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WHEN CAIRO'S PUBLIC SPACES START TALKING: THE STREET VENDORS' DAILY STRUGGLE DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Poverty is a phenomenon intertwined with both economic and social factors. A poor individual lacks the income for a decent living, thus requiring help. The assistance a poor person receives from the community decides her/his social status. It decides her/his identity and the social stratum to which she or he belongs. Social organizations and institutions govern social reality, perpetuating or reducing poverty rates. The poor assume a coping strategy to sustain their livelihoods. Some of them depend on street vending. They exist because there is a demand for their commodities. Unemployment, high profits, and lack of market infrastructure are the drivers for street vending. Street vendors are subject to security raids, causing traffic congestion, generating solid waste, and violating health measures. Any attempt to remove street vendors adversely affects the poor, whether buyers or sellers. Street vendors face hostility, implying that societal institutions deny them the right to public spaces. Lately, the outbreak of COVID-19 has added new challenges to street vendors.

In Cairo, Egypt, food street vendors are common. They come from informal areas or rural settlements in the hinterlands. Following the 2011 revolt, unemployed university graduates from middle-income class households started food vending carts in affluent communities. Local authorities tried to remove them, but under the pressure of the media, the President issued directives to support them. The State legalized their practices while excluding the traditional poor food street vendors. Both groups hit the pandemic and precautionary measures, including social distancing and lockdown.

The paper attempts to answer the following research question: how has the pandemic affected a food street vendor in Cairo's public spaces? The paper documents the State's response toward two types of street vendors stratified along social strata, particularly during a pandemic. It examines how public space ownership, institutional framework, and physical attributes, including location, yield different results. Data sources comprise published research, reports, posts on Facebook, newspapers, and interviews with food street vendors and their customers in their context.

The paper tries to provide a contemporary interpretation of the impact of disruptions on the public space and activities occurring in it, thus, linking disruption with tradition linked to cases, conceptions, and urban/rural culture. We use phenomenological research techniques to reveal the details and portray street vendors' experiences during the pandemic. The researchers seek patterns in a collection of people's behaviors. Based on our observations and discussions with the vendors and their customers, the paper highlights the challenges street vendors and their customers faced and the pandemic's opportunities. The paper examines structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.

1. INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal policies and globalization are sides of the latest stages of the capitalist system. Five monopolies distinguish globalization as a phenomenon resulting from neoliberal capitalism. First is monopolizing decision-making, where developed industrial countries form economic blocks, such as the European Union, and security packs, such as NATO. These countries control international organizations, such as the World Bank, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund, to promote their interests and dictate financial and economic policies that eroded the ability of national governments to control their markets and urban settlements. Second is the movement of energy-intensive polluting industries, such as cement production, from cities of advanced countries to those in the global south, where labor rights and

environmental protection are relaxed. Third, globalization led to transformations in the geography of production and consumption. It gave rise to transboundary and multinational companies that sell goods in nations and locate their production facilities in locations to produce items at lower costs, thus increasing their profits. These companies sponsor most research and development in research institutes found in cities of advanced industrial societies, thus attracting qualified individuals from developing countries to perform the needed jobs to advance science and technologies. Information and communication technology and other global communication channels make up the fourth monopoly. Owners of the satellite channels and social media sites can shape the general opinion and influence the masses' preferences and decisions, thus affecting their choices, whether to buy a commodity or vote for a candidate. Last, advanced industrial countries have the power and ability to destroy a developing country by launching cyber-attacks that sabotage its infrastructures. Freeing trade and terminating controls on the flow of capital and labor led to speed up economic growth. Applying neoliberal policies eroded the ability of national governments to control markets.[1]

1.1. Impacts of Neoliberal Policies

The impacts of neoliberal capitalism and globalization on the global south cities are profound. Atop these impacts is a growing regional disparity as businesses migrating from cities of more developed countries favor metropolitan areas of capital and port cities in the global south, which affirms urban primacy. To attract direct foreign investments, national governments invest in physical infrastructures. Meanwhile, provincial cities and rural settlements lack their fair shares, accelerating the influx of rural-urban migration and illegal transboundary migration in search of job opportunities.

Urban primacy is the reason for various urban ills in the cities of the global south. Poor rural migrants live in squatter settlements or urban slums. They seek employment in informal economic activities that do not require exceptional skills, such as shoe shining. Social services and physical infrastructures are under pressure. These services and infrastructures cannot satisfy the residents' needs after adding loads of rural migrants. Both businesses and citizens experience power breaks, drinking water shortages, and accumulated solid wastes on the pavements and empty lots. In short, the city experiences diseconomies of scale and environmental degradation, thus threatening its sustainability.

Scholars' research shows that colonialism, exports of raw materials, and institutional framework are among the main reasons for urban primacy. In Taiwan, various colonial territorial spatial arrangement strategies affected Taipei's degree of urban primacy between the 1930s to 1950.[2] In Guatemala, class relations and exports of raw materials and agricultural products explain the country's urban primacy. [3] The Chinese political hierarchy's centralization reform, which began in 1983 and implemented over 20 years, transferred decision-

making powers from county-level administrations to local governments. The distributional impacts include more urban primacy and a distinct core-periphery pattern at the district level. The reallocation of fiscal resources and industrial production, which depends on productivity gains and political favoritism, influenced outcomes.[4]

1.2. Food Vendors and Public Spaces

In cities of developing countries, the informal urban sector appeared within the global capital circulation.[5,6] Individuals and entities can buy and sell financial securities internationally because global capital interlinks between various investment exchanges worldwide. Cash, operational expenses, raw materials, inventory in progress, finished goods inventory, and accounts receivable are all examples of circulating capital.

Studies of the past consider street food vendors among the facets of the informal urban sector. In the 1970s, the International Labour Organization funded studies that regarded vendors as part of the informal economy. Researchers overlooked small and family businesses, which often included women labeling them "pre-entrepreneurial" because they used their own money. They predicted that street food vendors would vanish as capitalism progressed. However, street food vendors are an essential source of revenue and food. The Equity Policy Center[7] began a multi-country[8] study of women and street foods, which proposed and experimented with interventions to increase food safety and revenue. A decade later, results from Iloilo and Manila and other cities in six different countries indicated the long-term influence of these measures on the vendors. These results question economists' ideas about the informal economy and feminists' assumptions about the family. Six other studies that made up the street food project encouraged municipal, national, and international agencies and organizations to rethink their policies and induce changes. [9] Street vendors, market traders, and market porters supply essential items and services, particularly to individuals who must buy tiny quantities of needs at low prices. The informal economy is unquestionably crucial for food security, especially in low-income communities. [10]

Street food vendors are common in all cities worldwide. The vendors of a city are its outdoor caterers. They thrive because they satisfy a need unmet by the conventional commercial establishment. In a 40-foot stretch in front of Rockefeller Plaza during the Christmas season, Whyte (1980) counted approximately fifteen vendors. The optical leverage of these objects is astronomical. Nothing is more critical for basic props than a pushcart and stacks of folding chairs and tables. Establish a kiosk or pushcart, spread out chairs, and erect colorful umbrellas for a visually stunning effect. [11] As economic crises have become more common in developing countries, street food sellers and their clients have increased.

Street food is a significant part of city profiles. From vendors' perspective, the most pertinent issues are the function of public urban areas, the growing popularity of street food, which includes an increase in tourism demand, and the significance of social media as a revenue-boosting factor.[12]

Street food exemplifies a culinary tradition ingrained in the lifestyles of inhabitants and visitors. In urban contexts of the Mediterranean, street food transports clients to ancient times. From Palermo, Italy, Sgroi, Modica, Fusté-Forné, (2022) argued that street food preserves and promotes a place's heritage and history. The cultural and environmental landscapes around public spaces where vendors produce and sell foods play a significant role in deciding their provenance.[13]

In historic areas, street food vendors play a crucial role in the tourism industry. Many YouTubers dedicate their videos to street food, where tourists check for ideas and reviews. For example, in 2010, William Sonbuchner (1984-) founded his YouTube channel Best Ever Food Review Show.[14] He goes to various parts of the world to find the best food each country offers. He discusses these trips and the food he tries in his videos. In March 2022, the total view to his channel reached 1.63 billion, and the subscribers were 8.03 million. There are other YouTube channels like Sonbuchner's. FeedSpot[15] lists fifty different YouTube channels dedicated to street food. [16]

Street food vendors intertwine with the city's public spaces. In various cases, they are part of its image and identity. For example, *Sāḥat Jāmiʾ al-Fanāʾ*, Marrakesh, Morocco, is well-known for the active concentration of traditional activities such as food vendors, storytellers, musicians, and performers. Juan Goytisolo[17] (1931-2017) lived in Marrakesh from 1997 until his death. On 15 May 2001, he addressed the opening session for the First Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. He argued that the *Sāḥat Jāmiʾ al-Fanāʾ* houses a rich oral and intangible tradition as a physical site. Every day, the spectacle of the square is reproduced, yet each day is unique. Everything changes: voices, noises, gestures, the audience who watches, listens, smells, tastes, and feels, where a much larger — and intangible — tradition frame the oral tradition.[18]

Most contemporary conceptions of green cities disregard the needs and expectations of street vendors for public green spaces. Urban street trees provide essential ecosystem services, such as shade, and contribute to the health and well-being of urban dwellers, particularly those who spend a sizable part of their day outside. Street vendors spend most of their time on roadways, whether there are trees. After conducting in-depth interviews with seventy-five street vendors on eleven market streets in Hyderabad, India, Basu and Nagendra (2020) highlighted the importance of trees for their daily work and livelihood. They emphasized the difficulties street sellers experience in acquiring shade access, suggesting that the urban ecological planning

process excludes them, despite being one of the most impacted groups by the availability of tree-lined avenues. The outcome is displacing street vendors and denying them the right to the city. [19]

Investigating issues about street vendors is a complicated task. In New York, the number and location of food vendors are constantly changing. The major obstacles in examining street vendors are that their hours and places can change. They are more comfortable speaking their native languages, and people do not want to collect data from surveyors. [20]

1.3. Disruptions Complicate the Matter

Street vending is a political issue. Using Valparaiso, Chile, Ojeda, and Pino (2019) found social and spatial disagreements about using public space. Street vending and the social and spatial appropriation of public space can lead to conflicts over space. When designing and managing public spaces, it is of utmost importance to consider the logic and dynamics of street vending. [21]

Conflicts, urban riots, and pandemics have mixed impacts on street vendors. Kafafy (2017) noticed that in association with the 25th of January 2011 revolution in Egypt, informal street vendors increased rapidly, significantly affecting Egyptians' daily lives. The outbreak of street vendors had adverse effects. People questioned whether these vendors were victims or perpetrators. Before the revolution, street vendors were prevalent, and their numbers and locations fluctuated based on the severity of police crackdowns and the economic climate. The growing number of informal street vending affected the city and its economy, vendors' livelihoods, public space use, and city circulation. He noticed that street harassment of women was not a new phenomenon but increased with the growing number of street vendors. [22]

Street vendors have negotiated their place and presence in the public space. Brown, Kafafy, and Hayder (2017) examined the impact of the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Arab revolutions on street vendors in Tunis and Cairo. They concluded that the deposed authoritarian regimes left a governance vacuum. Despite being hampered by their lack of organization and voice and disruptions to their trade during the revolutions, street vendors proved resiliency through small-scale adaptations to their trade and incorporating newcomers in the face of political conflict. It was difficult for street vendors to profit from the idealism and opportunism of an evolving new order.[23] Bouhali (2017) collected data between 2011 and 2014 to highlight the struggles for power within the appropriation of commercial streets inside two transnational trade centralities, al-Muski, Cairo, and Medina J'dida, Oran. She concluded that street vendors must constantly negotiate their position in the city's two marketplaces despite a continually shifting, contradictory environment. She determined that street vendors know how to benefit from urban authorities' weaknesses. [24]

The outbreak of COVID-19 hit street vendors hardly in developing countries. They make their living in congested public areas. The lack of infrastructure made it impossible to wash hands and follow other suggested practices. In Accra, Ghana; Dakar, Senegal; Delhi, India; Lima, Peru; and Mexico City, Mexico, imposing local and national lockdowns to cease the spread of COVID-19 affected the livelihoods and the lives of informal vendors and their families. Physical distance, for example, was impossible to establish in Accra because there was no place to maneuver.[25]

1.4. Failing Urban Planning

Although the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11[26] calls for more economically and socially inclusive cities, street sellers face unprecedented obstacles in cities worldwide. As public space becomes disputed, these workers meet widespread eviction and abuse. After looking at 18 months of news on street vendors from six continents, Skinner and Balbuena (2019) discovered this animosity and questioned, where are the inclusive cities? [27]

Public spaces offer a glimpse into a city's soul. It is where collective urban life plays out, such as cycling to work, playing in a park, eating hot food from a street corner, performing music for tips, and gathering in celebration or resistance. This diversity of activity can enrich public spaces, but it could also make their management challenging.

This diversity of activity can enrich public spaces, making their management challenging. The work of street vendors is thoroughly modern, with connections to formal businesses and even global supply chains. Although there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of managing public space equitably, the experiences of large and small cities, ranging from New York City to New Delhi, supply insight into what works and what does not. Though there are notable examples of good practice, no ideal regulatory framework model can be directly transferred from one context to another.

Exclusionary practices worsen the poverty of already vulnerable workers. Evicting street vendors can make cities less desirable tourist destinations, negatively affecting the local economy. Besides often being illegal, other exclusionary practices, such as confiscations and harassment by local police or task forces, are similarly ineffective and detrimental to the vendors' ability to make a living.

The only way an inclusive agenda could take shape is if those affected on the ground have a voice in finding effective ways forward. It hinges on (a) recognizing street vendors' contributions to cities and (b) collaborating with street vendors to develop and implement solutions.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In Cairo, Egypt, food vendors on the street are common. They originate from slums and rural settlements in the hinterland. Following the 2011 uprising, unemployed college graduates from middle-class families began food vending cart businesses in affluent communities. Local authorities tried to remove them, but the President issued directives in their support under pressure from the media. The State legalized their practices while excluding traditional street vendors of poor food. The pandemic and precautionary measures affected both groups, such as isolation and lockdown.

This paper looks to answer the following research question: how has the pandemic affected a street vendor selling food in Cairo's public spaces? The paper provides a contemporary interpretation of the impact of disruptions on public space and the activities that occur within it, demonstrating a connection between disruption and tradition linked to cases, conceptions, and urban/rural culture. The paper investigates structures of consciousness as the street vendor experienced them, an interpretation of the impact of disruptions on public space, and the activities that occur within it, proving a connection between disruption and tradition linked to cases, conceptions, and urban/rural culture.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper describes the State's response to two socially stratified types of street vendors, particularly during a pandemic. It investigates how public space ownership, institutional framework, and physical characteristics, such as location, produce varying outcomes. The data sources include published research, reports, Facebook posts, newspapers, and interviews with food street vendors.

