



THE CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE POST-DISASTER  
COMMUNITY – THE RESEARCH OF CULTURAL  
CONSTRUCTION IN SIAO-LIN VILLAGE IN TAIWAN

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Abstract

The reconstruction progress in the post-disaster Siao-lin Village which was seriously destroyed by Typhoon Morak in 2009 are usually evaluated by environmental reconstruction projects, such as permanent housings, memorial parks, memorials, and other public buildings. However, other aspects of cultural reconstruction, such as such as traditional beliefs, life styles, and the model of interaction with the environment, which may connect the spirits between destroyed and reconstructed sites, are ignored. In this research, an interdisciplinary framework, including sociology, and theories of architecture and heritage conservation, will be applied. Documents will be analyzed, fieldtrip investigation will be carried on, cultural activities on sites will

be observed, and the stakeholders on different levels will be interviewed. Besides, the concepts derived from the Quebec Declaration adopted by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in 2008 will be discussed as part of the theoretical framework. With this research, on cultural sustainability in three “new” Siao-lin communities reconstructed after the disaster will be main issue of discussion. Discourses will be focused on how the “cultural reconstruction” is executed with the policies from different governmental authorities, supporting and accompanying programs from NGOs, and acting strategies from the demands of the survivors? Furthermore, how the “genius loci” could be preserved through the reconstruction of the tangible buildings and the intangible cultural traditions?

Key words: Cultural Sustainability; Siao-lin Village; Cultural Reconstruction; Typhoon Morak; the Quebec Declaration

### Introduction

Siao-Lin Village was a village in southern Taiwan, which was consisted of several small settlements, such as Jindi (which literally means “forbidden place”), Beishihkeng, Niouliao, Wulipu, and Siao-Lin. The village initially formed in 18th century, during the period of Qianlong Emperor of Qing Dynasty, by which some families of Da-wu-long (also called Tevorangh) Tribe of Pingpu Siraya moved from north. Most people in the village were forced to be emigrated from Tainan during the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945) for the purpose of eliminating resistance from Pingpu Siraya, while each family in the village was allocated 150 Ping (approx. 495 m<sup>2</sup>) of land for building (Chien, C. J. & Hung, S. F.,2009). Besides Pingpu

people, some Hakka and Hoklo people also immigrated from other places for different purpose. Hakka people moved from northern Taiwan during early stage of Japanese Colonial Period for the purpose of exploitation of camphor, and after 1945 Hoklo people moved from northern mountain range next to the village for the possibility of farming (Hung, S. F. & Liu, A.,2010).

Siao-Lin Village located between two major mountain ranges of Taiwan, and lots of faults and folds appeared across the village. Farming plains only spread along river alluvial and terrace, which provide very limit area. Different people or tribe also had various methods of farming: Pingpu tribe mostly works with the model of shifting cultivation, hunting, and gathering, while Hakka and Hoklo

people mostly work on camphor and other economical plants such like bamboo shoot. It could be seen as a harmonious relationship between people and nature. On the believe aspect, the traditional culture on the believe of God and other ancient spirits for Pingpu people was fully preserved in this area due to the semi- closed environment which was rounded by mountains and forest. This Arit believe system and its related night- ceremony at the middle of ninth month of lunar calendar in Siao-Lin Village was well preserved, which was regarded as the best example within other similar villages nearby with the same tribe and believe. The night- ceremony, normally started from the early morning until the late night, which was consisted of successive rituals and final singing ceremony (Qianxi), was the most important festival in the village, while the families and people living outside the village would come back for this.

However, on August 8 2009, Typhoon Morak and the extreme heavy rain caused a serious tragedy. Due to the heavy rain, a severe landslide from the mountain next to the village buried lots of buildings, and 463 people were killed. This landslide also resulted in a dam which collapsed soon after and became an-

other disaster. Even so the night-ceremony of 2009 was still held, however it was moved to southern settlement from the original Konkai (the public place), and the happy mood in the ceremony was changed to in memory of lost families and spirits. For the survival, the idea of reconstruction around original village arose from the emotion to the land they lived, and the memory to the lost.

After the disaster, 3 new Siao-Lin Villages were built as the reconstruction, in which 276 houses were constructed. Reviewing the reconstruction, four main bodies were involved in it: central government, local government, people of Siao-Lin, and other NGOs. However, some conflicts appeared on the mechanism, common consensus and role of different body in the process of reconstruction. In the beginning, the idea of reconstruction was tangled with different conflict aspects such as public opinion, resource, policy, power, tribe, culture, and economy. Thus the reconstruction works were also stagnated by the influences on different issues, e.g. economic benefit, public compassion, fair policy, and social reaction. In fact, the reconstruction works from different government authorities were differ-

ent from the expectancy of people. These differences came from several aspects. Traditional idea of reconstruction of community mostly focused on the rebuild of houses, and the quantity of houses, size of house, public facilities in the communities, and etc. Only hardware aspects were considered, and the software aspects, cultural context, ecological system, and impact due to different believe or culture background, were ignored.

