

Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai Village at Liuzhou, China: Public Space and Meaning Change in the Process of Minority Development

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Abstract

This qualitative research focuses on Dong's Wind and Rain Bridges in Chengyang Bazhai in Liuzhou, China. This research explores the academic issue of public space and meaning change in the process of minority development, through the Dong's Wind and Rain Bridges phenomenon. The findings of this research are that public space in all societies in the world is a fusion of space production and meaning and constructs identity and social relations. It has changed in the context of the times and has produced new functions for different groups of people, constantly generating new meanings superimposed on the old meanings. As an important public space in the community, Dong's Wind and Rain Bridges include the physical space production of the surrounding area and the social and mental space production of the Dong ethnic group, emphasizing the close relationship between "space production" and "ethnic identity". In the process of minority development in China, the use of the wind and rain bridge's public space has changed socially, responding to the new needs of different groups. It, therefore, has been constantly undergoing "meaning change".

Keywords: Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge, Public Space, Meaning Change, Process of Minority Development.

Chengyang Bazhai is a Dong ethnic community in the north of Liuzhou, China, with eight natural villages. These eight natural villages are separated by the Linxi River. To facilitate communication production and life in the villages, the Dong people use their unique

local wisdom to build wind and rain bridges that adapt to the local landscape. The Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge is a public building connecting the riverbank in the community and has become an important "public space" that supports the functions or responsibilities of people's lifestyles

related to physical conditions and social networks (Gans, 2002). The Dong people establish their daily life and ritual traditions on the Wind and Rain Bridge, create ghosts and construct sacred spaces so that all Dong people can benefit, maintain and use it together (Gehl & Matan, 2009). The Dong people build "ethnic identity" in the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge. In the process of the development of minorities in China, the Dong people have transformed from an "ethnic" to a "minority" in China. As a public space, the wind and rain bridge form a multi-faceted interaction with ethnic minorities and foreign groups in the complex status quo of social space, reflecting different levels of relationships, meeting the needs of different objects, and constantly generating new meanings superimposed on the old meanings, forming a "meaning change" (Ganji & Rishbeth, 2020). "

The historical or theoretical context of "public space" and "meaning change" can be traced back to urban planning and sociology. The concept of public space has evolved over time and is influenced by theories of urbanism, social interaction, and cultural studies. "Meaning change" is rooted in the field of semiotics and cultural anthropology, exploring how symbols and cultural representations transform over time within a society. This research explores the issue of public space and meaning change in the process of minority development in China. It takes the phenomenon of the Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai, Liuzhou, as the starting point. "Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai Village at Liuzhou, China: Public Space and Meaning Change in the Process of Minority Development" is basic research that responds to "small places, larger issues." It describes and analyzes academic issues such as cultural landscape, ethnic identity, public space, and meaning change. It will further enrich and fill in the above academic research concepts and provide a reference for the Chinese government's development of ethnic minority communities in the context of ethnic minority development.

Research Methodology

This is basic research using qualitative research methods. Guided by the core concepts of public space and meaning change, this research collects two main sets of data through fieldwork in Chengyang Bazhai and literature data collection. First, fieldwork data. The researcher collected data from village elders, wood craftsmen who mastered the construction technology of wind and rain bridges, Dong villagers, local government officials, research scholars, tourists, and managers of tourism companies through interviews, informal interviews, and group discussions and recorded activities through general observation and participant observation, such as Wind and Rain Bridge rituals, tourist visits, and Dong performances. Second, data was collected through relevant books and research literature, including literature data on Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge, public space, space production, meaning change, and China's minority development. Based on the research framework, the data comprehensively explored the issues of public space and meaning change of Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge, and the results were descriptively analyzed and presented with regional photos. The research concept of "public space" and "The Human Condition", and is explained using Henri Lefebvre's book called as "The Production of Space" as physical space, social space, and mental space.