We employ phenomenological research methods by focusing on the details and identifying the street vendors' perceptions and reactions to the disruption that the pandemic caused. The researchers examine a collection of people's behaviors for patterns to examine the challenges and opportunities that the pandemic presented.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Document Review

The tendency to amplify the punishment is the ruling logic of the State's vision of street vendors as an informal practice that the authorities must prevent on the grounds of protecting public health and assuring security. On August 6th, 1943, the Egyptian Parliament passed Law 73, regulating the activities of street vendors. The law comprises fourteen articles that define who qualifies as a street vendor, his/her health status, quality of the products sold on the streets, location, and a list of violations accompanied with the penalties. It stipulates that those working for the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, the Local Municipal

Councils, the Ministry of Health, and the judicial authorities, seize the commodities and jail the street vendor for violating the law. In 1957, Law 33 passed fifteen articles like those mentioned in Law 73/1943. In 1981, Law 174 changed Article 11 of Law 22/1957. The modification was to replace Article 11 of Law 33/1957 to increase the fines from five Egyptian pounds to EGP 100 and three months in jail instead of two months. Unemployment is among the root causes of the phenomenon. George (2014) wrote that according to a report that the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics released, the share of young people (between 15-29 years) was about 4.13%, almost 3.6 million persons, the majority were females, probably because of cultural and social constraints. Unemployment among university graduates reached nearly 69%, while for those with technical and secondary degrees, unemployment rates were 50% and 32%, respectively. These high youth unemployment rates show that the Egyptian economy cannot generate job opportunities. [28]

It is the citizens' right to work and access public spaces. There is a demand for street vendors' contributions and services. The solution lies in regulating access to public spaces and easing those vendors continuing rights. Street vendors are not criminals but entrepreneurs the Government must encourage and support. Recognizing and licensing street vendors, besides enabling them to access loans, are among the means to a win-win situation.

In January 2017, Yasmine Rahim sold burgers on the streets of Nozha, Heliopolis. Her friend Shaimaa joined her. The police force and local administrators violently removed her food cart. She video tapped the incident and posted it on social media to grab the attention of TV talk shows.[29]

In April 2018, President Sisi ordered the Government to support the project known as *Šhara' Misr* and expand it to other cities. In 2019 and 2020, the Governorate of Minya and the Sixth of October agency [30] set up projects named *Šhara' Misr*.[31] According to Hosny (2018), local authorities provided the youth with space and connections to electricity. The rent was EGP1200. He visited the project in Sheraton Heliopolis and met Rami Hani, who said:

> *I started working on a cart in the streets of Sheraton, Heliopolis, selling burgers and hot dogs. My customers are the above-middle class of young people sitting in the cafes. Local authorities' position changed after the President advanced the idea of Šhara' Misr. At the beginning of the project, we became selling fairy sales.* [32]

The authors visited the project at that time. Some young street vendors in Sheraton Heliopolis sold sushi; others sold pancakes.

A year later, newspapers reported that *Šhara' Misr* projects were failing. The local administration withdrew security and cleansing services. Āl-Kẖalfāwi (2019) reported that the youth complained about the

administrators' negligence. "The youth could not pay the fees and electricity bills after their contracts phased out. They reckoned to illegal power connections and using cheap inputs. Many changed their activities into flipping burgers. We tried communicating with the officials, who ignored us," said Rahim. [33] A Cairo Governorate official told Āl-Kẖalfāwi "the local administration would withdraw the project from the youth and turn it to the *Taḥyāh Misr*[34] (Viva Egypt Fund)." [35] El-Deehi (2019) reported the same news from Shebin el Kom, Menofia. He wrote that lacking the proper administration and organization are the main reasons for the project's failure. There was no perfect scheme for distributing the kiosks and deciding the activities. Responsible authorities did not monitor and follow up. [36]

In 2019/20, Misr Express Markets Company[37] established 306 Street in vacant plots and green areas. The project allows the youth to cater and sell food and beverages besides handicrafts. The company developed five 306 Street projects in Almaza and Sheraton Heliopolis in Cairo, Tanta, Dumyat, and Doqqi in Giza, the latest addition to these projects. [38] Currently, the Sheraton Heliopolis project is out of service.
The company developed the Doqqi 306 Street project over a green parcel of land (Fig. 1) in front of the Agricultural museum and a governmental building housing the General Authority for Reconstruction Projects & Agricultural Development and the regional office of the Food and Agricultural Organization. The project is a visual blight and an eye-soar ruining the entrance to the museum. Fig. 2 shows the lost green area.

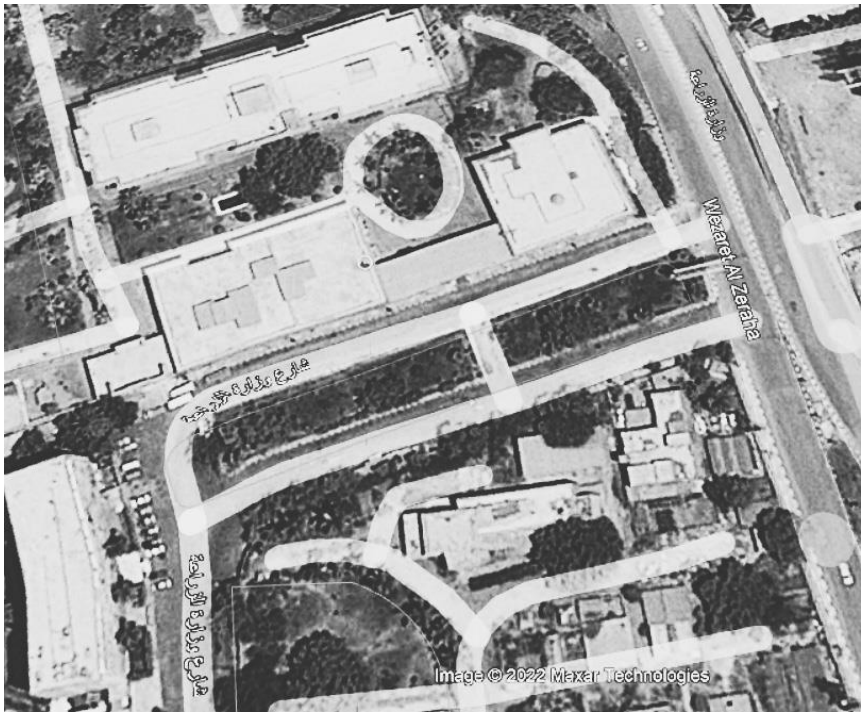

Fig. 1: The location of 306 Street in 2013. (Source: Google Earth).

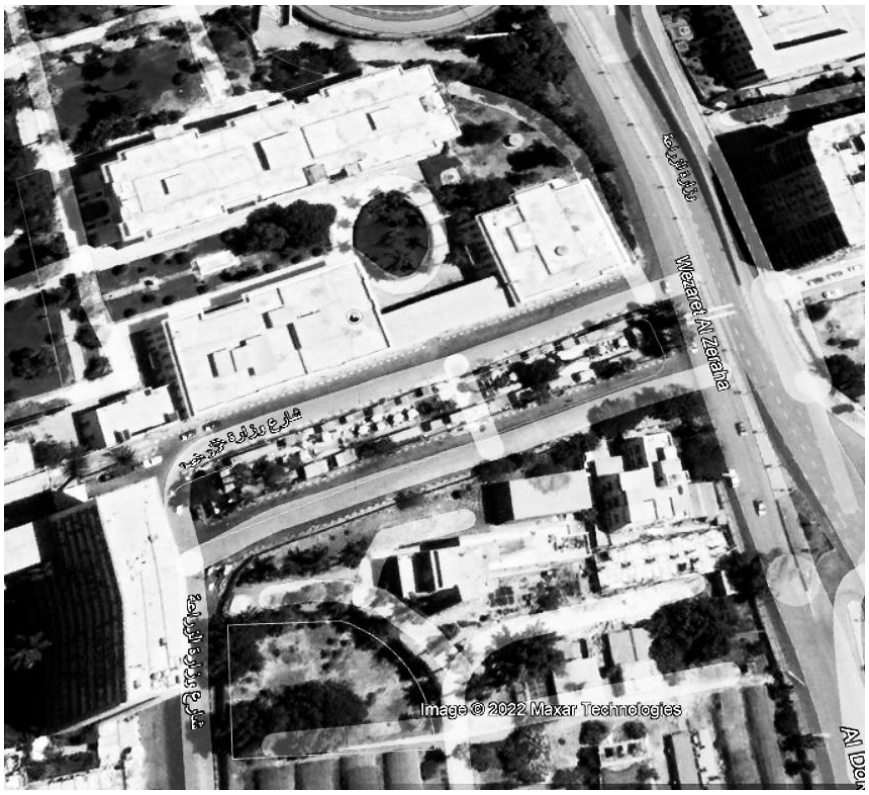

Fig. 2: The location of 306 Street in 2021. (Source: Google Earth).

Local authorities are transferring green areas in Cairo into food courts regardless of the location and the historical value of the public space and its buildings. In 2021, Āl-Dakẖākẖny reported that many Egyptians stormed social media sites rejecting developing kiosks in the garden at the center of the Abdeen Palace. [39] These kiosks are a visual blight that obscured the palace's vision and distorted the public space. [40] On his Twitter page, Ahmed Ezz al-Arab [41] posted a photo (Fig. 3) and commented, "Believe it or not. Fish stall at Abdeen Palace!" [42] Monica Hanna [43] said, "This palace is the head of the State in Egypt, so how do we put a fish stall before it? Have we seen similar stalls in front of Buckingham Palace in Britain or the Elysee in France?" [44]

Fig. 3: Fish stand at Abdeen Palace. (Source: Ahmed Ezz Al-Arab 2021).

4.2. Interviews

The newspapers and social media only covered one group of food street vendors, i.e., the government-support street vendors. We interviewed four food vendors in Cairo to examine why informal street vendors survived while those that the Government sponsored failed.

Ayman is 29 years old, married with two children. He migrated to Cairo from Minya in Upper Egypt. Two years ago, Ayman bought a cart and started selling hot beverages in Heliopolis, such as tea, coffee, and cappuccino. He used to deliver orders to clients. He moved to the present location from the road to the airport to avoid local administrators' sight. He works every day from 8:00 am to 2:00 am. Families come to his cart in the evening, and he maintains a good size of clients. The most significant nuisance is handling the local administrators. They let him hock his cart to the light post for electricity against a monthly payment. Ayman needs EGP 250 thousand (USD 27,144) to get a permit to run as a street vendor. During the pandemic, Ayman's business took a complicated hit. He used to work till the curfew. Today, Ayman's business is recovering, but not as it used to be.

Ahmed is a street vendor in Almaza, Heliopolis, nearby a regional bus terminal. He has been selling Kofta[45] sandwiches since three years ago. Today, he owns a shop selling Kofta sandwiches; however, the cart still has its customer. Ahmed's business is booming. He works every day from sunset to late hours. He has a Facebook page, and several YouTubers visited his cart and praised his sandwiches. According to the YouTube videos, Ahmed's clients are loyal and come to get Kofta sandwiches and plates [46] besides salad and

pickles. During the pandemic, his cart attracted more customers because people preferred to grab a sandwich in the open air.

Ali is 22 years old and single. His cart is in Shurabiya, Cairo, where he sells plates and sandwiches of foul,[47] falafel,[48] boiled eggs, pickled eggplant, fried potatoes, salad, and cheese. ʿAli has been in the business since five years. He moved to the present location two and half years ago. He found his cart in an area of various businesses, workshops, and storehouses. He works daily from 7:00 am till noon. His clients are those workers and employees who come to his cart for breakfast. He has other food carts in Shurabiya, selling the same products. During the pandemic, his expenses increased as he used disposable cups, plates, and gloves, which he did not need in the past. His business is recovering in the post-pandemic period. "People ain't afraid anymore," said ʿAli.

Ahmed is 23 years old and single. He supports his family. Since the pandemic, Ahmed has been selling hot beverages. Besides his job as a street vendor, he studies commerce, accounting, banking, and finance. His working hours are from 10:00 am till 2:00 am. He likes the job as no one is bossing him, but he hates standing on the street for long hours. Most of the cafes closed during the pandemic. It was an opportunity to sell hot beverages to customers in the open air. "In the post-pandemic period, the hot beverage carts are not making as much money as they used to," said Ahmed.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the disruption that the pandemic caused brought opportunities to some street vendors who sell hot beverages. Because of the lockdown, customers preferred a hot drink in the open air since the Government shut down the cafes. Informal street vendors worked more during the pandemic. Some informal street vendors started their businesses during that period. When the informal street vendors' business was booming, the youth of *Šharaʿ Misr* started to lose officials' support, and thus their businesses failed.

Street vendors who sell sandwiches also benefited from the pandemic. They were able to serve customers during the pandemic, who grab their sandwiches and move, unlike when they order their food in a restaurant, as Ahmed the Kofta sandwich guy said.

Some food cart owners could get a shop or own and run other food carts in the same area. They continued to work on the food cart and sold their customers the same products at equal prices. Customers preferred buying their food from the cart. On the contrary, public officials' practices and attitudes towards the youth at

Šharaʿ Misr led to the project's closing. Transferring the project to Misr Express Company did not help because the mentality of managing the initiative did not change.

The Government-supported street vendors, whether *Šharaʿ Misr* or 306 Street, did not survive the disruption. They would not survive because their business model differs from that of the informal street vendors, whose business model[49] seems agile. Informal street vendors survived the disruption, their businesses flourished and expanded because they turned a crisis into an opportunity., they understood their customers' needs by selling products, such as foul, falafel, and kofta, that are part of the Egyptian diet and cuisine.

The informal street sellers were successful because they considered their customers' demands, where to locate their businesses, and set the prices of the commodity they produce and sell within the consumer's budget. They focused on their (a) key partners, such as their raw material suppliers, (b) key activities, namely where to locate and what to sell, (c) customer benefits, (d) customer interactions, and (e) customer segments. Informal street vendors select locations with low automobile traffic. They avoided harassing public officials and managed crooked ones. Most informal street vendors seek shade or set up an umbrella, while others seek out nearby bus stations or parking lots.

Informal street vendors understood the importance of the traditional cuisine, but the youth that the government supported sold products that might not be to the taste of the ordinary Egyptian, not to mention the difference in the price of a foul sandwich compared to that of sushi.

Unlike the informal food vendors, who understand the market mechanisms, governmental officials' interventions disrupted the market mechanisms for the young entrepreneurs. The officials' view of the street vendors has been and continues to be as people acting outside the boundaries of the law and an opportunity to raise local administrations' revenues. The legislation passed in 1943 and changed in 1957 and 1981 does not aim to support street vendors but views them as a source of income generated from fees and penalties. The authorities changed their position after Rahim and her friend addressed the social media and made it to the TV talk show programs; thus, the President ordered the officials to support them. Ignoring the youth's plea for renewing their permits and continuing to provide security and cleansing services seems part of a plan to transfer the project to Misr Express Markets Company. The continuous transformation of green spaces seems to be a trend, as the case of Abdeen Palace garden indicates. The authorities transformed al Khalideen Garden, [50] a historic park in Alexandria, into a food court. [51]

Informal street vendors select locations where pedestrians can access with minimal motor traffic. They avoid public officials' stalking or striking a deal with corrupt ones. Unlike vendors of *Šharaʿ Misr* or 306 Street,

informal vendors are mobile. They find themselves in areas where there are shade or parking spaces. Their logic for selecting a location is in line with the literature on the spatial economy, which the writings of Alonso (1960, 1967),[52] Muth (1960, 1969),[53] and Wingo (1961, 2016)[54] explain.

