

Sacredness and Secularity: Evolution of Sacred Space of Traditional Villages in Western Hunan

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How to cite this paper: Zhang, Z. H. (2022). Sacredness and Secularity: Evolution of Sacred Space of Traditional Villages in Western Hunan. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 407-423.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.1012027>

Received: October 14, 2022

Accepted: November 15, 2022

Published: November 18, 2022

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Abstract

Sacred space is an important space form of Chinese traditional villages, which combines religious belief, humanistic belief and complex space. Taking Gaoyi Village, Jingping Village of the North Dong Dynasty, Huangdu Village, Pingtan Village and Dutou Village of the South Dong Dynasty as examples, the paper analyzes the evolution of the sacred space, the change of the sacred space function and its influence mechanism in the traditional villages of the Dong nationality in western Hunan through in-depth interviews with the author. The research found that: 1) The sacred space of Dong traditional villages experienced the Ming and Qing dynasties: the space shape was preserved, and the ancestral sacrifices were the main things; During the period from the Republic of China to New China: the function of sacred space changed; After the reform and opening up: the space form is restored and the sacred space is protected. 2) The evolution of the function of the sacred space is in line with the formulation and adjustment of the social system, presenting a sacred space of religious belief type, humanistic belief type, composite type. 3) The evolution of sacred space is actually the result of the progressive evolution of agricultural culture, industrial culture, new era compound culture and other factors in different periods. 4) In different periods and different spatial scales, different sacred spaces based on local cultural identity have also been formed in the South and North Dong.

Keywords

Dong Nationality in Xiangxi, Sacred Space, Evolution

1. Introduction

Sacred space is an important local culture of traditional villages, which is a spa-

tial form integrating nature, society and culture. As a region with rich and diverse traditional villages in Hunan Province, Xiangxi has distinctive ethnic characteristics and unique ethnic cultural connotation. Due to the characteristics of “regional gene”, a unique sacred space has been formed. As the carrier of Dong culture and the place for villagers to gather in Xiangxi, the sacred space has been evolving and developing under the impact of modernization, reshaping the local and social cultural concepts of traditional village sacred space.

“Sacred” corresponds to secular. Sacred space is generally considered as a spatial form full of meaning, which is a spatial form of secular and meaning superposition. In recent years, the research on sacred space in China mainly focuses on folk culture, family rituals and traditional folk houses to worship ancestors, which are studied in philosophy and humanities, social science and economic management; Architecture and geography mainly study the evolution of space form, public space, characteristics and mechanisms of traditional villages. Abroad, Iliad theoretically elaborated the dialectical relationship and social relationship of the sacred space in the religious perspective (Iliad, 2002); Hume believes that the sacred space is a cultural symbol and emotional link, with cultural significance (Hume, 2014); Durkheim believes that the sacred space is a kind of space of social nature, which shows the sacredness under the special space (Durkheim, 2006). With the constant change and development of people, the connotation and boundary of the sacred space are gradually expanding, the broad concept of the sacred space is recognized, and the functions of the sacred space are diverse. It not only limits the religious belief level that people know, but also shows the social and human significance of the sacred space. Sacred space is the spiritual sustenance of local people, through which a nation’s social and cultural accumulation can be expressed, the group’s cultural value can be reflected, the collective local attachment can be strengthened, and the group’s sense of national identity can be maintained. How does the form of sacred space in traditional villages evolve? (Xu et al., 2021). Is it a cultural link in the transition from traditional society to modern society to play its value by continuing in a new form? How should people rationally understand the connotation of sacred space in traditional villages and in the process of modernization? Is the evolution and construction of sacred space a “feudal superstition” or a “spiritual sustenance”? How to understand the evolution of the sacred space form of traditional villages is not only a problem of the transformation of the sacred space form of traditional villages, but also a problem of the restoration and cultural development of traditional villages. It is necessary to analyze the evolution of the sacred space form and change people’s cognition (Xue & Zhu, 2010).

Therefore, this paper looked up the paper materials in CNKI and Web of Science, and carried out database retrieval, classification, in-depth interviews with cases to elaborate the definition, functional classification and space-time evolution of the sacred space of the traditional Dong villages in Xiangxi. The functional classification and spatio-temporal evolution of the sacred space are

conducive to understanding the essence and contemporary value of the sacred space, promoting the social development and cultural heritage of the sacred space, and providing reference for the development of traditional villages and rural revitalization.