Research Results

Part 1: The Emergence of Wind and Rain Bridge and the Historical, Social, and Cultural of Chengyang Bazhai Village

This part explores the background of the emergence and development of Chengyang Bazhai Village and Wind and Rain Bridge from a comprehensive perspective, including the physical space of Chengyang Bazhai and the social, historical, and cultural changes and developments before and after the arrival of the ethnic minority development policy.

1.1 Physical Space of Chengyang Bazhai and the Emergence of ‘Wind and Rain Bridges’

Chengyang Bazhai is a Dong ethnic community located north of Liuzhou City, Guangxi, China. It has unique geographical features of hilly landforms, abundant water resources, and mountains and forests. Chengyang Bazhai is located on a narrow strip of land where the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau, Hunan Hills, and Guangxi Hills meet. The terrain is mostly hilly, with altitudes ranging from 2,000 meters to more than 300 meters. The land area is about 12 km², of which 70% is mountainous. As the Linxi River runs through it, the river provides abundant water resources for the community. The Dong people use abundant water resources to build Dong ethnic water wheels and wind and rain bridges for convenient production, forming a cultural landscape closely related to the river. Since the soil of Chengyang Bazhai is suitable for the growth and reproduction of fir trees, the fir forest has become the main raw material for protecting the village and building buildings, including the important public building wind and rain bridge in the community.

The unique geographical environment has nurtured the humid climate, abundant precipitation, and distinct cold and hot seasons. Chengyang Bazhai has abundant rainfall, with more than 170 days of precipitation per year. The humid climate here provides unique advantages for rice and forestry production. At the same time, the abundant rainfall also affects the form of wind and rain bridges, making wind and rain shelter a basic need of the Dong people for bridges.

To adapt to the local physical space, the Dong people have formed a unique farming life and production method of planting glutinous rice on terraces in the mountains, raising fish and ducks in paddy fields, and planting fir forests to protect the village. Because this lifestyle requires frequent crossing of rivers, it has given rise to the emergence of wind and rain bridges in the community.



Figure 1: Dong's wind and rain bridge in Chengyang Bazhai. It is a special bridge built to adapt to the local physical space.

Source: <http://www.baidu.com/> [Accessed on March 10, 2024]

Wind and Rain Bridge is a special wooden bridge with pavilions and corridors built by the Dong people in China to adapt to the local landscape. Its name comes from the Chinese word, which means bridge of wind and rain, implying its function of providing shelter from wind and rain. Its Chinese name originated from the geographical and climatic characteristics of the area where it is located. The strong wind and heavy rain environment prompted the emergence of the Wind and Rain Bridge (Gehl, J., & Matan, 2015).

Importantly, this community has a unique physical space. The Linxi River and its tributaries divide Chengyang Bazhai into three plots, forming eight natural villages: Dongzhai, Pingfuzhai, Jichangzhai, Dazhai, Ma'anzhai, Pingzhai, Yanzhai, and Pingtanzhai. The unique physical space divides people's living environment and makes people into several small groups. People build and use wind and rain bridges together out of the common need to remove spatial restrictions (Hansson & Hillier, 1987).

Therefore, the emergence of wind and rain bridges is the result of adapting to the local physical environment, climate, and the living and production methods of local people. The unique physical space of Chengyang Bazhai makes wind and rain bridges an important part of the community, helping the daily production and life

of the Dong people and communicating with the villages.

1.2 Wind and Rain Bridge and the Social, Historical, and Cultural Development of Chengyang Bazhai

There is a close relationship between the Wind and Rain Bridge and the social history and cultural development of Chengyang Bazhai. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Dong people were an independent ethnic group that continued to preserve their traditional farming society. The Dong people's origin and migration, social organizational structure, traditional ways of communication, and customs directly influenced the construction and use of Wind and Rain Bridge, laying the foundation for the local wisdom of its construction skills.

However, after 1949, the Dong people became part of the country, were given the identity of a "minority", and received corresponding minority development policies. This dual identity makes the Dong people an "ethnic" in terms of cultural identity and a "minority" under the framework of the national government. Through this identity transformation, the Dong community used its minority identity to obtain support and help from the state, while transforming its unique culture into commodities to obtain economic benefits. Importantly, as the Dong people's identity transformed, the Dong society and culture changed, which in turn affected the Dong people's interaction in the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge.

