From an Immigrant Village to a Tourist Spot: The Transformation and Reproduction of the Spatial Structure of the Toyota Immigrant Village in Taiwan

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Abstract

During the period of 1895 to 1945, Taiwan was a colony of Japan. The Japanese government implemented the policy in the context of immigration. In 1913, as the first test of the Japanese government immigration policy, the Toyota Immigrant Village was established in Hualien County in Taiwan. The Toyota Immigrant Village was not as good as the Japanese immigrants had expected during its initial period. Japanese immigrants established the village landscape. It presents a kind of spatial structure which is very different from the Architectural landscape that is often seen in traditional rural areas in Taiwan.

Japanese immigrants returned to Japan with the transfer of sovereignty in 1945. Toyota Immigrant Village, therefore, entered a stage of recession, development and sustained economic decline, with a large number of population relocation. Many scholars and residents participated in the Community Development Association. They tried to change the spatial structure of the Toyota Immigrant Village by tourism. There are many abandoned farm houses, temples, while tourist landscape is to restore its vitality. Cultural landscape is the physical sense of media for cultural meaning and value. By the research of visible cultural landscape, it presented a colorful local significance for Toyota Community.

Key words: Space Reproduction, Spatial Structure, Immigrant Village.
Introduction

Today’s Toyota Community is the predecessor to the village of Japanese immigrants, named Toyota Village. It is the outcome of Japanese immigration policy. Toyota Village is located in southwest of Shoufong Township, Hualien County. It is five kilometers from east to west, six kilometers from north to south, lying west to east, with the Shoufong River tributaries flow through the village. The Toyota Village is located in the alluvial plain washed out by Shoufong River. It is a flat plain with mountains in west and north, while the eastern part of the river flows through the low-lying land.

The Toyota Village is surrounded by mountains and rivers, making it inaccessible to the outside world. Taiwan became the new colony of Japan according to the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed in 1895 by the Qing Government. Qing ceded Taiwan to Japan and Japan was a doping assimilation to Taiwan. The reasons for the early Japanese immigrants in Taiwan and the promotion of the implementation of immigration policy are as follows: Japan rural issues, population pressure, and for the purpose of strengthening the power of colonial rule, that is, to increase Japanese population in Taiwan in order to stabilize the colonial rule.

Taiwan was the colony of Japan, and promoting immigration policy was one of the most important things to do by the Japanese colonizers. In 1908, the Taiwanese Governor’s commission on immigration has done a series of immigration assessment, and nine places in eastern Taiwan were selected as immigrant villages. Eventually, there were three immigration villages built: the establishment of Yoshino Village (Now the territory of Ji-an Township) in 1911, the Toyota Village (Now Toyota Community, Shoufeng Township) was established in 1913, and the Lin-Ten Village (Now Fenglin territory) was set up in 1914. They recruited immigrants from Japan and it was the prelude of official Japanese immigration to east Taiwan.

In 1913, following the Yoshino Village, the Toyota Village was the second immigrant village officially established in the southwest of Shoufong Township. It was under the rule of the immigration policy implemented by the mainland Japanese government, which made the Toyota Village the first official test run immigration plan. Toyota Village was established in 1913.

Toyota immigration Village is not as good as being expected by the immigrants in its initial condition. However, the immigrants had a strong will to live in Taiwan, so they settled down and started farming on the reclaimed land. Official immigration village was the product of Japanese Government who wished to transplant Japanese rural style to Taiwan and to present the typical Japanese village landscape, regardless of the fact that the architectural or spatial structures of the immigrant village were
very different from Taiwan’s traditional rural areas.

Apart from hardware facilities, the social structures between Japanese immigrants and native Taiwanese were quite different. Japanese immigrants were strangers to each other because they were recruited by the government, while Taiwanese knew each other through social networks of the blood or geographical relationship. Therefore, the Toyota Village’s spatial structure and place significance are worth exploring.

The Transformation of Toyota Immigrant Village

Looking at the Japanese immigration Villages in Hualien, one finds that the patterns of Yashino Village, Toyota Village and Linten Village were similar to each other. The immigrant Villages were linked by rail; Directorate of Immigration was set up in the center of Village, surrounded by schools, hospital, missionary plan, shrine and other public constructions. The internal Village and farm land were cut into neat pieces of land by the grid-like roads.

The Toyota Village is no exception; it was cut into same large residential areas by lattice-shaped roads. There were about 16 of 20 units which shared two wells for water access. Through the establishment of national rural demonstration, Immigration Village—with its straight and orderly streets and Village planning—stands for not only modern Western thoughts but also represents Japanese political ideology. Japanese had enough political power to draw out orderly rural areas in this wasteland, and to build a relatively comprehensive place with health care centers, educational institutes, police stations, religious communities and economic fields. Here, immigration Village stood for the symbol of power, order and rationalism. Compared with the Taiwanese people, whose residential places were surrounding the immigrant village, the Japanese settlers were in the dominant central spot. Such a residential arrangement indicates the relationship between center and periphery, the colonizers and the colonized. The space which was constructed under the ideological mode of operation is easy to understand.

