TANKA TRANSITIONS

Shrimp Paste, Dolphins and the Contemporary Aquapelagic Assemblage of Tai O

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Abstract

Tai O, located off the northwest coast of Hong Kong's Lantau Island, has a distinct socio-economic and cultural character premised on its position at the centre of an aquapelagic assemblage within the broader Pearl River Delta area. The area is well known as a centre for cultural heritage tourism within which culinary heritage, and particularly shrimp paste production, is a key element. Recent developments in Hong Kong fisheries policy have curtailed shrimp fishing around the island and required its shrimp paste operation to realign its production and manufacturing operations. In tandem with these changes, the island has recently developed as a centre for dolphin-watching tourism. The article examines the nature of Tai O's contemporary use of marine resources, the nature of community adjustments to external circumstances and the likely longevity of its livelihood activities and distinct culinary products.

Keywords

Tai O, Tanka, food heritage, aquapelagic assemblage, fisheries

Introduction

This article is relatively unusual within the field of Food Studies by virtue of combining a food topic (in this case, shrimp paste production) and a non-culinary one (namely, dolphin watching). While markedly different in nature, these two activities are aligned aspects of what Island Studies discourse has characterised as the *aquapelagic assemblage* of marine and terrestrial components that results from human livelihood activities across these spheres (see Hayward, 2012; Suwa, 2012). While the twinning of processed seafood products and marine eco-tourism may be relatively novel in Food Studies, the interdisciplinary approach required to consider them is far from alien to the field. Indeed, as Long (2009: 9) has identified, since its inception, Food Studies has tended to cross (and/or blur) "the usual boundaries between the humanities and sciences, as well as between academic and public (or applied) research" (2009: 9). Similarly, Rath and Assmann have asserted that Foodways research encompasses "the production, consumption and circulation of foods…as well as political, economic, cultural, social, and religious dimensions to these" (2010: 1). While the field of Island Studies has been somewhat slow to engage with Food Studies, recent work in the field is of particular relevance to this article by dint of its increasing recognition of aquatic spaces as ones that can be closely integrated with the terrestrial spaces of islands. Discussions in the journal *Shima* concerning the nature of aquapelagos (a neologism coined to refer to an integrated marine and terrestrial assemblage generated by human livelihood activity), in particular, have opened up ways of conceptualising such spaces and related patterns of human social, economic and cultural development.

This article deploys the concept of the aquapelago in order to illuminate aspects of a community during a time of rapid transition (and, thereby, to investigate the manner in which concepts of the aquapelago can be illuminating to such a project). The article aims to complement the considerable descriptive and analytical work undertaken on Tai O by previous researchers (such as Dryland and Syed, 2010 and Liu and Cheung, 2016) by adding a broader dimension only hinted at in Dryland and Syed's brief aside that "boats, fishing and the sea, along with other consistent infrastructure…were and are integral elements of the Tai O space" (2010: 627) and by considering the "sense of place" identified by Liu and Cheung (2016) as key to the maintenance of Tai O culture at a time of significant socio-economic change.

Fittingly, with regard to the blended nature of aquapelagic spaces, there is a degree of ambiguity with regard to what Tai O is and how it can be conceived and represented. While it is most often referred to in contemporary discourse as a village, it is also an island. Or, to immediately complicate matters, it is an island and a village partially constructed on an area of the island (and partially on the opposite bank of the creek that separates it from an adjoining, larger island; see Figure 1). Further complexity is added by the extension of dwellings on both banks into the creek and into the island's harbour waters, resulting from their (partial or whole) construction on stilts and the complementary conduct of livelihood activities upon boats moored adjacent to the dwellings. As this slightly complicated characterisation suggests, Tai O island/village is premised on an integration of terrestrial and marine/riverine spaces suitable for discussion in terms of aquapelagic assemblages even before the connection of this central lived/living village space to particular areas of the adjacent sea is considered. Photographic representation clarifies the previous descriptions. Figure 1 provides a panoramic view of the island in relation to the adjacent shore of Lantau Island, and Figure 2 illustrates the protrusion of the village into its central creek.

