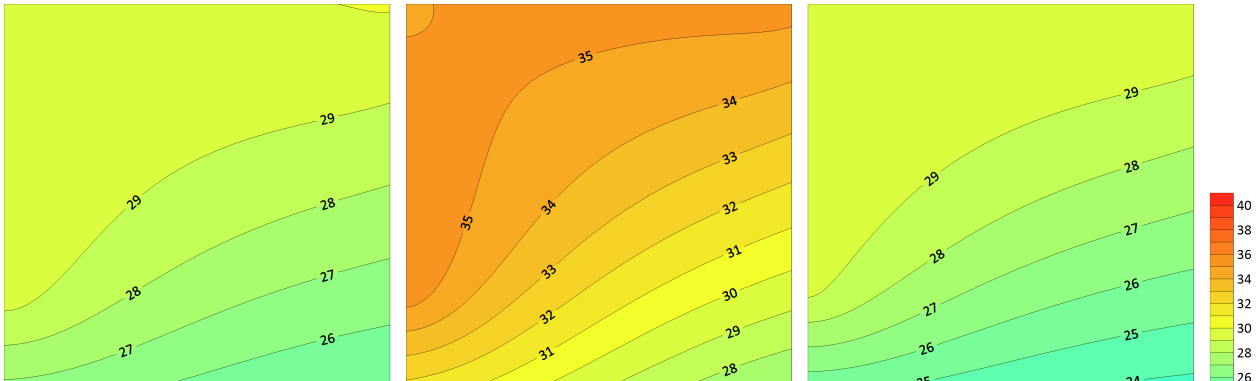


Fig. 8 *Average Clarity* (C_{80}) of sample houses (minimum, median, and maximum geometric proportion; the rectangle represents the house's interior plan).

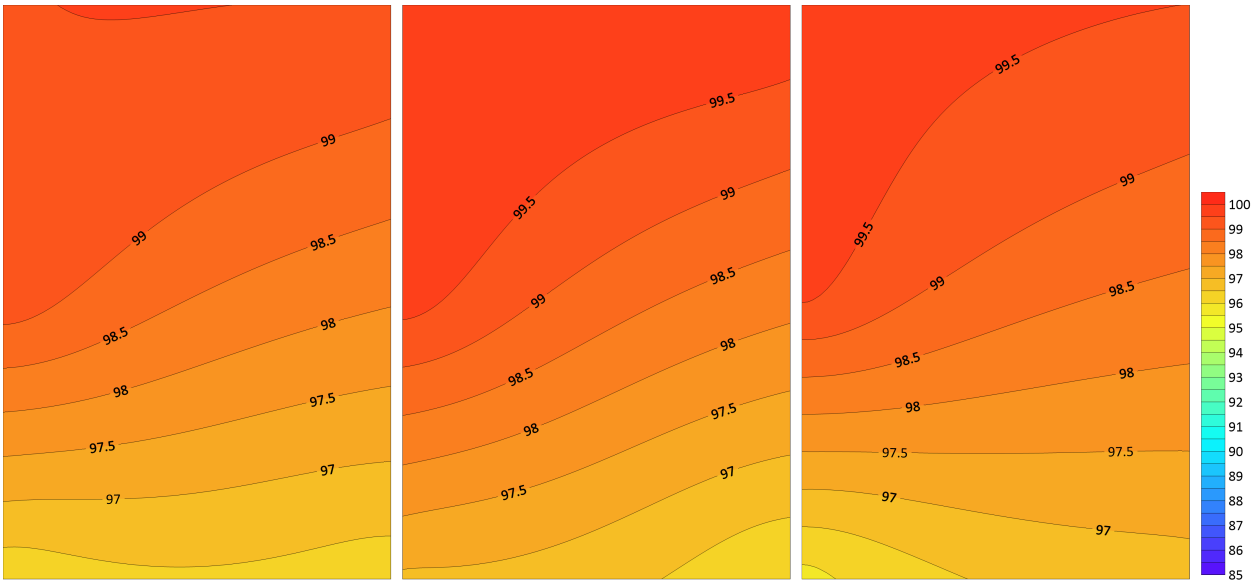


Fig. 9 *Definitions* (D_{50}) of sample houses (minimum, median, and maximum geometric proportion; the rectangle represents the house's interior plan).

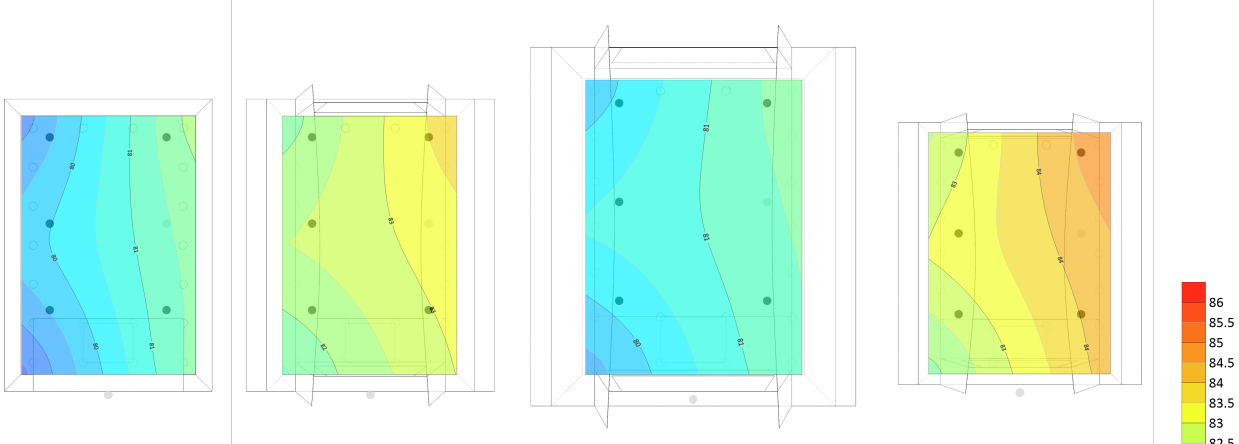


Fig. 10 *Average Sound Pressure Level* (SPL) of indoor and outdoor acoustic simulations of sample houses (a house with no roof as a base, with minimum, median, and maximum geometric proportions; the rectangle represents the house's interior plan).

9. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

Not all houses are created the same: The traditional dwelling is set in a context that enhances its acoustical performance through its architecture, not only accommodating daily living but also serving as a venue for rituals. Thus, making the architecture inseparable from their cultural values and rites. The studies reveal the otherness of vernacular houses as a thoughtful interplay of communal needs, shaping a synthesis that reverberates with Rapoport's phrase: "systems of settings within which systems of activities take place."[21]

The slow pace of societal changes presents compatibility issues with modern interpretation of house design in traditional communities. These findings exemplify an inadequate representation of functional design in houses, particularly among specific cultural groups. The contemporary approach in North Sumatra, particularly in the housing industry, exhibits deficient spatial accommodation, neglecting ritual and festive spaces such as the *bonggar-bonggar* and *alaman*. In traditional hamlets, shortcomings are rarely acknowledged, and resolutions are often partial, as residents continue to live in two types of accommodations: extension houses that cater to the mundane and the originals, which adhere to social law, the *adat*.

Acoustic assessment opens opportunities for investigating similar traditional communities for their performative attributes beyond the norms of living accommodation. This study demonstrates that traditions can reveal the otherness of a building's functional intentions, as expressed in its shape or components, thereby contributing to the spatial use profile of its occupants. Further research on other traditions offers

insight into contemporary house design considerations and shape designs by emphasizing overlooked functional requirements such as performative features in a domestic setting.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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REINVIGORATING URBAN FOODSCAPES: CULINARY TOURISM AS A STRATEGY FOR URBAN REGENERATION

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REINVIGORATING URBAN FOODSCAPES: CULINARY TOURISM AS A STRATEGY FOR URBAN REGENERATION

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This paper explores culinary tourism as a multidimensional strategy for urban regeneration, emphasizing its role in revitalizing cultural identity, public space, and local economies. Drawing on interdisciplinary theory and a case study of Kexiang District in Nanjing, the study introduces the concept of Culinary Urbanism—a holistic model integrating gastronomy, spatial planning, and community engagement. While recognizing risks such as gentrification and cultural commodification, the paper argues for inclusive, heritage-driven approaches to food-based development. The findings offer theoretical and policy insights relevant to Chinese and global cities pursuing sustainable, culturally grounded urban renewal.

1. INTRODUCTION: CULINARY TOURISM AND THE URBAN CRISIS

World urban areas are confronted with rapid urbanization that is linked with profound socio-spatial transformations. A key but often overlooked urban dynamism effect is the transformation—and sometimes degradation—of traditional urban foodscapes (1). Urban foodscapes, or physical and symbolic spaces that are formed by social practice around food production, consumption, and culture, play crucial roles in maintaining urban identity and facilitating social interaction (2, 3). However, contemporary economic needs and commercial property development tend to marginalize these culturally important landscapes, making cities more isolated from their surrounding cultural heritage (4-6). Consequently, cities become more susceptible to attacks on their cultural distinctiveness and social cohesion, further exacerbating urban fragmentation and loss of community vitality.

In China's situation, China embodies this worldwide urban crisis with peculiar intensity. China's process of rapid urbanization, driven by economic development necessities and real estate speculation, has disproportionately impacted customary food ways and markets, which have long been at the center of urban life (7, 8). Street food culture and neighborhood food markets, once vibrant public spaces of social interaction and cultural sharing, are rapidly vanishing or in retreat in most modern cities (7, 9). Scholars argue that these disappearing informal food economies have significant and long-term impacts on urban social cohesion, cultural heritage preservation, and local economic viability (10). Chinese urban renewal, as it proceeds with physical modernization, has tended to overlook intangible food-related cultural practices, leading to urban spaces ever more disengaged from their historical and cultural context (11).

Amid this pressing challenge, culinary tourism emerges as a potential tool for cultural preservation, social revitalization, and economic rejuvenation. Culinary tourism, defined as travel motivated primarily by food experiences, is increasingly acknowledged for its potential to foster authentic cultural engagements and

stimulate local economies (12). In their seminal work, Hall and Sharples (13) assert that culinary tourism integrates food as a core element of tourism strategies, making it instrumental in shaping destination image, improving visitor experiences, and reinforcing cultural identity. Furthermore, culinary tourism has demonstrated its capacity to enhance urban vitality by actively engaging residents, tourists, and businesses within food-oriented urban spaces (14).