The results indicate connections between space, location, and social interaction. The success of street vendors results from the specific spatial organization of encounters and interacting ensembles to an appreciation of how, by engaging with their clients in an area, individuals convert it into a jointly experienced, meaningful, and unforgettable place. The results validate Whyte's claim that putting food in a public space initiates human activities. Food draws in people, who in turn draw in more people. Street vendors have a keen sense of effective locations. If sales pick up in one area, there will soon be a concentration of sellers – a phenomenon known in urban economics as the agglomeration of economies. Thriving street vending attracts more people and sellers so that pedestrian traffic may slow.

The optical leverage of these objects is astronomical. Nothing is more crucial for basic props than a pushcart and multiple stacks of folding chairs and tables. Customers and the aesthetic impression can be magnificent if a vendor places a kiosk or pushcart, lays out chairs, and raise colored umbrellas. Instead of dispersing the tables and chairs across a vast area, the vendor arranges them closely together. As a result, people start to interact with one another more frequently while waiting in line or weaving between the tables. Pedestrians can rapidly transform the area into a vibrant social hub.

Informal street vendors add to the public space, giving it vitality. Informal street vendors provide a rich oral and intangible culture to the public space. They recreate the spectacle of the public place every day, but each day is unique. Everything changes: voices, noises, gestures, the audience who observes, listens, smells, tastes, and feels, where a broader, intangible tradition frames the oral tradition.

6. CONCLUSION

Poverty is one outcome of unemployment. For the unemployed, street vending is a solution for making a living. Public spaces are conducive to the activities of street vendors. The Government perceives informal activities as illegal. In 1943, the Government passed a law regulating street vendors. The Government amended the law twice to increase the sentences, not to enable the street vendors and organize them. In 2017, two girls started selling burgers on the streets of Sheraton Heliopolis, Cairo. The authorities violently confiscated their cart and merchandise. The girls video tapped the incident and then posted it to social media, grabbing the attention of TV talk show programs. In 2018, the President ordered the authorities to support the youth by establishing *Šhara' Misr* in Sheraton Heliopolis and replicating the project in other cities, such as Minya and Shebin el Kom. A year later, the youth complained that their contracts needed renewal, and the

authorities reduced their cleansing and security services. It was time that COVID started to break out. The youth started to lose money. The authority's response was to transfer the project to Misr Express Company. Another group of street vendors is young informal entrepreneurs, whom public officials annoy. They survived the pandemic. Cafes shut down, which was an opportunity for street vendors to sell hot beverages. The business of some street vendors flourished. One of them owns a shop, and another has several carts. Both are selling the same products they sell on their carts.

The informal street vendors succeeded because of their business model that paid attention to the customers' needs, location, and prices. They focused on their (a) key partners, such as the suppliers of their raw materials, (b) the key activities, mainly where to locate and what to sell, (c) benefits to the customers, (d) interactions with customers, and (e) customer segments. Most informal street vendors search for shade or set an umbrella, others locate nearby bus terminals or a parking lot. Informal street vendors choose places with less motor traffic and uncomplicated access for people. They avoided the harassment of public officials and managed corrupt ones.

In contrast, the vendors of *Šhara' Misr* and 306 failed because of governmental interference and a flawed business model. Their public space was not conducive to and supportive of their businesses. Some of them were selling sushi and cupcakes! Their location lacked parking spaces, a requirement for their young customers.

Putting food in a public space initiate human activity. Food draws in people, who in turn draw in more people. Pedestrians can rapidly transform the area into a vibrant social hub. The success of street vendors results from the specific spatial organization of encounters.

Informal street sellers contribute to the vitality of public space. They enrich it with a vivid oral and intangible culture. They reproduce the sight of the public place every day, but each day is different. Everything changes: voices, sounds, gestures, the audience who observes, listens, smells, tastes, and feels, and a larger, intangible tradition frames the oral tradition.

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[47] A breakfast dish from Egypt consisting of fava beans cooked with tahini and seasoned with garlic, cumin, and lemon.

[48] Another breakfast dish from Egypt Falafel is a popular fast food consisting of a mixture of fava beans, fresh herbs, and spices that is formed into small patties or balls and then deep-fried in oil.

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BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND RECREATION: THE MISSIONARY HERITAGE OF LANTAU MOUNTAIN CAMP

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BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND RECREATION: THE MISSIONARY HERITAGE OF LANTAU MOUNTAIN CAMP

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This paper traces the continuity and changes of the little-known Lantau Mountain Camp, a century-old hill station in Hong Kong, with respect to local, regional and global vicissitudes, from its missionary origins, its memorable tradition as an international Summer Camp to its growing reputation as a popular scenic landscape. The authors will discuss the presence and significance of hill stations, their representation in Hong Kong and its transition from a missionary heritage and closely bonded community to fraternity for rustic, spartan living and nature conservation. The paper will conclude by proposed conservation directions and efforts that engage stakeholders and foster awareness to its architectural, cultural, geographical and environmental attributions from members of the public.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lantau Mountain Camp perches on the ridge of two of Hong Kong's highest mountains, between the saddle of Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan. Comprising a string of 19 rough-hewn single-story stone cabins and several amenity structures, the Camp was established in 1925 by multi-national, inter-denominational Christian missionaries from South China and Hong Kong. For nearly a century, campers have actively maintained its fabric, modulated the use of its cabins and amenities, organized communal activities and kept the surrounding landscape and mountain trails in decent condition.

The Camp's establishment at the turn of the twentieth century and its way of life embodied religious aspirations, cross-cultural tensions, international coalitions as well as healthcare concerns. From the laying of its first stone, the Camp's unusual lithic architecture, uniquely adapted to its upland environment, bore witness to the internal strains of the early settlers, subsequent shifts in resident mix and sociality, and disruptions and adaptations during the Second World War and the Chinese Civil War. More recently, there has been renewed interaction with local communities in relation to Lantau's mid-century developments, continuation and conservation of the Camp in view of Hong Kong government's countryside regulations and the city's overall conservation policy directions.

The Camp's religiosity as well as the recreational potential of its geography has remained its primary thematics. Set at high altitude and benefitting from cooler temperatures in summer, the Camp served as a health retreat and a break-away from daily toil and stress for physical and mental well-being of the missionaries and their families in the city. Retreating to a pristine and austere environment was also an answer to the trending physical training for young people that was seen in the United Kingdom and North America.

The idea for a religious retreat with recreational and geographical setting was later extended to youth development programs at local churches and secular organizations set up by these missionaries.

The Camp's intriguing history, remoteness and lack of modern comforts have kept life on the mountain reminiscent of a quaint village. In spite of dwindling overseas missionary work in Hong Kong in the late 1970s, new occupants and interest groups share a similar appreciation of the Camp's spartan living, performing modest and organic restorations. Yet in recent years, with popular awareness in the multiple benefits of the countryside, the Camp has become increasingly popular for its scenic autumnal grasses and at the same time prone to deleterious intrusion of recreational visitors. Campers, academics and the government have hence come together in response to rising awareness for cultural heritage the Camp and natural conservation of its surroundings.

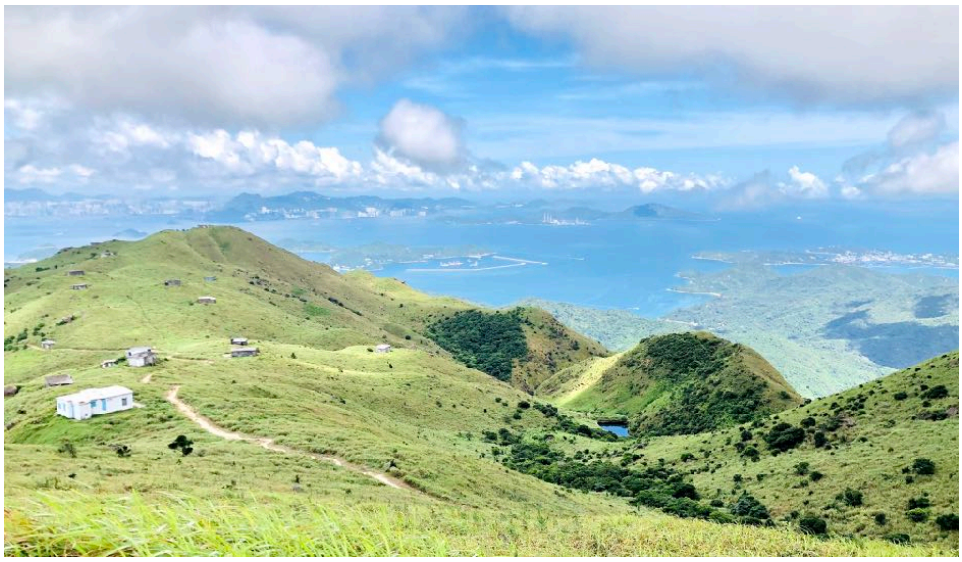


Fig. 1: Some stone cabins of Lantau Mountain Camp with the swimming pool, and Hong Kong Island, Lamma Island, Cheung Chau and Hei Ling Chau in view. (Photo credit: Miriam Lee)

2. HILL STATIONS & THEIR PRESENCE IN CHINA

Hill station, also referred to as mountain station or mountain camp, in particular in Asia, is a village or small town established by Europeans colonists on the hills or plateaus for health and relaxation to get away from the heat and disease of the tropical lowlands[i]. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, a myriad of them were set up across India, Ceylon, Myanmar, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines and China for the civil administrators, soldiers, merchants, missionaries, and the families who followed them in the course of advancing political, social or religious enterprises, in order to escape and recuperate from "tropical fatigue"[ii] — a medical euphemism of a melange of tropical diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, typhus

fever, bowl disorders, typhoid, cholera, dysenteries and the residuum of morbidity as a result of exposure to extremes of heat and humidity. An escapade to higher altitudes gave many of these European settlers and sojourners, men and women alike, debilitated by the tropic climate and cultural shock, the much needed physical and mental restoration so that they could return to another round of administering, ministering, or running a colonial household.

The scale, fabric and sociality across different hill stations varied. Compounds of primitive, makeshift sheds were not uncommon. Some kept up truthful to their intended function as a sanatorium with essential amenities. Others gradually grew into clusters of sizeable mansions with an assortment of recreational facilities and even schools for children. While many of these hill stations had remained remote and isolated from towns and cities in the lowlands, some had inadvertently attracted the attention of their more affluent and resourceful local counterparts, who would also fancy a share of the cooler, crispier air as well as a taste of somewhat foreign lifestyle.

In nineteenth and early twentieth century China, over a dozen of notable hill stations were found across the Manchurian empire[iii]. A couple of them were established in the vicinity of the Forbidden City, one in the Western Hills (*Xishan*) about 15 miles southwest of Peking around the village of Fengtai, the other later at the much coveted seaside resort of Peitaiho (*Beidaihe*). Both were organized and patronized primarily by the British legation to China. The hill station at Western Hills started out in practice as a walled compound containing buildings for rent to foreigners at a Buddhist temple, besides the monks 'shrines and dwellings. Later in 1897, a site of about 30 acres, at an open hillside a little bit closer to Peking at a lower altitude of about 70 meters above sea level, was acquired to build a completely new enclosure as a summer retreat. The Shanghai office of the Office of Works was commissioned to build four bungalows, a secretary's mess and chancery, and students 'quarters, complete with stabling for twelve horses. The building project was completed in spring 1900. Sadly the completed compound was burnt down by the Boxers in summer 1900 and was barely in use at all. The site was never re-occupied and was sold in 1923 to the Church of England Mission for the equivalent of its original cost.

Undeterred by this ill-fated hill station, the Peking legation began to build another permanent summer quarters in 1905 at Peitaiho, a burgeoning seaside resort about two hundred miles east of Peking that had become accessible by rail. This seaside town was overtaking the Western Hills as the legations 'preferred summer retreat. By 1905 about 150 new summer houses had been erected from the ruins of foreigner-owned houses during the Boxer Uprising, occupied by merchants and missionaries. These clusters of bungalows, often with pitched roofs and verandas on all four sides, served well their purposes until the outbreak of Sino-

Japanese War in 1937. Although some missionaries returned here after the war, by early 1950s the town was sieged by the Chinese Communist Party, and the remaining summer residents were levered out a few years later.

Fig. 2: Sketch of Minister's bungalow, Western Hills, 1897. (Source: Mark Bertram, 2017)

In central China, Rev Edward Selby Little, a British missionary, founded a hill station in mid-1890s in the lofty hills of Kiukiang (*Jiujiang*) of Jiangxi, which began as a sanatorium for weary missionaries working in the inland provinces of China to escape the torrid heat. After lengthy negotiations with the county government and the gentry of the area, lands were acquired along a valley near a peak colloquially called "Ku-niu-lin", meaning Bull Peak, which the founding members soon changed to "Kuling" to make it fit the Chinese form of the English word *cooling* to describe the estate's destined use[iv]. Land lots at the Kuling hill station were so enviously sought after that, by the turn of the century, visiting missionaries had built over a hundred houses and a church there, with additions of a municipal council to oversee the upkeep and maintenance of the roads, rest houses and public improvement, and even a tree planting program to boost biodiversity of the area. Benefits with the provisions of a cooling retreat were apparent, secularly cordial relations with the local community as the construction and operation of the estate brought substantial job opportunities, and spiritually for the missionary residents for much needed recuperation and rejuvenation to continue their ministry on the field. Even the lay community of foreign mercantile and the more affluent Chinese classes discovered the benefits of escapades to higher altitudes and availed themselves largely of its advantages, building mansions around the missionary estate and spending their summers in Kuling.