2. Research Area and Data Source

For Nandong, Huangdu Village, Pingtan Village and Yutou Village in Tongdao Dong Autonomous County, Huaihua City, Hunan Province are selected as the case sites; In North Dong, Jingping Village, Zhongfang Town, Zhongfang County, Huaihua City, Hunan Province and Gaoyi Village, Gaoyi Township, Huitong County are selected as the case sites. North Dong and Dong minority inhabited areas are heavily sinicized, with more urbanization impacts, and less traditional villages with sacred space; The South Dong is well preserved, and the sacred space is concentrated, with obvious characteristics (Tongdao Dong Autonomous County Local Chronicle Compilation Committee, 1999). Pingtan Village, Huangdu Village, Tarou Village, Gaoyi Village, Jingping Village and other villages have profound historical and cultural deposits, special architectural styles, unique characteristics and distinctiveness, and have been successively selected into the second, third and fourth batch of national traditional village lists, and well preserved ancient buildings in traditional Chinese villages (Xiao, 2011). The village sacred space has a long history, diversified functions of the sacred space, and unique village spatial layout characteristics, which can be regarded as a typical example in the development process of traditional villages in the Dong minority area of western Hunan, and has the general law of the development of traditional villages in the south and north Dong. Therefore, taking Pingtan Village, Huangdu Village, Tarou Village, Gaoyi Village, Jingping Village and other villages as case villages, it is representative and typical to compare and analyze the laws of the evolution of Dong's sacred space.

The main sources of relevant data in this paper are field surveys and literature review. From June 24 to July 2, 2022, I conducted field research on Huangdu Village, Pingtan Village, Tarou Village, Gaoyi Village and Jingping Village. Through in-depth interviews, UAV image acquisition and other methods, I obtained information about local traditional culture, geographical environment, and spatial form of residential buildings. The literature mainly comes from the village chronicles and relevant literature (planning text, genealogy, etc.) provided by local governments at all levels (counties, townships, villages) and cultural tourism departments. In addition, remote sensing images are obtained through GIS to analyze the layout characteristics of village sacred space (Figure 1).

3. Research Assumptions

3.1. Concept Definition

Sacred space is a space form with special significance, which is opposite to secu-

lar space. In the early days, people did not have the ability to conquer nature. At first, they were regarded as the belief space of witchcraft or religious significance, the sustenance of people’s spiritual power, and the space was endowed with sanctification. The sacred space connects a nation or clan, combines the fate of the ethnic group with self-awareness, and enhances the local dependence of the nation to create a sense of attachment through the development of the national society. With the development of society, people’s practical ability has been strengthened, the connotation of sacred space has been expanded, and the boundary is rich. The functions of the sacred space are diversified, and the social and humanistic significance of the sacred space is strengthened, not limited to the level of religious belief. Sacred space has also gradually evolved into a space that carries the people’s material and cultural spirit and group value, and there is a dialectical existence between culture, society, space and residents.

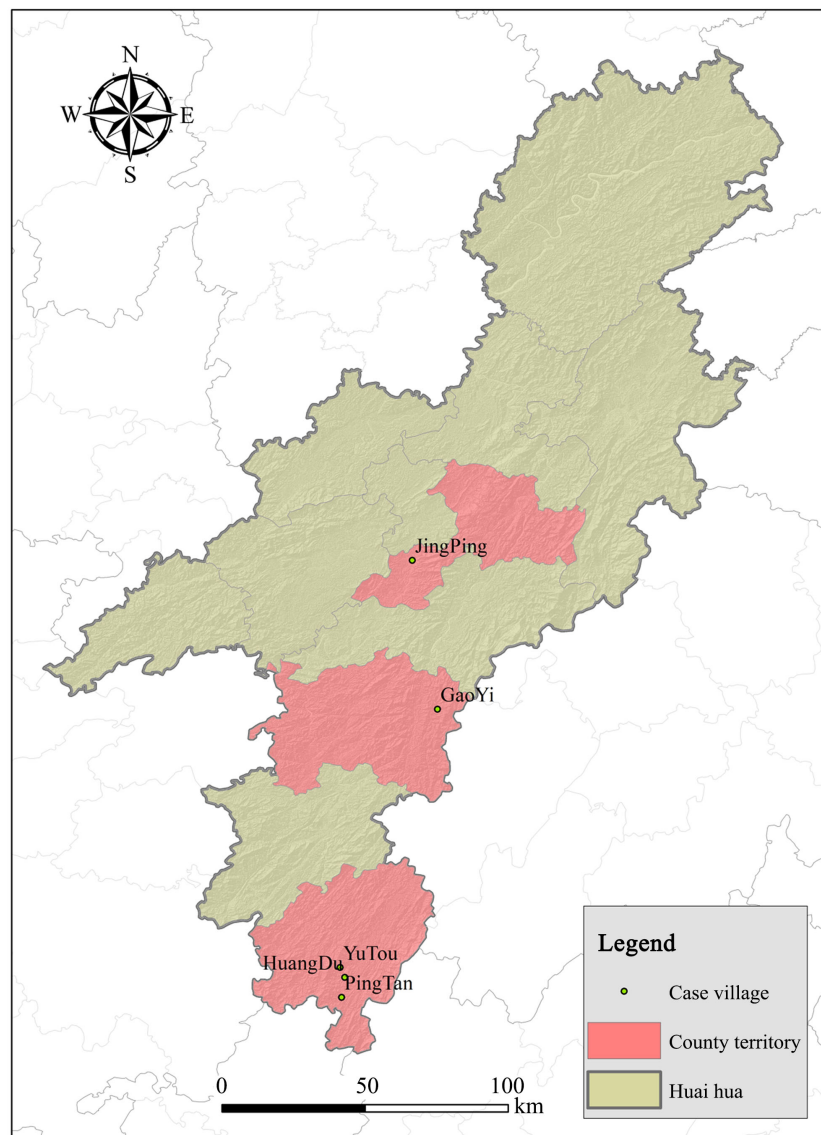


Figure 1. Cases of dong traditional villages.