Figure 1: Panoramic view of Tai O (top centre and top right of image) and adjacent areas of the Lantau shore and hinterland (bottom centre and left) (photo by Li Wai On, May 2016)

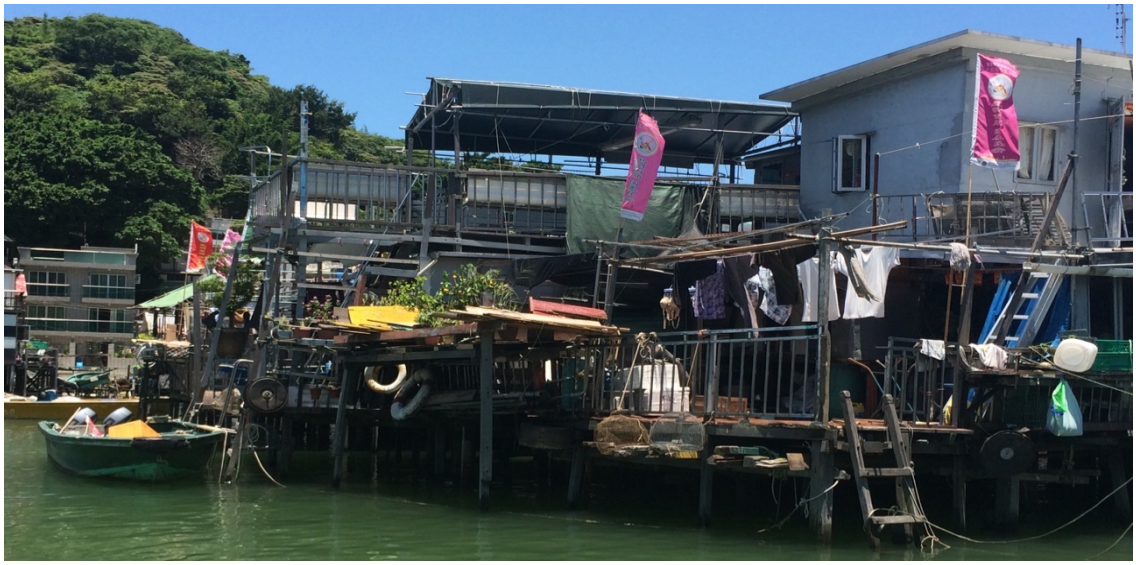

Figure 2: Contemporary stilt-based dwellings in Tai O's central creek area (author's photo, July 2016)

The Tanka and Tai O

Tai O's present-day community of around 2,000 is dominated by members of its original settlers, the Tanka.[1] The Tanka are a Chinese cultural minority that occurs in clusters from Hainan, in the far south of China, to Fujian and Taiwan on its mid-coast.[2] The Tanka are a predominantly boat-dwelling people whose exploitation of marine resources has largely obviated the need to encroach on the terrestrial territories of other groups in order to sustain their communities. Dryland and Syed suggest that the Tanka's "verifiable and permanent settlement" in Tai O "is known to date back 300 years" (2010: 619), with increasing documentation and study of the settlement occurring in the 1800s as the Pearl River Delta became increasingly frequented by European merchants and, subsequently, colonists.

The Tanka community's extended presence offshore in particular locations led to partial adaptations to onshore life, such as sleeping in boats dragged ashore and the fabrication of more permanent dwellings in close proximity to the water. The community's distinctive *Pang O* (stilt houses) are iconic in this regard. Built on the edge of the tidal zone, they formed a shore and mooring base for fishing junks and may also have been constructed as a way of escaping prohibitions against the Tanka living on land (Chung et al., 2012: 20). Accounts of the Tai O community in the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century represent them as primarily engaged in fishing and some associated processing of fish products as both

subsistence activities and, particularly following Tai O's inclusion in the expanded British colony of Hong Kong in 1898, through sales of product from boats and local fish stalls to residents of Lantau and other islands. During this period, the Pearl River Delta provided such a rich fishing ground for Tanka fishers that the volume of their catch did not appear to deplete to any significant (i.e., unsustainable) extent. For much of the early-mid-twentieth century, the Tai O community was remote from the developments of settlements in eastern Lantau Island, such as Mui Wo, and on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. But by the mid-twentieth century, a number of innovations began to affect the community, modifying its livelihood activities and changing the local marine ecology that the community relied on. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Tai O community was primarily sustained by fishing a variety of species on seasonal bases, including most prominently yellow croaker fish (*Larimichthys polyactis*) and other species such as Macau sole (*Cynoglossus trulla*), using a variety of net types cast from traditional junks. Initially, the community perceived the introduction of motor-powered fishing boats in the 1950s (together with industrially manufactured nets) positively, as these new technologies boosted local prosperity by securing increased catches. But a rapid decline soon followed (indicative of overfishing), and 546,000 kilograms of croaker fish caught locally in 1954 declined to 20,100 kilograms by 1958 (Chung et al., 2012: 24).