Ruth Vikner Gamelin, daughter of a Lutheran missionary family from Oklahoma, USA, had accounted her childhood in China, a large part of which was spent at Kuling. Born in one of the missionary houses in Kuling in 1915, she detailed the sojourns to Kuling with amahs packing for the household for the entire summer, riding sedan chairs carried by coolies on crude mountain roads and steep flights of stone steps, enrolling in the prestigious Kuling American School, playing and competing regularly in sports, swimming in the community pool, hiking in the mountains and valleys, and availing herself and her peers the expanse of the natural landscape. It was hill stations like this that:

> "Missionary families were bonded by faith more closely than most relatives are bonded by blood. These bonds were reinforced enormously by the fact that we all spent our summers playing and praying together and sharing events like Saturday night songfests, interdenominational Sunday services, Fourth of July celebrations, picnics in mountain valleys, swims in mountain pools, and tennis on the courts below our home… Missionary women, whether single or mothers, needed summers at (hill stations)… After long months at isolated stations, often alone, often working as well as managing their households, frequently hearing scary rumors of bandits, but without telephones to talk it over with husbands or friends, they needed refreshing summers to avoid estrangement from their own culture, to exchange native garments for American dresses, jewelry, and wedding rings, and to renew their sense of worth and security."[v]

Fig. 3: Missionaries employed coolies to carry baggage, toddlers, and those unable to hike rugged terrain, like the mountain paths to Kikungshan and those to Kuling. (Source: Ruth Vikner Gamelin, 2006)

3. THE BEGINNING OF LANTAU MOUNTAIN CAMP

The origin of Lantau Mountain Camp of Hong Kong could date back to as early as 1907, when a number of overseas missionaries in South China developed a makeshift summer retreat on Luofushan near Huizhou, Guangdong[vi]. Its story and development were interwoven with developments of Christian ministry by overseas missionaries in South China, particularly in Guangdong, at the turn of the twentieth century. While many of these missionaries worked in Hong Kong, a substantial mission population were posted in and around Canton (*Guangzhou*) and further out to various townships in the province. According to various directories of Protestant Missionaries published during 1910s-1930s[vii] [viii], in Hong Kong and Guangdong alone there were at least 50 Christian missions, institutes and related charitable organizations with stations scattered across the province.

Early residents of Lantau Mountain Camp were members of various missionary societies who were mainly stationed in Canton (*Guangzhou*), Fatshan (*Foshan*), Yeung Kong (*Yangjiang*), Shek Kei (*Shiqi*) and Kukong (*Shaoguan*). The missionaries were involved in both evangelistic pursuit and modernization of the society in terms of education, medicine, social welfare, and improvement of infrastructure. Very often, these missionaries served as a couple or a family together. The profile of early members of Lantau Mountain Camp was a veracious representation of such. For instance, nearly a dozen of them were medical doctors, and among them several were academic staff at universities and medical schools in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. In the case of the American Presbyterian Mission, which had 8 mission persons or families among the first members of Lantau Mountain Camp, they had 67 missionaries (children not included) in the whole of Guangdong in 1922. Among these 67 persons there were 22 couples (i.e. 44 persons); 3 of them were holders of PhD and 4 holders of MA, 10 medical doctors, 3 registered nurses, 1 LLD, 2 Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Doctor of Divinity and 13 ordained as Reverend[ix].

The idea of establishing a summer camp on a hilltop in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong caught on when missionaries in South China could no longer continue their usual summer retreat on Luofushan due to political disturbances[x]. The provincial governor of Guangdong gave the camp committee an advance warning in 1922 that he could no longer protect the camp from bandits and robbers. Pertinacious efforts were made by a special committee to have the summer camp resumed as soon as possible at a long-lasting location[xi]. Knowing that their usual summer retreat would not be able to continue after the 1922 season, the camp committee turned to British Hong Kong for a new location by setting a temporary camp with similar mat sheds at Tai Mo Shan in summer 1923. The sheds were however destroyed overnight by typhoon near season end. Application to build stone shelters was refused by the Government as the site lay within the proposed catchment for the Jubilee Reservoir[xii]. Multiple hikes were organized in autumn 1923 in search for a suitable

campsite. Ma On Shan and "Laan Tau Shaan" (Lantau Island) were eyed on. The Colonial Secretary's Office expressed a preference for Lantau because there were some prosperous villages at the foot of the mountain which could easily furnish chicken, fish and other supplies[xiii].

Acting on the advice of the Colonial Secretary's Office, the camp committee asked the Office for information on which sites were obtainable, and arrangements for visiting "Laan Tau Mountain" — instead of conducting reconnaissancee on a lofty mountain on Hong Kong's largest island of Lantau, they were to survey several highland locations along the imposing mountain range. The reconnaissance was organized in two teams; one to scout the plateau above the valley of Tai O (Ngong Ping), and the other the head of valley of Tung Chung (saddle between Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan). While both teams found their respective expedition destinations of desirable altitude and water supply, the Sunset Peak team were very insistent in their recommendation for its similar character to that of Luofushan. With the unpromising experience on Tai Mo Shan earlier, a few more adventurous mission families decided to erect a small room made of stone as storm shelter and kitchen, attached by mat shed and lean-tos to withstand typhoon on Sunset Peak in the summer of 1924[xiv]. In retrospect, the location of the camp was decided by default instead of by choice since all hilltops on Hong Kong Island were taken by that time (the Peak and Jardine's Lookout). Even the highland of Ngong Ping was already occupied by some Chinese residents and monasteries.

At the same time, negotiations with the government to obtain land between Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan were underway. The negotiations involved key issues such as the acquisition of land lot and building permits, trail construction, water preserve and foreign reservation. Auction of the collection of land lots on which the cabins of Lantau Mountain Camp were built took place on 24 December 1924. A few days before the auction, prospective campers had already had themselves organized to secure all land lots open for the bidding. According to land registry, the first campers of Lantau Mountain Camp involved at least individuals and families of at least 10 missionaries who were of British, Irish, American, Canadian, Dutch, Australian and New Zealand nationalities.

A contractor was hired to build stone cabins on the saddle between Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan as soon as the land lots were secured. The builder, a "Presbyterian Chinese, western-trained, who was forthright and honest"[xv], was largely responsible for the uniform lithic tectonics of the cabins. Stone-cutters were sent up to the construction site only slightly below the mountain top of Sunset Peak to quarry building blocks from the hillside. Local materials were preferred due to the remoteness of the site. Apart from stone, cement was made on the spot by mixing local sand with water from mountain streams to build cabin walls of 16 inches thick

with 6 inches roof of poured reinforced concrete[xvi]. This housing project was described by campers as the largest construction project on Lantau since the construction of Fan Lau Fort in 1729.

Fig. 4: Campers of Lantau Mountain Camp landing at Tung Chung by boat (Source: Raymond Smith, 1939)

Construction of the cabins at Lantau Mountain Camp spanned over more than a decade. The first batch of cabins — eleven stone cabins to be occupied by campers and a caretaker's hut (a.k.a. the coolie shack) were constructed in 1925, spread out along ridge from Sunset Peak to the heart of the Saddle, and from here to the peak of Yi Tung Shan at quite an even distance between each other. The Mess Hall (a.k.a Mess Hut, Mess Shack, the Mess) was then built in the heart of the Saddle in 1928 – the location of which hinted that it would be the center of communal life on the mountain. In the next few years, more cabins were added to the northern slope of Yi Tung Shan, one cabin at the Saddle below the watershed, and one cabin on the ridge between the two cabins closest to Sunset Peak. Cabin #24, which began as "Dobson's Hut", remains the highest (in terms of altitude) residential premises in Hong Kong. By 1934 there were altogether nineteen stone cabins at Lantau Mountain Camp with the Mess Hall, caretaker's hut, amah's hut and a swimming pool dammed from mountain stream. The built structures of the Camp had since then remained till today.

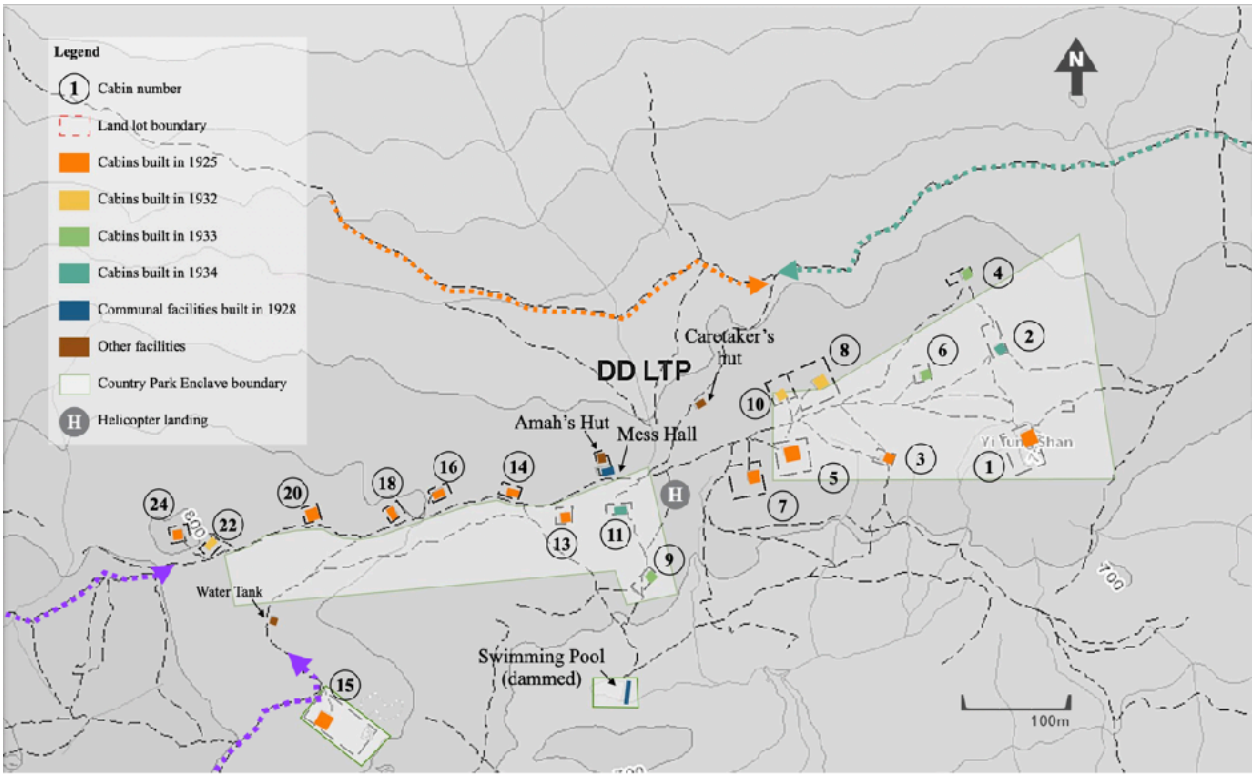


Fig. 5: Map showing cabins, amenity facilities and footpath access to Lantau Mountain Camp. (Source: Miriam Lee, 2022).

Fig. 6: Going up Lantau Mountain Camp from Mui Wo (Silvermine Bay) (Source: Raymond Smith, 1939)

The first trail to Lantau Mountain Camp was blazed only shortly before the construction of cabins. The creation of a walkable trail that negotiated the precipitous terrain from the bottom of Tung Chung valley to

the Saddle (which became Wong Lung Hang Country Trail later) was the joint effort of both the Government and the missionaries, in which the Government agreed to undertake the initial cost on the condition that the prospective campers would agree to keep the road in repair at their own expense to the satisfaction of the District Officer for three years from the date of completion of the improvement[xvii]. For almost a decade it had remained the only trail and connection of Lantau Mountain Camp until the construction of the second trail from Mui Wo in 1933-1934, while substantial construction works were only carried out after World War II. The trail from Mui Wo was built on an abandoned ancient trail ostensibly built by monks but had largely disappeared except for a few stone steps[xviii]. The construction of the trail was planned and supervised by the Camp's trail committee, which was headed by Mr George Stacey Kennedy-Skipton for over three decades. Maintenance of this trail had always been a major project expenditure of the camp. The actual work of repair and upkeep had involved contractors from Lantau, a few masons brought by the missionaries who fled from China, and later the inmates of Chi Ma Wan and Ma Po Ping prisons. There are detailed records from Lantau Mountain Camp Resident Association on the condition and maintenance of this trail throughout the years. The trails which were meant for accessing the Camp have now become integral parts of the trail system of the area.

Fig. 7: Lantau Mountain Camp in 1939 (Source: Raymond Smith, 1939)

4. DESIGN FOR NATURE

The architecture of Lantau Mountain Camp epitomizes outdoor living and resilience to weather. The stone cabins of Lantau Mountain Camp were designed by Arthur J. May, a local preacher at the English Methodist Church in Hong Kong as well as the Methodist Mission's South China District architect. He was the designer

and project manager of the construction of Chinese Methodist Church, Wan Chai which opened for worship in 1936 and that of Kowloon Methodist Church. When the land lots on Sunset Peak were acquired, May was approached by the prospective campers to work out "some sort of a house-plan suitable for such a camp as Lantau".

In 1920s, the usual requirement of the Government on purchase of a site was that a building should be erected to the value of 50 cents per square foot of the purchased area. In view that buildings on the mountain were meant to be modest, the initial discussion was to have the District Office making a discretion to halve the value required that a stone hut could occupy, which meant doubling the land size that it could usually occupy. The discretion was not seconded immediately by other officers in the department, on either the value, number of rooms or headroom of the 10 'x 10 'x 8 'prototype of stone walls and concrete roof. The design was criticized by Mr W. Schofield, the District Officer who took over the Camper's application, as "not… desirable for human habitation; the minimum height of any room should be 10 feet, and no house should have less than two rooms"[xix]. Much effort was spent in the subsequent correspondences in explaining the purpose and limitations of the dwelling houses for the intended summer camp. Higher construction costs (triple of that in lowland), altitude, cooler and more severe weather conditions and the purpose of campers abodes only during summer months should be taken into consideration. The Campers argued that under these circumstances the conditions which the Government might find necessary to enforce with respect to builders on the lower levels need not be applied in the case of the camp[xx].

Unlike the more sophisticated church constructions in the lowland designed by May, the cabins were planned to be "as alike as peas in a pod"[xxi]. The outside measurements were to be 18 by 16 feet, and walls of concrete would be from 12 to 14 inches thick. Not more than three rooms to a shack were provided for[xxii]. This house plan fits the description from Don Ady, the youngest son of the second owner of Cabin #24 as well as one of the explorers of the Sunset Peak site Rev Merrill Ady, of his own family cabin:

> The "Ady Shack" was the highest shack in the camp. Dad bought it from Dr Dobson, also a Presbyterian missionary in Yeung Kong - and a fabulous character. Dobson had just the one room, with a miniature toilet and miniature "kitchen" large enough to stand in. Dad got the shack enlarged with a "sitting room", plus miniature additional bunk room and toilet/shower. The shacks had stout wood shutters closed with stout wood bars of about two by four inches cross section. The windows slid horizontally and loosely, and were fastened open with wood wedges. My father, the sort to stay busy, gave us brief camp visits which he often spent doing odd chores like repainting some wicker chairs[xxiii].