Therefore, as a public space, the Wind and Rain Bridge supports the needs and functions of the Dong people in Chengyang Bazhai in different social contexts and builds a complex and close internal relationship between ethnic development and national policies. This set of relationships is the new meaning of the Wind and Rain Bridge.

Part 2: Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge in the Dimension of Cultural Landscape and Architectural Culture

This part focuses on the cultural landscape of Wind and Rain Bridge, including the natural and human factors in the formation of this cultural landscape, as well as the architectural culture related to the cultural landscape. The formation and architectural style of Wind and Rain Bridge form a complex and close interaction with the cultural landscape.

2.1 Wind and Rain Bridge: A Unique Cultural Landscape Formed by the Influence of Natural and Cultural Factors

"Cultural landscape" links the relationship between landscape and groups (including ethnic groups). It is the result of a group (country, region, ethnic group) using and transforming nature (He et al., 2021). The formation of the wind and rain bridge in Chengyang Bazhai Community is a unique cultural landscape formed by the influence of natural and cultural factors. This is a unique interaction and integration phenomenon between human culture and the natural environment. From the cognition and utilization of the environment to the social and historical process to the belief concept, Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge has become a unique cultural landscape of Chengyang Bazhai and shows the "tradition" and "culture" of the Dong ethnic group.

1) The Influence of Natural Factors on Wind and Rain Bridges in Chengyang Bazhai

The formation of wind and rain bridges is influenced by the natural factors of the villages. The natural landscape of Chengyang Bazhai, "relying on mountains, close to water, and beside forests", has prompted the Dong people to form a unique production and living style that adapts to the landscape. They cross the river to plant fir trees in the mountains and forests and plant rice next to the river. Frequent crossing of the river has become a necessary part of daily life.

In addition, Chengyang Bazhai is divided into several plots by Linxi River and its tributaries. To facilitate walking and

communication between villages, the Dong people built seven wind and rain bridges on the river. The three main bridges on the Linxi River, the main river of Wind and Rain Bridge, are the Puji Bridge, Helong Bridge, and Yongji Bridge. Puji Bridge is located in the upper reaches of the river, connecting Pingpu, Dazhai, Dongzhai, Jichangzhai in the upper reaches of Linxi River with Ma'anzhai, Yanzhai, Pingzhai, and Pingtanzhai in the lower reaches. Helong Bridge is located in the middle section of Linxi River, connecting Pingzhai and Yanzhai, and is an important passage used by the eight villages. Yongji Bridge is located in the lower reaches of the Linxi River and is an important checkpoint for Chengyang Bazhai to communicate with the outside world. In addition, Wanshou Bridge, Pin'an Bridge, Meishao Bridge, and Hongjun Bridge are all located on the western tributary of the Linxi River, belonging to Yanzhai, the central area of Chengyang Bazhai.

Wind and rain bridges play different roles in villages, some are gates, some are roads, and some are connections between villages. Wind and rain bridges form an interactive relationship with other buildings in the village (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001).

2) The Influence of Cultural Factors on Wind and Rain Bridges

The formation of wind and rain bridges is influenced by cultural factors, including the influence of social history, the influence of Han Ethnic Covered Bridges and Dong Ethnic Drum Towers, and the influence of Dong Ethnic Fengshui Beliefs and Soul Concepts.

First, wind and rain bridges did not exist in Dong nationality villages from the beginning. Their appearance went through a long social process. In the closed ancient times, the ancestors of the Dong nationality only placed some large stones in the shallow streams or set up wooden boards in the ditches and on the rivers to solve the travel problem. It was not until the Tang Dynasty that the Dong people learned the method of making bridges from the Han people. The cultural migration in the Song and Yuan

dynasties brought about further improvement in the artificial bridge-making technology of the Dong people. In the Ming Dynasty, the Dong people were influenced by the Han nationality's belief culture, and finally gradually formed the "local wisdom" of building wind and rain bridges and built a large number of wind and rain bridges in the Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China (Ivory et al., 2007).