The complex and multidimensional potential of culinary tourism as a regeneration strategy has begun to receive academic attention in recent years, linking food culture closely to urban planning practices and sustainable development objectives. For instance, Henderson (15) highlights Singapore's intentional leveraging of street food heritage to strengthen its tourism appeal while simultaneously reinforcing its cultural narrative. Similarly, in Western contexts, studies of cities such as San Francisco and Barcelona illustrate how culinary tourism can spur spatial revitalization and reshape community identity positively, fostering vibrant neighborhoods deeply connected to their cultural roots (16, 17).

Despite these promising international precedents, critical questions remain unanswered in the context of Chinese urban landscapes. Scholarly attention remains limited on how culinary tourism could be systematically integrated within urban planning frameworks to counteract the adverse effects of rapid commercialization and spatial homogenization specifically within Chinese cities (18). Given the distinctive socio-economic and cultural contexts shaping urban development in China, a critical and context-sensitive evaluation of culinary tourism's applicability and effectiveness is essential.

This paper addresses this critical research gap by examining culinary tourism's potential as a strategic approach to urban regeneration, specifically focusing on Kexiang District in Nanjing. Nanjing, historically recognized for its rich culinary heritage and vibrant urban culture, represents an ideal site to explore the intersections between culinary practices and urban renewal (9). Kexiang District, traditionally renowned for its local food culture yet currently experiencing significant socio-economic and spatial decline, encapsulates broader issues affecting urban foodscapes throughout China, providing valuable insights into the practical and theoretical dimensions of culinary tourism as an urban regeneration tool.

The principal objective of this research is thus to critically assess how culinary tourism can serve as an effective catalyst for urban regeneration, fostering economic resilience, spatial renewal, and cultural vitality. Specifically, this paper aims to develop a robust theoretical framework to articulate how culinary tourism integrates with urban planning, contributes to spatial improvement, enhances community engagement, and revitalizes cultural identity within urban contexts. By undertaking this theoretical exploration, the research contributes to urban regeneration literature in two significant ways:

Firstly, it provides a conceptual bridge between culinary tourism and urban regeneration theories, highlighting the intersections between economic sustainability, spatial reconfiguration, and cultural preservation. Secondly, by contextualizing these theoretical insights within the specific urban reality of China, it enriches the global discourse on urban regeneration by introducing nuanced perspectives relevant to rapidly transforming urban societies.

Therefore, this research aims explicitly to delineate the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of using culinary tourism strategically to regenerate declining urban spaces. Through theoretical synthesis and critical reflection, it proposes an integrated theoretical perspective—culinary urbanism—that could inform future urban planning and policy initiatives in Chinese and global urban contexts.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING CULINARY TOURISM AS A REGENERATIVE URBAN STRATEGY

Defining Culinary Tourism: Different Perspectives

Culinary tourism is commonly defined as the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences as a form of travel. Early Western scholarship treated food mainly as a sub-component of cultural or heritage tourism, but over the past two decades food has become a central attraction in its own right. Folklorist Lucy Long (2004) broadened the concept, defining culinary tourism as "the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of another – including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own". This expanded view emphasizes that one can engage in culinary tourism even in everyday settings by exploring "otherness" in food (e.g. trying immigrant cuisines at home). Western literature traces the evolution of the concept alongside rising interest in authenticity and local culture in tourism. MacCannell's notion that tourists seek markers of authenticity and Urry's tourist gaze theory both help explain why cuisine – as a tangible marker of local culture – has gained prominence in destination appeal (19, 20). In fact, scholars note that Western countries were relatively slow to recognize culinary tourism compared to Asia, where vibrant food cultures long attracted intra-regional tourists. The rise of culinary tourism as a trendy leisure activity in the 2000s is often attributed to the promotion of local cultural heritage and the idea that food represents place identity.

In Chinese academic and policy discourse, "美食旅游" (culinary/food tourism) has been embraced as both a cultural and economic phenomenon (21). Chinese researchers echo Western definitions but place strong emphasis on gastronomy as intangible heritage and a vehicle for city branding. For example, Horng and Tsai (2010) define culinary tourism as visiting destinations specifically to taste local cuisine and to learn about food

production and culture (22). This reflects an integrated perspective: food tourism is not only about consumption but also education and cultural exchange. In practice, China's rising middle class and government initiatives have fueled a boom in gastronomy-focused travel. The government has issued policies to support gastronomic tourism and promote regional food cultures as part of tourism development. Chinese cities such as Chengdu have leveraged their famed cuisines to gain international recognition (e.g. UNESCO City of Gastronomy status) and to attract tourists seeking authentic culinary experiences. Thus, across both Western and Chinese contexts, culinary tourism has evolved from a niche interest into a recognized strategy for cultural promotion and economic development, rooted in the notion that cuisine is a powerful expression of place.

Urban Regeneration Theory: Spatial, Social, Economic, Cultural Dimensions

Urban regeneration refers to comprehensive, integrated actions aimed at reversing decline and revitalizing urban areas. A classic definition by Roberts (2000) describes it as "a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change" (23). This highlights that regeneration is multi-dimensional, extending beyond physical redevelopment to include social welfare, economic vitality, and environmental quality. Later theorists added that regeneration also encompasses cultural and symbolic dimensions. In essence, urban regeneration is a holistic process to transform the nature of a place through coordinated efforts across sectors and themes. It differs from narrower concepts like "urban renewal" (which traditionally emphasized physical rebuilding) by explicitly integrating social and economic objectives and engaging local communities (24).

The core dimensions of urban regeneration can be summarized as: spatial (physical), social, economic, and cultural. The spatial dimension involves improving the built environment and public spaces of the city – repairing derelict structures, revitalizing streetscapes, and reimagining land uses to enhance urban functionality and aesthetics. The social dimension addresses quality of life and equity – aiming to reduce social exclusion, foster community cohesion, and involve residents in the remaking of their neighborhood. The economic dimension focuses on stimulating investment, entrepreneurship, and employment in previously declining areas, often by nurturing new industries or attractions that can diversify the local economy. Finally, the cultural dimension entails preserving and celebrating local heritage, identity, and creative life as integral to a place's renewal. Contemporary regeneration strategies increasingly view culture as a catalyst: for example, Charles Landry's Creative City concept and similar approaches position cultural assets (arts, heritage, food, etc.) at the heart of urban revival (25). In Chinese cities, planners similarly recognize these dimensions; urban regeneration is seen as using "a range of physical, economic, environmental, social and cultural tools" to

revitalize areas, with attention to symbolic meaning and community identity (26). In sum, urban regeneration theory provides a framework to understand how targeted interventions across spatial, social, economic, and cultural realms can synergize to breathe new life into urban districts (24).

Spatial Vibrancy and Economic Resilience through Food Tourism

Culinary tourism can be theorized as a strategic contributor to spatial vibrancy – the lively, continuous use of urban space – and to economic resilience in cities. Food-oriented activities naturally draw people together in public settings, animating streets and squares with human presence. Jane Jacobs famously observed the "sidewalk ballet" of city life, wherein diverse uses (shops, cafes, restaurants) keep urban streets active and safe (27). In this spirit, establishing food markets, street eateries, and culinary festivals in underused areas can increase foot traffic and bring a buzz to previously stagnant streetscapes. Indeed, the rise of gastronomic tourism has led to food markets being used as "a new type of resource and tool for the regeneration of urban centres" (28). By repurposing historic markets or creating food districts, cities rejuvenate their physical fabric and invite both locals and tourists to circulate, thus avoiding urban stagnation. For example, Barcelona's La Boqueria market was revitalized as a gastronomic destination, transforming a traditional marketplace into a vibrant social space that attracts visitors worldwide (28).

Economically, culinary tourism functions as an engine for local development. Food-related enterprises – from hawker stalls and cafes to high-end restaurants – generate employment and stimulate surrounding businesses (retail, entertainment, agriculture). The Inter-American Development Bank notes that gastronomy is "a significant economic force", sometimes termed the "gastro-economy," creating numerous jobs, boosting social entrepreneurship, and stimulating regional economies (29). By diversifying the urban economy with culinary niches, cities build economic resilience, i.e. the ability to withstand shocks and downturns (13). Small food businesses and markets often have lower entry barriers, empowering local entrepreneurs and spreading tourism income more inclusively. Moreover, food tourism tends to be less seasonal than some other forms of tourism, since people eat year-round (30); this steady demand can stabilize local economies. Even during crises, the food sector can adapt creatively – as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when many cities relied on takeout, outdoor dining, and local markets to sustain livelihoods (31). Scholars have observed that destinations known for food can recover faster by attracting visitors back through the lure of cuisine, thereby helping the wider city economy to rebound. For instance, Singapore's hawker centers and food courts, famed for affordable ethnic cuisines, not only feed residents but also draw tourists, supporting thousands of small vendors and contributing to the city's economic vitality (32). In short, culinary tourism imbues urban spaces with activity and character while also bolstering the economic base – two pillars of regenerative urban vitality.

Culinary Tourism, Place Identity and Urban Memory

Food is deeply woven into urban cultural identity, and culinary tourism can reinforce and renew that identity through place-making and urban memory. Gastronomy often serves as a "common thread that weaves stories and identities", shaping a city's unique character. The cuisines of a city – its signature dishes, food rituals, and dining scenes – become symbols of place identity that both locals and visitors recognize (33). Theoretical perspectives on place-making argue that the meaning of a place is constructed through cultural practices and shared memories in space. Eating and cooking are intimate cultural practices; thus, food-centric places like restaurants, street kitchens, and markets act as stages where urban identity is performed and experienced daily. Culinary tourism builds on this by spotlighting local foodways as attractions, effectively telling the city's story through flavor and dining. According to ethnographic research, "food memories provide the material and symbolic context" for narratives of our lives. Cities similarly use food heritage to narrate their histories. By promoting indigenous cuisines and traditional eateries, cities can project an image of authenticity and continuity with the past – what some planners call "heritagization" of urban space (34). However, this process must be genuine; as Sudjic and Sayer (1992) caution, when economic need overtakes authenticity, cities may cynically "rediscover or invent history" as a regeneration tool (35). A critical approach therefore insists on community involvement in curating these narratives so that culinary tourism doesn't create a shallow pastiche but rather celebrates living heritage.