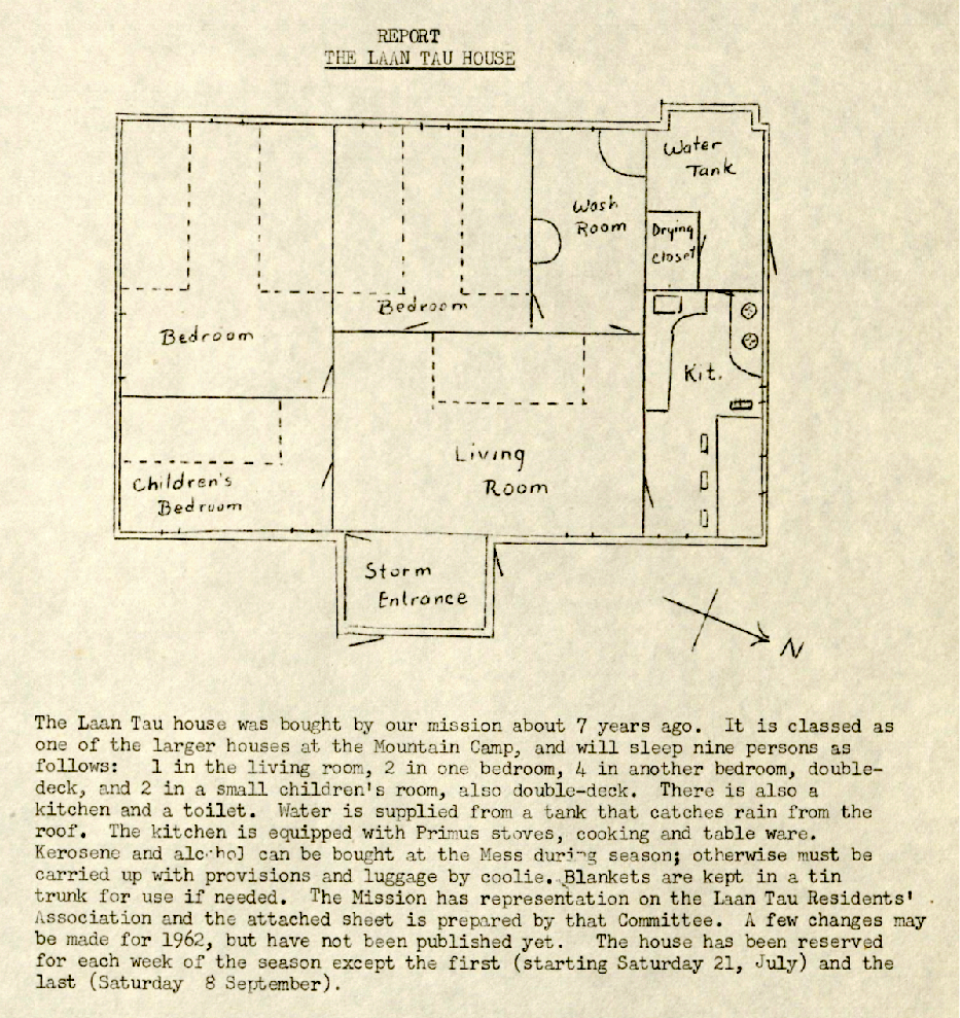


Fig. 8: Floor plan of the Baptist Cabin at Lantau Mountain Camp, drawn by Dr Carter Morgan. (Source: Carter Morgan, 1961).

Because of the lack of space inside the cabins, the dwellings were barely furnished and rooms were to be used for multiple purposes. Dr Carter Morgan, representative of the Baptist cabins (Cabin #14 and 18) in 1960s to 1970s and camp manager of Lantau Mountain Camp for various summer seasons, wrote that,

> Early years Laan Tau camping was quite rough. Beds were made or taken up as needed because the same space had to serve for cooking and eating as well. Anything not in use was hung from the ceiling. Many cabins still have ceiling hooks for the storage of beds and gear out of season. A mattress was simply a tick containing rice straws[xxiv].

Morgan also remarked that,

> They (the cabins) had been planned with the Loh Fau Shan (*Luofushan*) lifestyle in mind – viz, outdoor living… Laan Tau had far more wind, rain, clouds, and unsettled weather than campers had experienced inland… and families discovered they had to spend more time indoors. So bit by bit cabins came to be enlarged. The different is still visible in the thickness of the walls. The original construction called for walls 16" thick; later walls were built about half that thick which proved to be quite adequate – many, many typhoons later. Today most of the cabins are an architectural hodge-podge as rooms, lean-tos, storm-entrances and so on have been added… (The) enlargement business ended soon after World War II when extensive repairs had to be made[xxv].

Miss Dorothy Shilston, representative of the London Missionary cabin (Cabin #15) after World War II and Chairperson of Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association in 1953 and 1954, summarized that,

> Houses had, of course, no water, or sanitation or bathrooms, and as was discovered later, they faced the wrong way, so that in wet weather people had to get in by windows, as the rain beat in at the doors[xxvi].

Rev Lam Sung Che, President of the Methodist Church, Hong Kong, who had spent a fair amount of leisure time at the Methodist cabin (Cabin #8) in the 1980s and still visits the cabin occasionally in recent years, concurs that the cabins on Sunset Peak serve as shelters on the mountain more than holiday dwellings for indoor living. He mentioned that cooking was done outside the cabin on camp stove or campfire, and cabin users would only stay indoor to read or play chess when bad weather prevents them to go outside. Because of the austere and basic overall condition of the cabin, the Methodist Church ceased to lease the cabin to interested church members from 2000 onwards.

Correspondences of the explorers of Lantau Mountain Camp revealed that possibility of damming a swimming pool was one of the most important criteria of choosing a suitable site[xxvii]. That the saddle between Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan was chosen for the camp site was due to its plentiful water supply with a number of tributaries. The swimming pool was built over several season in the late 1920s by voluntary labor of removing rocks, mud and debris from the stream. In 1927 and 1928 the campers received assistance from the British army who blasted the larger rocks and built a cement face for the dam originally composed of mud[xxviii]. The swimming pool had been in place in the camp since 1928. Local hikers who discovered it decades later dubbed it *Tin Chi* in Cantonese, meaning "Heavenly Lake", and aptly this swimming pool of Lantau Mountain Camp is the highest manmade pool above sea level territory-wide of Hong Kong.

Swimming was an important part of summer activities and social life of the Camp since its establishment till late 1980s. A children's paddling pool was added in 1950[xxix]. Considering that Hong Kong's first public swimming pool (Victoria Park Swimming Pool) was only opened in 1957, a properly-operating freshwater swimming pool was a state of the art amenity for any resort. During the years when the swimming pool was actively in use, maintenance and disinfection was carried out every year by voluntary efforts of the campers. Camp rules on swimming were clearly spelt out for users to be aware of all safety measures.

5. FROM RELIGIOSITY TO RECREATION

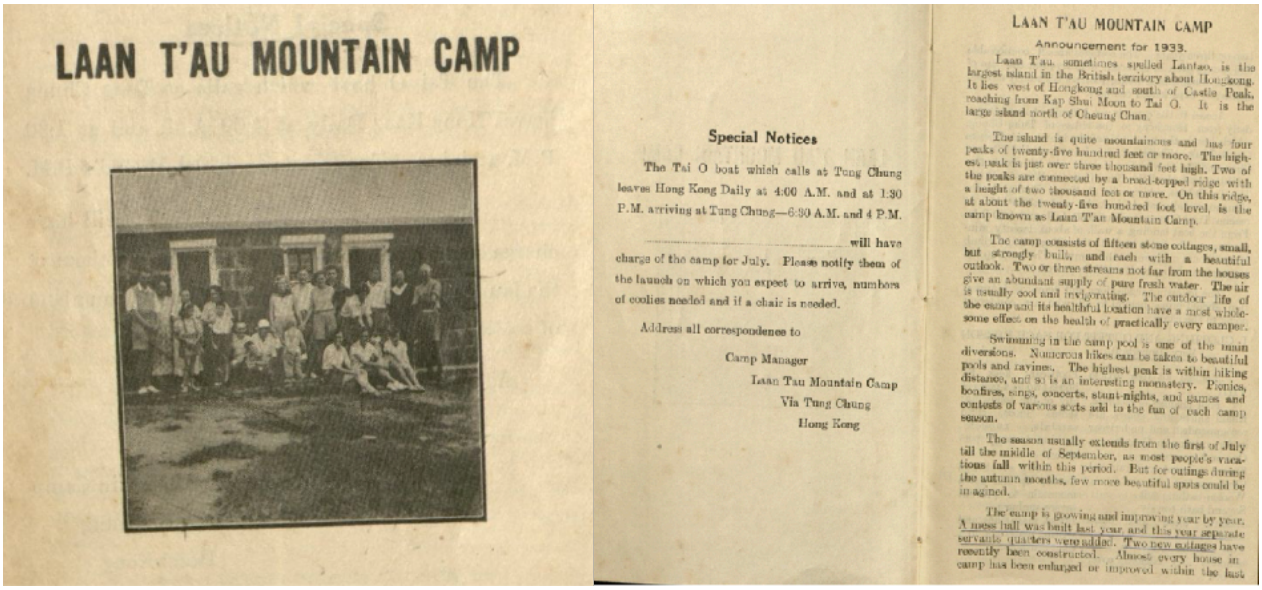
At the beginning the upswing of hill stations was primarily for health reasons, for which visitors of the stations benefit from cooler and fresher air by staying on higher altitude and optionally taking part in physical exercises in the outdoor setting that the natural topography of the site allowed. In the case of Lantau Mountain Camp, which started out as a cross-denominational, international summer retreat for Protestant Christian missionaries, members of the camp had unfeignedly wanted to maintain the sense and bond of faith in the community. The stress on Christian fellowship could be seen on notes to campers for summer camps as well as in the meeting minutes of the Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association regularly. It was also mentioned from time to time at executive meetings of the association the importance to stress such aspirations for the holiday community.

The first clause of the constitution of the association elucidated the objectives of the Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association, and hence the existence of the Lantau Mountain Camp as "to foster and maintain the tradition of Christian fellowship and to represent and further the interests of the owners of the buildings etc which constitute the Lantau Mountain Camp"[xxx]. There is an apparent emphasis on the sharing of religious life and preservation of common values among its members. Membership of the Association is limited to the owners of the buildings which comprise the camp, or representatives designated by these owners[xxxi]. For decades meetings of the Association were held at Y. M. C. A. on Salisbury Road in Tsim Sha Shui, and occasionally at Helena May Institute (during 1950s). In 1980s the meetings were often held at St Andrew's Church, or at the church offices of the executive committee members. Meeting minutes of the Association from 1950s to late 1980s showed that meetings were always opened and ended by prayer.

Similar emphasis is also found in the operation of the summer camp, which involved not only cabin owners but also their guests and anyone who booked through the Association to use the cabins. Of all the particulars mentioned in the camp notes, emphases were made on preparation for the camp, camp rules, cabin care and most importantly, objectives of the establishment and operation of the camp to discreetly remind campers

and their guests of the common values to be honored and enjoyed at Lantau Mountain Camp. Organizers of the summer camp and cabin owners in general felt that "pamphlet giving particulars of the camp to stress the Christian purpose and origin of the camp, so that persons not in sympathy with this or who were unwilling to participate in the communal life of the camp would not attempt to rent houses"[xxxii]. For many years prospective campers would read in the camp notes that:

> Lantau Mountain Camp is a group of twenty small huts or cottages, situated at a height of 2,500 feet on Lantau Island… erected and are mainly owned by missionaries who, with their families, like to spend a summer holiday there away from the humid heat of the city. It is a place where the spirit of Christian fellowship is fostered and enjoyed.
>
> The management of the Camp and the catering is done voluntarily by people who are themselves on holiday. These tasks are onerous but can be made less so if all campers confirm to the rules and do all they can to assist the Camp and Mess Managers. It is hoped that all campers will join in the communal life of the Mess. The limited cooking facilities make it most important to be punctual for meals and to give the stipulated notice of arrival at and departure from the camp.[xxxiii]



LAAN T'AU MOUNTAIN CAMP

Special Notices

The Tai O boat which calls at Tung Chung leaves Hong Kong Daily at 4:00 A.M. and at 1:30 P.M. arriving at Tung Chung—6:30 A.M. and 4 P.M.

..... will have charge of the camp for July. Please notify them of the launch on which you expect to arrive, numbers of coolies needed and if a chair is needed.

Address all correspondence to

Camp Manager
Laan Tau Mountain Camp
Via Tung Chung
Hong Kong

LAAN T'AU MOUNTAIN CAMP

Announcement for 1933.

Laan T'au, sometimes spelled Lantao, is the largest island in the British territory about Hongkong. It lies west of Hongkong and south of Castle Peak, reaching from Kap Shui Moon to Tai O. It is the large island north of Cheung Chau.

The island is quite mountainous and has four peaks of twenty-five hundred feet or more. The highest peak is just over three thousand feet high. Two of the peaks are connected by a broad-topped ridge with a height of two thousand feet or more. On this ridge, at about the twenty-five hundred foot level, is the camp known as Laan T'au Mountain Camp.

The camp consists of fifteen stone cottages, small, but strongly built, and each with a beautiful outlook. Two or three streams not far from the houses give an abundant supply of pure fresh water. The air is usually cool and invigorating. The outdoor life of the camp and its healthful location have a most wholesome effect on the health of practically every camper.

Swimming in the camp pool is one of the main diversions. Numerous hikes can be taken to beautiful pools and ravines. The highest peak is within hiking distance, and so is an interesting monastery. Picnics, bonfires, sings, concerts, stunt-nights, and games and contests of various sorts add to the fun of each camp season.

The season usually extends from the first of July till the middle of September, as most people's vacations fall within this period. But for outings during the autumn months, few more beautiful spots could be imagined.

The camp is growing and improving year by year. A mess hall was built last year, and this year separate servants' quarters were added. Two new cottages have recently been constructed. Almost every house in camp has been enlarged or improved within the last

Fig. 9: Camp notes of Lantau Mountain Camp for summer 1933. (Source: Laan Tau Mountain Camp Collection, Special Collections & Archives, University Library, California State University, Northridge, 2003).

Despite the absence of a church on the altitude, the Mess Hall of Lantau Mountain Camp held a much more important role than a dining room. It represented the center of communal activities at the camp and the headquarter of logistics of supplies for all campers. Camp rules were posted up at the mess, and important announcements were usually made at meal times. Sunday service at the camp were also held at the Mess Hall, with hymn singing, praying, preaching and offering. The Sunday offering fund had been explicitly dedicated to deserving causes connected with Lantau, for instances local schools, welfare for children, refugees, and the underprivileged served by mission societies.

The change in Western missionary activities in Asia since late 1960s had subtly changed the religiosity and sociality of Lantau Mountain Camp. Following the localization of foreign missionaries and churches in Hong Kong, and transferring of missions to more underprivileged or needy areas, transition of the backgrounds of the cabin owners and campers was observed. Until late 1960s, cabin owners and their representatives were predominantly missionaries as clergy, teachers or doctors. Gradually members of the Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association included an increase in practicing Christians who were professionals or government officers, working at fields of education, architecture, public works, observatory, forestry and so on. Their active participation in camp and association affairs had however brought valuable connections and experiences to the management of the camp.