3.2. Classification System

Sacred space is characterized by human activities, and its connotation and boundary are constantly enriched. In the *Primary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim pointed out that “all religious beliefs, no matter simple or complex, show the same commonness: they all take the classification of things as the premise, no matter real or imaginary things, people have divided them into two categories, which are opposite to each other: secular and sacred.” The classification system of sacred space has been expanded. According to the representation of human activities and the characteristics limited by the sacred space, the sacred space is divided into three categories: first, the religious belief type sacred space. The sacred objects are mainly ancestral halls, temples, and halls with spirituality. It is the place where villagers worship ancestors, hold activities, and gather together to express their worship of ancestors and sacred objects; The second is the sacred space of humanistic belief, a sacred space that carries the people’s material and cultural spirit and group value emotion and can not be extinguished, expressing people’s good hopes and expectations for a better life, with a sense of local attachment; The third is the compound sacred space, which integrates sacrificial activities, gatherings, leisure and entertainment (Guo, 2020).

4. Research Results

4.1. Types of Sacred Space in Dong Traditional Villages

In the traditional villages of the South Dong and Dong ethnic groups, religious sacred space is mainly composed of altar and ancestral hall, which is an important spatial form. The sacred space regulates the space between man and earth, and integrates nature and human beings to show the “Harmony between man and nature”. Dong villagers usually choose the period from the first day of the first lunar month to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month to offer sacrifices to their ancestors, to bless the villagers and villages, and to beg for happiness for their families (Shi, 2005). Villagers choose specific days, wear festival costumes, gather together for dinner or assembly, and use specific ancestral hall sacrifices and ancestor sacrifices as the connection between people and gods, people and ancestors (Liu & Pu, 2014). This kind of sacrifice activity connects the relationship between sacred and secular, individuals and groups, and establishes spatial relationship in the relationship between people and land. In recent years, torch festivals and closing feasts will also be held regularly on specific dates to strengthen the protection of the sacred power to the villagers. In addition, as an extension of religious belief type sacred space, such as Drum Tower and Wind and Rain Bridge, is a representation of social and cultural space. The villagers will also discuss the village related issues, rest, entertainment, etc. In the process of the mutual integration and development of rural revitalization and urbanization, the sacredness of the traditional village sacred space gradually weakens and

evolves into a social public space. The function of the sacred space is diversified (She, 2011). The diversified development of the sacred space can maintain the cultural identity and identity between nations. From the “man land” regional activities, it can enrich human experience and strengthen the local deep cultural connotation. Humanistic belief type sacred space is more local and extends the meaning of sacred space. The bonfire party, sacrificial offering, and doye dance strengthen the personal recognition of the local sacred space and culture, strengthen the connection between individuals and groups and places (Zhu et al., 2017). In practice, cultural memory, local attachment, and reverence for ancestors are combined to jointly show the meaning of the sacred space, deepen people’s understanding and research of the sacred space, and represent the connotation of the sacred space (Jin & Xiang, 2020).

Compared with the South Dong, the North Dong is more sinicized, with more ancestral temples and Wutong temples offering sacrifices to Wutong gods, followed by the Fengshui Forest to protect descendants. With the development of the new urbanization and rural revitalization policy, most ancient villages connect more ancient villages with their hometown. Nostalgia and local attachment are inseparable from the sacred space, which is also a way to extend the sacred space. Sacred and secular collide and run in, and extend and build a new sacred space (Tan, 2007) (Table 1).









In depth interview, the author compared the two and found that the southern Dong mainly offered sacrifices to Samu and the northern Dong mainly offered sacrifices to ancestors. In the process of modernization, villagers only offer sacrifices on specific dates in recent years to express their respect for their ancestors and to bless their families for good weather throughout the year, and more importantly, they hope for a better life; Secondly, if sacrificial activities will also be held on grand festivals, after the development of tourism economy, the local sacredness of traditional villages will be gradually secularized to meet modern people’s perception and demand for sacred activities, effectively regulate the order of village community space, and the sacred space will promote the development and revival of traditional villages, which has an irreplaceable role.

