

The Commodification of Culture in Space: A Landscape Analysis of Little Tokyo

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Abstract

The food, the ambiance, and the architecture of the restaurants in Little Tokyo; combined with the Filipino Employees who manage and serve food there, make this small place feel more like being in old Japan, without all the hassle of actually going there. The use of old Japanese architectural designs and decorations with the food attract Filipino and foreign enthusiasts alike. Entering through a long stone pathway into a central Japanese-style garden, with a bell tower in the midst of it all, would transport anyone who enters Little Tokyo into a nostalgic experience.

Inside the seven restaurants, one can either sit on bamboo "tatami" mats laid down on the floor beside small tables; or on old Japanese-style benches while watching a baseball game in Japan and sipping warm "sake", and eating "sushi". The architect, Mr. Yasuyuki Kido, designed and conceptualized the whole place to look, feel, and be as close to being like old Japan as possible. The only thing out of place would be the Filipino employees, who could speak Nihongo but has the distinct Filipino accent. But it is undeniable that the fine dining, the nostalgic architecture, and the pleasing personalities who work there, attract all types of people with a taste for anything Japanese. The busy business streets of Makati outside would be a far away thought to anyone who would enter the walls of Little Tokyo.

This research aims described the embedded symbols and meanings that the people who created, work in, and are consumers in Little Tokyo attribute to the landscape. All have different views or levels of understanding with regards to the landscape; the creators' intentions, and the people who are working inside of, or are consumers in the place. By examining the architectural style, building materials used and the techniques used in creating the place; this research hopes to find out more about the technological capabilities, economic development, religious beliefs, social structure, goals and aspirations of the Japanese culture that is reflected through the landscape.