Lantau Mountain Camp saw its first Chinese cabin owner in 1977. Apart from cabins under society ownership, most of the cabins today are still owned by non-Chinese. As Lantau Mountain Camp was established with the primary objective of operating a summer retreat for missionary families in South China, when the summer camp ceased to run in late 1980s, campers now are not obliged to stay on the mountain during the hottest months. There is actually a benefit of avoiding the more fluctuating, stormy weathers. They tend to make intermittent short visits to the cabins for just a weekend or for a day hike only in the cooler months. Shorter stays at different times of the year also mean there is less physical connection between campers. Interaction with other cabin owners or users has become very limited. Despite the increasing secular combination of cabin ownership and dwindling interaction between campers, a sense of fellowship in sharing love for nature and tranquility remains. Cabin owners and their guests are keeping both the infrastructure and lifestyle of a quaint indigenous Chinese society for a century notwithstanding modernization and changes of the society.

Nonetheless, outdoor activities were pivotal in the communal summer camps and individual pastimes on Sunset Peak. When summer camps were still organized, much of the time of the campers was spent around the swimming pool for both swimming and socializing. Long hikes and expeditions were organized among small groups to Lantau Peak, Rocky Top (Lin Fa Shan), Perfect Pool and Black Rock Pool (near Wong Lung

Waterfall), or even down to Pui O Beach[xxxiv]. The fondest experiences of Rev Hans Lutz of Basel Mission, ex-Chairman of Lantau Mountain Camp Residents Association, at the summer camp were excursions to Perfect Pool, being away from the hurly-burly of the town to immerse in nature, and communal life with fellow campers. More recent campers recalled playing outdoor games such as "capture the flag" with fellow young campers in 1980s, and often they had to go into the forest to collect firewood for cooking outside the cabin.

Other group activities, such as folk dance, singing and comical skits[xxxv] were organized around the mess. Families, individuals and children found their own pastimes as they pleased. Rev Lutz recounted that for several years a Swiss camper would go up the camp once a year with fellow Swiss for an evening of "Yass", the Swiss form of bridge. The memoir of Dr Carter Morgan could best summarize the joy of enjoying nature and fellowship at summer camps of Lantau Mountain Camp[xxxvi]:

> Laan Tau Camp represents for many a child the first place he was able to run free and play without locked doors, gates and dangerous traffic. For older persons, the camp was literally the only place in Hong Kong Colony they were able to get away-from-it-all for a few witnessed by the people who toil up the steep trail, carrying heavy backpacks, year after year, and as often as they promise themselves they will never go up again, it takes one beautiful day and night on the mountain to change their mind, It is truly a campsite hard to duplicate anywhere in this part of the world.

The appealing natural topography of Lantau Mountain Camp is not only shared by campers. Though not a cabin owner or camper himself, Brook Bernacchi, Hong Kong politician, philanthropist, Queen's counsel, and founder of Ngong Ping Tea Garden at Lantau Peak, was a frequent visitor of the camp. He was known to have organized various training expeditions for teenage boys and young men who made rest stops at the Mess Hall of Lantau Mountain Camp since early 1960s. In late 1960s and early 1970s, Hong Kong saw a surge in outdoor activities especially of hiking expeditions among young adults to explore hills and countryside areas of the city. Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan, being the second and third highest peaks on Lantau Island, received a fair share of these new ramblers. The historical stone cabins in the saddle between these two peaks hence become attractions to holiday hikers. Lamentably, what came with these jovial bands was a sharp increase in reports of trespassing and vandalism of the cabins and camp facilities of Lantau Mountain Camp. In 1967 the Mui Wo Police was reported of the trespassing. In 1968 and 1969, there were more frequent reports of casual hikers, parties and vandals breaking camp facilities and entering the cabins[xxxvii], and damage was reported every month out of season[xxxviii]. The security report made by Mr Tom Hunter during a winter inspection in 1973 of the campsite gave distressing details of the damage done by

vandals; many of the cabins suffered from one or multiple signs of vandalism with shattered window and light access, tempered or shattered shutters, padlocks tempered with or sawed, door ripped off hinges, window latch ripped off, butane gas bottle adaptor gone, butane gas tube cut off, and litter deposited around[xxxix]. Security of Lantau Mountain Camp still remains a serious challenge as of today. Vandalism in the area is still reported from time to time. Inconsiderate hikers are sometimes found climbing onto the roofs of the cabins; some of them even pitch tents on the roofs or patios of the cabins.

Fig. 10: Information panel of Lantau Mountain Camp at Sunset Peak area erected by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. (Photo credit: Miriam Lee, 2021).

In response to public needs and interests in traversing the countryside, and in a bid to conserve the city's natural resources in the wake of sprawling new town plans, large areas of Hong Kong's countryside were designated by phases as country parks with statutory protection and regulation. The pristine valley of primary forest north of Sunset Peak and Yi Tung Shan was designated as Sunset Peak Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1976, and to the two sides along the ridge where the string of stone cabins of Lantau Mountain Camp stood, Lantau South Country Park and Lantau North Country Park in 1978. Construction of a new footpath on the rugged western slope of Sunset Peak from Pak Kung Au was commissioned in early 1980s, completing the network of hiking trails between the existing paths from Tung Chung and Nam Shan to Lantau Mountain Camp and the extended Sunset peak area. Under the coordinated efforts of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), regular maintenance and patrolling were

carried out along the hiking trails and country park areas at Sunset Peak, with additions of rest pavilions, picnic sites, distance posts and information panels at the trailheads.

Cabin owners have mixed feelings towards outsiders passing by or visiting Lantau Mountain Camp. While they respect the right for anyone to come to the camp to enjoy nature, and hike along the trails which had been for decades maintained by the campers at the campers 'expense, they feel that there had not been enough respect from the visitors on their effort in the upkeep of the area and on the unique history of the camp. Campers also hold the view that there is a need to raise awareness among hikers and country park visitors to keep off the cabins as they are still in use, not abandoned. Others are wary that there is a certain level of jealousy, if not hostility, from the public against the cabin owners for having the "privilege" of owning property, though remote and inconvenient, in the territory at a unique spot of the city famous for sky-high property prices. More optimistic members of the camp think that greater involvement of the country park management may bring better management and conservation of the area, for instances, better trail maintenance and more effective management of visitor behavior. The availability of basic country park facilities may also prevent visitors from damaging the cabins.

6. WAY FORWARD

Lantau Mountain Camp's intriguing religious background and recreational benefits, and its consistent existence and successive transformation through the century, is one of a kind of Hong Kong and China. In recent years the camp and its vicinity are becoming increasing popular among local and international visitors for its scenic beauty and recreational hiking. Seasonal, overwhelming patronage brings negative environmental impact, overuse of trails and intrusion into resident privacy. In light of its architectural attributes, encompassing natural landscape, unsullied highland ecology and social legacy, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive conservation plan to preserve all these features.

The conservation for Lantau Mountain Camp is pertinent to cabin owners/users (and their related organizations), hikers, villagers in the neighboring areas and so on. To preserve the fabric of the camp and carry on the pleasingly austere lifestyle, conservation plans and efforts will have to address the concerns and needs of the stakeholders, create synergy of different parties to leverage knowledge and resources for preservation and enhancement of the area, and strike a balance between heritage conservation and respect for private property rights.

Lantau Mountain Camp and its vicinity feature highland environment, diverse natural habitat at different altitude ranges, as well as environments designated for nature conservation such as Site of Special Scientific

Interest (SSSI) and Country Park. Baseline survey on its ecological values should be conducted, and historical use and human interaction of these natural landscapes and resources investigated. Empirical study on visitor impact and country park management of the Sunset Peak area is anticipated for long-term conservation considerations.

Regarding its people, history and cultural heritage, which are closely knitted with Christian ministry by overseas missionaries in South China and Hong Kong, research on its historical development and conservation of built heritage should reflect, apart from relationship with neighboring communities, the religious activities in the area and related organizations beyond the camp itself. Study on its cultural and social legacy should reflect the historical and cultural value of Lantau Mountain Camp in terms of cultural heritage, social development and international cultural exchange.

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TEMPLE AS AGENT FOR COMMUNAL NETWORK: A CASE STUDY ON SOUTH LANTAU

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In multi-lineage communities like villages on South Lantau, worshipping a common deity provides the vital social bonding, in particular, for an area long beset by typhoons, piracy and banditry. Local people pray for safety and prosperity through collective rituals and celebratory activities. Therefore, temples are not only religious establishments but they also embody the sense of social solidarity among villagers on South Lantau. Through the case study of three rural villages, namely Pui O, Shek Pik, and Shui Hau, this paper examines how temples play an important role in the continuity and repercussions of the communal network vis-à-vis the post-war disruption of traditional rural life on South Lantau.

1. INTRODUCTION

Countryside conservation has received more attentions not because people want to retain the rural landscape for tradition farming but how urbanites can enjoy the cultural diversity opposing the pressured lifeways of the modern city. Again, countryside conservation takes place in the physical location which is neither rural nor urban, and it is the zone in which urban visitors are most welcomed while rural inhabitants' values and experiences are fully respected[1]. In order to enhance the kind of rural-urban symbiosis in the countryside area, built heritage will probably play a significant role for both the local host and urban guest to engage with each other in the new countryside zone.

Regarding the regional network in various village cluster, there are lineage-oriented network with the lineage hall as the center through which ancestral worship has been organized for the enhancement of the sense of belongings, while religious places of worship serve the same purpose for multi-lineage cluster. For example, Joseph Bosco observed that Tin Hau temple serves primarily as a centre for individual worship, as well as a symbol of and focus for community identity; however, it can be seen as common venues to unite groups with different backgrounds, and also the regional center allying various unites which as be in the forms of family or regional community association for coastal communities, the Tin Hau Festival in Pat Heung and Shap Pat Heung will be the best cases showing the network embedded in the regions[2].

Similar to Joseph Bosco's interpretation, in multi-lineage communities like villages on South Lantau, temples and places of worship are not merely religious establishments but they also embody the sense of social solidarity among villagers. A place of worship does not materialize as a full-blown temple on day one. Worshipping a common deity provides the vital communal bonding, in particular, for an area long beset by typhoons, piracy and banditry. Local people pray for safety and prosperity through collective rituals and celebratory activities, which mostly co-related to their traditional living pattern. However, in our research on

South Lantau, we found some temples in different situations reflecting how the religious networks have been affected, or even destroyed. Therefore, we would like to show how built monuments have given impacts on the local communal development.

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory helps us to understand the interrelations of agency and structure; with individual's subjective view of the objective social structures, we are able to investigate how individual subjects manage to satisfy their needs and goals while structure refers to the social norms supported by the authority and traditional values[3]. Here, we would like to take temple as an agent in the local network since there is a rupture taken place between the temple as a built monument and a center for the practice of folk beliefs in the local network. In other words, temple used to represent the center religious practice including individual's encounter to the supernatural, festival participation within the regional context, and allying ethnic groups in a trans-regional networks.

In this paper, we would like to portray the "traditional" village landscape with our survey of temples along the coastal communities on South Lantau, even though some of them were removed, re-established, abandoned and left out from the "normal" practices. On the other hand, we have interviewed local residents regarding their views and practices on folk beliefs in order to understand the new communal network based on the changing roles of temple in the area.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH LANTAU

2.1. Background and Cultural Significance of South Lantau

Lantau Island is located in the southwest of Hong Kong, which is located at the lower basin of the Pearl River estuary. It was originally home to the native *She* (畲) and *Yao* (傜) people. The earliest trace of human activities on Lantau Island can be dated from the mid-Neolithic Period of more than 5,000 years ago. Other archeological findings including lime kilns and tombs where unearthed artefacts such as stoneware, pottery and bronze warescan be found along the coast of Lantau Island, with their archeological period from the Bronze Age (c. 1500-221 BC), Han and Six Dynasties (206 BC-AD 589), Tang and Five Dynasties (618-960), Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1911).

The first written record of villages on South Lantau was found in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)[4]. According to *Yue Daji* written by Guo Fei in 1595, there were 9 settlements on the island: Kai Kung Tau, Mui Wo, Lo Pui O, Tong Fuk, Tung Sai Chung, Tai Ho Shan, Shek Pik, Sha Lo Wan and Tai O. More villages, such as Yuen Ka Wai, Mui Wo, Shek Pik, Tong Fuk, Shui Hau, Shek Mun Kap, Shek Lau Hang, Ngau Au, Sha Lo Wan, Shek Tau Po, Yi O, and Ngau Ku Long were recorded during the Reign of the Jiaqing Emperor (1796-1820).

Apart from the above land-based communities, an Imperial Edict was proclaimed in 1728 allowing the *Tanka* (蜑家) people to settle permanently on shore and take up farming after the Coastal Evacuation Order was rescinded. Gradually, these sea-based boatpeople moved ashore and assimilated into the land-based living environment. Nowadays most of their descendants live on land.

With the *Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory* being signed between the United Kingdom and the Qing government in 1898, Lantau Island was put under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. The then Colonial Secretary J. H. Stewart Lockhart found 35 villages on Lantau with 30 people living in Shek Pik, 80 people at Shui Hau, and 300 people at Pui O. Statistics in 1911 indicated that there were approximately 1,600 residents on Lantau Island.

Though the majority of the above South Lantau villagers are composed of land-based communities, they are more susceptible to the monsoon climate as their villages are mostly located along the shore. In addition, with the frequent contacts with the sea-based *Hoklo* (鶴佬) and *Tanka* people over time, the land-based and sea-based customs merged among these coastal communities through marriage and trading, and traces of this assimilated culture still survive today in many traditions of South Lantau. For example, the coexistence of worships in Tin Hau, Hau Wong, Hung Shing, Kwan Tai, Earth God, etc. reflects the strong connection between the land-based folk beliefs system and the cult of sea gods in these coastal communities.

In view that many temples on South Lantau have undergone a natural development process from small to large or declined from prosperity, an understanding of these local temples and places of worship helps us know more about the social lives and historical development of the entire South Lantau.

2.2. Rupture of Traditional Living Pattern of South Lantau

During the post-WWII era, the government of mainland China changed hands and a large number of refugees flowed into Hong Kong. In response to the massive influx of refugees, the colonial government introduced the Lantau Island Development Plan in 1953, advocating the promotion of Lantau's agricultural industries, facilitating the development of rural economy, and at the same time opening up new sources of fresh water resources for Hong Kong Island. The two key proposed projects of the scheme were the construction of the Southeast Lantau Road (hereafter the "South Lantau Road") and the Shek Pik Reservoir, which have indirectly caused the rupture of the traditional rural life of South Lantau.

Transportation between villages of South Lantau was by sampan or through footpaths of about four feet wide, worn by the feet of the villagers in the old days[5]. South Lantau Road, which was built in two phases, was the first paved road on Lantau Island. The first phase of the roadworks was carried out from 1955 to

1957, with the route starting east to west from Mui Wo, passing through Pui O and finally arriving at Cheung Sha. The second stage of roadworks was to extend the original road to Tong Fuk, Shui Hau, and Shek Pik from 1958 to 1959. The road has officially penetrated the entire South Lantau area since the 1960s.

