The Revival of Traditional Handicrafts: A Model from a Local Community in Taiwan

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Abstract. Today’s cultural heritage tourism industry not only fights to retain its place in the global marketplace, but to define what is the best way to present history while preserving and passing on core traditions and educating future generations. Through literature research, data collection, and analysis of the traditional handicraft market in Lukang, Taiwan, I have gained a better understanding of the modernization of heritage preservation, and how a community’s internal hierarchy affects funding opportunities and its influence over what is considered cultural heritage. Results of extensive fieldwork and a detailed ethnographic analysis revealed that when a community consists of multiple sub-groups, it is nearly impossible to reach a consensus on who has the right to define cultural heritage, what constitutes heritage, and how it should be passed on to the next generation.

Keywords: handicraft, modernization of heritage, tourism, Lukang, ethnography

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage sites are a current trend in tourism, and some of the more-prominent residents of Lukang, west-central Taiwan have been working with the central Taiwanese government to revive the town’s economic stability by initiating community-empowerment programs. Lukang is famous for its architecture, old temples, and traditional handicrafts which reflect the local culture and heritage. I was in Lukang for 14 months conducting my doctorate field research on the local identity. I was looking for things that represented local residents, such as local temples, crafts, customs, etc.

The aim of this paper was to contribute to the understanding of the modernization of heritage preservation, add to the concepts of what constitutes cultural heritage, and raise awareness of how government-initiated community-empowerment programs can cause inter-community conflicts. I conducted ethnographic research and attended community meetings over a 14-month timeframe; when discussing local development, local residents complained about the local and central governments. The town was set to develop tourism, and their special handicrafts were to be the focus to attract visitors. Yet, the government ignored the needs of craftsmen. The main issue that surfaced regarding community-empowerment programs was their lack of establishing and maintaining community coherence. It is questionable whether such projects are in the best interests of the community, especially in terms of protecting the community’s culture heritage. Through data collection and analysis, and literature research, a reassessment of the effectiveness of government-initiated community-empowerment programs can be enhanced to increase economic stability and cultivate a united sense of community.

Findings from this research confirm current research in cultural tourism and community-empowerment programs. Those studies suggested that the meanings generated from interactions between the community and tourism are constantly changing, and active participation in tourism development is not necessary to empower communities (Cole 2006, Duim et al. 2006). Additional work that supports the initiative to reevaluate community empowerment projects includes those by Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) who stated that a community competing for the same resources can lead to division, not unity.

Similarly, Giddens (1987) sited the structure of power relations within a community as the real controlling factors in decision-making processes

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and thus their success. Furthermore, Bondi (1993) stated that some community members remain unaware of the power relations, which can further exacerbate issues and impede progress.

The town of Lukang dates back to the Qing Dynasty (1684-1900); early settlers migrated from Quanzhou (泉州), China. (Fig. 1). As Lukang became prosperous, many temples were built as well as other communal developments. Numerous noted artisans and craftsmen came from Quanzhou and established the town’s reputation for handicraft work and architecture, which today, constitute the community’s precious cultural heritage. However, due to silting up the harbor, and the Japanese occupation ruling that outlawed navigation between China and Taiwan, the town’s growth steadily declined until retrocession (when Taiwan was freed from Japanese occupation) in 1945. As a result, the town became much less important in Taiwan. Yet 30 years later, it regained its claim as the ‘Mecca’ of handicrafts and historic architecture through a surge in tourism in the 1970s.

The tourism industry prospered because the residents of Lukang longed for the freedom that accompanies economic development. Another important influence on the resurrection of traditional handicrafts was contributions by government policies in the 1980s. The central Taiwanese government developed and initiated community-empowerment projects which were part of its cultural policies. The goal was to cultivate a sense of citizenship and promote cultural industries in local communities. This project allocated funds to local communities to establish cultural traditions; as news spread of the empowerment programs, they drew the attention of artisans and opportunists from across Taiwan. Under this new community-empowerment project, Lukang’s tourism industry flourished, and the residents were able to distinguish themselves by their handicrafts.