Importantly, food-oriented locales serve as repositories of urban memory. Long-standing food establishments – a century-old dim sum teahouse, a historic market hall, a famous street food stall – often carry collective memories and local pride. Preserving and revitalizing such sites through regeneration efforts helps maintain the "continuity of place" amid urban change. In Chinese cities, the concept of "城市记忆" (urban memory) has gained attention in urban regeneration projects that capitalize on nostalgia (36). For example, in Changsha, the innovative Wenheyou food complex meticulously recreates 1980s street scenes and local cuisine stalls, offering young consumers a chance to "walk into" the city's past and experience its cultural memories firsthand (37). This illustrates how culinary spaces can act as living museums that keep urban history accessible and engaging. Similarly, Chengdu's identity as China's "spice capital" is reinforced by its food tourism narrative: the city's famous hotpot and Sichuan pepper cuisine are not only commercial hits but also a source of civic identity and global recognition (34, 38). When Chengdu was designated UNESCO's first City of Gastronomy in Asia in 2010, officials noted that food heritage "perfectly showed the spirit of the city" and pledged to conserve traditional food culture as a legacy even while modernizing the industry. Such examples show how culinary tourism can anchor regeneration in a cultural narrative that honors a neighborhood's or city's layered history, strengthening place attachment for locals and attractiveness for outsiders.

Food, Public Space, and Social Interaction

A vibrant food culture contributes directly to the quality of urban public space and functions as a mechanism for social interaction and civic participation. The French Marxist Henri Lefebvre argued that social activities produce lived space – in this view, a bustling night market or a lively café-lined plaza exemplifies how food-centered activities produce welcoming urban spaces imbued with human meaning. Edward Soja's concept of Third space likewise suggests that the physical city and the imagined city merge in lived experiences; sharing food in a public setting is exactly such an experience, where the city's material setting and cultural life converge (39). In practical terms, introducing culinary venues often leads to public space improvements: streets get pedestrianized, squares are furnished with seating and lighting, and safety increases as more people populate the area. City planners leverage this effect. For instance, Singapore's tourism board recently launched a project to rejuvenate Smith Street in historic Chinatown – known for its hawker food – by expanding pedestrian areas and adding curated dining and cultural offerings to "inject vibrancy and drive greater footfall" while preserving heritage (32). The plan explicitly links placemaking with food: by reactivating a street once famous for opera and night stalls, the project aims to "rekindle that vibrancy" through regular community events and a mix of shops and restaurants at street level. Here, culinary diversity is seen as key to showcasing the precinct's multicultural identity. This example typifies how food-led placemaking can enhance public space quality – making streets more inclusive, active, and culturally expressive.

Culinary spaces also serve as classic "third places" of social life. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg defined third places as informal gathering spots (like cafés, coffeehouses, bars) that are neither home nor work, but vital for community connection. Food experiences naturally cultivate such third places: think of a neighborhood coffee shop where strangers chat, or a street food corner where diverse patrons share tables (40). These are spaces "where friends meet, where neighbors share news, where strangers start talking", reinforcing social cohesion. Culinary tourism often encourages locals and visitors to mingle in these settings, fostering intercultural exchange and civic interaction. A food festival or night market, for example, is as much a social event for residents as it is an attraction for tourists. Studies on localized urban food systems find that such activities yield social benefits including education, community pride, and greater civic engagement. In Chinese cities, food-centric events have become avenues for public participation – from volunteer-run food fairs to community cooking competitions that engage residents in celebrating their culture. For instance, Chengdu's annual Gourmet Festival (held for over 14 years) involves cooking contests, street banquets, and cultural performances, drawing citizens into active participation in the city's gastronomic culture (34, 41). By providing arenas for face-to-face interaction, culinary experiences can rebuild social capital in regenerating neighborhoods. They encourage people to occupy public space in positive ways, thereby strengthening civic

ties and a sense of belonging. Crucially, this social dimension of food helps ensure that urban regeneration is not only about physical and economic change, but also about nurturing an inclusive urban community.

Culinary Narratives and Urban Cultural Vitality

The cultural vitality of a city – its capacity to sustain a dynamic, living culture – can be maintained and renewed through culinary narratives and spatial storytelling. Food is a form of storytelling: each dish, recipe, or food establishment carries narratives about origin, migration, and local life. When cities promote culinary tourism, they are effectively curating and broadcasting these narratives. Theorists of place identity note that stories linked to place help continually redefine what that place means, especially in times of change. Culinary narratives, in particular, are immersive and multisensory, making them powerful tools for engaging both locals and visitors in a city's culture. By designing food tours, heritage trails, or museum exhibits around cuisine, urban planners enable a form of spatial storytelling – the city is experienced as a sequence of edible stories. For example, Singapore's hawker culture (recently added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list) is presented to tourists through narratives of how migrant communities invented iconic dishes in specific neighborhoods, linking food stalls to the nation's multicultural history (42). Such storytelling not only entertains tourists but also educates younger residents about their own cultural mosaic, thereby renewing cultural knowledge. Academic observers have noted that "culinary heritage, an edible identity, can enhance city attractiveness and place identity" while also engaging urban memory and local pride (43).

Culinary tourism can act as a catalyst for cultural regeneration by refreshing these narratives and encouraging creative new ones. As cities grow and demographics shift, food traditions inevitably evolve – new fusions emerge, old recipes get revived or reinterpreted by young chefs. By spotlighting these processes (for instance, through food media or gastro-tours), cities ensure that culture is not frozen in time but remains dynamic and adaptive. The concept of "spatial storytelling" in urban design suggests that places gain vitality when people continuously add new stories to them. In regenerated food districts, one can see layers of storytelling: historical placards or old photos might tell the tale of a famous eatery's past, while contemporary mural art and menu innovations add new chapters. This layering prevents cultural stagnation. Tourists drawn by stories of famous food traditions inadvertently become part of the story themselves – their presence and feedback further enliven the narrative of the place (44). A critical, reflexive tone is warranted, however, when evaluating these narratives. Scholars like Eden Kinkaid warn that exploiting food heritage for development can commodify culture and exclude those who originally created it (45). To counter this, some cities adopt participatory approaches, involving local cultural practitioners (chefs, elders, community historians) in crafting the narratives presented to visitors. When done thoughtfully, culinary storytelling in urban regeneration can

reinforce a city's cultural vitality, ensuring that regeneration is not just a one-time facelift but an ongoing cultural dialogue between past and present.

3. CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF CULINARY TOURISM

Theoretical Challenges in Culinary Tourism: Gentrification, Commercialization, and Cultural Impact

Culinary tourism – the exploration of a destination through its food – can bring economic opportunities, but it also poses significant challenges to local communities and urban spaces. A foremost concern is tourism gentrification, wherein food-led revitalization raises property values and shifts services toward affluent visitors, ultimately alienating longtime residents (46). Studies show that as restaurants, cafes, and food markets proliferate for tourists, original residents often face increased rents and living costs, feeling "alienation and exclusion" in their own neighborhoods. Over time this process results in displacement – both direct (through evictions or unaffordable housing) and indirect (through loss of belonging and cultural change). In extreme cases, whole communities are effectively pushed out or marginalized, a pattern Sharon Zukin observed in New York's gentrifying districts and now seen in tourism hotspots. The privatization of public space for tourist use and the reorientation of services to meet visitor demands erode the social fabric, weakening community bonds and residents' sense of place. Thus, while food tourism can physically improve an area's appearance and amenities, it often "aggravates social differentiation" and can intensify class disparities between newcomers and locals.

Another theoretical challenge is the commercialization and commodification of culture inherent in culinary tourism (5). As local food traditions become tourism products, aspects of culture are packaged and sold in simplified form. Scholars note that the commodification of regional food involves transforming unique culinary practices. Traditional dishes may be altered to suit tourist palates or heavily advertised as "must-try" attractions, a trend critics liken to Disneyfication – a process where environments are made into sanitized, easily-consumable versions of themselves (31). In practice, this can mean venerable food markets or street kitchens shifting from serving residents to staging performances for outsiders. For example, in planning China's themed "characteristic towns," planner have explicitly selected only certain heritage elements with market appeal – such as famous local snacks or festivals – and repackaged them as commercial attractions, simplifying the rich local culture into a few branded products (47). Such cultural simplification risks hollowing out the true diversity and meaning of culinary heritage. Over-commercialization can also lead to loss of authenticity: food offerings become standardized for tourist consumption, and the intimate link between

cuisine and the community's identity may be weakened. The challenge, then, is that culinary tourism's very success at turning culture into an economic asset can undermine the cultural value that made it attractive, creating a precarious balance between profit and authenticity.

Global vs Chinese Urban Contexts: Comparative Challenges in Implementation

The difficulties of implementing culinary tourism manifest in cities worldwide, but there are noteworthy differences between global (often Western) contexts and Chinese urban contexts. Globally, many cities have embraced food tourism as a regeneration strategy, only to grapple with side effects like crowding, loss of local use of space, and resident pushback. A vivid example is Barcelona's La Boqueria market, a public marketplace that became a famed foodie destination. As tourists poured in to "experience" the local market, long-time shoppers found themselves squeezed out by the massive influx of visitors; vendors increasingly catered to tourist tastes with ready-to-eat snacks instead of selling everyday groceries (47). The market's former reputation as a place where locals could "find everything" shifted to "the market where you can't buy quietly," as one city report lamented. This reflects a common global challenge: culinary attractions can turn public urban spaces into crowded tourist zones, prompting measures like caps on tour group sizes or designated tourist sections to protect local access. Similarly, popular food streets in cities like New Orleans, Paris, or Bangkok often see traditional eateries replaced by themed restaurants and international chains as commercial rents climb, raising fears of homogenization. In essence, Western cities often face bottom-up touristification driven by market forces and social media hype – a diffusion of "foodie" culture that signals a neighborhood's trendiness and inadvertently accelerates gentrification. Local communities in these contexts have sometimes mobilized in response (for instance, residents' associations campaigning to preserve the everyday functions of markets and limit tourist-oriented businesses) (48), highlighting an adversarial dynamic between global tourism flows and urban livability.

In Chinese cities, the implementation of culinary tourism frequently follows a different trajectory, shaped by strong state involvement in urban redevelopment. Local governments often spearhead food-centric regeneration projects as part of broader city branding and economic plans. A case in point is Beijing's Nanluoguxiang hutong, a historic alley neighborhood transformed in the 2000s into a trendy "culture and leisure street" filled with snack shops, cafés, and bars. This change was not incidental but the result of a top-down initiative: district authorities explicitly planned and beautified the area – repaving streets, restoring façades, and installing amenities – to attract visitors and private investment (49). While this state-led approach avoided the outright demolition seen in some Chinese redevelopments, it still precipitated gentrification. Rents in refurbished courtyard homes skyrocketed beyond local affordability, and many original residents were eventually "squeezed out" of the neighborhood as affluent outsiders moved in or as houses were

converted to businesses(50). Unlike in Western cases where market forces gradually displace residents, here the government-orchestrated commercialization rapidly altered the social composition. Moreover, Chinese urban culinary districts can suffer from over-commercialization to the point of jeopardizing their cultural status. Indeed, Nanluoguxiang's over-success led to criticism of "excessive commercialization," causing it to lose eligibility for national heritage designation (51). Chinese cities also face the challenge of balancing modern consumer experiences with preserving tradition under state direction – for example, Xi'an's Muslim Quarter food street, celebrated for its ancient food heritage, is now "being swallowed by tourism and development," raising concerns about the survival of authentic local practices amidst the tourist throngs (52, 53). In summary, while both global and Chinese cities experience issues like rising costs, cultural dilution, and displacement when leveraging culinary tourism, the Chinese context often features faster, policy-driven transformations. The powerful role of the state can amplify the scale of change – positive in mobilizing resources for urban improvement, but problematic if local communities have little say. This contrast means that solutions must be tailored: Western cities might focus on regulating market forces and managing visitor behavior, whereas Chinese cities must address governance structures that currently prioritize tourism growth over community empowerment (50).