The location of Shek Pik Reservoir was formally selected and surveyed since 1955, and its service was officially commenced in 1963. Rivers and streams which originally served the irrigation purpose of South Lantau would be diverted to the reservoir from different water catchment areas, and then transported to the Silver Mine Bay Water Treatment Plant through underground tunnels in various areas of South Lantau. The water would then be supplied to the Mount Davis Service Reservoir on Hong Kong Island through the submarine water pipe located in Steel Wire Bay.

Lantau people have long been seafarers and farmers. Prior to the end of the WWII, most farmers were engaged in growing fresh water paddy and paddy fields occupied over 80% of the arable land[6]. Though a gradual decline of rice growing activities in Hong Kong was recorded during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the massive influx of cheaper rice imported from Southeast Asia, some farmers switched to more cost-effective crops, such as lotus root and Chinese water chestnut since the 1960s. However, the aforementioned roadworks and waterworks have had a serious impact on agriculture of South Lantau thereafter. The South Lantau Road cut across paddy fields in the villages, and the water catchment facilities brought most irrigation water needed for agriculture to the Shek Pik Reservoir[7]. Meanwhile, the underground tunnels of the reservoir affected the water table of South Lantau, making farming more difficult in some places. Moreover, the noise and pollutants of the construction works have also affected the local fisheries activities. In general, it is observed that traditional industries of South Lantau started to decline since the 1960s.

Apart from the rupture of the traditional living pattern, the completion of South Lantau Road has strengthened the connection between South Lantau area and other parts of Hong Kong, which gradually resulted in the exodus of local inhabitants. In the launching ceremony of the first phase of South Lantau Road in 1957, Mr. Allan Inglis, the Director of Public Works, pointed out that "it is expected that people lived in the city...will come in (to South Lantau). In this way, the villagers here will be closely in touch with the residents of Hong Kong and Kowloon". With new job opportunities brought by the rapid growth of manufacturing industry of Hong Kong since the late 1950s, large amount of South Lantau inhabitants found new jobs and moved to the urban areas by means of the better transports. At the same time, the new roads and bus services made many scenic spots in the area widely reported. The massive influx of new visitors prompted the opening of new restaurants, holiday accommodations and shops of South Lantau, which dramatically transformed the rural life of the area.

The aforementioned exodus of local villagers and changes in living pattern has unavoidably weakened the communal networks of South Lantau villages, at the same time it also affected the inheritance of folk belief and the subsistence of temples in the area. In the next section, findings on three rural villages of South Lantau, namely (1) Pui O, a *Hakka* (客家) village which has restored one of its abandoned temples in the 1970s, leading to the revival of the sub-ordinated communal network of the entire village; (2) Shek Pik, a submerged *Punti* (本地) village in the Shek Pik Reservoir which demonstrates temple remains the center of community memorial activities even if rituals and celebratory activities related to the deities are no longer practiced after village resettlement, and (3) Shui Hau, a *Punti* village which retains its communal network to a certain extent in the absence of a formal temple, would be shared to demonstrate how temples as objective structures are managed and utilized by individual subjects under the rupture, continuity and repercussions of the communal network vis-à-vis the post-war disruption of traditional rural life on South Lantau.

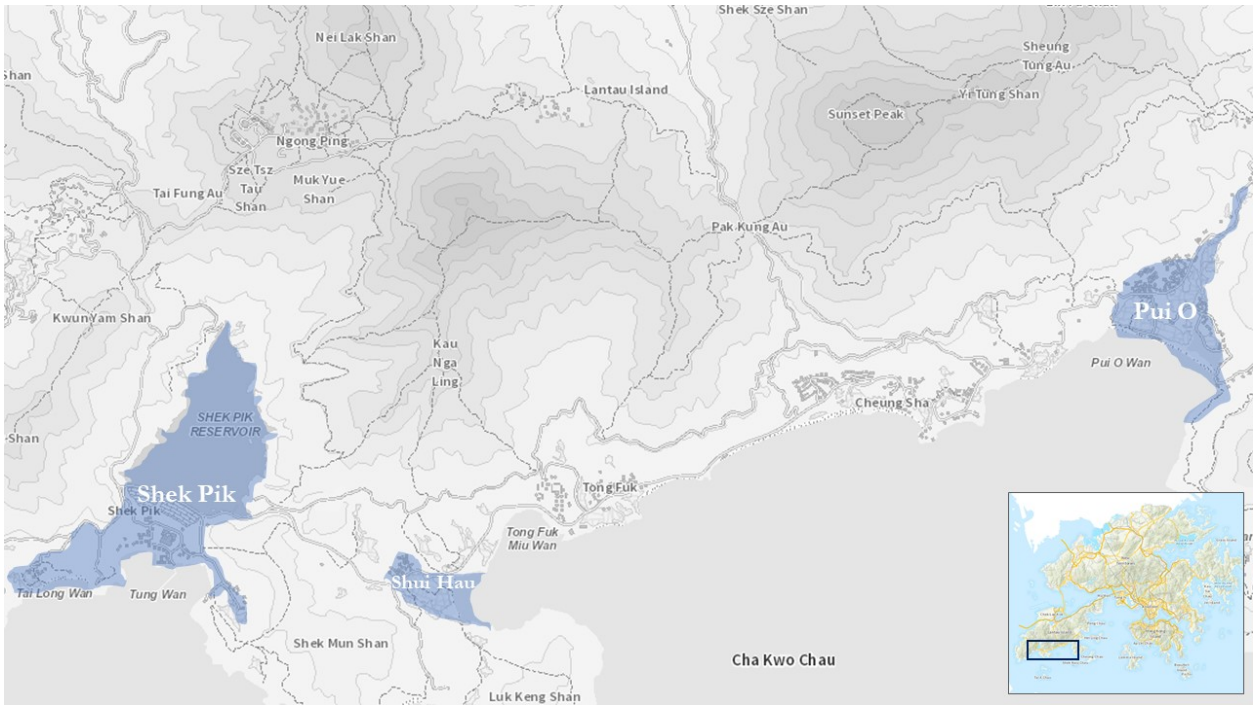

Fig. 1: Location map of Pui O, Shk Pik and Shui Hau.

3. THE THREE VILLAGES

3.1. Pui O

3.1.1. Background

Pui O is located in a river valley at the eastern part of South Lantau, surrounding by mountains in both the east and the west. Pui O Lo Wai Tsuen is the oldest village at Pui O. It was founded by the Cheungs, a *Hakka* clan originating from Fujian, with their clansmen settled at Pui O at around the late Ming or early Qing

Dynasty (middle of 17th century). The Cheungs had left for inland during the period of the Great Clearance, and returned to Pui O during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1662-1722). After that, they grew and set up branch villages such as Ham Tin, Sap Long, Tai Long, Lung Mei, etc. in adjacent areas. Despite villagers obtained a living from the sea, these villages were located at some distance from the shore. The genealogy of the Cheungs documented that in 1788, a sea robber named Tam Ah-che "robbed and killed, burned down houses, took away men and women as slaves". In 1803, villagers constructed walls to enclose Pui O which is the current Pui O Lo Wai Tsuen, to protect themselves against the pirates.

From the 18th to the 20th centuries, there were other clans, including both *Hakka* and *Punti* people, moving to Pui O in the pre-existing villages, or setting up new villages such as Pui O San Wai Tsuen, Lo Uk Tsuen, etc. There were 300 people at Pui O according to the Lockhart's report in 1899. The population gradually increased to 434 people in 1911, but dropped to 349 people in the 1950s.

Prior to the 1950s, villagers of Pui O used to make a living on fishing and farming. Each family grew paddy rice, sweet potatoes, vegetables, spring onions and chili, as well as taro. Families would help one another – if a family member had been sick or pregnant, other villagers might help in their farming chores when they had done with their own[8]. Villagers also reared pigs (the scale of which had been so large that the villagers suggested setting up a cooperative in 1955), chicken or ducks (and thus having egg as food as well), and would gather firewood regularly. Each family owned sampan(s) for fishing, which were only operated by males (while females were in charge of farming). Villagers would set net traps, use bright-light fishing at nights for cuttlefish and pomfret, or gather shellfish at the shore. As for transport, on average two families shared one bigger sampan to take fishing and farming products to Cheung Chau and bring back grocery items such as oil, salt, sugar and fruits[9].

Though there had been quite a number of public affairs among the villages, neither *heung, yeuk* (village alliance) nor any village office was set up at Pui O until 1986[10]. Most village affairs were settled at Pui O Lo Wai Tsuen (the central village of the Cheungs), and meetings were hosted in the Cheung's ancestral hall, *Yu Tak Tong* when needed. There was also a multi-clan organization named *Hap Hing Tong* to coordinate festive activities such as *qilin* (Chinese unicorn) dance and setting off *hung meng teng* or *kongming* lantern (Chinese sky lantern) at the mid-autumn festival.

3.1.2. Rupture of Traditional Living Pattern

In the late 1950s, the government opened up a quarry site at Pui O Au to extract stones for different roadworks and waterworks. Aqueducts, pipe tunnels, cisterns, pumping station (for supplying water from Shek Pik to Silver Mine Bay), were built at or near Pui O. Some farmlands were resumed and the irrigation

system was affected. For example, an underground pipe tunnel leading to Mui Wo from Pui O was dug in 1961, resulting in poor harvesting on villagers' arrowheads farmland. In 1962, villagers complained that the irrigation water source was affected by the construction of the Shap Long Pumping Station, and the lack of water resulting in the loss of the lotus and arrowheads farms again. In 1963, most farmlands at Pui O suffered from monsoon failure, which has caused acute crisis and suffering in many areas. However, at the same time plenty of freshwater collected from the water catchment areas flowed out from the *Loong Hau* (exit of the underground pipe tunnels) next to Lo Uk Tsuen to the sea directly as the water pipe was not yet connected to Mui Wo, leading to a wastage of freshwater resources.

Agriculture was gradually declined at Pui O with increasing unfavorable factors for farming. Meanwhile, the completion of South Lantau Road improved the mobility of villagers to find other jobs outside Pui O. It was reported by the South Lantau Rural Committee that inquiries from more than 200 young farmers were received for seeking jobs in urban areas in 1962. At the end of 1964, an article stating that in addition to the impact of typhoon and other factors, the introduction of low-price foreign agricultural and livestock products caused competition to local products. Majority of the villagers on the outlying islands were forced to give up large-scale farming activities.

In general, it is observed that traditional industries of Pui O started to be reformed since the 1960s. Following the rupture of the traditional rural life, the two main temples at Pui O, namely the Hung Shing Temple and the Tin Hau Temple, have also declined from prosperity.

3.1.3. Hung Shing Temple and Tin Hau Temple

Though with its construction date unknown, the Hung Shing Temple was renovated during the reign of the Jiaqing Emperor (1796-1820) and Guangxu Emperor (1871-1908). It was mainly worshipped by boatpeople, but land-based villagers of Pui O also donated and co-managed the temple though they provided less support in the later period. As farming at Pui O was well developed decades ago, villagers would routinely extract certain amount of harvest to use as the funds for paying the temple's manager and other daily operation costs. However, with the rupture of traditional living pattern such practice no longer existed and eventually no one managed the temple. It is speculated that the Hung Shing Temple was still active in 1955 as villagers of Pui O requested to build a jetty (though in vain) in front of the temple to facilitate better traffic, but it was then damaged by typhoons in the second half of the 20th century and fell into disrepair. Villagers of Pui O suggested to restore the Hung Shing Temple in 1963 and 1968 respectively, but these suggestions were all put on hold due to lack of funding. At that time, the temple was described as "the front hall has collapsed, the ruins are crumbling, the ground is full of rubble, and the dangerous place is barely supported by old wood. It

is heart-wrenching to enter. Inside the temple, the whole offering table is engraved with figures, flowers and birds but it is deteriorating" in the news article. Today, the Hung Shing Temple is completely abandoned.

Similar to the practice of the Hung Shing Temple, the Tin Hau Temple was co-owned by all villages and together they pay for the temple's manager with husked and unhusked rice as reward in the past[11]. The temple was repaired in 1916 and the donation list included villagers of different surnames. With the decline of agriculture during the 1960s, the temple started to be deteriorated as reported in an article that it was "very majestic in appearance, but unfortunately the temple has been abandoned and dilapidated". In 1968, it was said that "the two side halls of the temple have collapsed and only four walls are left in the nave. Roof tiled of the temple have long since disappeared, and only a small part of it is left to cover".

However, different from the scenario of the Hung Shing Temple, villagers of Pui O joined forces with other villages of South Lantau to form a temple rebuilding committee for the Tin Hau Temple in order to promote it as one of the tourist attractions of the area. The committee received HK $80,000 (approximately US $10,000) from the Chinese Temples Committee to carry out the restoration works in 1974. Following the completion of the renovation works, Tin Hau Festival was celebrated again at Pui O and it is still one of the very few elaborated ritual celebrations on South Lantau nowadays.

Accompanied with the revival of the Tin Hau belief, the traditional *Hakka* unicorn dance was re-introduced to Pui O more or less during the same period, as our research team was told by some Pui O elder villagers that they were members of the unicorn team for about 50 years. Current unicorn troupe is the second generation since the re-introduction of the practices, and there are separate teams of players at Pui O Lo Wai Tsuen and Pui O San Wai Tsuen. Since *Hakka* people consider Chinese unicorn an auspicious creature which traces away evil and brings good luck, unicorn dance is performed especially during large-scale festive occasions. Our research team believes that the restoration of Tin Hau Temple and the revival of Tin Hau belief provided the necessary supports to the re-introduction of the *Hakka* unicorn dance.

Nowadays, Pui O villagers believe that *Hakka* unicorn dance is one of the important parts of their communal network. Some of the local villagers consider *Hakka* unicorn dance the "soul" and identity which was indispensable at Pui O. They feel nostalgic once the music of unicorn dance was heard, and they hope that the practice of unicorn dance could be passed to their next generations. In response to this, Pui O villagers keep reviewing ways on inheriting the practice of *Hakka* unicorn dance and improvement is made to catch up with the time. For example, they start to accept female members recently though women would be rejected to learn *Hakka* unicorn dance in the past according to traditions.

Fig. 2: Unicorn Dance at Pui O during Tin Hau Festival in 2021.

3.2. Shek Pik

3.2.1. Background

Shek Pik Valley is situated on the southwestern coast of Lantau Island, directly under Lantau Peak, the highest point on the island. The first Chinese peasant probably entered the valley not later than the mid-Ming Dynasty. Materials evidence shows that the name of Shek Pik was found in documents published in the Ming Dynasty, such as *Yue Daji* written by Guo Fei. In terms of family histories, some lineages claimed to have lived in the valley since the 15th century. Another scholar learnt that the Fung clan was said to have arrived from Kowloon Peninsula in about 1660[12].

The valley used to have two main villages, namely the Shek Pik Wai and Fan Pui, which were connected to two subsidiary hamlets, Kong Pui and Hang Tsai. Almost all of the Shek Pik inhabitants were *Punti* people given the long family history of them in Hong Kong. In addition to the *Punti* community, it was recorded that there were 6 families of boat people at the Shek Pik area in 1957[13].