During the Japanese colonial period, there were an increasing number of Taiwanese people residing in the Toyota Village. This occurred especially in World War II when many young Japanese people returned to Japan as soldiers, and the Village started facing the issue of lacking in labor migrants. The master of the village began to hire Taiwanese people as farmers. There were three Taiwanese settlements located around the villages. Taiwanese people resided in this area made their living by offering labor to Japanese and stayed with low quality of life. Their houses were all easily made of thatched cottages. They were envy towards the Japanese immigrant’s
houses and lives.

Agricultural production was the main industry of Toyota Village during the Japanese colonial period. The Japanese government hoped that Japanese immigrants could ultimately make a living in Taiwan by self-sufficiency in the rural area. Such an idea was promote to other industries except agriculture in Taiwan at the time. One of the thresholds for Japanese immigrants must be recruited to work for the land. The agricultural production is to test for the tropical plants in agriculture, and the priority purpose of colonial policy is economic purpose.

There were two areas where sugar canes were grown, and they ensure the stability of the material for sugar mills. Therefore, sugar canes became the main product in Toyota Village, and the villagers began to dig for water in 1916. It was planned to fetch Shoufong river water through the rock of mountain foot for irrigation. The main trunk line was Tamashita line which supplied the water for Yasmashi tribe. There were two branch lines; one was for Morimoto tribe, the other for Ohira tribe. For the purpose of roasting and storing tobacco, Toyota village built a lot of tobacco houses. A tobacco house was established by baking tobacco. Taiwan’s yellow species tobacco required to be dried in a special drying room which was generally referred to as the frying chamber “Tobacco house” or “Smoking house”. The shape of Tobacco house is different from the traditional residential houses because a “transom” is needed to be set on the roof, and that makes it is easy to identify the place.

The location of different sets of “transom” changed the cultural landscape into a special industrial landscape. At the beginning of the village establishment, Chong-Li tribe was planned to be the administration center of Toyota Village where there was a light railway to transport harvests to the market. During the period, cargo transportation was more important than passenger for railway existence. Geographically speaking, Chong-Li tribe is in the center of the village. As to the oversea Japanese immigrants, the most important thing is the spiritual sustenance to soothe the solitude of homesickness, and that was the reason for them to plan for building a Toyota Shrine here. Paradoxically, most Japanese immigrants were Shinshu Buddhists while Toyota Shrine is the national Shinto Shrine system—the “Founding Shrine”. The location of Toyota Shrine was next to the village but positioned at the end of the road. By maintaining a distance between the shrine and the village, it created a noble and awesome atmosphere for the spiritual place. Several giant trees and lush foliage were plant around the shrine, which increased the sense of serenity and mystery for the place. Such a kind of planning is to separate the shrine and people by planting trees as a barrier and keeping an isolated space without too much social contact. The space distance was changed into a spiritual distance, and then the shrine had become a sacred space and created an arbitrary position, not to be blasphemed.
After Taiwan’s recovery after World War II, the Japanese residents living in immigration villages were forced to repatriate back to Japan. Part of lands and houses were taken over by indigenous Taiwanese farmers and long-term employees who had worked for Japanese immigrants living in the outlying villages. In recent years, with the rising local consciousness, the indigenous residents begin to set up community and to gather hometown’s identification. Because nowadays the three villages (Fiong-shan, Fiong-li, Fiong-ping) are commonly expressing strong feeling towards the Japanese, local organizations begin to be referred to the three villages as “Toyota Community”, and the scope for community empowerment. Therefore, this study adopts such an idea and use “Toyota Community” in the text, it means Toyota village in Japanese colonial period.

The Spatial Reproduction of Toyota Immigrant Village

Toyota village is the outcome of Japanese government official policy. Before the village construction, there were completely planning, assessment and execution. Therefore, according to the layout of buildings, one can interpret that as Japanese government intention to educate Japanese immigrants in order to accept a certain concepts, and to force their people to obey the militarism. One can learn about Japanese value and world view when catching the meaning of a cultural landscape.

In the administrative regions, Toyota Village consists of four parts: Yamashita tribe, Morimoto tribe, Chong-Li tribe and Ohira tribe.

1. Yamashita tribe

It is located in the northwest of the Toyota Village, the only tribe built in 1915 after the Village established. It was named “Yamashita” due to the fact that the village was located at the foot of the mountain. It often resulted in destruction of agricultural land affected by the disaster of rain because it was close to the hillside. During Japanese colonial period, there was asbestos mining ore even after the recovery in 1945 when Jade was accidentally discovered. The discovery made the tribe developed rapidly and significantly changed the cultural landscape of the Village.

2. Morimoto tribe

It is located in southeast of Toyota station and named “Morimoto” because of the rich forests around that area. There is the Toyota shrine (now Bilian Temple) in the southwest of tribe. This area was divided into eight regions, surrounded by a stream
and sandbars, and it was mostly a wasteland.