4. CASE REFLECTION: INSIGHTS FROM KEXIANG DISTRICT, NANJING

Study Context: Kexiang District in Nanjing

Kexiang District (科巷) is a historic neighborhood in Nanjing, China, renowned today for its vibrant culinary scene. The very name "Kexiang" hints at its cultural pedigree, originating as an "Imperial Examination Alley" during dynastic times – reportedly the site of imperial martial exams and camps in Nanjing's examination system. Over the 20th century, this alley evolved into a bustling local vegetable market, embedding itself in residents' daily life. In recent years, city authorities upgraded the old market into the "Kexiang New Market," a revitalized food marketplace that blends tradition with modernity (54). This transformation has turned Kexiang into a food paradise hidden in the city, bringing together a mosaic of traditional Nanjing foods and emerging snacks all in one place (55). The district's historical character – from imperial-era academies to everyday market life – endows it with a rich cultural texture that is now leveraged for culinary tourism. Kexiang lies near major heritage sites (e.g. the Presidential Palace area and Confucius Temple quarter), making it an ideal case to examine how street-level culinary districts contribute to urban regeneration. Its recent visible transformations through tourism (e.g. refurbished stalls, new signage celebrating local delicacies, extended business hours) exemplify the trend of Chinese cities rejuvenating old neighborhoods via food and culture. Kexiang thus offers a representative case to study "culinary tourism" as a catalyst in urban

regeneration: it encapsulates Nanjing's famed food heritage within a single neighborhood, showcasing how a mundane market lane can be reimagined as a cultural-touristic hotspot.

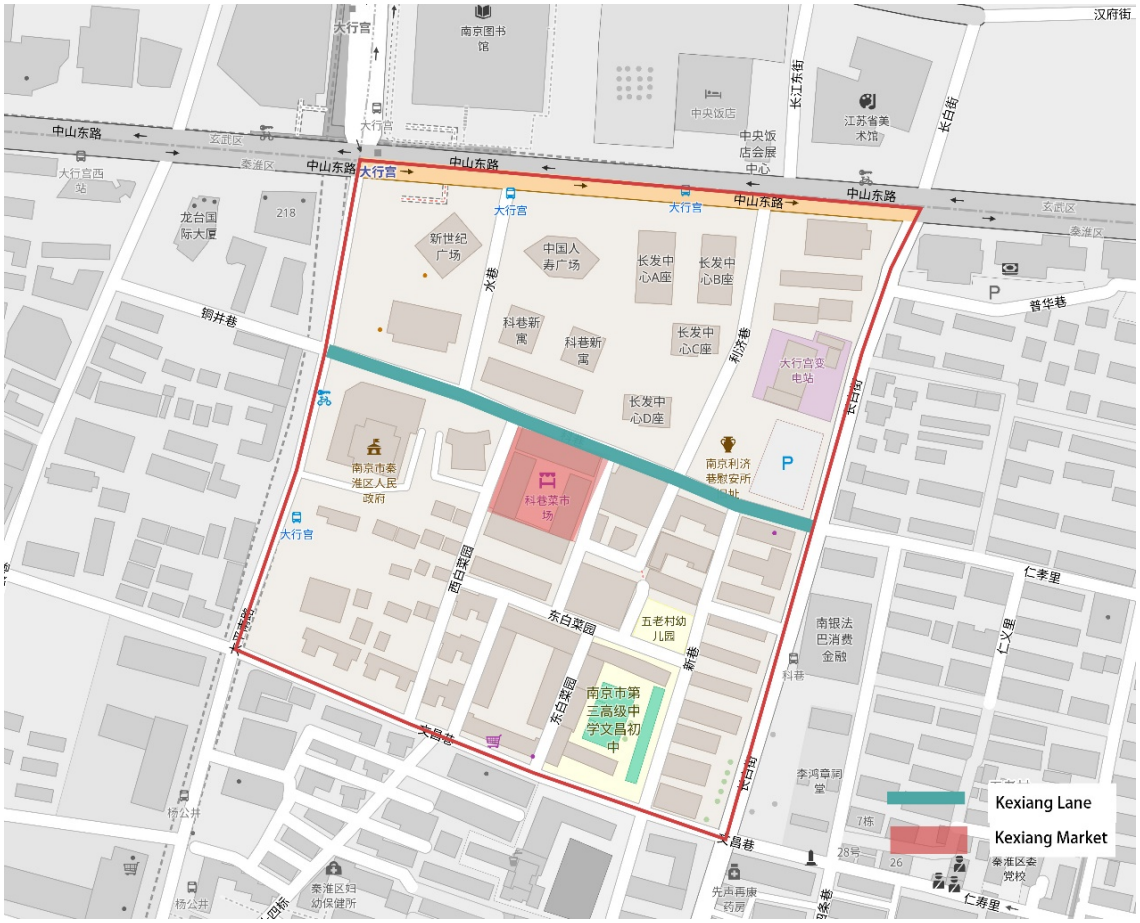

Fig. 1: Map of Kexiang Lane District (Source: author).

Rationale for Case Selection: Kexiang was selected as the study site precisely for its street-level authenticity and evident evolution. Unlike top-down created tourist zones, Kexiang's regeneration has been relatively small-scale and organic, rooted in local vendors and traditional snacks. This makes it an illuminating example of culinary urbanism at the grassroots. The district captures the "flavor of Nanjing", both literally and metaphorically. As part of an "Urban Life" walking route, it showcases Nanjing residents' daily lives alongside local food traditions, thereby incorporating modern lifestyle elements without erasing authenticity. These qualities – intimate scale, cultural depth, and a blend of old and new – allow Kexiang to serve as a microcosm for exploring how culinary tourism can reshape a neighborhood's identity and vitality. In sum, Kexiang's rich historical character and its recent culinary revival present an ideal context for reflecting on an integrated model of urban regeneration driven by food culture.

Culinary Tourism, Identity, and Spatial Vitality in Kexiang

The case of Kexiang exemplifies how culinary tourism can actively reforge urban cultural identity and enliven public spaces. Theoretical perspectives on food, place, and identity shed light on this process. Food is widely recognized as a powerful marker of cultural identity and place-making (56, 57). As Ellis et al. (2018) note, "Food is accepted as a notion of place and culture because of its connectedness with place-making and destination identity" (30). In other words, local cuisine is deeply intertwined with how a city tells its story and how people experience urban place. Everett (2012) similarly observes that food and dining practices are important sources of identity formation for communities (57). In Kexiang, the revival of street food has indeed become a medium for reasserting Nanjing's cultural identity. The district now celebrates Nanjing's culinary heritage – from its famous salted duck to lesser-known traditional snacks – as living culture rather than static history. Local food products here "symbolize the destination and vividly demonstrate local traditional culture", reinforcing Nanjing's image as a historic yet gastronomically rich city. A resident vendor in Kexiang reflected that seeing crowds enjoy authentic Nanjing snacks "makes us proud of our neighborhood's heritage." This anecdotal insight echoes academic assertions that authentic culinary experiences can bolster community pride and a positive city image. By consuming local dishes in their place of origin, visitors partake in Nanjing's cultural narrative, effectively strengthening the city's identity in the public imagination.

Fig. 2: Kexiang Market (Source:(58)).

Fig. 3: Kexiang Street (Source:(59)).

Culinary tourism in Kexiang has also palpably enhanced the spatial vitality of the area. Urban theorists stress that food-oriented sites like markets and food streets function as important public spaces that foster social interaction and street life. Traditional markets are not only about buying and selling; they serve as "exchange terrains" and everyday gathering places, carrying layers of community memory and social exchange. In Kexiang, what was once a routine produce market with a daytime focus has transformed into a lively multi-

use space active into the evening. The renovated Kexiang New Market, while still hosting produce vendors on an upper floor, now features ground-level food stalls, small eateries, and pedestrian-friendly design, inviting both locals and tourists to linger. This has turned the street into a "meeting place of strangers" in the Jane Jacobs sense – an urban space where diverse groups mingle amid the aroma of cooking food. One local shopkeeper noted that "each night feels like a festival now, with people filling the alley until late." Such observation aligns with the notion that culinary districts can "drive new urban trends and renewed socio-economic and cultural processes". Simply, food tourism has animated Kexiang's streetscape: night markets and snack stalls have increased foot traffic, extended business hours, and created a safe, convivial atmosphere after dark. Studies find that tourists often spend a large share of their budget on food and seek out evening food experiences, which in turn stimulates the local nighttime economy. In Kexiang's case, the influx of visitors (along with returning local patrons) has spurred not only economic gains but also a renewed "buzz" in the urban space that was previously underutilized at night. Urban planners often describe such outcomes as enhanced "eyes on the street" and greater vitality of public space, both indicators of successful regeneration. The spatial-temporal extension of life in Kexiang – from dawn vegetable markets to a dusk till late-night food bazaar – illustrates how culinary tourism can resuscitate the urban rhythm of a historic neighborhood.

Critically, however, one must note that this reshaping of identity and space is not without tensions. The commodification of local food culture for tourism can introduce challenges, such as commercialization or authenticity dilution. In interviews, a few long-term residents voiced mild concern that the street's focus has shifted "from serving neighbors to entertaining outsiders." This reflects a common paradox in culinary tourism: the need to balance tourist demand with local life. In Kexiang, thus far, the balance appears to be managed – locals still patronize the market for groceries by day, and many of the food vendors are neighborhood residents preserving family recipes. The governance and community agency behind Kexiang's transformation play a key role in maintaining this equilibrium, as discussed next.