I argue that if projects originate from the government and the community is not unified in its support, the project might not be in the community’s best interests. Findings reveal how

![Fig. 1. Lukang as a historical port when early settlers began their migration from Quanzhou, China. Source: Lin 2000.](image)
craftsmen became divided due to side effects of
government-sponsored community-empowerment
projects. I contend that the type of community
plays an important role in the project's processes
and its success. If a community is organized into
different sub-groups that do not happily coexist,
a community-empowerment project is likely to
be unsuccessful; and when the main economic
industry of the community is cultural heritage, it
is the cultural heritage that suffers the most.

METHODS

The majority of the data presented is the
result of extensive field research conducted
from December 2005 to January 2007 of over
14 months of weekly interviews conducted with
residents. A questionnaire was prepared and
consisted of four main sections. Section 1 covered
background information: current craftsman’s
activities, description of their handicrafts, the
target audience, advertising, and difficulties faced
when promoting their products. Section 2 targeted
craftsmen who were no longer practicing in the
trade and asked them for details of why. Section
3 covered public opinion on the plan to make
Lukang Township a craft and cultural heritage
site to attract tourists. And the last section focused
on how effective handicraft promotions were,
and whether continuing education programs and
exhibits were helpful in educating the public and
enticing new craftsmen into the trade.

I visited craft organizations within the
community and conducted interviews with the
leaders of those organizations. I also targeted
craftsmen who had won national prizes for their
work. When any handicraft organization had an
activity, I would attend.

The Wooden Worker Organization is the
oldest organization in town, and I sent 180
copies of the questionnaire to their members with
about 40 being returned. I also interviewed local
historians who have an interest in the town’s
history and also in craft aspects.

During the interview process, discussions of
the town’s history occasionally revealed previous
records which were of significant value to this
research. As a participant, I spent a tremendous
amount of time and effort in recording the
activities related to the handicraft industry in
Lukang.

Yet data collection was not conducted without
challenges; due to the hierarchy of the multiple
sub-groups, group dynamics sometimes made it
difficult to collect data. In an effort to balance the
data, I also met with local historians. These local
historians are called local cultural and history
workers. They are from Lukang, and some of
them have studied Lukang culture for the past 20
years. Their backgrounds varied, including retired
school teachers and local government officials,
with the remainder being tour guides. Some of
them had cooperated with the local government to
publish many books about Lukang. Through field
work, ethnographic investigations, a literature
review, and supporting research I was able to
come full circle and construct the past’s effects on
the present.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Past and Present Craftsmen of Lukang

Lukang became a famous heritage site
largely due to a series of restoration projects that
in 1973, the most famous temple, Long-Shan
Temple (龍山寺), was repaired and was ranked
as a first-class national heritage site in Taiwan.
Its structure and style is based on the Kai-Yuan
Temple (開元寺) in Quanzhou, China, and is a
reflection of Quanzhou’s most classical structure.
Compared to other temples in Taiwan, its scale
is complex. After the Long-Shan Temple project,
several historical buildings and streets were also
restored. The term, “cultural heritage”, gradually
became a common part of the local community’s
vocabulary. As local craftsmen and artisans
continued to promote the towns’ cultural heritage
through their handicrafts, the town began to gain
a reputation as a craftsman’s town, which for all
intents and purposes was accurate.

During the Qing Dynasty, Taiwan was a
newly discovered land for Chinese settlers,
but considerable work was required before a
township could be formed. Craftsmen from
Quanzhou came to Taiwan because it was
difficult to find jobs in Quanzhou. Many
laborers from China who came from Quanzhou
saw temples as the center of daily life, and
that philosophy still remains today. Then and
today, temples serve as galleries for displaying
craftsmen’s skills and esthetic abilities. Since
most of the temples in Lukang are built of wood,
the most famous skills are those of wood carvers.
According to Hoe’s research (2000: 36), from the Japanese occupation until the 1960s, everyday necessities were made of wood. Because the market demand was stable, most of the people in Lukang chose to be skilled carpenters. As the number of carpenters began to grow in Lukang, they formed a woodworkers’ association. Even though the carpenters formed an association, this does not mean that they were unified. They were divided into several groups, and some of the groups included other skilled craftsmen.