The decline in the local fishing industry, combined with a boom in manufacturing in Hong Kong island and Kowloon that offered more reliable employment, led to a substantial depletion of Tai O's population from around 30,000 prior to World War Two to nearer 2,000 in the early twenty-first century. Despite a palpable sense of decline, a pronounced movement of young people away from the village, and increasing poverty in the late 1990s and early 2000s, researchers have shown that local identity has continued to be important for the Tai O community (Liu and Cheung, 2016). The strength of local identification with the *Pango O* heritage and associated lifestyles was particularly evident in the community response to a 2004 local government 'Concept Plan' for Tai O. Formulated in response to both the declining prosperity of the village and a fire that destroyed over 90 dwellings in 2000, the plan effectively proposed redeveloping the village into a fishing heritage theme park, complete with newly designed buildings, plazas and amenities. The Tai O Culture Workshop was formed by local activists in response to the minimal local consultation and a desire for an alternative (and less radically disjunctive) future for their village. The

workshop's campaigns and the support of outside individuals and agencies caused the local government plan to be shelved and led to a variety of less intrusive initiatives aimed at re-energising the economy while maintaining the essence of the community and traditional lifestyles. One notable project took place outside of the village area, on the northwest coast. This involved the conversion of the old British colonial Tai O police station, built in 1902, into a luxury boutique hotel that consciously conserved many aspects of its built heritage (Lung, 2012) and, indeed, made this a focal point of guests' and visitors' experiences. The hotel opened in 2012 as a not-for-profit social enterprise that runs guided tours of its buildings and promotes local produce in its restaurant, such as its "signature dishes"—Tai O fried rice with shrimp paste and pork chop bun marinated with shrimp paste (Tai O Heritage Hotel website, n.d.).

Fisheries, fish products and tourism

Fundamental to the traditional identity of the Tai O community defended by the Cultural Workshop (as discussed above) is its history as fishing community, and it is this aspect that has been core to the village's socio-economic disruption and re-inflection in the early twenty-first century. Subsequent to the marked decline in local fish stocks in the 1950s caused by overfishing, the situation across Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta deteriorated from the 1980s on as a result of a 'perfect storm' of factors, including general pollution from the Pearl River resulting from the rapid development of a huge, urban-industrial conurbation around its lower reaches; disruption of the sea-floor and adjacent waters around northern Lantau Island arising from the construction of Hong Kong's international airport on (a massively expanded) Chep Lap Kok Island during the 1990s; increasing demand for fish in Hong Kong related to its population growth; and further overfishing in response to the above pressures.

Reflecting these factors, the Hong Kong Legislative Council's *Consultancy Study on Fisheries Resources and Fishing Operations in Hong Kong Waters* (1998) found that the total fish catch had declined by 50 per cent since the end of the previous decade, that fish fry (i.e., juvenile fish) numbers had decreased by an alarming 90 per cent and 12 of the 17 commercial fish species were categorised as "heavily over-exploited" (including the three main varieties of local shrimp[3]), with the remainder being identified as "fully exploited" (ibid). Despite a

number of measures being undertaken to stimulate fish stocks (such as trials in creating artificial reefs), the situation has continued to decline and the total collapse of a number of species has been predicted. Increasing perceptions of the crisis in the fishery led the Hong Kong Government to impose a total ban on trawling in its territorial waters in 2013. While loans were provided to fishermen who wished to transition to other occupations, the effect of this action upon traditional fishing communities across Hong Kong was dramatic and also affected the operations of Tai O's local seafood-processing sector.

While the photographs used in this article provide valuable visual information to support the descriptions and analyses offered, they cannot do justice to the olfactory impression of entering central Tai O. Leaving the coach terminal and walking towards the bridge over the creek to Tai O Island, the visitor enters a crowded retail space dominated by stalls selling dried fish, shrimp paste, and related products (Figure 3) and by outlets selling related products, such as fish balls and barbecued fish. The enclosed streetscape in this area confines the products' odours and provides a rich sensory impression that is part of the tourist experience of Tai O and an olfactory reminder of a continuing tradition of such markets in Hong Kong and along the Chinese coast more generally. It is pertinent to note in this regard that Hong Kong's other major dried fish retail area, in the very different vicinity of Des Voeux Road West in Sai Ying Pun on Hong Kong Island, occurs along main streets where the impact of the walk-through (and 'smell-through') of Tai O is dissipated.[4] Tai O's tradition of dried fish production appears to have been a commercial development of subsistence fishing activities that sought to profit from the production of material surplus to local needs. In recent years, the latter activity has come to be as significant as the former, and village food processors are therefore in the process of transition from an integrated primary and secondary production base to an increasingly secondary process-oriented economy. In addition to the spectacle of seeing fish drying outside local homes and on stalls, the production of shrimp paste is conducted on either side of the harbour walkway in the northern part of Tai O village by the Sing Lee family company (Figure 4), in an operation that also packages and retails jars of paste, and now also provides short introductions to manufacturing processes to parties of visitors.