Consequently, the result of reconstruction normally was reviewed by tangible buildings, such as houses, memorial park, memorial statue, local museum. Intangible parts in the reconstruction site, traditional belief, life style, interaction between people and environment, and other aspects of “cultural reconstruction”, were neglected. The reconstruction of a new community should not focus on the tangible part only, and the intangible part, culture, belief, life style, working model, social relation, and ethnic boundary, should also be considered. While these intangible issues could be represented from the tangible elements such like house style, site plan, indoor plan, location of public belief center, and public space, which are important for an aboriginal culture. The spirit of the place in a community may be repre-

sented through these elements, which should be an essential part of cultural reconstruction. Without the spirit of the place, the reconstructed community would be nothing but a congregate housing after disaster, or a long-term casual ward. Besides hardware reconstruction, the intangible cultural reconstruction should be focused since this would integrate each member in the community, and transform as the core value for sustainable development.

### *Three New Siao-Lin Villages after Reconstruction*

Three new villages were reconstructed after the disaster for the original Siao-Lin Village. Thus every new village may only represent one-third of original village. Each new village is different, and the composition of people, industrial type, and site plan of new villages are most obvious.

#### First Siao-Lin Village.

First Siao-Lin Village was sponsored and built by the Red Cross Society Taiwan, which was located in Wulipu, Jiasian District, Kaohsiung City. The total area of the site is 5.8 hectares, in which 89 houses were built for villagers. The building work started from April 2010, fin-

ished by January 2011. The idea of “preserving Pingpu culture and sustainable development of natural and ecological environment” was prepared as planning concept. In this site, some structures which represented Pingpu culture were built, such like Pingpu culture park, museum, Konkai, and etc. As for the design of living unit, the space for the life of villagers and architectural elements which may represent Pingpu culture have been designed by project architect. First Siao-Lin Village was the only one village in three new ones which fully fulfilled the requirement of government reconstruction principle. It also reconstructed follow the principle of “far from the disaster, close to original place”. Most families in First Siao-Lin Village were moved from original Siao-Lin Settlement, which was the model of “moving from the same place”.

A memorial park was also planned near the Village, from which the disaster site may be seen. It was consisted of memorial square, memorial hall, memorial path (along which names of the dead were carved), and grove (395 trees represented 395 lost families). This park was the winner of LivCom Awards - Al Ain 2012. Siao-Lin elementary

school was also built next to the Village, which was sponsored by TVBS Taiwan Caring Foundation. This school was designed with the concept of “a sky castle of learning”, which was built follow the landforms, and with original materials of local river stone and floating timbers to represent the vernacular features.



Figure 1. Site plan of Siao-Lin Village



Figure 2. House in First Siao-Lin Village



Figure 3. Pingpu Museum



Figure 7. Siao-Lin Elementary School



Figure 4. Konkai



Figure 8. Stage in school



Figure 5. Memorial Park



Figure 6. Memorial Hall

#### Second Siao-Lin Village.

Second Siao-Lin Village, aka Second Site of Wulipu, situated at Yuemei Farm, Sunlin District, Kaohsiung City. It was also sponsored and built by the Red Cross Society Taiwan, which started building work at January 2011, until December 2011. For distinguishing the background and concept from other villages sponsored and built by Buddhistic Tzuchi Foundation in the same Farm, this village was named as Second Site of Wulipu by local government. 120 houses were built in this 5.7 hectares site. Similar to First Siao-Lin Village, Pingpu culture elements were integrated in the

building design, by which these two villages have been connected, and also reconstructed the linking symbols to the original village. Nevertheless, there was no Konkai in Second Siao-Lin Village, instead two Earth God Temples which belonged to the belief system of people of Han were built just next to the village. These two temples are now also worshiped by villagers who have tried to integrate into new local cultural model.

As for the economic and industrial policy, this site was designed as Pingpu creative culture area, and a workshop will be built in the village. Creative culture products and farm products of Siao-Lin were planned to be sold here, due to the good traffic connection. Most of the villagers in Second Siao-Lin Village were young generation who once worked or studied outside the village even in urban areas. This new village has provided new opportunity for them to participate in different aspects of construction works, including industry, culture, life style, and homestead. This could be seen as the model of “moving from other places while villagers were related to original Siao-Lin Village”.