4.2. Temporal and Spatial Evolution of the Sacred Space of Dong Traditional Villages

4.2.1. Ming and Qing Dynasties: The Space Form Is Reserved, and the Clan Worship Is the Main Thing

The Dong nationality has experienced the primitive society, the natural environment is closed and isolated from the Han culture in the Central Plains, and the primitive spiritual beliefs have long influenced the social and spiritual life of the Dong nationality. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the central government made great efforts to develop. From the north to the south, the policy of Jimi, the chieftain system, the simultaneous rule of the local people and the return of the local people to the local people were gradually strengthened. They

Table 1. Function type of sacred space in dong traditional villages.

Type	Function	Representative buildings	Major function	
Religious belief type scared space	Sacrifice	Ancestral hall	Ancestral hall is the place where clan sacrifices and adjudicates clan affairs, as well as the place where family laws and regulations are implemented.	
		Salon Altar	It is a scared for sacrificing the Female ancestors of the Dong Nationality. It is generally located next to the Drum Tower and at the entrance of the village.	
	Religion	Earth Temple	Worship the God of Land and pray for harvest, peace and prosperity.	
	Faith	Fengshui Forest	The trees, usually artificially cultivated or naturally grown, have the functions of keeping peace, seeking longevity, thriving population, promotion and wealth, and have the Fengshui function of storing wind, gathering gas and getting water.	
Humanistic belief type scared space	Traffic	Wind rain bridge	It not only has a shrine for villagers to pray for blessings, but also serves as a space for sacrifice.	
	Leisure time	Stage	The stage is used to perform Dong operas, which is a symbol of Dong culture. It is usually located near the Drum Tower.	
	Life	Fire pit	Fire is a symbol of the prosperity of homes and the reproduction of children. It is a flexible space for sacred and daily use.	
		Ancient well	In addition to water for daily production and living, there is also the saying of “carrying water on the head” to eliminate disasters and ensure safety.	
Compound Scared Space	Sacrifice, Assembly, Leisure Time	Drum-tower	It is a sacred space for holding collective sacrificial rites, and also a place for local people to make agreements, hold meetings and have leisure and entertainment.	

ruled within the central dynasty step by step. Han culture was gradually imported. The migration of the Dong nationality had a profound impact on the internal culture of the tribe. During the Chenghua period of the Ming Dynasty, the Confucius Temple was built for schools; During the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty (1378-1385), he led the peasant uprising and expanded the border areas of Pingtan, Huangdu and Taro; In the 20th year of Hongwu in the Ming Dynasty (1378-1385), the Chengfang Temple was built and rebuilt in the third year of Tongzhi. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty, the family of Wu built the Feishan Palace Temple with the surname of Wu at the beginning of the reign, hence the name Feishan Palace. In the 25th year of Qianlong's reign in the Qing Dynasty (1760), Puji Bridge, which was regarded as a "living fossil of bridge construction" by bridge experts, was built and rebuilt in the 21st year of Guangxu's reign in the Qing Dynasty (1895). During the reign of Guangxu, the Drum Tower was gradually completed. In the third year of Tongzhi (1864), the stage was built next to the Drum Tower. During the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty, the ancient city walls of villages were built. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the construction of the Feishan Palace of the Wu family and the construction of the Saltan began. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, Leizu Temple was built and then destroyed, leaving bluestone chopping boards and stone incense altars.

The sacred space built in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, such as the "Feishan Temple", is dedicated to the folk historical figure Yang Zaisi. According to literature, genealogy and other relevant records, Yang Zaisi was appointed governor of Yangzhou because of the interaction between the Central Plains dynasties. He gained the opportunity to develop in the surrounding areas. Hunan, Guizhou and Guangxi went out to control banditry. Yang Zaisi is revered as a god by local people. He became the "Duke of Feishan" and the ancestor of Dong villagers. The Annals of Jingzhou, Zhili, written by Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty, recorded that "all the people of a state who have cast sacrifices are on the peak." Feishan Temple has been established since Jingzhou, and Feishan Temple has also been established in relevant areas around Jingzhou. The festival is held on June 6 and October 26 of the lunar calendar every year. "Saltan" is a kind of Samu offering sacrifices to the Dong culture, which exists in the folk beliefs and folk literature of the Dong people. Samu is a heroine who led the local people to revolt against the development and occupation of King Li's army. She is honored as the "Holy Mother" and established a "altar" to worship her ancestors, expressing her respect for their ancestors, which has continued to this day (Liu, 2007).

4.2.2. During the Republic of China New China Period: Changes in the Function of Sacred Space

At the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, a large number of immigrants migrated, which had a significant impact on the social development of the Dong nationality. The policy of "diverting the north to fill the south" and "resettling to broaden the countryside" was implemented, and a large number of Han people were integrated into it. There were many people

from Jiangxi. During this period, the ancestral hall for sacrifice was changed into a school for students to study.

After the liberation, the folk belief in the sacred space was severely attacked as a feudal superstition. The national policy and revolutionary situation strongly required the removal of the relevant places of folk belief, and the village's worship activities and public memorial ceremonies were gradually eliminated. Large scale sacrificial activities were prohibited, and villagers' sacrificial activities were gradually moved to their homes. The public sacrifice ceremony became a family sacrifice, and the ceremony was simplified. During the period of "breaking the four old", in order to preserve the ancestral hall, it was also used as a school to pass on family customs, teach and educate people.

