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Taiwan with a Side of New Public Diplomacy — The Gastrodiplomacy of Taiwan’s Representative Offices as Served in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna

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Summary

This paper is about the presentation of Taiwanese cuisine abroad. This is important for two reasons: (1) according to the concept of gastrodiplomacy, a country can use its national cuisine as a form of public diplomacy, and (2) Taiwan’s national identity is described as “contested and largely undefined at home and abroad” (Rawnsley 2017: 991). As one part of the nation’s identity-building process, its national cuisine is undergoing a process of “making and shaping.” The Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwan’s de facto embassies and consulates in German-speaking Europe, function as an important intermediary in shaping Taiwan’s image — including that of its cuisine — among foreign audiences. This paper analyzes the role of food in newsletters sent out by the Berlin, Bern, and Vienna offices in 2017 and 2018. The results of this analysis contribute to our understanding of the roles played by food in public diplomacy in general and in the Taiwanese context in particular. Moreover, it makes a significant contribution to research on the characteristics of Taiwanese cuisine and how it is constructed by political actors in an “attempt to distinguish it from others” (Chen 2011: 316).

Keywords: gastrodiplomacy, public diplomacy, Taiwan, Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwanese cuisine, content analysis

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