Figure 3: Street stall in Tai O selling dried fish and jars of shrimp paste (author's photo, July 2016)

Shrimp paste is a pungent and salty concentrate that is widely used as a flavouring ingredient in Chinese and other East Asian cuisines. The role and nature of traditional shrimp paste production in Tai O serves as something of a microcosm of the broader circumstances affecting the island community within a wider aquapelagic environment. Shrimp paste is a flavouring ingredient used widely in Chinese and other East Asian cuisines and is made from finely minced and salted shrimp meat that is dried in the sun to form blocks (Figure 4) or packaged in jars. Current producers describe the production process as a highly artisanal one that requires focussed sensory awareness of the texture, smell and appearance of the product during its drying phases (Fung, 2014). Local shrimp paste production appears to have developed in association with the introduction of salt production on the adjacent area of Lantau in the mid to late eighteenth century (which provided a cheap and reliable source of salt to use in processing). During the early-mid-twentieth century, this enterprise increasingly served both the wider Hong Kong region and a number of international export markets, but the number of local operations fell progressively past that point, from around ten in the 1960s to two in the mid-2010s. This reflects a more general decline across Hong Kong related to the low profit margins of the operation and competing commercial and employment opportunities. While the (then) British colony was a major production, retail and export centre for the product in the early to mid-1900s, shrimp paste production operations in Peng Chau, Aberdeen, Cheung Chau,

Lantau and Ma Wan closed in the 1980s and 1990s, leaving Tai O increasingly isolated (and thereby distinct) as a production base.

The significance (and endangered) nature of the traditional product and its artisanal production processes was acknowledged by the Hong Kong Government in June 2014 through the product's inclusion on Hong Kong's Intangible Cultural Heritage List (along with other fish products such as fish maw, traditional seafood sauce and dried oysters).[5] This recognition was both timely and problematic in that the miniscule manufacturing centre was cut off from its traditional source of shrimp by the imposition of the trawling ban in Hong Kong waters in 2013. Local shrimp fishing in the summer and early autumn seasons traditionally supplied manufacturers with enough material to produce paste until the following year's season. As a result of the trawling ban, Tai O manufacturers now have to import shrimp from China and/or switch the early stages of their processing there—as the Chen Cheung Hing company does, running operations in Guandong province and then completing the processing, packaging and retailing in Tai O (Fung, 2014). This has changed the spatial and economic nature of Tai O's shrimp processing businesses. The former aspect has led to quality control issues. Where once the nature of shrimp meat used was monitored and controlled by the paste manufacturers, there is now local concern that the preferred types of shrimp are being adulterated in imported mince and that parts of shrimp formerly discarded (such as heads) are being minced along with tails (Ching et al., 2014). Despite these issues, paste produced in Tai O is still a preferred product for Hong Kong restaurants (ibid), underlining the rationale for retaining a production base in the location while skilled labour is still available and while costs and pricing provide a sufficient profit margin. But despite its continuance (and its inscription in the Hong Kong heritage list), the nature of artisanal shrimp paste production in the mid-2010s is markedly different and less sustainable than in earlier decades. The production base of its local aquapelagic ensemble has been undermined by wider forces; requiring it to operate in a more geographically fragmented and vulnerable manner. In these regards, the Hong Kong intangible heritage listing might be interpreted as an implicit recognition of the endangered nature of shrimp paste's status as a commercial operation without forms of support and subsidy. As this characterisation suggests, other forms of economic activity are increasingly necessary to sustain the local community.