Shek Pik appeared to be a populous place until the mid-19th century, at which time the valley claimed to have a peak population of nearly 1,000. However, the number of villagers had then fallen significantly due to recurrent epidemics, for example, an outbreak of *haemorrhagic septicaemia* on Lantau Island was recorded by government officials in 1905[14]. According to the Hong Kong Census Returns of 1911, 422 people were living in the Shek Pik Valley. Among them, 363 were resided in Shek Pik Wai, which by New Territories standards of the time was still a rather large settlement.

The Shek Pik villagers were farmers and inshore fishermen. According to Austin Coates, the South District Officer of the colonial government in the early 1950s, Shek Pik and Fan Pui had splendid water supplies and thus were among the very few villages in the Southern District which could grow enough rice for subsistence[15]. Nevertheless, the villages sold pigs to Tai O and bought cheap rice and other supplies from Cheung Chau. In terms of economic crops, James Hayes, the successor of Austin Coates in the late 1950s, recorded that pineapples had long been planted in Shek Pik[16]. The villages had 11 sampans and 7 stake nets, each equipped with a boat. The community also owned "one of the finest herds of cows in the New Territories[17]".

3.2.2. Rupture of Traditional Living Pattern

Two serious stages of rupture took place at Shek Pik during the 1930s and the late 1950s. For the former one, Austin Coates recorded a sharp decrease in population at the area that 70 villagers were said to have died in 1928 and another 100 people in 1936 due to two major plagues. As a result, there were just 179 residents left in Shek Pik and Fan Pui together, and there were only 2 families living in Kong Pui and 3 families in Hang Tsai by 1955. Moving all the surviving inhabitants to another location was the last resort that the desperate villagers took in this protracted tragedy. They abandoned their centuries-old homes in Shek Pik Wai, moved southwards and settled in the crop-drying ground, a site which was thought to be less dangerous lower down the valley. They either occupied the existing huts used to store tools and grain or built simple structures with materials salvaged from their old homes[18]. The resettled village was then renamed to Shek Pik Tai Tsuen.

The later stage of rupture was directly caused by the construction of the Shek Pik Reservoir. In order to solve the chronic water shortage problem due to the increasing population, Shek Pik Valley was chosen by the government as the site for a new reservoir in 1955. After a series of confrontations and fierce negotiations, the administration finally reached a consensus on resettlement options with Shek Pik villagers in late 1950s. The relocation project involved resettling 202 people, mainly being relocated to the new villages constructed by the government in Tai Long Wan and Tsuen Wan. Separate school, temple and ancestral halls were also relocated to the two places at the same time. The villages located in the valley were then inundated by the Shek Pik Reservoir in 1963.

The 13 households living in Fan Pui first moved out on October 4, 1959. They were transferred to Tai Long Wan Tsuen, a neighborhood built in Tai Long Wan, an adjoining bay to the west of Fan Pui. The new village continued as a farming community of their own choice. Each household whose farmland was reclaimed by the government in the old village would receive compensation equivalent to the value of three crops a year (two crops and one vegetable) according to the area of arable land[19]. Later on, the majority of the villagers left Shek Pik Tai Tsuen on November 22, 1960. These 59 households moved into Shek Pik San Tsuen built on

newly reclaimed land on Yeung Uk Road in Tsuen Wan. The new village consists of 6 five-storey buildings completed with 8 shops on the ground floor of each building[20]. These shops were allocated to the land-owning families as compensation because the villagers had to give up farming in the urban area.

3.2.3. Hau Wong Temple, Hung Shing Temple and *New* Hung Hau Temple

There were two temples in the Shek Pik Valley, namely the Hau Wong Temple and the Hung Shing Temple. During the resettlement in the 1960s, a combined Hung Hau Temple was built in both Tsuen Wan and Tai Long Wan to host the deities of the two old temples. Though the traditional living pattern have been changed after the relocation project, the combined temple still acts as the center of community memorial activities even if rituals and celebratory activities related to the deities are no longer practiced.

The submerged Hau Wong Temple, which was reputed to be more than 300 years old, was located inside Shek Pik Wai. Villagers seemed to pay great respect and attention to this temple, as it was the only building left standing and maintained when they moved down the valley amid the epidemic, while other old settlement in Shek Pik Wai was allowed to fall into decay. It was recorded that the temple was repaired at the village's sole expense as late as in 1950[21] before it was submerged underwater after the completion of the reservoir. Though no written record could be found to justify the importance of the temple to the village, it is in general believed that Hau Wong and Che Kung have a special bond with the Lantau Island. Hau Wong refers to Marquis Yang Liangjie and Che Kung was his subordinate marshal. The two fled with the last Emperors who took refuge on Lantau on the last days of the Southern Song Dynasty. Meanwhile, their veneration in South Lantau is probably related to the recurrent epidemics took place in the area, as the two generals are said to ward off evil and forestall calamities for their devotees. Though another temple, the Hung Shing Temple, was located near the shore and escaped from the flood, it was eventually abandoned without supports from villagers after the resettlement project.

In the combined Hung Hau Temple in both locations, the two main deities, namely Hung Shing and Hau Wong, are enshrined on the temple altar in parallel, which is very uncommon in Hong Kong. According to artifacts in the temple and other old photo records, the original statue of Hau Wong, bronze bell, drum, incense table etc. were relocated to the new temple in Tsuen Wan, which is located on the top floor in one of the five-storey buildings of Shek Pik San Tsuen, while its counterpart in Tai Long Wan is a one-storey traditional pitched-roof building.

Our research team found that the religious function of the combined temples seems to be weakened with the reformed living patterns of the relocated villages. Rituals and large-scale festive activities related to the two deities are no longer practiced, and statues of some subordinated deities are misrecognized. For example, the

statues of Che Kung, with its most significant feature of holding an axe on his hand, should be worshipped subordinated to Hau Wong, but it was found that the statues of Che Kung were placed in the Earth God Shrine and in the shrines related to business and wealth respectively in the two temples, which were believed to be mistaken as the God of Wealth and Earth God. It is believed that the religious know-how has been faded among the younger generations after the relocation of the two villages.

Though no longer serving as a centre for individual worship, the two temples are still frequently visited by local villagers to maintain the communal network of the communities. Our research team found it was interesting to note that residents of Shek Pik San Tsuen would celebrate the anniversary of resettlement at the Hung Hau Temple and give thanks to their deities at "*mei nga*" on the 16th day of the 12th lunar month every year to this day. These practices are irrelevant to the natures and functions of Hau Wong and Hung Shing, which are commonly believed responsible for warding off evil, forestalling calamities and providing protection from storms.

Fig. 3: Resettled villagers celebrated the Anniversary of Resettlement at the Hung Hau Temple in 2021.

3.3. Shui Hau

3.3.1. Background

Shui Hau is located on the southwestern coast of Lantau Island, with Shek Pik in its west and Tong Fuk in its east. It is situated at the foot of the mountain, with woodlands surrounding its north. Its name, literally "water mouth", was said to be originating from its location near the river mouth. The plain was all farmlands along

the river all the way down. An Earth God Shrine is located on the way to the farmland from the village. The river mouth was also where the boat people berthed.

There are three clans, surnamed Chi, Chan and Fung (all *Punti* people), inhabited at Shui Hau. The Chis, originated from the Shek Pik Valley, arrived at Shui Hau not earlier than 1625. These clans often had intermarriage with neighboring villages at Shek Pik, Tong Fuk and Pui O. Some of the Chis recognized themselves as *Hakka* people, which may be a result of cultural integration due to intermarriage with *Hakka* people nearby[22]. There were 80 residents at Shui Hau according to the Lockhart's Report in 1899. The population gradually increased to 214 people in 1911, but dropped to 126 and 147 people in 1955 and 1957 respectively. As at today, there are around 200 villagers at Shui Hau, among whom 143 are indigenous villagers.

Prior to the construction of the South Lantau Road, Shui Hau inhabitants made their living mainly with farming and fishing. Villagers grew paddy rice, vegetables such as sweet potatoes, taro and spring onions for their own use, and kept oxen, pigs, chicken and ducks most of which would be sold to Cheung Chau. They would also visit Cheung Chau when they needed to buy grocery items such as oil, salt, sugar and rice. The bay of Shui Hau used to be a source of food as well. Males usually caught fish while females gathered clams, sea snails and oysters on the 1st and 15th day of every lunar month on the mudflat. Meanwhile, there was boat people living around the bay of Shui Hau before the 1960s. They went out to fish and berthed their boats near the bay which acted as a shelter with calm water. They sometimes cleared the sludge near the river mouth.

3.3.2. Rupture of Traditional Living Pattern

Similar to the rupture of rural living pattern of Pui O, farming and fishing was in a decline since the 1960s at Shui Hau. With the intension to increase the water supply to the Shek Pik Reservoir, aqueducts which cut the streams and rivers that used to supply the irrigation of farmland to Shui Hau were built in the water catchment areas. As a result, Shui Hau villagers had to share the same water source with the nearby village Tong Fuk. In 1962, conflict was aroused among the two villages over water issue. Though the government tried to seek new water source for Shui Hau in the same year (1962), and built water gates and dams to secure the water supply of Shui Hau in the following year (1963), the situation was not improved due to serious drought in 1964.

In addition to the tough conditions for agriculture, the tourism industry developed rapidly at Shui Hau since the 1960s also accelerated the reformation of rural living pattern. Shui Hau was a transiting spot for tourists from Mui Wo to Ngong Ping by bus according to a tourist map of South Lantau in the 1960s. Many shops

and grocery stores, which provided tourists with beverage, food and recreational equipment, began their businesses at Shui Hau in this period. Moreover, with more convenient transport, competitive salary earned in urban areas, and availability of public housing, many villagers and boat people began to move to the urban since then. In the 1980s, numerous young villagers have moved to Hong Kong and Kowloon to make a living, leaving less than a hundred elderly and children remained in the village.

It is interesting to note that there is no formal temple at Shui Hau except a small-scale Tin Hau Temple (which is very difficult to access by footpath). Surprisingly, the communal network of the village is still maintained through embodying in different places of worship, such as the Earth God Shrines, the Tai Wong Yeh (literally "Great Lord") Shrine, etc.

3.3.3. Earth God Shrines and Tai Wong Yeh Shrine

The most general village protective deities are commonly referred to Tai Wong Yeh, Pak Kung (Earth God of *Hakka* people), or the Earth God. They are the presiding deity for the intimate affairs of the locality that provide good health for humans and animals and act as the arbiter of disputes. Earth God Shrines can commonly be found at all key locations in the village such as wells, bridges, trees, and especially every village entrance. There may be several Earth God Shrines in the same village, but usually only one Tai Wong Yeh Shrine can be found to oversee all the Earth Gods.

Both Tai Wong Yeh and Earth God are usually worshipped in an open-air shrine. Meanwhile, unlike other deities represented in human likenesses and known to their devotees by names, Tai Wong Yeh and Earth God are usually represented in the forms of a rock on South Lantau. Taking the shrines at Shui Hau as an example. Villagers believed that the two stones in the Tai Wong Yeh Shrine were collected from the sea during inshore fishing in the past. The stones were then taken back to the village and deified as the local protectors. With such simple structure of shrines and representation of deities, the shrines can be managed in a far lower cost and would hardly be abandoned as long as the village still survives. Our research team believes that this may be one of the reasons for the sustainability of the rituals performed at Shui Hau even under the rupture of rural living pattern since the 1960s and the efflux of villagers in the 1980s.

On every 16th day of the 12th lunar month (commonly known as "*mei ŋga*") and 2nd day of the 1st lunar month, villagers would perform rituals such as burning incense, setting off firecrackers, beating drums and gongs, sharing pork, etc. at Shui Hau. The Tai Wong Yeh Shrine and Earth God Shrines are located at the strategic locations of the route of worship. Pork sharing is the most symbolic ritual among the worship, and it is usually performed at the open area in front of the Tai Wong Yeh Shrine. In the old days, pigs raised in the village would be butchered in front of the shrine. The fresh meats would be shared among all families

(instead of the number of males) of Shui Hau, and they would bring the meat back home for further cooking. The great emphasis on "families of Shui Hau" during the process of pork sharing undoubtedly consolidates the social bonding of every individual member in the village, and the identity of being "Shui Hauees" is strengthened through the practice.

Fig. 4: Ritual in front of the Tai Wong Yeh Shrine on the 2nd day of the 1st lunar month in 2021.

4. DISCUSSION

The case studies of the three villages demonstrate how temples or places of worship as objective structures are managed and utilized by individual subjects in different levels. The intension of the individual subjects to promote the abandoned Tin Hau Temple as a touristic destination at Pui O led to the restoration of the temple, and the revival of the Tin Hau belief reintegrated into the daily life of villagers and strengthened their communal network. For the Shek Pik Case, the religious function of the objective Hung Hau Temple gives way to maintaining the communal network of the resettled villages through different kinds of community memorial activities organized by the individual subjects. With the low cost of maintenance and management for the objective Tai Wong Yeh Shrine and Earth God Shrines, Shui Hau villagers could sustain their community in a lower cost even under the rupture of rural living pattern since the 1960s and the efflux of villagers in the 1980s.

We may further discuss the meaning of conserving religious structures in the countryside area from the findings of the three cases. First adopted in 1979, the Burra Charter suggest that culture significance of a place can be understood in terms of aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or

future generations[23]. It is obvious that religious buildings usually have outstanding religious value according to social norms supported by the authority and traditional values, but they are not merely places of worship from the perspective of individual subjects, especially for stakeholders whose daily life are closely attached to the religious structures. The three cases of South Lantau clearly demonstrate how communal network of villagers is embodied in the religious building itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, etc.

Findings in this paper show that it is important to define the place and its extent from the perspective of individual subject before preparing a management plan for religious structures in the countryside area. Sometimes we may be misled by the rupture of traditional living pattern that the religious structure could no longer perform its original religious function, and underestimate the cultural significance of the said structure by the first impression. As in the case shown at Pui O and Shek Pik, the Tin Hau belief of the former case has only been continued since the 1970s, and the religious know-how has been faded among the younger generations at the resettled villages of the latter case. However, the temple in both cases has transformed into a key element in embodying the communal network and the sustainability of the community.

Though it is not yet the mainstream practice in conserving religious structure, there is rising awareness to incorporate the need of individual subject and sustainability of local community when restoring abandoned religious buildings. For example, in 2016 the project of restoring the abandoned Sanro-Den Hall at Sukunahikona Shrine, Ozu City received the Award of Excellence from the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation with the comments below:

> "The building was rescued after two decades of abandonment and has been reintegrated back into the life of the community … Advocacy and outreach efforts successfully broadened awareness of the building's importance among Ozu residents, generating renewed commitment to sustain the shrine for future generations to come. The outpouring of local support from enthusiastic volunteers, experts and skillful artisans serves as a testament to the success of community stewardship in safeguarding vulnerable heritage buildings and fostering cultural continuity."
>
> 2016 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation[24].

Regarding the situation in South Lantau, we want to show not only the functions of temples in the historical context but also how the buildings should be understood for the community engagement in the coming future.

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