

The Community Narrative Space of Yim Tin Tsai in Hong Kong: A Study of Multi-Involvement Based on Domain Theory

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Abstract: Traditional villages are typical forms of farming settlements, which concentrate the essence of vernacular civilization. However, with the evolution of urbanization and modernization, the desire of villagers to improve their living standards is increasingly in conflict with the preservation of the authenticity of villages, calling for the innovation of village governance means. Based on this, this study attempts to highlight the role of multiple subjects participating in excavating the plural value of the traditional communities, in the hope of consolidating the sustained intrinsic motivation for the conservation. By using the domain theory, this study takes Yim Tin Tsai Art Village in Sai Kung, Hong Kong, as a case study to focus on the community involvement mode embodied in its revitalization and restoration plan. Through exploring the formation of cultural habitus, the logic, and the influencing factors of subject interaction, intending to provide references for addressing existing situational constraints and achieving overall development.

Keywords: Yim Tin Tsai, Multi involvement, Community, Domain theory

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Traditional villages, also known as ancient villages, are a typical form of farming settlement, and a carrier of the historical cognition of vernacular civilization. With the evolution of modernization, traditional villages have gradually transformed into regional complexes with natural, social, and economic characteristics, promoting towns and cities in symbiosis and coexistence, constituting the main space for human activities. However, urban expansion and industrialization have impacted the overall landscape of villages, there is a contradiction between the villagers' desire to improve their lives and the preservation of the authenticity of villages. Additionally, the growing disparity between urban and rural development has resulted in the loss of the labor force, inevitably causing a situation of decline.

Historical villages are important carriers for the manifestation and inheritance of outstanding traditional culture, and the maintenance of rural characteristics as well as the enhancement of ethnic cultural self-confidence. Based on this, in recent years, relevant policies have been issued to

encourage commercial capital and social forces to participate in the utilization of traditional villages. To continuously strengthen the understanding of traditional villages in terms of rural ecology and diversified values, innovative practices around the world are increasingly highlighting the role of pluralism in the excavation and living inheritance of traditional communities, consolidating the sustained intrinsic motivation for the conservation and development of villages.

In this regard, this study is based on the restoration project of the Yim Tin Tsai Art Village in Sai Kung, Hong Kong, focusing on the community involvement model that promotes village revitalization, to explore the logic and influencing factors of the interaction among multiple subjects, providing references for the development of villages' study.

1.2. Literature review

For the study of traditional villages, scholars at home and abroad have conducted research from various perspectives, such as inheritance, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism development, which have achieved relatively fruitful results, providing theoretical guidance.

According to overseas studies on traditional villages, from the perspective of pluralistic subjects, Sim Loo Lee pointed out that the government's protection policy is conducive to the operation of ancient shops based on in-depth research of the historical neighborhoods in Singapore [1]. Coggins Chris et al. studied the effect of village self-management on the conservation of environmental diversity in the southern countryside of China.[2]. Nakamura Naohiro in Japan concluded that one of the effective ways to conserve the native cultural heritage is to encourage the autonomous participation of aboriginal people in environmental assessment [3]. Shahrul Yani Said et al. concluded that effective measures are to raise awareness and stimulate the potential of various stakeholders, and to innovate financing mechanisms [4]. For the current situation of existing village conservation, David A. Fyfe emphasized the importance of the combination of culture and tourism in New York [5].

Research by domestic scholars covers the value of traditional villages, public space, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, individual protection, and so on. Attempts have been made to analyze the impact of development from the perspective of residents' perceptions. Specifically, Wu Bihu et al. pointed out that regional economic, social, geographic, and cultural factors are closely related to the formation of villages by studying the spatial distribution pattern of 350 domestic famous historical and cultural villages [6]. Wang Lu pointed out that strong clan concepts, Fengshui culture, and commercial atmosphere are the characteristics of Huizhou's ancient village architecture [7]. As for the impact study of tourism, related scholars focused on exploring the social integration structure of tourism migrants, believing that the migrants have increased income and made a great contribution to the alleviation of poverty while bringing foreign cultures and values impacting the national cultural inheritance [8].

To sum up, scholars at home and abroad have focused on the overlapping research on traditional villages, based on which the daily interaction, cultural practices, and belief totems have become the starting point for the protection and development, leading to the remodeling of the social relations and order of the ethnic groups. However, the relevant research also suffers from the shortcomings of uneven research areas, the poor combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, and multidisciplinary cross-research, which are yet to be further developed in the new era.

1.3. Overview of the study area

Yim Tin Tsai, a member island of the Hong Kong Sai Kung District, with an area of less than 1 square kilometer, is located in the sea of Sai Kung at Kau Sai Chau to the north of the island. It was originally a traditional fishing village whose ancestors originated from Wuhua County, Guangdong Province.