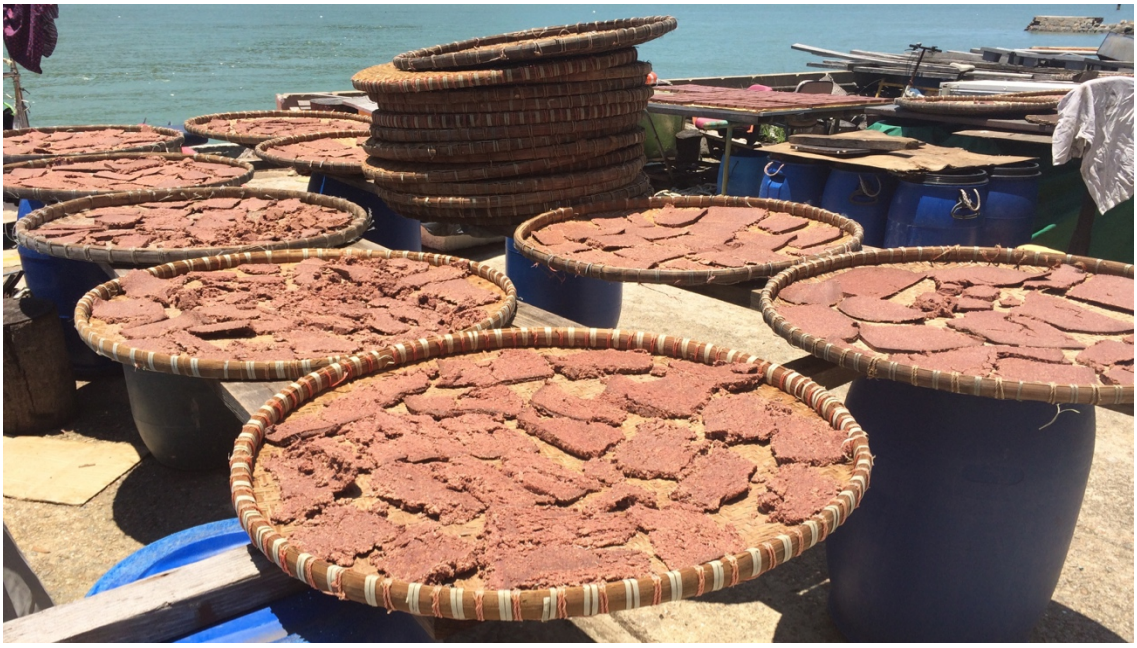

Figure 4: Slices of shrimp paste drying in sun outside of Sing Lee shrimp paste facility on Tai O harbour front (author's photo, July 2016)

Dolphins

If visitors to Tai O are not familiar with the location's status as a dolphin-watching centre prior to arriving, they are made aware by the banners advertising boat trips that greet them as they approach the Island's market area (Figure 5). The waters around the Pearl River Delta and adjacent coastal areas have been recognised as hosting populations of the eastern variety of the *Sousa chinensis* (Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphin) since the 1600s (World Wildlife Foundation Hong Kong website, n.d.). Their (initially pink and subsequently) grey-white appearance has led them to be commonly referred to as 'Chinese white dolphins'.[6] The species commonly inhabits estuarine zones where fresh and salt water mix, often remaining close to the shore in small pods. The white dolphins attracted local interest and attention in the mid-late 20th Century as a type of aqua-fauna that had particular appeal to tourists and also received official recognition in 1996 when the committee co-ordinating the celebration of the hand-back of Hong Kong to Chinese rule chose the white dolphin as a symbol for the event. The total population around the Pearl River Delta is estimated at around 1,400 with less than 200 living off Hong Kong's islands (Wursig et al., 2016), mainly to the north, west, and southwest of Lantau Island and with smaller populations to the west of Lantau and Hong Kong islands (Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society website, n.d.).

The dolphins usually stay within a small area and surface for air around every four minutes, making their location and behaviour predictable for boat operators (Figure 6).