During the Cultural Revolution, the government severely cracked down on folk beliefs, which was the peak of the crackdown. The slogan "Get rid of all feudal superstitions" spread in the streets. The state used violence to crack down on folk beliefs, and all religious activities were hit. Atheism and revolutionary and progressive ideas gradually penetrated into the villagers, and the villagers' ideas gradually changed, which weakened and attacked the groups of folk beliefs. The drum tower and stage of the Southern Dong Dynasty were demolished, and the log structure was moved to the back mountain of the mountain stronghold until the reform and opening up. After the national policy was relaxed, the restoration was started, and the original wooden frame (tenon and mortise structure) was reinstalled to the original position to repair and protect it.

4.2.3. After the Reform and Opening up: The Space Form Is Restored and the Sacred Space Is Protected

After the reform and opening up, the population moved and moved on a large scale. The villagers mainly went out to work, and the labor outflow was serious. As a kind of space for foreigners to attach themselves to and glorify their ancestors, the sacred space has gradually become active. In the 1980s, when the Drum Tower and Feishan Palace were moved back to their current locations, the government relaxed its policies and relaxed its control over the people. Folk beliefs gradually emerged, but folk beliefs were no longer the focus of activities among the villagers. With the passage of time, the cultural beliefs of the Dong nationality gradually weakened and assimilated with the cultural beliefs of the surrounding ethnic minorities. The sacred space is jointly expanded and protected by villagers and government departments. From the first day to the fifteenth day of the first month of each year, sacrificial activities are held, and all villagers in the village participate in offering sacrifices to their ancestors.

In the 1990s, traditional villages such as Huangdu were rated as traditional Chinese villages. The village also set up an elderly association to coordinate with the village committee to manage village affairs. The government tourism bureau and other departments dispatched cultural relics restoration workers to focus on the restoration and protection of traditional villages and cultural heritage; Nowadays, with the progress of science and technology, as well as the populariza-

tion of scientific knowledge, villagers' ideas have undergone qualitative changes, and they begin to believe in science and advocate science. Nowadays, most of the sacred space is used as an activity place. The collective participation makes these activities more social and customary, and the sacred space can continue to continue and regenerate (Chen, 2021) (Figure 2, Table 2, Table 3).

Table 2. Evolution of sacred space of traditional villages in south Dong.

Time	Social environment	Representative buildings	Main function
Ming and Qing Dynasties	Population mobility and changes in economic development	drum-tower	Assembly and ceremony
		Salon Altar	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion
		stage	Gathering and leisure
		General repair bridge	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion
		well	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion
		Fengshui Forest	Shelter and safety
The Republic of China New China Period	"Breaking the Four Old" "Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture" "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution"	drum-tower	Migration of Agriculture Learning from Dazhai
		Salon Altar	The sacrificial activities were hit
		stage	Singing was hit
		General repair bridge	Leisure and discussion
		well	Gather wealth and pray for peace
		Fengshui Forest	Shelter and safety
After the reform and opening up	Rural surplus labor force goes out to work Tourism Investment Promotion and Economic Development The government supports the protection of traditional culture; Maintain traditional culture and develop cultural tourism industry	drum-tower	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion, tourism
		Salon Altar	Sacrifice and tourism
		stage	Sacrifice, leisure, parliament, tourism
		General repair bridge	Sacrifice, leisure, parliament, tourism
		well	Gather wealth and pray for peace
		Fengshui Forest	Shelter and safety

Table 3. Evolution of sacred space of traditional villages in north Dong.

Time	Social environment	Representative buildings	Main function
Ming and Qing Dynasties	Population mobility and changes in economic development	Wutong Temple	sacrifice
		ancestral hall	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion
		stage	assembly
		well	Gather wealth and pray for peace
		Fengshui Forest	Shelter and safety
		Earth Temple	sacrifice
The Republic of China New China Period	"Breaking the Four Old"	Wutong Temple	"Breaking the Four Old" and "Cultural Revolution" were demolished
		ancestral hall	suffer a blow
		stage	Hit and demolished

Continued

		well	Gather wealth and pray for peace
	The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution	Fengshui Forest	Shelter and safety
		Earth Temple	Shelter and safety
	Rural surplus labor force goes out to work	Wutong Temple	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion
		ancestral hall	Sacrifice, assembly, discussion, tourism
After the reform and opening up	Tourism Investment Promotion and Economic Development	stage	Gathering, sightseeing and tourism
		well	Gather wealth and pray for peace
	The government supports the protection of traditional culture; Maintain traditional culture and develop cultural tourism industry	Fengshui Forest	Bless and keep safe
		Earth Temple	sacrifice