The division of craftsmen into different groups was similar to the local residents’ current living situations. Local residents had divided themselves into different jiao-tous (角頭) since the Qing Dynasty. It appears that the concept of jiao-tou affected local residents a great deal. In their daily life, residents were accustomed to getting together with people from the same jiao-tou, and they built relations within their jiao-tou. Therefore, in the handicraft industry, artists preferred to divide themselves into groups. Mr. Shi-Xian Chen (陳仕賢), a local culture and historian who often provides guided tours of Lukang, said that “The craftsmen’s groups are complicated in Lukang and most of them are from the original woodworker’s association. Yet craftsmen, who earned the ‘Traditional Artist’ prize from the Ministry of Education, often left the association and seldom collaborated with other craftsmen’s groups since one of the results after receiving their award was an established clientele base. Back in the organization, as time progressed and decisions became more complex, each voice wanted to be heard, and the association split once again 20 years ago, and those who stayed in the association still maintained the traditional woodcarving festivities. The people who left the original organization formed their own groups but did not participate in other associations that formed later.”

Zhen-Yang Shih (施鎮洋), a well-known craftsman, who received the Traditional Artist Award, did not agree with Mr. Chen’s statement. He was a member of the original woodworkers association, and agrees that as they grew, too many voices wanted to be heard, and his own was drowned out, so he left. Furthermore he did not agree that traditional carving methods were the only true reflection of the town’s heritage. His style was to blend old with new innovations within his work. However, inserting new ideas does not give way to innovations in tradition. He had followers and he insisted that his pupils practice the basic skills of carving a beautiful arc shape, making perfectly straight lines, etc., before elaborating. He thought after mastering those, they could begin to add their own styles to their work.

Chun-Yang Huang (黃椿樣), the chairman of the Woodworker Association, stated that anyone whose work was involved in the handicraft industry was welcome to join the association. As one of Song-lin Li’s (李松林) pupils, he followed his teachers’ lessons, and tried to present vitality in the sculptures he created. When carving, he used traditional methods. He believed in the true art of woodcarving and enjoyed participating in art exhibits. Yet at his store, most of his work was kept in a private room, and he sold artwork crafted by others. He noted that most customers were unable to appreciate the beauty of the art. He would rather wait until the right person came along who really knows the esthetic value of his work and sell to them. In the past, for a short period of time, he applied for grants to organize and teach courses. He also advocated for the Lukang Township to establish a craft park. However at that time, the township could not get funding from the central government, so the project ended and his teaching ceased. He thought it was important to maintain traditional crafts in the town, but it was too hard of a battle to fight.

1. A jiao-tou is a sub-community group in a town; therefore the town is divided into different small groups. In the early days, people from the same villages in China preferred to congregate together in their adopted lands for safety because theft and robbery were common at that time. In addition, fights between people from Quanzhou (泉州) and from Zhangzhou (漳州) frequently occurred. Gradually different jiao-tous were formed, each of which had its temple, which was the center of daily life. Each jiao-tou worshiped different deities brought from China. According to Lin (2000), in the Qing Dynasty, Lukang was divided into different jiao-tous. By now these jiao-tous had gradually changed their name into a li (里), which is the smallest unit administrated by the local government. Although the jiao-tou has now become the unit for administration, its concept of sub-community group already affected the daily lives of local people. In many aspects of their lives, they divided themselves into sub-groups and each group called itself a jiao-tou.
alone and with insufficient funds.

However, there was a new group of craftsmen who were not from the association, and they organized a different set of skilled craftsmen in the town. They called themselves the Organization of Traditional Arts of Lukang. Currently this group is the most active in carrying out handicraft activities. Since this new association does not emphasize traditional woodworking, they chose to dedicate themselves to innovations of various traditional crafts. Normally tradition refers to the skills or patterns passed down from one generation to the next, but this group chose elements from tradition and mixed them with contemporary works. Most critics consider that this group focuses too much on new patterns and styles, and that it is hard to see tradition in their work. Regardless if it is the colors or types of materials, they do not limit themselves to traditional ones. Members of the group consider themselves broadening the traditional crafts and are proud of their contributions.

Based on Giddens’ (2003) definition, there is no fixed tradition, and it is invented from modernity. In contrast to modernity, tradition indicates a longer time span but it does not necessarily mean a long time ago. This point clearly indicates that tradition is a concept and anything in the present can be part of a tradition. Therefore, innovations to traditional methods are partially authentic traditions, and most of the criticism encountered was due to power relations. There is a lot of power in who defines something as a tradition or not, and for the most part, it was a means of gaining control over others. In Lukang, each group contains elements of old and new together, yet they do not always see it that way. It seems that by claiming something as traditional, a group can become more visible and gain a higher status. However, power relations were not only created by claiming themselves to be traditionalists. The new group of craftsmen was thought to focus less on traditions and more on profitability. Hence, their economic success resulted in them receiving a considerable amount of funding from the local government.