Toward an Integrated Culinary Urbanism Model

The Kexiang case inspires the concept of "Culinary Urbanism" — a holistic urban regeneration model that integrates food culture, spatial planning, economic development, and governance. It centers local culinary heritage as the foundation for revitalizing neighborhoods, using gastronomy to preserve identity and attract tourism. Through thoughtful design, such as improving public spaces and supporting street life, Culinary Urbanism enhances urban vibrancy. Economically, it empowers small vendors and local producers, linking food systems into an inclusive value chain. Policy-wise, it calls for integrated planning across cultural, tourism, and urban departments, promoting heritage without over-commercialization. Kexiang exemplifies how food can drive inclusive, culturally rooted, and dynamic urban renewal.

The Kexiang case invites a broader theoretical proposition: an integrated framework of "Culinary Urbanism." By this term, an urban regeneration model synthesizes culinary tourism, cultural heritage, spatial planning, and governance into a coherent approach (33). Culinary Urbanism recognizes food-oriented places as engines for holistic urban development – combining economic revival with cultural preservation and social vibrancy.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has critically examined the potential of culinary tourism as a strategic and culturally grounded form of urban regeneration. By engaging with interdisciplinary theories from urban geography, cultural studies, tourism, and planning, the study has established that food-based urban development can do far more than stimulate local economies. It can also rejuvenate public space, reinforce cultural identity, and empower communities—provided it is approached with sensitivity, inclusivity, and long-term vision.

The conceptual framing of culinary tourism revealed its evolution from a niche leisure activity into a significant cultural and spatial force in cities. In both Western and Chinese contexts, culinary experiences are increasingly central to how cities brand themselves and reimagine declining neighborhoods. Urban regeneration theory helped unpack the multidimensional nature of this process, emphasizing that space, economy, society, and culture must be addressed together. In particular, food-related practices—cooking, eating, and gathering—can enliven urban streets, reclaim public space, and act as shared symbols of belonging and identity.

At the same time, the paper has presented critical perspectives on the risks of culinary tourism. If poorly managed, it can lead to gentrification, cultural commodification, and the displacement of long-standing communities. These risks are not abstract; they have been documented in global cities and are increasingly relevant in rapidly transforming Chinese urban environments. Theoretical reflections have underscored the need for sustainable governance models that prioritize community participation, spatial equity, and cultural preservation over mere economic return.

The case of Kexiang District in Nanjing served as a practical illustration of how these dynamics unfold in a real urban setting. Once a modest alleyway with deep historical roots, Kexiang has become a thriving culinary hub. Through its blend of traditional food culture, pedestrian-friendly design, and grassroots vendor participation, it exemplifies how culinary tourism can revitalize both identity and space. The district's transformation also underscores the value of small-scale, culture-led regeneration as an alternative to top-down redevelopment models.

From this synthesis, the paper proposes the concept of Culinary Urbanism—an integrated framework that views food culture as a central tool in urban transformation. Culinary Urbanism brings together heritage, spatial design, economic development, and participatory governance into a holistic approach for planning culturally vibrant and socially inclusive cities. It offers a powerful model for cities in China and beyond that seek to regenerate historic neighborhoods without sacrificing authenticity or community agency.

Culinary tourism—when critically and carefully embedded in urban policy—has the potential to shape more humane, distinctive, and resilient urban futures. As cities confront the dual pressures of economic competitiveness and cultural erosion, Culinary Urbanism provides a path forward. It invites planners, policymakers, and scholars to rethink food not just as consumption, but as a medium for crafting meaningful, livable, and inclusive urban spaces.

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements
Working Paper Series

MODERN DAY COLONIZATION THROUGH THE LENS OF ARCHITECTURE LEADING TO A MISSED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE MIST OF THE SIXTH EXTINCTION

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MODERN DAY COLONIZATION THROUGH THE LENS OF ARCHITECTURE LEADING TO A MISSED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE MIST OF THE SIXTH EXTINCTION

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This paper will dissect the sustainable nature of The Amazigh's architecture and culture, while criticizing the west's approach to the group and their land. By analyzing the history endured, a strengthening argument arises that such a group upholds all the values the West has been attempting to achieve.

From the locality of material and labour, a missed lesson arises. But we begin to question why their sustainable natures hasn't been analyzed. Rehabilitation and tourism reveal themselves as the weapon against any opportunity of education. Colonization hasn't died; it has just taken a new form. Vocabulary, architecture and rehabilitation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion, ethnic pride, and nationalism were at the root of every celebration after the significant Moroccan win in the World Cup Quarter Finals in 2022. "The Arab world has united behind the giant-killers, but some Moroccans have questioned whether this is victory for the Amazigh people first and Africans and Arabs second."[1] As the north African region addressed representation conflicts, the western world is unaware of their false term, "The Berbers."

Nations such as Morocco and Algeria have inhabited in part a cosmopolitan nation. As ancestral tribes of the indigenous group, The Amazigh, are still in existence and Arab cities flourish beside them, coexistence has evolved. Coexistence was unity at historical times where invaders threatened both groups. The invaders intended colonization; they were unsuccessful at the time, but their colonial impact is present today. The invasions forced a very common ideology to be implemented on the people living in what is Morocco today. The ideology that indigenous groups are barbaric and uncivilized. Today, the indigenous group of Morocco are still referred to as, "The Berbers." They call themselves The Amazigh people, the Arabs that now live in this region use the same term, which means 'free person.' Refusal by the west to correct their terminology has caused greater harm to the human made climate-crisis.

Political mindsets and colonial history have contributed to the neglect of sustainable solutions through architectural studies. Amazigh communities have stood for over 10,000 years with no negative contributions to the climate. With maintenance of sufficient energy, sustainable material and urban functionality, the vernacular architecture is in many ways modern architecture. The strive for sustainability has seized the architectural world. If it is indeed a true strive in the field, why is a neglect of The Amazigh's ecologically

sound architecture and construction system present? If the wrong terminology is utilized, a continuation of neglect and barbaric vision will exist of a group that has reached a goal that has cost the human race millions.

Neglect doesn't only apply to the terminology, but in fact the physical construction as well. Complete unawareness of the efficient system already in place among the Amazigh towns, has implemented restoration projects that have forced standardized material on a non-westernized group. Modern colonization through architecture is the only rightful term to describe these restoration projects.

An attempt at colonization in the 1400s has seen a long-lasting impact. Colonization is witnessing reciprocation of this impact as it chooses to neglect tradition while believing it is the source of diversity. If a group is seen as barbaric, the source of knowledge will never exist in the eyes of the west.[1]

2. WHO THE AMAZIGH REALLY ARE

Pre-Arab inhabitant of North Africa, the Amazigh can be found all over Morocco, Alegria, and in diaspora. Focusing on the group in Morocco, previously known as Mauretania, a major historical event defined the origin of their western name. The Roman empire began expanding into northern Africa in 146 BC. The ruler at the time, Juba II was successful in Christianizing the region and implementing relations with the tribal leaders of the Amazigh people. Due to the civil relations that existed, the indigenous group doesn't characterize this time as colonizer rule. Mistakenly, their name has been colonized ever since. The Latin word, *barbarus,* (barbarian) was used to describe the indigenous groups encountered by the Romans at the time. Barbarian today has evolved into a generalized term for the overall group, 'The Berbers.'

By the early 7th century new invaders entered the region after the weakening of the Romans. The Spanish began their rule over the Amazigh. By the 8th century the Arabs migrated across the north Africa region spreading the religion of Islam. The Amazigh population converted to Islam, but many stayed Jewish and Christian. Most of their population did convert to Islam however, and according to W.B. Harris the Amazigh have a stronger hold of the religion then the Arabs that introduced them to it [2].

Colonial history may have had a religious alteration throughout the introduction of foreigners. But the Amazigh culture is still an untouched form of life. Comprehensive by other non-religious components of culture. Tamazight is the original language of the Amazigh's. Due to dispersed tribes the mother language has evolved into 300 languages [3]. Today no two tribes speak the same dialect.

Culture is religion, language and music. A bendir is a circular drum that was used for entertainment on social nights in the Atlas Mountains 10,000 years ago [4]. Today it is used for entertainment on social nights in the

Atlas Mountains as if it was still 10,000 years ago. The elders of each tribe still gather in the center of town to provide locals and tourists with entertainment, and if the bendir isn't available household items are used instead. Metal basins and plastic cans have come to the rescue occasionally as tourists hike through their neighborhoods. This has kept tradition alive, as each generation passes down the music sung for thousands of years to the next generation.

This group's history is not defined by the failed colonization attempts, but by who they are as a people. A unique factor is the upholding of tradition despite the distances between tribes. Riffis, Susi tribes and Purest Berbers are scattered in the Atlas Mountains [5]. Their language may differ from one another, but their music, food, community ties, construction methods and values have been preserved due to culture. A culture that was met by Arabs with the intent of Islamization. Religion was historically accepted by this group. Many tribes had converted to Judaism and even moved to occupied Palestine. Christianity was widely accepted when introduced by the Romans. Islam spread rapidly and its teachings are still honored in modern day Amazigh towns. The same towns neighboring the rapid Arab cities of Casablanca, Tangier, and Rabat. If it wasn't for the preservation of their traditions, the cosmopolitan way of life that exists in Morocco wouldn't be possible.

This coexistence of Amazigh and Arabs contains unity of armed forces against a colonizer. The French began this unity by placing a siege in Morocco in 1912 [6]. From 1912 to 1930 the two groups joined fronts to fight the invader. During this time a realization of similarities in values is established in a societal aspect within both groups. This does not dismiss any mistreatment of the Arab government to the Amazigh prior to the war. But it is an establishment of a cosmopolitan way of society. This was not the only period of harmony within Morocco; between the 8th century and the 16th century peace, prosperity, and dignity thrived between both communities. Under the Sa'adi monarchy that began its rule in the late 16th century, we saw a suppression of the Amazigh and all non-Muslims. The monarchy imposed higher taxes and harsher duties on the Amazigh tribes. Despite a divide based on religion, when the Amazigh revolted, they revolted for a rule that imposes no ethnic or tribal discrimination. The suppression of Amazigh demands continued until 1912, where the pattern was broken due a western colonizing entity entering the region.

After the establishment of the nation of Morocco the indigenous groups still struggled with misrepresentation. Today we see the Arab government adjust this unrighteousness through recognition of the Amazigh New year's, recognition of Amazigh schools, and a budget set to teach the original language of Tamazight. Even with the lack of budget and recognition prior to the 2000s, the Amazigh always fought for a cosmopolitan world with the Arabs. Upholding their traditions and respecting the religion of the Arabs, their uprising demanded coexistence. The unity under war times is a successful measure for such a goal.

Morocco as a society existing today is also a successful outcome of cosmopolitanism. Cities thrive on markets and trade, and the Amazigh traders and farmers travel into the city to sell their goods. When their business in the city is done, they return to their villages to their bendir filled nights. Arabs have adjusted to traveling into the mountains for any tribal needs. This coexistence has surpassed neighboring cities and towns; today many Arabs and Amazigh have married one another and teach their kids of their Amazigh ancestral roots. 70% of Moroccans can trace back their Amazigh heritage[7].