Figure 9. Site Plan of Second Siao-Lin Village



Figure 10. House in Second Siao-Lin Village



Figure 11. Overview of Second Siao-Lin Village



Figure 12. Workshop in Second Siao-Lin Village



Figure 13. Siao-Ai Village

### Siao-Ai Village.

Siao-Ai Village (literally means “small love” village which was contrastive to “Dai-Ai” region where it located literally means “big love”) was sponsored and built by Buddhistic Tzuchi Foundation. The whole region was planned to provide refugees from several villages, while Siao-Ai Village was especially designed for people from original Siao-Lin Village. 66 houses in this village would provide 62 families from different settlements of original Siao-Lin Village. Some families was moved here due to their house were buried in the disaster, others due to their houses were potentially dangerous. Siao-Ai Village could be seen as the model of “villagers came from several settlements of original Siao-Lin Village”.



Figure 14. House in Siao-Ai Village

### *Replace, Transform, Connect, and Represent*

The reconstruction of Siao-Lin Village was full of dilemmas, contradictions and compromise. This could be seen from the site plan under the ideology of specific sponsored organization, or the plan of house made by professions. Traditionally, Konkai, the center of worship of ancient spirits in a Pingpu settlement, was located at the edge of settlement; houses in the settlement seldom faced the Konkai or gathered



along a specific axis. However the reconstructed village changed such concepts. In First Siao-Lin Village, Konkai was designed as the center of whole village which was seen as the central public space and integrated with nearby museum. With which a new cultural axis became the most important concept in this village while it was quite different from traditional one. On the other hand there was no Konkai in Second Siao-Lin Village and Siao-Ai Village. No other place for worship was planned in Siao-Ai Village due to the insistence of sponsored organization. While the different worship spaces for both Han people and Pingpu have symbolic meaning, the replacement of them may help people to rebuild their ethnic identity.

Different performing groups were established in 3 new villages, such as drum procession, plow procession, dance group, night ceremony singing group, and etc. The member in one group may support other groups occasionally. By this way, specific culture for each new village may be created, and original culture and spirit of Siao-Lin Village may be reconstructed and then practiced. People of Siao-Lin have made a connection with original Siao-Lin Village through the practice and in-

novation of culture, and represented Pingpu culture through different cultural activities.

### *The Establishment of Spirit of Space and Cultural Sustainability*

It is argued that reconstruction is an opportunity to plan for the future and to conserve the past. A good reconstruction policy helps reactivate communities and empowers people to rebuild their housing, their lives, and their livelihoods (Jha et. al, 2010). People of Siao-Lin have involved in the reconstruction work. After the disaster, they tried to find new hope with their own faith, and attempted to rebuild their own village which was once in their memory. This belief came from people who lived Siao-Lin Village with specific historical background and cultural context, and from people who had consensus of love of land and preservation of ethnic culture. With which the identification of reconstruction and appearance of new Siao-Lin Villages were made. It also represented a new spirit of space, and the power of cultural sustainability on ethnic culture.

In Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place 2008 adopted by ICOMOS, it is de-

defined that “spirit of place is defined as the tangible and the intangible elements, that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place”. The spirit of place would be similar to Genius Loci, which has become ancient tradition in many cultures. With which a place or city may have distinctive atmosphere which represent spirit and connect people and place. However modern built-environment may ignore this concept while the setting is nothing but a composition of abstract structures. It is argued in the Declaration that considered as a relational concept, spirit of place takes on a plural and dynamic character, capable of possessing multiple meanings and singularities, of changing through time, and of belonging to different groups. In the reconstruction work of village destroyed in a disaster, it is the critical issue that if the original tangible and intangible cultural elements may be resumed and transformed in the new reconstruction site, while the spirit of place from the original setting may be connected and new spirit of place may be established. It will also become the core value for the sustainable development of the reconstruction of village.

The cultural reconstruction works in these three new Siao-Lin Villages have represented the cultural sustainability. Their tangible buildings, public spaces, intangible ceremonies and activities have connected old setting and spirit, even generated new spirits of place.

### *Conclusion*

In the assessment of reconstruction policy, it is essential that drafting the principles of reconstruction according to the factors of local features, ethnic culture, living condition, and ecological environment, and etc. Besides, related codes for building and participation of local resident should be also integrated. Thus, every reconstruction plan is unique. It should follow the particular conditions in different cases, from different ethnic culture, natural environment, people’s demand, etc. Moreover, it will be also important for a sustainable village that a bottom-top planning process, and the revival and reexamination of the spirit of place from original one to the reconstructed one.

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