In its heyday, more than 400 people lived in Yim Tin Tsai, making their living by salt-drying, farming, fishing, and livestock-raising. In the middle of the 19th century, the whole village converted to Catholicism and it became the Catholic main missionary area in Hong Kong.

Yim Tin Tsai used to be one of the five major salt fields in Hong Kong, producing enough salt to feed all of Sai Kung. However, with the impact of continuous innovations of industrialization, the villagers left one after another from the 1960s onwards, and by 1998, the last family had moved out, leaving Yim Tin Tsai an uninhabited and empty island.

In 2003, Yim Tin Tsai began to prepare for its restoration program, to preserve the island's intangible cultural heritage, like the annual Catholic religious festival, and the restoration of the St. Joseph's Chapel. Since 2010, the indigenous people of the village have been extensively involved in promoting the revival of the village. With the joint efforts of villagers and volunteers, the restoration of the salt field was completed in 2015, and in 2018, a salt tanning workshop was organized, the quality of which gradually met the indicator requirements of the International Commission on Food Safety. Starting in 2019, the revitalization of the arts will be another milestone in the restoration of Yim Tin Tsai. More than 20,000 visitors came to the month-long festival, making it an unprecedented event. The island has been attracting nature lovers again.

2. Theory Description

2.1. Basic concept

The concept of “field”, which originated in physics, refers to a specific space formed by the establishment of a connection between objects not in physical contact within a specific area. Levine introduced it to the social sciences, and Bourdieu extended the concept of “field” in his theory of praxis, which refers to a network or a configuration of objective relations between locations [9].

The field is one in which social actors, group institutions, systems, and rules coexist and form relationships between various elements. It comes with a dynamic network and spatial domain with its own logical rules and is also full of corresponding action strategies to maintain the capital position. According to this, Kaufman proposed the concept of the “community field”, which is a community of various subjects constantly interacting with each other [10]. Wilkinson further clarified it, arguing the importance of common interests [11]. To specifically analyze the logic of action in the field, concepts of capital and habitus are also necessary. As Bourdieu put it, habitus consists of historical relations within the individual and is in the form of various mental and physical schemas of perception, and judgment. On this basis, “habitus” is also considered as the system of dispositional tendencies to which each field belongs. Referring to the struggling nature of the field, Bourdieu categorizes capital within the field into three types: economic, social, and cultural capital. The inducing effect of capital is used to motivate various actors in the field to act and then to balance the forces of various capitals so that they can achieve a dynamic equilibrium effect.

Therefore, this study explores influencing factors of community involvement and the current state of capital in the community field, accordingly, including the economic affordability and sustainability of village revitalization, and the equal treatment of disadvantaged groups by public culture. Cultural capital refers to whether the cultural atmosphere and system in the community respect the various types of needs of the residents; the social capital of the community consists of a network between community groups, support, and cohesion, as well as a sense of belonging.

2.2. Practical approaches in community governance

The management of Yim Tin Tsai adopts the concept of an “Eco museum”, which refers to four major missions of collecting, displaying, researching, educating, and effectively combining the strengths of residents to maximize social and cultural values. Therefore, this study applies domain theory to the

practical situation of the Yim Tin Tsai Restoration Project to explore the role of local practices in the formation of communities, and the multiple forces in the process of governance, the following figure shows the logical framework. According to it, multiple entities including the government, the Catholic Diocese, the Conservation Center, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Yim Tin Tsai Village Committee and the Sacred Heart Church of Sai Kung, constitute field capital, giving full play to the momentum of governance and cohesion, in the hope of dealing with constraints and dilemmas in the existing project and promoting the overall development.



Figure 1: Interaction diagram of multiple subjects in the field space.

3. Analysis of multi-involvement in Yim Tin Tsai

3.1. Cultural habitus and the formation of Yim Tin Tsai

It can be found that Yim Tin Tsai is one of the few Hakka villages that is full of Catholic characteristics, with a history of religious culture and natural ecological appearance. With a dynamic system including spatial and geographical beliefs that have been gradually formed, to preserve the cultural landscape of the village, religion has become an indispensable connecting point. For instance, there are many religious sites and facilities on the island for religious purposes and pilgrimage. The Salt and Light Preservation Center and the annual Lord's Day Ceremony also stand for religious ecology.

In the space of a particular field, the governing principle is internalized by the actors through a process of socialization, thus forming a habitus that fits in with the field. In the restoration and development of the village, the religious resources dependent on the Catholic faith are reinforced through ceremonies, and related architecture, resulting in the habitus that is generally embraced by residents. It also comes from the villagers' deep-rooted identity and collective memories, as well as longstanding historical ties. Due to the communal nature of Catholicism, the visual symbols of the community make both the physical boundaries and the boundaries of beliefs clear. In this process, the church carries the functions of a village temple, and cooperates with the YTT village committee, playing the role of a civil authority. It naturally becomes the only space for public activities and can intervene to a certain extent in the daily lives of the parishioners, which is conducive to the coordination of conflicts and the forging of consensus, to preside over the community's public welfare.