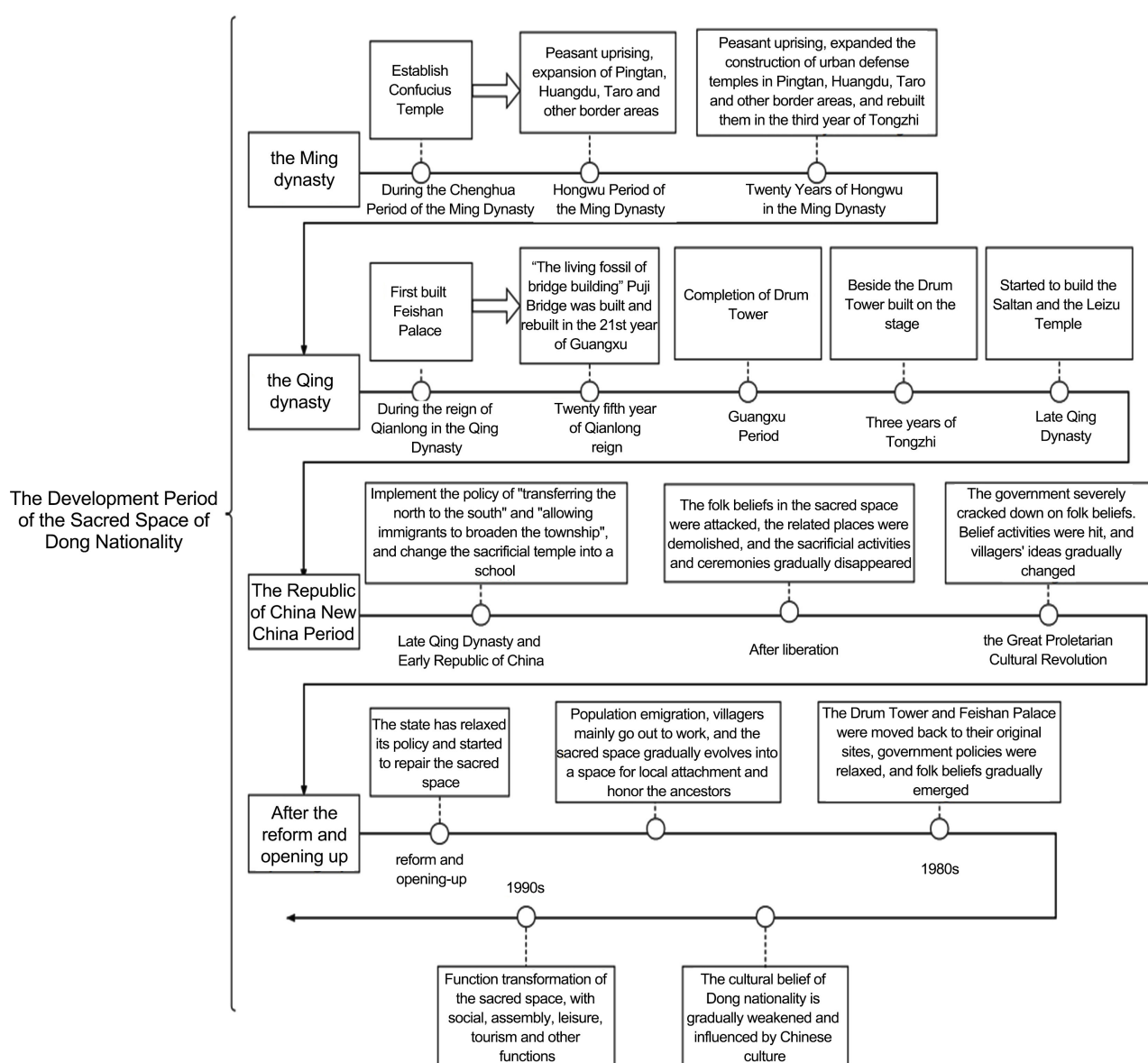


Figure 2. Evolution of the development period of the sacred space of the dong nationality.

5. Result Analysis: Impact Mechanism

5.1. Analysis on Impact Mechanism of Natural Environmental Factors

Due to the influence of natural environment and geographical environment, Dong people mainly live in compliance with nature. In primitive society, human survival ability was low, settlement consciousness was related to belief and worship factors, and residential buildings and custom culture had a greater impact. Dong villages are located near mountains and rivers. In order to live a long life, there are open water sources and land around the site. The Dong people revere nature, and the village location also considers the concept of geomantic omen. The rolling mountains are known as the dragon veins, which can bless future generations; The place where the flat dam is waved by the stream becomes the “dragon head”. The “dragon head” faces the river and flat dam, and the village is built on the “dragon head” relying on the winding dragon vein. The ancient trees on the back of the mountain can form a Fengshui Forest to drive away evil spirits and protect people; Build wind and rain bridges on the streams and rivers to gather wealth with water and lock the source of wealth; The gate of the village shall be built before the village is built, and the drum tower shall be built before the village is built. It is generally located in the center of the village. As a sacred space, the drum tower is sacred in the sense of Fengshui, and it is located on the “Dragon’s Nest” of the village. It is full respect for the natural environment that forms a distinctive Dong village, which is naturally integrated with the surrounding mountains and farmland, forming an enclosure situation and an important resource for the development of tourism economy (Liao, 2009).