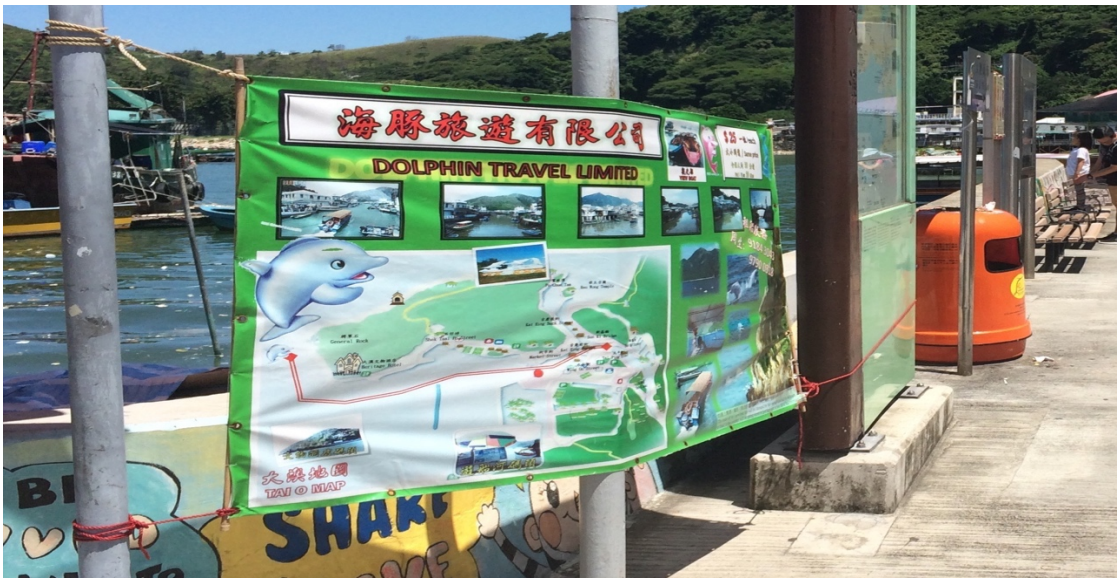

Figure 5: Dolphin cruise banner at entrance to Tai O village (author's photo, July 2016)

Figure 6: A white dolphin propelling its upper body out of the water, in sight of dolphin-cruise boat from Tai O (author's photo, July 2016)

The massive expansion of the human population of the lower Pearl River region over the last five decades—and related industrial, construction and shipping activities—has had a major impact on the dolphins' aquatic habitats. Chemical pollutants, mud and sediment resulting from dredging, land 'reclamation' and the construction Hong Kong's new

international airport on the eastern side of Chek Lap Kok Island during the 1990s, have all combined to make the local marine environment more polluted, far noisier (and, thereby, more stressful) than in previous decades. In addition, the scouring of the seafloor by trawlers has further damaged the marine environment and diminished dolphin food sources. This has led to a diminution of the area's dolphin population and, in particular, a drop off in breeding rates (or, at least, in the progress of young adults to maturity) (World Wildlife Foundation Hong Kong website, n.d.). Awareness of these issues has been growing over the last 20 years, resulting in the establishment of the Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau Marine Park, north of Lantau, in 1996 in an area with a dense population of white dolphins.

The presence of pods of Chinese white dolphins off the northwest coast of Tai O Island, a short distance from the village and port area, along a route regularly navigated by boats heading into and across the mouth of the Pearl River, has likely been known by local fishermen and residents for as long as the area has been settled. The dolphin's significance as anything other than a form of aquatic fauna that consumed a small proportion of local fish stocks is a phenomenon that dates from around 2005. Since that time, the sea areas that the dolphins regularly frequent have become part of Tai O's aquapelagic space by virtue of visitation by boats carrying paying passengers (Figure 6) and for the role that visits to these locations have in boosting local tourism more generally. It is also notable that the dolphin resource requires no cultivation or maintenance and has allowed former fishing-boat owners to refocus their prior skills and technologies in a new context (Liu and Cheung, 2016: 176). The dolphins' natural aquatic territories are thereby part of Tai O's human livelihood zone and are as integrated with the contemporary village economy, lifestyle and knowledge base as either its fisheries or on-shore amenities (such as gardens, food processing facilities and/or retail outlets). Indeed, in livelihood terms, the dolphins' marine habitat areas are more economically significant than inaccessible parts of the island's steep interior; emphasising the manner in which marine areas extend the terrestrial bases of islands into aquapelagic assemblages essential to the prosperity of communities.

Public acknowledgement of the importance of dolphins to the local economy is evident in both functional tourism signage and in public imagery around the island. One striking example is the mural on the street-side wall of the Church of Christ in China's Primary School (which provides the principal education facility for young local residents). The

extended mural (Figure 7) provides a representation of Tai O Island and traditional fishing boats arranged around a central image of Jesus and the Apostles on board a boat gathering a substantial haul of fish. The story, which occurs in Luke 5:1-11, involves Jesus joining Saint Peter in his boat on the Sea of Galilee and instructing him to let his nets down again after an unsuccessful night's fishing. Showing faith in Jesus, Peter and his crew are rewarded by a substantial catch that strains their nets.[7] In the Tai O version, the catch is accompanied by images of two large white dolphins leaping out of the water, symbolising the bounty delivered to the faithful and the fruitful co-existence of dolphins and fishing boats. The latter association is somewhat paradoxical in the context of Tai O as local fishing grounds are now severely restricted, but if the space portrayed is interpreted as an allegorical one, representing an aquapelagic one condensed into the space of a mural (rather than a representation of specific marine locale), it stands as an accurate snapshot of key marine resources in the early twenty-first century.