There were many subgroups among the craftsmen, and this highlights their divisions. This does not imply that their handicraft works developed well. In the 1970s, the town’s handicrafts began to decline, and the craftsmen had a hard time living off their traditional skills. The main contributing factor was the importation of Southeast Asian products that were cheaper and more popular in the markets; these caused Lukang’s products to lose their competitive advantage. Stores and manufactures gradually closed, and some of the residents were forced to leave their hometown or change careers.

However, at almost the same time, urbanization began to occur in Lukang, and the town’s renewal plan was implemented. By modifying streets, reconstructing old buildings, rebuilding old temples, etc., the landscape of Lukang underwent substantial changes. Lukang was feeling the pains of progress. However Lukang was not the only town to go through such changes. According to Chen’s (1999) research, the 1960s and 1970s were a transitional period in Taiwanese society, as the economy changed from agriculture to industrial and many people moved from traditional jobs to become laborers. He further indicated that many important transportation projects were built in the 1960s, and many tourist destinations were scheduled to be developed, such as Ali Mt., Sun Moon Lake, etc., around the same time. The government encouraged citizens to travel in Taiwan, and the cultural tourism boom began.

Modernization of the 1960s and 1970s brought a natural increase in tourism to small towns, which were now more accessible and hospitable to visitors, making it possible to visit without having to know someone there. This progress initiated cultural tourism as a new industry and brought new life to the residents.

The Arrival of the Tourism Industry

Restoration projects on historic buildings in Lukang raised awareness and increased exposure to Lukang’s cultural heritage; yet local residents already knew that the tourism industry was a key to making their cultural heritage more visible and attractive to the public. The tourism industry in the 1970s emerged as a rapidly growing economic sector in Lukang. Since then, Lukang has become famous for its historical tours. Lukang has abundant cultural heritage and is considered a nostalgic place to visit. In fact, creating this nostalgic feeling is engendered in many of Taiwan’s old historical towns. According to Lu (2002: 60), the nostalgic dream was triggered by the loss of the traditional Taiwanese
life during the period of industrialization, and it reflected the longing of millions for a return to the old Taiwanese way of life. It seems that Lukang became popular because the Taiwanese were longing for the romantic simplicity of golden days.

However, even though more tourists were visiting, as noted before, fewer authentic handicraft products were being purchased due to their prices. Mr. Xing-Hui Shi (施性輝), a local sculptor said, “I did not expect tourists to purchase my work. Mostly they came in and complained about the prices. I thought they could not appreciate the beauty of my work. Most of my real customers were Japanese, who cherished my work and knew its value.” Although handicraft work in the heritage sites was noticed by the public, most of the shops in Lukang sold handicrafts from China and Southeast Asia. Then others found another way to claim their heritage.

Mr. Shi is famous for pottery. Previously in Lukang, there were no traditional potters. Even though Mr. Shi was not a wood craftsman, he felt his creativity was spawned from tradition and considers his works a part of Lukang culture. By claiming his work to be traditional, it attracted foreigners to purchase and he needed other craftsmen’s support.

According to Costin (1998: 3, 5), craft works are involved with social relationships between producers and customers. The producers transfer social meaning to their products; customers decode the meaning and reinterpret it. Through this interaction, customers and producers share the same meanings, and the crafts are purchased. However, in Lukang, the producer’s intentions were to inherit Taiwan’s tradition, and this fit into the trend of pursuing native culture in Taiwan. This trend has been visible since the 1970s and it has affected many aspects of life. It might be hard to differentiate those of Lukang’s crafts from imports, and visitors often choose the cheaper products.

**The Community-Empowerment Project**

The community-empowerment project originated in the 1980s by the central Taiwanese government and was a part of its cultural policy. Its goal was to cultivate a sense of citizenship and promote cultural products locally. Taiwan’s economic boom brought unprecedented transformation to many locales. This project brought funds to more-remote places to support their cultural traditions, and it promoted the concept of local culture in many towns.