Fig. 1 Moroccans and other Arabs celebrating victory of Portugal in the streets of Astoria, Queens

December 2022, Qatar World Cup, Morocco triumphs over Portugal (Fig.1). As the Moroccan flag is waved on the pitch, the national team's goalkeeper, Munir Mohamdi, ties the Amazigh flag around his waist. He celebrates alongside the rest of the team; a moment shared across many screens worldwide. A modern take on the coexistence of the society of Morocco. Center-back, Jawad El Yamiq, waves the Palestinian flag, celebrating alongside both the Amazigh and Moroccan flags. The values both communities shared in 1912, resurface in 2022. Some may call it tradition. By overcoming history, differences, and in some cases religion these groups have united. The argument of the current governmental body and its suppression of the indigenous group is undeniable. But moments of marriage, and celebration are undeniable as well.

3. TRADITION CAUSES SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE:

2,165 years ago, The Amazigh used raw materials located in the Atlas Mountains to construct their dwellings, hotels, and shops. Today, 2024, all their dwellings, hotels, and shops are constructed with raw material found in the Atlas Mountains. Tradition in the form of architecture. 2,165 years ago, the Romans called an indigenous group in the Atlas Mountains Barbaric. Today, 2024, the west refers to an indigenous group that lives in the Atlas Mountains, The Berbers, meaning barbaric. Tradition in the form of vocabulary.

As the west refers to a group of people as barbaric, they simultaneously cause the Sixth Mass Extinction, also known as the Holocene Extinction. The "barbaric" group they refer to is not contributing to the Sixth Mass Extinction by constructing with raw materials, creating functionable layouts, and traveling with cattle. As the west destroys, the "barbaric" group preserves. A current argument to acknowledge is the west's goal of sustainability. Sustainability that is believed to be reached through code, zoning, and material adjustment. However, The Amazigh have reached sustainability with no western influence. Unfortunately, a large population of the world isn't even referring to them as The Amazigh, so how are they expected to learn of their sustainable architecture?

A case study of how The Amazigh constructed their towns deserves worldwide lectures in architecture education. Before recognizing the material and methods, it is vital to understand the construction occurred under tradition and resistance of foreign power. Architecture that resisted colonization in the past and continues its resistance today. As many remote towns, home to Amazigh families, become tourist destinations, they are overlooked as established regions for living and work. An ideology has formed that these towns are to be seen and not to be lived in. Towns that emit no carbon emissions are viewed as impoverished and unlivable to the west. This ideology is dangerous as it imposes colonization through architecture. With this modern form of colonization, the sustainable practices are greatly overlooked.

Chefchaouen has received the nickname, "The blue city." A two-and-a-half-hour ride from the vibrant city

Tangier, it is located on the western Rif. A part of the Alpine belt, the boundary converging African and Eurasian plates. A city that experiences earthquakes and tourists simultaneously. Originally built in 1471 due to defensive purposes. When the Portuguese had a threatening colonizing presence along the north coast of Africa, The Amazigh prepared a defensive stance by constructing Chefchaouen. Today the city is composed of dwellings, restaurants, markets, and mosques. Built alongside a mountain, heavy rain is experienced in the winter, and extreme heat in the summer. The lowest temperatures recorded was -8 degrees Celsius, and in the summer 45 degrees Celsius.

A city built on the idea of defense, will not only defend its people, but its traditions as well. The tradition of locality, local material and local labor. The material overall of the buildings consists of lime, brick, stone and soil. Kiln brick is the most used for their exterior walls. Consisting of mud, shrubs, and bushes it is shaped and baked in local ovens, then left outdoors for 24 hours to cool and harden. Foundations for the brick exterior were formed through larger stones typically found at the bottom of the city. An emphasis is placed on the stone's structural purposes in two ways throughout the neighborhoods. It is either left the original brown shade, or the blue plaster is a harsher and darker shade then the brick exterior (Fig.2). The keddane stone brought about an architectural practice to the Amazigh. The stone is unique for its soft characteristics and was utilized in the making of artistic pieces.

The fine aggregate found in the mountainous region was mixed with sand and lime to produce a mortar. Its production resulted in a brown shade that stood well with the original color of the blocks created. The dwellings still standing today were all originally a brown shade. Differences can still be spotted amongst the foundation and exterior wall, and the brown shines through the current day blue facade (Fig.3).

The local labor was the passageway to the blue facade the city is famously known for today. It was, and still is, tradition to construct your own household for you and your family within this community. But community comes above all selfish needs in the teachings of the Amazigh. The remote mountainous location of Chefchaouen experiences heavy rainfall that strips the brick and stone of their most exterior layers. Structurally, the building begins to suffer. Common dwellers in the city, with better precision than their neighbors, began wanting to address this issue. They created a plaster that would cover the full building's exterior envelope that would act as a rainfall protective barrier.

The base of the plaster is a lime material, but that base was white. It was mixed with a material called Nila. Nial is found in the woad plant. A plant famously located in European nations such as Germany, France and England. This plant is also found in China. Europeans have famously used the Nila extracted from the woad plant to create a blue dye. Morocco and Algeria are the only two nations in Africa that also have the woad plant; in Morocco it is found the high Atlas Mountains along with Atlas cedar, olive trees, citrus trees, and

lavender. When mixed with the lime, a protective indigo blue plaster forms. It provides a thick layer between the rain and the structure of the building protecting the striping of the brick. The application resulted in a blue facade, giving this city its famous nickname, "The blue city."

Fig.2 Darker blue indigo on stone foundation in narrow street of Chefchaouen with local children

Fig. 3 Brown and blue dwellings adjacent to one another in the Amazigh city of Chefchaouen

Fig. 4 Chefchaouen viewed from adjacent mountain showing its famous blue finish in mist of mountains

It has been expressed that the city is blue due to religious beliefs, or intention to replicate the sky color. The extract that led to this blue shaded city was a protective plaster that was meant to serve a construction purpose. As colonization has made its way through architecture, it has reached the undermining methods of building protection. The blue outcome is not the only arguable aspect of the colonizer mentality, but the community-based labor as well. In the west men are praised for their self-labor on their own homes: mowing the lawn, trimming the bushes, raking leaves or cleaning a chimney. When an indigenous man builds a brown brick home for him and his family, it is a barbaric and uncivilized man doing so. When a neighbor helps shovel the snow of another neighbor, they are a kindhearted person. When the Amazigh community formed a plaster and applied it to the whole city, it is a form of an uncivilized culture.

As the civilized contribute new levels of carbon emissions into the atmosphere. The 'barbaric,' remain sustainable by creating their building material with raw material. By noticing issues and referring to the natural sources provided in their region. Finally, by not exploiting others for labor and honoring their home and land. This comes from the deep connection indigenous people have to certain locations. A mindset colonizer can't achieve. As the west colonizes the reasons the city is blue and only places it in the lens of tourism; a major learning opportunity is bypassed. Vernacular architecture has successfully maintained an ecologically sound city yet is ignored in our studies.

Materiality and labor are one way to achieve a lack of contribution to the man-made climate crisis, but multi-use buildings and a functionable urban layout is another. The city holds a rich history of living off trade. Amazigh tribes trade with each other constantly. Chefchouan accommodate their own culture through fonduks. Fonduk means hotel. But their hotels weren't typical. They are a multi-use building consisting of a courtyard, which alone holds sustainability through providing ventilation and concentrated sunlight (Fig. 5). These traders traveled with their produce many of the times and would go to multiple tribes, before returning home. Both the trader, and their cattle needed accommodations. The founduk in Chefchaouen consisted of the first-floor courtyard surrounded by the produce's housing. The second floor was a courtyard surrounded by the rooms for the traders. The courtyard also assisted in avoiding a concentration of the unwanted scent, as the animals did spend many hours of the night in a certain section. Today, these buildings are still utilized for the same purpose, during the off-season only. When tourism returns during the summer seasons the founduk is strictly a tourist hotel, with no produce.

Fig. 5 Courtyard in fonduk (hotel) in Chefchaouen

The Amazigh were not only self-sufficient with specific buildings, but the city as a whole. The steep structure of the land Chefchouan sits on, has allowed for water to emerge from the cracks of the limestone abundant throughout the city. Canal systems were constructed to guide the water emerging from the larger sources. This system is still in use today, as fountains are placed all over the city providing free water to residents and tourists. Originally this system guided the construction of the weaving workshops that produced the carpet, textiles, and rugs that they traded immensely. The area heavily populated with the workshops was named the Sebaine district [8]. Souk is the word used to say market. The collection of shops in the city are defined by the Souika district[9]. This is a district that doesn't require an energy source, it is in the heart of the city away from the canal system, to allow the energy to only be consumed by the workshops and allow the water access to the fountain openings.

The residential districts today, unfortunately, are the tourism focused regions. The streets are narrow and don't provide much room for a busy trader (Fig. 6). This aids the tourism business because it allows for ease of travel on foot. Tourists will typically begin with the residential districts, slowly make their way to the ovens and fountains scattered about, tour the shops and end by the hotels and restaurants. The districts are not only sustainable in function but have produced an ease of travel that has been utilized by the Amazigh to keep their tourism businesses thriving.

Fig. 6 The narrow blue streets of a residential Amazigh district in the Atlas Mountains

Chefchaouen has been a self-sufficient city since its construction in 1471. From material locality, source of labor, community culture, attention to efficiency, multi-use, and urban layout. The Amazigh that inhabited this city have given the west a guidebook to approaching the urban fabric to any region. They constructed a canal and located factories based on an energy source of water. They have lined their carpet and textile shops for ease of trade and shopping. Through culture and tradition, they have reached sustainability with no desire to do so. It is an embedded system in their practices. They should be praised that with tourism increasing, their values have stayed the same. But the west refuses to acknowledge a naming alteration, it is expected to refuse to learn from a 20,000-year-old culture.

4. COLONIZATION THROUGH REHABILITATION

Oftentimes when we hear the word rehabilitation, a sense of pride and beneficial practices subsides us. But rehabilitation can be the weapon that destroys tradition. The process of rehabilitation is subsequent to abandonment. Absence of maintenance causes the moments that require rehabilitation in structures. Chefchouan entered this cycle as tourism thrived in the region. Local members of the city found tourists occupying hotels constructed for traders and their produce. They found tourists in their narrow streets that were always calm and quiet. They were met with latest wide lens cameras as they headed up and down the steep mountain to purchase their groceries and other needs. Their way of life was invaded by westerners who came to temporarily admire and leave. Discomfort spread and families started to relocate.