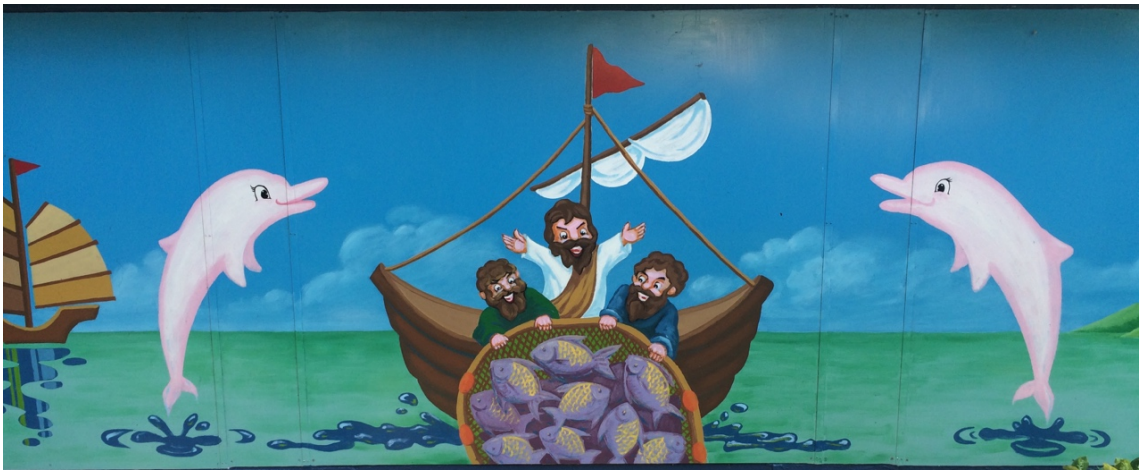

Figure 7: Central section of mural from front wall of Church of Christ in China Primary School in Tai O (author's photo, July 2016)

Dolphins are also represented in interior areas of the island, at the peak of the lookout path that runs from the village's Shaolin monastery up to the island's northwest ridge. As the path turns to run along the ridge, it passes a sculpture of four life-sized dolphins leaping from crests of water accompanied by a caption that refers the viewer to the government's Conservation Programme and its aim of improving the habitat for the dolphins while minimizing the effects of human activities that may threaten the dolphins' survival (Hong Kong Government, 2000: 9). The monument is located above an area of water frequented by

dolphins—and, therefore, dolphin-watching boats—which allows walkers to look down at the pink-white shapes of dolphins breaking the surface below and, if the wind conditions are suitable, to hear the exclamations of the boat passengers as they enjoy a closer proximity to them. The assemblage of the elevated terrestrial position and coastal waters around the pivotal monument is effective in facilitating land-based dolphin watching and providing insights into the integrated marine and terrestrial spaces of Tai O. But the viewing spot is increasingly all but overwhelmed by another feature in the offshore waters.

Looking north from the dolphin monument during visits to the peak in mid-2016, the piers and partially connected lateral structures of the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge, currently under construction, dominate the view (Figure 8). Work on the fifty-kilometre-long bridge began in 2009 and is planned to be completed by 2020. The construction of a series of massive piers capable of supporting an extended multi-lane highway across the mouth of the Pearl River estuary has caused a major disturbance of the dolphins' environment and Delta fisheries. Despite legal objections to environmental assessment reports that delayed the project in 2010–2011 (Hong Kong Court of Appeal n84 2011) and detailed research on topics such as the highly adverse effect of vibration hammer technologies on the dolphins' acoustic environments (see Wang et al., 2014); construction of the bridge has proceeded with little (if any) consideration of its impact on a population of endangered marine mammals that were designated as symbols of Hong Kong's return to China in the preceding decade.[8] In addition to the commencement of work on the bridge, construction work on a third runway for the international airport has also caused disruption to the local marine environment and concern over inadequate environmental assessment processes (see Chan, 2015). As will be apparent, these developments override and negate the central goals of the Dolphin Conservation Programme commemorated in Tai O's monument. In this manner, dolphins and shrimp are both marine resources that are under pressure as a result of environmental damage arising from major schemes outside of the control of Tai O islanders. Unlike shrimp mince, which can be relatively easily imported, there is no obvious source of replacement (or habitat maintenance) for white dolphins, leaving a prospect that dolphins' function as a key asset for local tourism may be a brief one, potentially leaving the island's dolphin-themed murals and sculptures as a testament to a species *lost* from its waters rather than iconic to them.

