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Cultural Studies and Cultural Politics: Interrogating the Identity of a Cultural Preservation Movement

Cultural studies has long been skeptical of the cultural claim of authenticity for heritage, probably because of its tendencies of postmodernism and poststructuralism. As an instructor in the Department of Cultural Studies at a university in Hong Kong, my participation in the preservation movement for the Star Ferry Pier and Queen's Pier in Hong Kong during 2006-2007 proves to be an interesting story worthy of theoretical reflection, particularly upon the political possibilities and limitations of this field of knowledge in which I have got involved since the mid-1990s. In this paper, I focus on the concept of identity, the most important subject matter for cultural studies since the 1990s, by coincidence, also a period of Hong Kong's post-colonial transition. The conceptual tools of cultural studies are helpful for me to contextualize the local identity of the movement in Hong Kong's post-colonial traumatic situation. Yet rather than simply identifying its existence, analyzing the suturing process of the colonial trauma is more necessary for assessing the relevancy of the claim of authenticity to cultural studies.