5.2. Analysis of Influence Mechanism of Political System Factors

The Dong nationality gradually stabilized and became an independent nationality “Geling” in the Song Dynasty. Before the Tang Dynasty, the central government did not conduct centralized control, and the Dong culture was established. Since the Song Dynasty, the central government has gradually increased its development efforts to the southwest, focusing on the “Jimi policy”. Since the Yuan Dynasty, the centralized politics has been constantly strengthened, and the southwest region has also been included in the jurisdiction, gradually changing the Jimi system to the chieftain system, controlled by the floating officials; To implement the system of returning the land to the local government, the central government has centralized management and control, which has become a part of the central government. Step by step, the area of the Dong nationality is placed under the jurisdiction of the central government, which directly governs the area. The input of Han culture also has a profound impact on the Dong people. Dong people live in a closed natural environment for a long time, isolated from the Central Plains culture, and primitive beliefs gradually emerge,

which are the living and spiritual pillars of Dong people. With the input of Han culture, nature worship has generated independent branches and independent religious organizations in social groups. Buddhism and Taoism have less influence on Dong people, and the sacred space is mostly embodied in the worship of human gods, such as the female god “Sa Sui”. The Han culture was gradually imported. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the migration of the Dong nationality had a profound impact on the internal culture of the tribe. During the period of liberation and the “Cultural Revolution”, the sacred space was severely attacked, and the places related to folk beliefs were closed and activities were prohibited; In the 1980s, the government policy was relaxed and the folk belief was slowly restored, but the mind of Dong culture was gradually weakened; Nowadays, villagers’ thoughts have changed, and they advocate science. The collective participation in the sacrificial activities is social. Rather than experiencing the baptism of religion, it is to show the joy and expectation of the cohesion of the Dong nationality (Chen, 2014).

5.3. Analysis of Influence Mechanism of Social and Cultural Factors

5.3.1. Social Organization Structure

The social organizations of Dong nationality have national cultural characteristics. Under the influence of “money”, they are mainly composed of families, house races, villages, small money and large money. The family is the smallest unit in the social organizational structure of the Dong nationality, and also the basic unit in the social structure; The Fangzu refers to the social organizational relationship formed by blood ties within five generations, which is linked by paternity. Each Fang family has a common ancestor, and the sacred space such as the public cemetery in the Fang family belongs to the Fang family. The Dong society attaches great importance to small families, and large families form a clan organization with blood ties as the link. However, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Dong people’s fund organization was replaced by the people’s political power. The Dong people’s fund organization is no longer a traditional social management organization (Jiang, 2018).

After the reform and opening up, the Association for the Elderly, as a new organization, assisted the management of the two committees of the village secretary and the village committee to participate in the management of village affairs; Participate in the decision-making of village branches and committees, and supervise; Carry out publicity and education to protect the natural environment; Organize village fellowship and other activities. Strengthen the activities among villagers, promote the relationship between residents, and strengthen the sense of cultural belonging and national identity. Most of the sacrifices, discussions, leisure and entertainment of the Dong people are held in the Drum Tower. The holding of sacred activities has consolidated and enhanced the sense of cultural belonging and national identity of the Dong people. Women’s associations will

also be set up under the Dong Village Elderly Association to assist in management, ensure the life management of the Dong people, create a sense of psychological security, and promote the development of the Dong society.

5.3.2. Religious Belief

Folk beliefs are influenced by the people and spread naturally in ordinary life based on life experience. Compared with institutionalized religions such as Buddhism and Taoism, they lack religious doctrines, rules, special organizations, etc. In the process of historical evolution and development, regional belief culture with special significance has been formed and a unique folk belief system has been formed.

First is ancestor worship, which is a belief in the deification of the deceased ancestors and has an impact on the way of life of future generations. The most respected is the grandmother god “Samui”. It is said that Samui turned into a goddess to lead the Dong people to fight against the enemy and become the protection god of the Dong people after his death. In order to thank Sa Nian, later generations held sacrifices at Sa Nian Altar and begged the goddess for protection. The second is Feishan Duke Yang Zaisi, who is worshipped by Yang’s descendants. In the process of governing barbarism, the policy of governing barbarism by barbarism was adopted to pacify southern Xinjiang and save Feishan barbarism. After his death, Feishan Temple was built for memorial and remembrance in the era of his descendants. Strengthen the sense of local attachment and emotion between ethnic groups, and strengthen the cohesion between ethnic groups (Yang & Liu, 2017).