It is arguable that this is a form of displacement. It may not be a form of forced displacement due to harsh conditions and genocide, as many indigenous groups have experienced and still do to this day. But with the recurring historical events, displacement due to foreigners has been a form of ethnic cleansing repeatedly throughout history. Chefchaouen is not an abandoned city, it is a city that has recognizable moments of abandonment. Many locals stayed and aided the tourism market that entered the city. But many cracks, empty dwellings, and abandoned shops stand today telling the story of many displaced Amazigh families. The traditions, including their way of construction, that were taught to the younger generations left this city as well. The jeopardy of current structures and the possibility of new sustainable structures, built using the same method, tie back to this break in tradition. That break ties back to the families abandoning this city.

A quarter that was composed of mostly Jewish residents no longer exists. It faced abandonment in the 20th century. Consisting of 22 houses and two synagogues, this quarter has disappeared[10]. This was a specific area that has completely fallen, as you maneuver the city of Chefchaouen collapsed walls and loss of structural integrity appear in many cases. The fonduks that were constructed to house the merchants and their produce during their travels were located in our scattered areas within Chefchaouen. Today only one is still in its

proper hotel use, the other three have been abandoned. A rehabilitation project of this hotel was taken on by European contractors. Columns held up many of the balconies constructed on the upper levels of this structure. Reinforced concrete was utilized to adjust the columns and patch the balcony areas that have eroded away.

To create more room in certain structures the courtyard has been closed off to make an addition in private spaces. The courtyard that provided ventilation and many cases in this specific city used to grow citrus trees. Rehabilitation projects have taken on the task of closing these courtyards and replacing the local material once used with standardized material. In the heart of the city, two homes embarked on a rehabilitation process. A main scope was to connect these two structures, the connector that stands today is fully constructed of the modern material of concrete. Some architects express this as a connection of the past and present. Except the structure that represents the present is experiencing climatic destruction. Although this is what is viewed as modern, and the most recent technology; the modernity has led to its failure. This is a remote location that experiences harsh weather conditions. The most durable material is what has survived in these mountains prior to human life even reaching it.

The failure of the recent structures has pushed more locals out. The lack of skill working with these materials within the local community has led to more failure, separate from the failure of material. With tourism expanding, the modern structures are what attract the market and not the indigenous. With the mixture of material failure, lack of experience with these materials, and tourism only increasing expenses increased for the locals and they were forced to abandon their hometown of more than 20,000 years.

As the Amazigh are still referred to as barbaric, it makes their displacement an easier process. As their architecture is colonized using reinforced concrete and modern aesthetics in newer structures, they only have one option, leaving. As the west continues to believe they must rehabilitate to achieve a thriving tourist market, the climate-crisis will continue to be a crisis. If it is believed the current material used is destructive, and is pushed onto the most sustainable groups, how is it expected to achieve sustainability? If groups, such as the Amazigh, are looked at in a lens of needing rehabilitation, their traditions will not be lessons. Their cosmopolitan way of life will be ignored. The only tradition that will live on, will be the west's tradition to colonize and undermine the ones most connected to the land.

5. CONCLUSION

Traditions will continue to be passed down from generation to generation. Some traditions will teach cosmopolitanism, sustainability, and defense. Others will teach elitism, colonization, and a belief of diversity. As our modern cities of New York, London, and Paris pride themselves on diversity and co-existence; they

stem from a colonist's background with colonial ideologies still being practiced. What we have today is an indigenous group that defended their land under colonization attempts of the French, Spanish, Portuguese, Greeks and Arabs. Built homes from only what was available to them, that have survived over 2,000 years later. Their tradition is sustainability. Their tradition is also cosmopolitanism. As they faced suppression by the Arab leader, they revolted against it and for the strive of coexistence. Revolts against the government were demanding no religious discrimination and no ethnic discrimination, whether Arab, Amazigh, or any other group that comes into this region. As they welcomed each one of the major religions, a continuation of growth within the community was the center of who they were, never the religion.

The west has failed to encounter this group as equal individuals, and is determined to undermine their architectural, defensive, and social achievement throughout history and in modern day. Instead, the west flaunts an idea of diversity in its most advanced cities. Diversity that locals in those cities believe is non-existent and only certain groups benefit from the addition of minorities. As well as advancements that lack a basic touch with nature, the main issue behind the human-made climate crisis. It is time the weird 'Berbers' is removed from the west's vocabulary. Tradition will empower other generations to utilize the same vocabulary. The Amzazigh will gain recognition in modern day studies and be a source of a true case study. Modern forms of colonization come in all forms, and so modern forms of tradition need to be implemented. This ideology starts with a simple name change from Berbers to Amazigh.

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REPRESENTING COSMOPOLITANISM: FOOD MARKETS IN GUANGZHOU AND CHINA'S LATE SOCIALISM IN THE 1980S

Xinhui Chen

REPRESENTING COSMOPOLITANISM: FOOD MARKETS IN GUANGZHOU AND CHINA'S LATE SOCIALISM IN THE 1980S

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This research examines the representation of markets circulated by Chinese media amidst the late Cold War period, through a case study of the "wet markets" in Guangzhou—a city at the forefront of China's market reform. The media representation framed these markets with two dominant imaginations: the exoticized foodscape of wild animal consumption as part of traditional practices, and the market landscape representing China's ambitions to adopt neoliberal approaches while maintaining socialist rules. Examining the conflicting interpretations of the markets, this paper argues against the fixed concept of locality, demonstrating how these markets emerged through complex global connections.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1979, with China's implementation of the Reform and Opening-up policy, Guangzhou reopened a great number of urban markets for farmers to trade their produce privately, which became venues for observing the shifting social and political conditions in China. Among them, the most famous was the Qingping Market. Christopher Wren, a New York Times journalist, recalled his encounter with this place:

> "The impact of China's new agricultural reforms is visible at the farmers market along Qingping Road. Here peasants from the countryside may sell their surplus produce privately. They squat and haggle with customers over live chickens, ducks, fish, snakes, frogs, herbs, vegetables and handicrafts." [1]

Wren's account highlights two dominant images associated with the Qingping Market. First, the exoticized foodscape of consuming live animals fueled orientalist imagination. Second, the market landscape served as a representation of China's ongoing marketization experiments, evoking post-socialist imagery with the decline of the socialist bloc and the rise of global neoliberalism. Shaped by the Sino-American encounters in the late Cold War period, these two dominant ways to frame Guangzhou's "wet markets" were widely circulated by global media. Meanwhile, Chinese media mobilized the two framings to remake the imagination of these markets as everyday spaces where Chinese people experienced cosmopolitan sensibilities.

But a closer investigation of these representations reveals deeper discrepancy. Wild animal consumption had been assumed a local traditional practice, yet its persistence was facilitated by translocal exotic consumption that linked to a broader aspiration to position China within global trades. While many oversea tourists experience authentic Chineseness from these urban markets, the Chinese media described these markets as novel interventions with references from other socialist countries. By examining these discrepancies, this

paper challenges the static notion of locality as the making of these local markets was deeply entangled with broader global flows.

2. WILD FOODSCAPE AND COSMOPOLITAN SENSIBILITIES

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Guangzhou's "wet markets" had been a recurring fascination in English newspapers and magazines. A 1984 newspaper article in South China Morning Post described Guangzhou's Qingping Road as a "market that turns gweilos' stomachs".[2] A 1986 article in The Washington Post, titled "The Queasy Shouldn't Shop in Guangzhou", wrote:

> "This is a market where parental guidance is suggested. Never mind the meowing kittens and what they've devised for man's best friend. Somewhere in the wooded hills of Sichuan must be a lot of pawless bears. At the pork stands, pig's faces hang from hooks, flattened and pressed into ghoulish masks with yellow eyes."[3]

This sensationalized imagination of "Cantonese culinary tradition" raised extensive discussions that seek to make sense of this consumption practice, challenging the dichotomy of nature and human, dirt and purity, Eastern and Western. Some scholar argues against the orientalist response to blame "unruly" Chinese consumers for the "unnatural" interspecies encounters.[4] Meanwhile, wild animal consumption was never a timeless tradition in Chinese culture. Tracing the history of wild animal consumption in modern China, Liz P. Y. Chee argues that the scientific construction of wild animals' medical value is largely a modern reinvention of Chinese medicine under Communist Party leadership.[5] Considering this practice in China's post-reform era, Mei Zhan contends that consuming wild animals was a product of postsocialist transformation following the globalized neoliberalism that redefines individual responsibility for human actions.[6]

While these discussions predominantly focus on the controversies between Chinese society and international media, I argue that the wild foodscape in the 1980s was equally "exotic" to Chinese people as to any other. Consuming wild animals was never a part of ordinary Chinese life. Instead, it had always been seen as an unconventional experience that may provoke unpleasant feelings. A 1979 People's Daily article noted the contested perception of wild animal markets in Chinese society:

> "Guangzhou is a city obsessed with exotic game. Wet markets, hotels, and restaurants routinely offer wild animal products. The Guangzhou Wild Game Trading Department resembles a miniature zoo: rows of cages hold porcupines, civet cats, monkeys, wild dogs, and birds like pheasants, wild ducks, cranes, and even owls. Colorful venomous snakes slither in display, enough to deter the uninitiated."[7]

Guangzhou's local media, too, noted local people's uneasiness towards wild animal trade. South Reviews reported residents' discomfort with the snake trades in Qingping Road, which led to a huge conflict between

snake vendors and residents of the neighborhood.[8] More crucially, almost no one purchased wild animals from markets solely for their own consumption; these foods typically appeared in banquets to cater to guests, especially foreign guests.