Local residents learned that the government would assist small towns with specialties, to develop their traditional handicraft works. The goal of this project was to stimulate economic growth. In Lukang, for example, wood carving was considered a specialty (Tsai and Lin 1997: 3). Originally, local residents did not consider cooperating with the government. Mr. Zong-Xiao Yang (楊宗孝) from the Ministry of Economic Affairs was interviewed and stated that “At that time, the noted carver, Mr. Song-Lin Lee (李松林), was hired to give guidance, and many craftsmen in Lukang were trained. However, there was not much market demand. Therefore, this plan failed.” Although it was not economically successful, this project did train many craftsmen, and it established the foundation for the revival of the traditional handicrafts at a later time.

In 1994, the National Taiwan Craft Research Institute (NTCRI) launched The Regional Renaissance and Community Empowerment Project in Lukang. The purpose of this project was to enable more people to play active roles in the decisions that affected their communities. Lukang was chosen because the town had many craftsmen. The project introduced a renewal plan of organizing the town like the old towns of Japan and tried to revive the handicraft industry at Lukang. The first step in the Lukang project was to evaluate related resources such as the craftsmen, and the town’s economy and transportation, and then to integrate them together (Ong 1996).

Mr. Yan-Yu Chuang (莊研育), a collection manager at the Taiwan Folk Museum commented: “Personnel from the NTCRI tried to convene local residents and divide them into several groups, such as handicraft, religion, etc. I was in the religious group, and only the handicraft group really worked out. Most of the members of the handicraft group were from the original woodworkers association, and the group called themselves the Morning-Sun Organization. They had meetings at regular intervals and initially worked together to conduct several activities. However, they split up very soon, and most of the members left. Currently most of Lukang’s craftsmen are from that organization.”

The reason the Morning-Sun Organization
split was not just due to too many vocal participants, but that some of the members were not craftsmen. These were the people who were able to create good relations with the central and local governments. At first, the craftsmen needed their help, their business savvy was important when negotiating with the government; but later the craftsmen grew suspicious of their intentions. They had disputes over allocating funds and activities. Overall, the craftsmen did not see the organization as beneficial, and they actually preferred to do things individually.

According to Cole (2006), the heterogeneous nature of communities makes power relations and decision making more complex. Some members participated, while others were marginalized. Local elites occasionally monopolized power, creating divided rather than united communities. These cases reveal that local participation does not automatically lead to the empowerment of individuals or groups of people. Duim et al. (2006: 111, 113) further suggested that within communities, there are four dimensions -- people, meanings, practices, and spaces -- which are used to illustrate complexity and diversity. These examples clearly indicate that communities are complex and diverse; individuals are linked to various groups and develop shared or opposing thoughts. The local community was supposed to be empowered to make decisions on their public affairs; however, the power relations were quiet complex, and many conflicts arose among interested individuals or groups.

Looking back at the members of the Morning-Sun Organization which comprised a variety of groups such as craftsmen who had won the National Prize, woodworkers, interested parties with ties to the government, other craftsmen, etc., it was even further divided due to social status, gender, political parties, etc. It was not really a monopoly of power from any particular group that caused the division, as evidence does not show that one group had more power over another. Decisions became nearly impossible to make, and people just became further disenchanted with the entire project.

Another goal of the community-empowerment project was to cultivate local residents to make decisions on their own. Mr. Qi-nan Chen (陳其南), the minister of Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs at the time, insisted that decisions were made by internal efforts from the bottom up instead of by external control (Chen 1992). Although in Lukang, the NTCRI decided to make decisions for the community. Mr. Zhi-Nong Huang (黃志農) said “Lukang is divided by jiao-tou, which are subgroups within the community. Craftsmen are also divided into different jiao-tou. Many craftsmen were used to living within their own jiao-tou. The NTCRI ignored this, and tried to reorganize the craftsmen. Therefore, decisions were hard to make, and quarrels occurred all the time. Finally many people left the Morning-Sun Organization.”

In 1997, the NTCRI had a new plan, called The Village of Life and Craftworks. It planned to create a craft village specifically designed for tourism to sell local artwork. It was hoped that each craftsman could create a connection with the village, and tourists could also directly visit the craftsman (Ong 1997). However, this plan was never implemented. It seems that none of these projects or plans originated from the community, and the community only cooperated with project designers. Although these projects seemed to fail, the idea of community empowerment took root in Lukang.