3.2. Analysis of the interaction of multiple subjects

Existing community involvement consists of six parts mentioned above. Throughout the entire space, the government, as a leader and supporter, plays a decisive role as the basis of capital in building public facilities and coordinating relevant policies. First, the government drives the transformation of

traditional resources into industrial resources. Combining the resource endowment, and religious culture, it encourages the orderly conduct of special activities to expand local popularity. Second, it enhances the autonomy to activate the talents of traditional organizations and reshapes the community with integrated rural production. It fully mobilizes self-consciousness and cultural self-confidence in publicity, carrying out the excavation and collation of customs and innovations. Third, through the YTT village committees, policy mechanisms have been improved and the construction of village grassroots has been strengthened, to reduce negative external interference.

The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong and the Sacred Heart Church in Sai Kung together constitute the cultural capital of the field space. They co-manage St. Joseph's Church as a venue for public folk activities, reinforcing the common psychological awareness of the residents. They combine with the local characteristics and religious buildings, strengthening communication and inheriting harmonious historical traditions. Relying on high-quality platforms to increase the promotion of the concepts of responsibility and community, they change the focus of residents' attention from the demands of material interests to community involvement, further cultivating a sense of accumulation.

Community construction is good cooperation based on mutual trust among multiple actors. Vertically, it adheres to the unified leadership of the government and makes full use of administrative power to provide public infrastructure and financial support. Following the policy pace of the cultural and tourism industry and integrating the consultation of the village committee and the joint meeting, the relevant departments have achieved governance linkage. Horizontally, the community tapped into experts, scholars, and other external social forces, thus enhancing human capital. The Salt and Light Preservation Center set up by residents on their initiative with the support of multiple representatives, and diocese funds has also played an important part in mobilizing resources to carry out restoration and to promote the education of religious culture and ecology of simple living, through guided tours, workshops, thematic experiences, and the provision of street ferry services.

The establishment of the Yim Tin Tsai insists on people-oriented space and renovation planning, starting from the local resource endowment, and encourages multi-involvement. With the financial support of the local Sacred Heart Church, it relies on art resources like heritage exhibition halls to disseminate the culture of folk beliefs in collaboration with professional training institutions.

3.3. Situational constraints of existing future

First, the constraints of geographical factors. Yim Tin Tsai village is in the southeast coastal region, which is easily affected by typhoons, flooding, and other natural disasters, causing casualties, resource destruction, and economic losses, which requires a better emergency response capacity. Specifically, the government needs to improve the level of risk prevention, to strengthen routine maintenance and emergency planning. Relevant departments should actively carry out emergency rescue and improve the authority and responsibility system. In the face of post-disaster resource requirements, there needs to ensure the smooth progress of work. The affected areas must be restored as soon as possible through the expenditure of time, economic costs, and human resources.

Secondly, the plight of population exodus. Even though the Yim Tin Tsai Restoration Scheme is in full swing, it is still inevitably faced with the population exodus and labor shortage. To alleviate this, in addition to giving full play to the role of social capital and village committees, the widest range of villagers should prepare for self-management and self-education. Tertiary sectors can jointly provide villagers with employment opportunities. Villagers should be united through village culture and folklore to enable a better sense of gain and well-being.

Third, the hidden worry of governance culture. The core function of contemporary village faith is to survive the township and unite people's hearts. However, religious forces that lack constraints and guidance may also become a major hidden danger in village governance. Villagers' elections and other issues concerned with the fundamentals of village governance will be interfered with by local

clans and may be accompanied by illegal behaviors, which seriously affect the construction of harmonious villages. Thus, it is necessary to correctly guide the role of Catholicism and Hakka culture, to transform emotion into governance increments, and to drive all villagers to participate in community public affairs spontaneously, and positively to promote artistic improvement.

4. Conclusion

Most of the existing studies on community involvement in Yim Tin Tsai, start from the social division of labor among multiple subjects. This paper does not step out of this framework. Still, it builds on it by applying the domain theory to analyze the formation, showing the interactions and the situational constraints of the existing development in a more comprehensive way.

To summarize, Yim Tin Tsai community involvement still has a developmental dilemma to achieve a higher degree of development. the revitalization of traditional villages is a long-term process that requires sustained government attention and management, as well as the formulation of policies that are realistic and tailored to local conditions. How to better balance the collision between elite and popular culture, and how to improve the efficiency of preservation while preventing the loss of traditional values due to commercialization. There are still questions we need to ponder.

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