If so, what motivated people of Guangzhou to participate in the making of this exoticized foodscape in the 1980s? I argue that wild animal consumption was driven by a sense of cosmopolitan modernity promulgated by mass media, which was associated with Guangzhou's role in China's export commerce. Since the 1950s, Guangzhou had been the gateway for China's exports, as it hosted the Canton Fair --the most important venue for China's external trade throughout the Cold War. After Nixon's visit in 1972, China's external trade expanded drastically. In 1975, Guangzhou began exporting frozen dishes to Hong Kong, including delicacies such as turtle soup, stewed turtle, snake soup, and a stew of snake, civet, and chicken.[9] In the early years after China's 1978 reforms, to ensure supply for the Canton Fair, Guangzhou re-established state-run trading depots to handle goods outside the national procurement plan. A 1979 People's Daily article announced that Guangzhou had opened 18 such depots, funneling rural specialties—including meat, eggs, and wild game—into the export trade fair. [10] Among the most sought-after goods were wild animal products: "On the export market, each ounce of snake gallbladder is worth the same weight in gold, and six processed dog pelts can be traded for a ton of wheat." [11]

Chinese media illustrated Guangzhou's cosmopolitanism through exotic encounters with wild animals: western tourists were stunned by markets teeming with exotic creatures, and banquets for overseas visitors where cuisines containing snakes, deer, and dogs elicited curiosity or sensational feelings. These curated reactions—circulated through newspapers and television—reinforced Guangzhou's identity as a cosmopolitan city that was "one step forward" than the other Chinese cities in incorporating into a globalized market. As Arjun Appadurai argues, the circulation of images by mass media allows ordinary people to engage with translocal experience and envision themselves as part of global exchanges.[12] Guangzhou-based food writer Zhong Zhengxiang captured this sentiment in his writing collection titled Eating in Guangzhou:

> "Every year, tens of thousands of foreign visitors, overseas Chinese, and compatriots from Hong Kong and Macau flock to Guangzhou for its cuisine, leaving satisfied—some even taking dishes home across continents. Chefs from abroad increasingly come to study Cantonese cooking, while Guangdong's masters are invited to teach in the U.S. [...] As one of China's earliest treaty ports, Guangzhou has long thrived on foreign trade and cultural exchange."[13]

Zhong maintains that cuisines containing civet cats and snakes were not rooted in tradition: "The famed 'Dragon-Tiger Fight' (braised civet cat and snake) originally used eels and frogs in the mid-19th century; the current version emerged later."[14] Rather, such culinary practices were tied to diplomatic activities and foreign encounters:

> "Nearly anything that flies, crawls, or swims can grace the table: pheasants, finches, civet cats, palm civets, pangolins, and even insects. Skilled chefs turn them into delicacies that astonish diners. Foreign dignitaries, including heads of state, seek out snake dishes here. In 1957, Soviet leader Voroshilov visited a snake restaurant on Jianglan Road, marveling as chefs barehandedly subdued a king cobra. Later in Beijing, he still reminisced about Guangzhou's 'Dragon-Tiger Fight.' Japanese chefs from Tokyo's Asia Restaurant, a decades-old Chinese cuisine specialist, study Cantonese techniques during the Canton Fair—and never miss trying owl, rat, snake, or civet."[15]

This spectacle of exotic consumption, intertwined with market reforms and global trade, fostered a cosmopolitan modernity for Guangzhou residents to perceive. Yet underpinning it was not the liberated individual desire prevalent in neoliberal society or a vernacular practice continuing culinary tradition, as few people ate wild game for private pleasure out of habits. Rather, the desire was rooted in a collectivist vision of national futurity: Guangzhou, and by extension China, joining the globalized market, with its people deriving a pride that was both cosmopolitan and nationalist.

3. MARKET LANDSCAPE AND SOCIALIST MODERNITY

In 1985, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger visited Qingping Market, posing for photographs with local vendors. This event was widely covered in Chinese newspapers, becoming a significant moment for Guangzhou people to experience the city's global impact since China's initial years of Reform and Opening-up. Located between Tiyun Road and Qingping Road in Guangzhou, Qingping Market stretches about one kilometer and covers an area of over 6,000 square meters, accommodating more than 2000 stalls. Official archives and newspaper articles frequently mention visits by foreign government delegations, journalists, and scholars to Qingping Market. Among all farmer markets in Guangzhou, Qingping Market is the most well-known in the English media.

The market's prominence is largely attributed to its political connotation, under the context of China's increasing economic connections with the capitalist countries. In Lonely Planet's 1988 travel guide, Qingping Market was featured as part of a waterfront attraction, forming a continuous tourist route alongside Shamian Island.[16] Situated just north of Shamian Island and separated from the White Swan Hotel by a single river, Qingping Road held a unique position. Shamian Island, formerly a French and British concession following the Opium Wars, was home to the White Swan Hotel, China's first Sino-foreign joint venture hotel, established in 1980 to accommodate visitors attending the Canton Fair. From the hotel's rooms overlooking the Pearl River, guests could observe the bustling waterfront market, where vendors paddled boats laden with bananas and fish, calling out to potential buyers onshore. A short ten-to-twenty-minute walk from the hotel would lead visitors to Qingping Market, widely regarded as the "most authentic" Chinese market. This route linked Guangzhou's historical roles as a colonial trade port, a Cold War-era gateway for foreign trade, and a

frontier of China's post-socialist marketization, reinforcing its significance in China's foreign trade landscape and constructing a market landscape imbued with cosmopolitanism.

This globally visible market landscape also sparked debates: was China deviating from its socialist path toward a form of neoliberal society? While Chinese officials framed market-oriented practices as a new socialist approach, foreign observers often interpreted them simply as capitalism. These observers generally regarded Guangzhou's farmer markets as microcosms of China's broader marketization experiments, remaining skeptical of claims that these markets were part of a socialist framework. This viewpoint stood in stark contrast to China's official account, which emphasized that reopening farmer markets would facilitate the growth of a socialist economy rather than signifying a concession to capitalism. This debate surrounding socialist marketization was not confined to academia but also deeply disturbed Chinese society. Deng Xiaoping's famous remark --"It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white; as long as it catches mice, it's a good cat" –shows his effort to set aside the debate of political consciousness, in favor of economic growth as the primary criterion for evaluating the marketization experiments that he initiated.

In this context, Chinese media sought to render markets as spaces where ordinary people could experience socialist modernity exceeding Chinese borders, thereby facilitating the promotion of market-oriented practices. As China sought to reintroduce farmer markets in major cities, People's Daily reported on several food markets established in socialist states. In 1979, the newspaper published a series of articles on markets in Bucharest and Belgrade, introducing Chinese readers to Romania and Yugoslavia's hybrid system of public and private food supplies. One of them noted:

> "In Romania, farmers' markets are visible in every city. Near major residential areas or state-run shopping centers, one can always find a 'piața' (market) sign. Currently, Romania has over 360 urban farmer markets. These markets vary in size, from a few hundred to several thousand square meters, and are generally equipped with overhead canopies and essential facilities to ensure smooth operation regardless of weather conditions. This form of market trade serves as a necessary complement to socialist commerce."[17]

These articles, resembling detailed architectural fieldnotes, highlighted the spatial configuration of urban markets, offering references for China's own market designs. Foreign correspondents observed that, for instance, food markets were intentionally built near large residential areas for convenience; open-air markets were equipped with shelters and essential facilities to accommodate farmers selling their produce in the city; and sales areas were divided into sections for different goods, such as vegetables, fruits, poultry, and meat. On May 8, 1982, The People's Daily reported on a newly opened market in Prague:

> "This is one of the measures recently adopted by Czechoslovakia to encourage private cultivation of household plots and the free sale of products to invigorate the market. The new market, located along the Vltava River in the city, covers an area of over 40,000 square

> meters and was converted from old buildings. It consists of both indoor and open-air sales areas. Vendors include state-owned farms, shops, agricultural cooperatives, and individual producers. They sell fresh vegetables, fruits, flowers, seedlings, and other products rarely seen in regular stores, with state-owned and private sellers offering similar goods at comparable prices."[18]

This depiction of European farmer markets emphasized the features that resonated with China's market policies under exploration at the time. They stated that permitting urban markets did not equate to embracing free markets. Farmers were permitted to engage in private trade but with certain restrictions. In addition, state-run companies maintained a dominant role while coexisting with and competing against private enterprises. People's Daily thus illustrated a shared image of advancing marketization within the socialist bloc, positioning China as an active participant in this trajectory while citing its socialist reference in remaking a market landscape.

While People's Daily reflected China's official narratives, many former state procurement staff also held the view that adopting market practices would not undermine the principles of state socialism. By the 1980s, Guangzhou had terminated central state planning for fish supply. The city's former fisheries procurement department transformed into a state-run fishery company, which was in charge of several state-owned fish wholesale markets. The state-owned markets and companies were deeply troubled by their position as part of former institutions of the central planning economy. On one hand, they were seen as symbols of socialist legacies, demonstrating China's commitment to maintaining public ownership. On the other hand, they were criticized as remnants of Maoism and were in danger of failing to compete with the versatile private enterprise.

American journalist Jeff Bradley, who worked for the Associated Press, visited Guangzhou's Fisheries Company and interviewed market employees about these changes. The employees expressed support for the marketization project, maintaining that it had improved their livelihoods. One interviewee said: "Market reforms have increased our income and improved our standard of living—these are the new changes since 1979."[19] His account suggests to the imagined audience that marketization was not a departure from socialism but rather a means of better realizing its objectives with economic growth.

Bradley's article in the South China Morning Post was not the only coverage of this visit. The very fact that an Associated Press journalist interviewed Chinese market employees was documented in the Guangzhou Gazetteer.[20] The local news agency Yangcheng Evening News covered Bradley's visit, which highlighted the conversation between the American journalist and the Chinese interviewees by framing the article into a scripted dialogue. [21] While Bradley's piece conveyed Chinese people's views on economic reforms, the Yangcheng Evening News placed greater emphasis on the Sino-American encounters. By presenting Chinese

workers' voices as part of a Sino-American conversation, the newspaper rendered the market a stage where ordinary Chinese people helped articulate China's marketization efforts to the world, reaffirming its role as a socialist project with transnational impact.

4. CONCLUSION

Guangzhou's "wet markets" in the initial years of Reform and Opening-up served as focal points where competing narratives of cosmopolitanism, socialist modernization, and nationalist patriotism intersected. By examining the conflicting media representations in the making of these markets, this paper sees these "wet markets" as a product of China's pursuit of cosmopolitan modernity.

This paper examines two dominant imaginations that frame these markets: the exoticized foodscape of wild animal consumption, and the market landscape representing China's ambivalence in adopting neoliberal approaches while maintaining socialist rules. While the growing wild animal consumption invoked discomfort, local people continued to participate in such practices, motivated by an imagined cosmopolitanism associated with Guangzhou's increasing foreign exchanges. At the same time, the debates on the nature of China's markets – whether they signified a shift towards capitalism or an adaptation of socialism – echoed larger global conversations about the viability of socialist economies. While many international media see the "wet markets" as a restoration of traditional markets, Chinese media saw them as new interventions. The making of these local Chinese markets was thus supported by references from other socialist states, representing a socialist modernity beyond Chinese borders. By revealing how cosmopolitan sensibilities and global dynamics contributed to the making of Guangzhou's "wet markets", these markets offer a crucial lens to understand local landscapes as products of broader social and political networks.

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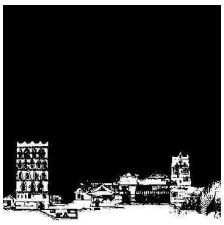

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