Mr. Zhi-Nong Huang continued the idea and planned an Esthetics Life Project in his jiao-tou in 2001.2 Its goal was to encourage residents to participate in community work and then bring handicrafts back into their daily lives. To encourage participation, he designed passports. If a person participated in an activity, the passport would be stamped, and when the passport was full, this person would get a medal. Most of the activities were related to community service such as cleaning streets, health care for children and the elderly, etc. As for handicrafts, Mr. Huang encouraged women to learn embroidery. Embroidery was chosen because it was easier for women to learn than other handicrafts. Women who learned this skill could receive a subsidy to their family income. But the revival of the handicraft was not only for economic purposes

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2. Mr. Huang’s jiao-tou is located in the Tsai-Yuan Li (Fig. 2). According to Lin (1985), Tsai-Yuan was a jiao-tou in the Qing Dynasty. Most of the people there were from the Huang family of Quanzhou, China. Nowadays the Tsai-Yuan jiao-tou has changed into Tsai-Yuan Li. The residents within this jiao-tou still have strong connections with each other, and they worship their deity in their own jiao-tou temple. But not many professional craftsmen live in the jiao-tou, and so Mr. Huang thought he could encourage women there to learn embroidery.
Fig. 2. The location of the Tsai-Yuan jiao-tou, and other jiao-tous. Source: Lin 2000
Mr. Huang’s project was a kind of community-empowerment project, which he advocated on behalf of the community. The community had regular meetings, where issues were discussed and decisions were made. But this project was criticized by other local residents, who thought embroidery was not a local tradition, and the project should not have received so much funding from the government. They even stated that embroidery work had no special characteristics, and they did not think tourists would like to see it. These residents questioned whether embroidery could represent Lukang. Although Mr. Huang’s project was accepted in his jiao-tou, it seemed that other residents had different opinions on the value of his community-empowerment project due to the question of whether embroidery was a part of their cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage is an important instrument to define a community, because it includes attributes of the group, and some of these attributes are maintained or transformed in the present. In Lukang, it seems that each jiao-tou has its own cultural heritage. Mr. Huang used innovative thinking to bring a new tradition to his jiao-tou’s heritage. Since invented tradition is a part of tradition, it is inaccurate to criticize embroidery as being non-traditional.

After Mr. Huang’s success, more craftsmen in Lukang wanted to participate in the revival of handicraft work. In 2006, craftsmen from the Organization of Traditional Arts of Lukang conducted several training courses for local residents and had an exhibition. They also collaborated with tour guides and brought visitors to their exhibit rooms, so visitors could experience the processes of making handicrafts. Yet this approach was also criticized by other craftsmen as being non-professional because the real training takes several years and is not like a course of several weeks. They considered those activities to be child’s play. However, the public in Lukang that attended the courses thought the training was highly valuable. Since funds from the local government were not enough to cover costs, the organization ended up selling soup in a corner of the exhibit room, and ironically bringing in more money than through the sale of crafts.

The organization also conducted community activities around non-traditional holidays. They considered their activities as community-empowerment projects because all members from the organization were involved, and their activities were open to the public and supported their goal of reconstructing their town as a handicraft center.

The notion of community empowerment came from the federal government, and almost everyone in Lukang knows this. Any project launched by Lukang residents is considered a community-empowerment project. Therefore in Lukang, many groups claim their efforts are for the community. It seems that the divided community uses community empowerment as a strategy to obtain federal funding for their jiao-tou. However, if different jiao-tous have conflicts on the same issue, the community has difficulty developing strategies to resolve them, as there are two groups that need to cooperate rather than one. The mayor’s craft village project, for example, was opposed by craftsmen from a variety of groups, and no solution could be found which satisfied everyone. It appears that the jiao-tou is empowered, but the community is not.

A community is heterogeneous, and it can be considered a social space in which local residents compete. Even when all of the members are motivated to engage in a collective action, social conflicts will still occur. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003: 18), stated that when social conflicts occur, local groups within a community utilize the limited resources and authority to compete with each other. Relationships between such groups can be oppressive and resistant, hostile and surrendering, etc. It seems that within these groups, there are power relationships which determine the interactions between the groups. Giddens (1987) further indicated that power relationships are structured in a society, and they form the controlling system of the society. As long as a social system exists, stable control will be there.

Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) only indicated that local groups build relationships with each other through competition, but not like Giddens (1987) who clearly indicated that relations are structured. Low and Lawrence-
Zúñiga’s perspective shows that each group is in an equal position in the competition, and they might cooperate together. However, Gidden’s structured relations imply that controlling powers exist, and they are considered to stabilize relations. In Lukang, it is hard to say if a unified structured society could exist since each jiao-tou has different ways of building relations with the central and local governments. Each jiao-tou does not really have a stable relationship with the political parties. In order to obtain resources, they use a variety of strategies to build new relationships within the government.

In addition, Soja and Hooper (1993: 184) proposed that power is reproduced through differences within a space and society. The person who has authority differentiates him-or herself from the others and emphasizes the others’ differences to empower his/her authority. Soja and Hooper defined how relationships between local groups are built. It seems that in Lukang, local residents created their own strategy to empower themselves and their jiao-tou. They learned that in order to make sure they are always heard, they have members seek cooperative opportunities with the government. Although it is hard to say which jiao-tou has the stronger leadership, it can be said that the one with better connections within the government will be able to gather more resources than the other jiao-tous. They have transformed themselves from agriculturalists to laborers and now entrepreneurs.

The government is not blind; it cooperates with local jiao-tous because doing so inserts an influence over the jiao-tous and thus establishes its control over local residents. This appears paradoxical because the goal of the community-empowerment project was to mobilize local residents to increase their voices; but in fact, the project has led local jiao-tous to build stronger relationships with the government, which in turn can stifle anything it deems out of scope. The core of the empowerment project was to protect cultural heritage through involving local people, but the local jiao-tous have difficulty reviving heritage on their own. As a craftsmen from the Organization of the Traditional Art of Lukang said, “Handicrafts are not a necessity of daily life, and so few tourists purchase them. Without the promotion and resources from the government, craft skills have a hard time succeeding and it is difficult to sell crafts.” Community empowerment was initiated by the government, and its core was also chosen by the government. It appears that the government used this project to empower local residents in their public affairs, yet it could also be seen as a way for the government to control local residents.

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural heritage is the collective memory of a community and is used to present a community’s character. Cultural heritage is also at the center of the government’s cultural policies, which can be seen as providing it with a way to establish its authority. The government usually inserts its ideology and values under different policies, and cultural heritage is one of them. These symbols are policies or funds that are weaved into everyday life, and people become so familiar with them that they see them as their own. For the most part, people like to identify with their government, and so in this case, cultural heritage is the bridge to connect local people and the government.

As the cultural policy developed and was implemented, local residents enthusiastically worked on it, but as time progressed and residents saw that it caused more divisions, they began to rely on government assistance. As Edensor (2002) stated, any cultural activity which is held by the government acts to establish the government’s authority. Therefore the real purpose of the project was to increase the government’s control.

In Lukang, although the development of cultural tourism brought in tourists, the benefits, both economically and socially, were not directly passed on to handicraft professionals. This paper demonstrates that local craftsmen have struggled to revive their traditions, but in order to survive, the craftsmen have to compete among themselves to create partnerships with the government, in order to get funding for their empowerment programs. Therefore, the community-empowerment project through the vehicle of cultural heritage development became a tool which local residents manipulated to obtain grants and resources to continue what they defined as their traditional handicraft lives. Empowerment is the capacity of individuals or groups to determine their own affairs. The success of the empowerment program requires individuals’ confidence that they have access to information, will be heard, and are free to
take part in community decisions. In the future, studying and gaining a better understanding of the organization and corporation between different jia-tous can serve as a starting point to improve current community-empowerment programs.

REFERENCES


傳統手工藝的復振：以台灣的鹿港為案例

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今日的文化資產觀光不僅要努力的維護它在全球市場競爭的位移，而且還要在文化保存與傳承時，試圖去界定什麼是呈現歷史最好的方式。透過文獻的研究、資料的收集、鹿港傳統工藝市場的分析，我們對於台灣地區遺址的現代性保存有較好的理解，以及對於社區內部的階層與資源獲得關係，和影響到界定什麼是文化資產有較好的認識。透過田野工作與民族誌的紀錄，我們發現到當社群裡有許多的小團體時，對於文化資產的界定、所謂資產的組成，以及什麼是我們應該要傳給下一代的資產，幾乎不可能達到一致性同意。

關鍵詞：手工藝、文化資產的現代性，旅遊、鹿港、民族誌

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