The second is the worship of natural gods, which is the most direct manifestation of folk beliefs and makes people revere and rely on nature in the early stage. Land is the material basis of people’s life. The Dong people regard the land god as the “land god”. There is a local land temple, which is used to worship the land that nourishes all things and lives on. With the worship of the land, the villagers’ responsibility for protecting the land god has expanded, and the land god has been given a god to deal with floods, droughts and diseases. The land god will be worshipped every New Year and holiday to pray for peace and harvest and protect the village; Because the villages where Dong people live are close to mountains and rivers, their productivity is relatively low and they are isolated from the outside world. Therefore, the Dong people also worship and rely on the mountains. They usually choose to burn incense and paper to worship the mountain gods and beg for peace and happiness when they live in the mountains; Living near mountains and rivers, villagers believe that there is a water god beside the ancient well, so they should respect water and get the protection of the water god. They usually worship the water god in the morning of the New Year’s Day, and then bring a cup of water home, which means that the water god will bless them in the coming year, and they will be safe and auspicious. The worship of natural gods places the villagers’ good hopes and wishes to bless their families (Figure 3).

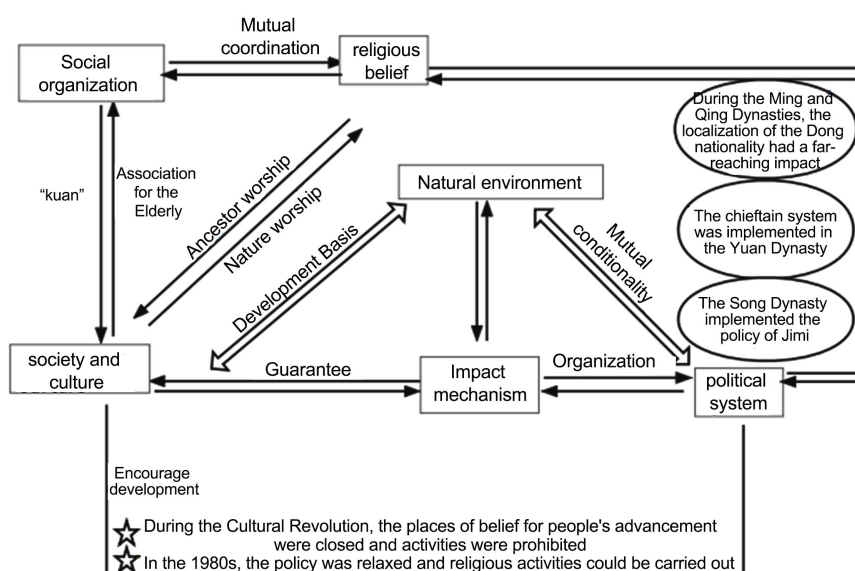


Figure 3. The relationship between “influencing factors” and “influencing mechanism”.

6. Conclusion

The evolution of the sacred space of Dong Village is essentially a process of continuous selection, evolution, adjustment and adaptation around the evolution of social system. This deep-rooted cultural awareness is also the reason for the continuity and development of the sacred space of the Dong nationality. In order to adapt to the development of the natural and social environment, the function of the sacred space gradually changes, forming a unique folk belief system. It is an important part of the development of the entire village culture, condensing the wisdom and value orientation of the Dong people. In today's development and in the process of the practice of global faith social mobility, the ethnic identity of the Dong people also plays a role in promoting the development of the village. The evolution of folk beliefs is a positive evolution, but there are also some negative factors. How to better actively develop and coordinate the relationship between the two, and promote the virtuous circle of society, is one of the main tasks for future development.

The sacred space lacks a full-time operation subject. In relative time, the village committee is responsible for the management. A few villagers spontaneously repair the damage of the sacred space. There is a lack of full-time staff and application system. The sacred space has not been maintained and operated for a long time. The cultural value of the sacred space has not been fully utilized and explored. With the development of urbanization, the functions of the sacred space are diversified. The sacredness of folk beliefs and the sense of cultural orthodoxy are constantly used to let folk beliefs exist in the construction of the folk balance system, and the functions of folk beliefs are constantly explored and brought into play. The sacred space is divided into religious belief type, humanistic belief type and compound type, which have the functions of regulation, moral education, psychological adjustment, national identity, cultural inherit-

ance, etc., and can participate in the construction of a harmonious society properly and reasonably.

Fund Project

Hunan Postgraduate Research and Innovation Project (No.: CX20211254).

Relevant Information

1) Dong nationality, a minority nationality in China, believes in multi gods. Dong people are mainly distributed in Xinhuang Dong Autonomous County, Huitong County, Tongdao Dong Autonomous County, Zhijiang Dong Autonomous County, Jingzhou Miao and Dong Autonomous County in Hunan Province, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture and Tongren Prefecture in Guizhou Province, Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County, Longsheng Autonomous County, Rongshui Miao Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, EnshiTujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province, etc. 2) As the carrier of Dong culture and the place for villagers to gather in Xiangxi, the sacred space has been evolving and developing under the impact of modernization, reshaping the local and social cultural concepts of traditional village sacred space.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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