3. Chong-Li tribe

It was named “Chong-Li” due to its central location in the Village and was planned as the administrative center of the Village. All public facilities were provided here, such as immigration clinics, primary schools, police stations and religious activity places.

4. Ohira tribe

It is located at the south east of the Village. The place was named “Ohira” because of the elongated shape and flat terrain. It was connected with outside would by light railway.

Spatial organization faced center and made Toyota Village draw a neat plan, not only did it show the land features of Western modernism but it also revealed the Japanese officials run immigration “demonstration” nature. From the viewpoint of Taiwanese people who stayed outside the village, Toyota Village stood for rational, modern and better lives.

After World War II, in 1945, Japan declared unconditional surrender. The Japanese rule in Taiwan was invalid when World War II ended. The government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) decided to repatriate the Japanese home and freeze their properties in Taiwan. The following year, in 1946, the KMT (Chinese Nationalist) government began to set limitations for Japanese immigrants who return home with goods; they are only allowed as follows: cash no more than one thousand yen, summer and winter clothes (one for each), and one set of bed quilt. Other things are not allowed to take back to Japan except those mentioned above. Any remaining clothes or household can be given away to the Taiwanese they acquainted, or they can set up a stall to sell it. Finally, all Japanese residents of the immigration villages left Taiwan, and Japanese social cultural landscape disappeared as well in the Toyota Village. Eventually, the new residents of Toyota Village were those who worked for Japanese during colonial period. They bought the land from Japanese privately. In 1932, a Japanese named Chong-Dau, a Toyota Village resident, found the asbestos mine in Lao-Nau mountain. In 1937, Japanese worked on the asbestos and talc production; only a dozen tons were shipped to Osaka, Japan, for sale. In 1965, Chinese Quarry Company started mining Taiwan jade officially; illegal mining by outsiders was strictly prohibited. Gradually, the mining object was changed into soft jade which was the main supply sources of Taiwan jade. Its annual average productivity was about 300 tons. In 1969, the tunnel
mining and mass production began, so the yield greatly increased, about 1,100 tons per year. It changed the structure of the industry, which transformed not only for Fong-shen’s village’s production space, but also created a lot of commercial landscape. The residents changed their living space because they made a lot of money. Especially in Fong-shan village, the huge wealth and income resulted in the gradual renovation of their houses. The original space was reconfigured to meet the agricultural production; thus, traditional houses were replaced by concrete buildings. From the Japanese colonial period, Toyota Village as an official migrant village was an abstract space conceived by experts, scholars’ brain storming and planning. When this concept had been put into practice in the real space, including the construction of chessboard road, the unit lands of similar sizes, the railway, Immigration center, Toyota shrine and other landscape, it started the interflow between man and space and became a real space for residents to use in Toyota Village. And then, gradually, Japanese immigrants who resided there treated it as a symbolic space for them to live. Through the perception of residents, the feeling of space was put into practice by continuous daily habits. After Taiwan’s recovery, Taiwanese moved to previous Japanese living space and began another cycle. Taiwanese entered this different living space from the previous familiar one. Through this experience, they did the different interaction and made different perception and then they started to scheme how to rebuild the Japanese-style space.

**Conclusion**

Japanese immigrants went back to Japan with the transfer of sovereignty in 1945. Toyota Immigrant Village entered the stage of recession, development and sustained economic decline, and a large number of population relocation. In recent years, scholars and residents have formed a Community Development Association. They have tried to change the spatial structure of the Toyota Immigrant Village by employing tourism. Bicycle tourism is very popular in Taiwan in recent years. There are many abandoned farm houses and temple. Tourist landscape is to restore its vitality.

In this circulation, it is also implicit in abstract concept of social structure and cultural background. These concepts made cultural landscape visible. In other words, from the viewpoint of the Taiwanese culture that faces the space with familiar behaviors—and this may imply social structure and power meaning—may express the changing cultural landscape, eventually get used to a new living space and cope with the process of different social an cultural spaces.
In 1966, due to the rise of new industries in Taiwanese jade, economic changed in the production process resulting in further changes in the Toyota Community space. In the Taiwan jade period, the jade mining industry attracted a large number of labors to move here. The residents perceived a lot of business opportunities which came from Taiwanese jade. The residents promoted the trading business and made good profit by selling jade. It made the Toyota community residents start setting up the mini gem plants. It also changed the daily living space that many Toyota Community residents used family rooms for displaying the processing apparatus. Fongshan village increased commercial spaces when mining business gathered in this village. Finally, the focus of village has been transferred. Although it appears to be an individual industrial network which separates personal life and production process, it reseated a new space part of the production. In the meantime, it expressed different period residents. Cultural landscape is the physical sense of media for cultural meaning and value. By the research of visible cultural landscape, it presented a colorful local significance for Toyota Community.

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