Figure 8: Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge under construction close the northwest coast of Tai O (author's photo July 2016)

Conclusion

Tai O fishing village was founded by members of the Tanka community who pursued livelihood practices that relied on marine resources as a result of their displacement from inland areas of China. The aquapelagic life- and livelihood- styles the Tanka adopted continued to be viable until the early-mid-twentieth century, when a number of factors resulted in their closer association with shores as residential areas. During the latter period, the community both lived on the liminal shoreline zone and conducted livelihood activities in particular marine places and with particular marine species around Tai O, western Lantau Island and the mouth of the Pearl River. These areas can, in this sense, be understood to have been components of the aquapelagic assemblage of Tai O village. Marked changes in local fishing technologies in the 1950s disrupted this assemblage by decimating the biomass of key species in particular areas of the aquapelago and the community's alienation from its traditional fishing grounds was compounded by the impact of Hong Kong trawlers in the 1990s and a subsequent ban on trawling in the following decade. The diminution of the livelihood activities in particular marine areas effectively contracted Tai O's aquapelagic space, making it a more terrestrially oriented one remnant of the former integrated terrestrial and marine system. The introduction and rising significance of dolphin-watching tourism over the last decade has refigured the aquapelagic space by extending it to particular points around the island in which the observation (rather than harvesting) of key

marine fauna provides a significant livelihood activity. At the same time, the production of shrimp mince in areas of mainland China for processing in Tai O has created these spaces as remote aquapelagic enclaves of its central island-coastal space whose viability is far more fragile (and, in all likelihood, far more transitory) than the marine spaces that were adjacent to the island's shorelines. Despite these changes and pressures, the early culture—and earlier configurations of aquapelagic space—have resulted in a continuing character for Tai O's community that is revealing itself to be a considerable intangible cultural asset within the contemporary tourism industry. The Tai O community's history of dynamic adaptation to a lifestyle conducted at the interstices of the shore and the sea is therefore a template for its future development, but one that will be increasingly challenged by the momentum of development activities in Hong Kong and in adjacent areas in China (whose economic value is far greater than that of local tourism). It is therefore likely that continued ingenuity will be necessary for the Tai O community to retain a cultural heritage that is increasingly displaced and distant from its original aquapelagic character and raison d'être. While its production of shrimp paste continues to exploit the local tradition of its manufacture, its designation as a Tai O product is increasingly more a matter of branding than one derived from the local fishery.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

[1] Other members of the contemporary community include Hakka, Hokkien, and Han Chinese descendants of migrants who arrived during the sustained conflicts in mainland China between 1927 and 1950.

[2] One strain of research suggests that the Tanka are descended from the indigenous Yao people of the mountainous inland province of Hunan, who were displaced by Han Chinese moving into their homelands from the north around 2,000 years ago and that the Yao moved to coastal areas such as the Pearl River Delta and Taiwan since these locations' remoteness from the Imperial Court afforded those residing in them a degree of anonymity.

[3] The three main varieties of local shrimp are Mantis shrimp (*Stomaopoda*), Southern Velvet Shrimp (*Metapenaeopsis palmensis*), and Whiskered Velvet shrimp (*Metapenaeopsis barbata*).

[4] It is also notable that this area has also been identified as an important urban heritage site (Nicolson, 2016: 78-87).

[5] The Chinese government formally adopted UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004 and extended it to Hong Kong shortly after. Engagement with and implementation of its provisions were somewhat delayed, however. See Ding (2009) for further discussion.

[6] The term 'pink dolphins' is also used interchangeably with 'Chinese white dolphins'.

[7] John 21:11 also has a related story that is commonly visually represented by Jesus watching the catch from the shore (unlike the Tai O mural).

[8] A recent study of the dolphins has identified that in addition to pollution and vehicle impact issues, the dolphins' acoustic communication and prey location abilities are highly vulnerable to "anthropogenic noises", with the result that "HSFs [high speed ferries] and industrial activities are likely to alter dolphin habitat use patterns and overall behaviours" in a manner likely to deplete their populations and/or drive them away from the area (Wang et al., 2014: 1).

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