Second, the Dong people-built wind and rain bridges by learning and imitating the style of Han Ethnic Covered Bridges and integrated the Dong Ethnic Drum Towers architecture into the wind and rain bridges.



Figure 2: Han Ethnic Covered Bridges, Dong Ethnic Drum Towers, and Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge. The Dong Ethnic imitated the Han Ethnic Covered Bridges to build a wind and rain bridge and incorporated the architectural style of the Dong Ethnic Drum Towers into the construction of the wind and rain bridge, which became a bridge pavilion, making the wind and rain bridge a unique architectural style of the Dong ethnic.

Source: <http://image.baidu.com/> [Accessed on March 10, 2024]

From the social history of the emergence of the wind and rain bridge, we know that the Dong people learned the skills of making covered bridges from the Han people, combined with their own life experience and aesthetics, improved the skills, and finally formed the local wisdom of making wind and rain bridges that we see now. The Dong Wind and Rain Bridge evolved from the Han Ethnic Covered Bridge, but there is a difference. The difference is that the Dong people integrated their important drum tower into the wind and rain bridge. From the

comparison of the architectural styles of the Han Ethnic Covered Bridge and the Wind and Rain Bridge, it can be seen that the Covered Bridge has a corridor but no pavilion, while the Wind and Rain Bridge has both a corridor and a pavilion. Careful observation will not make it difficult to see that the pavilion on the wind and rain bridge is very similar in shape to the drum tower of the Dong people (Jebb et al., 2021).

Third, and most importantly, the influence of the Fengshui Beliefs and Soul Concepts of the Dong people on the Wind and Rain Bridge. The Fengshui Beliefs of the Dong ancestors show that the bridge can penetrate the dragon energy and keep wealth, while the Dong soul concept believes that the bridge is the passage of the soul. This is an important mental space production process of the Dong people in the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge.

The Feng Shui beliefs of the Dong people show that bridges can penetrate the dragon energy and keep wealth. Due to the geographical environment and the actual life and production of the Dong people, the Dong people have formed their own unique Feng Shui beliefs, which have an impact on the spatial layout of the village, which determines the construction of bridges and their location in the village. For example, Ma'an Village, one of the eight villages in Chengyang, faces water on the south, east and west sides, and is located in the surrounding streams. The river passes around the village. The village is centered on the drum tower and the houses are built around it, which is the "sitting on the dragon's mouth" in the Feng Shui of the Dong people. Although Ma'an Village was built at the dragon's mouth, the village still has a place where the dragon vein disappears, that is, where the mountains are separated. This place is often separated by a river, which is the "water mouth" in Feng Shui. The Dong Feng Shui beliefs believe that at this time, a bridge should be built at the place where the dragon vein disappears to allow the dragon energy to penetrate and connect. In addition, the bridge can prevent the

flow of wealth and keep the wealth of the village. Therefore, the Yongji Bridge was built here.

The Dong's Soul Concepts believe that the bridge is the passage of the soul, leading to the underworld or the world of the living. This passage must be built in the village to help the Dong people guide the soul.

Through literature (Johnson, 1980), the researcher collected a folk legend: "It is said that there is a river called Yinyang River at the intersection of the Yin and Yang worlds, and there is a bridge on the river. All people in the world, whether alive or dead, need to walk on this bridge. If a person dies, he needs to walk on this bridge to the underworld. If a person wants to reincarnate, he also needs to cross this bridge to return to the world of the living. When the person who reincarnates first walks on this bridge, if the person who reincarnates later cannot squeeze onto this bridge, then he has to build a fir tree next to the bridge as a bridge to cross the river."

Therefore, the bridge is a special existence for the Dong people, which is different from the concepts of other ethnic groups. The Dong people believe that everyone can have their bridge, so the bridge is related to everyone's soul. The Dong people believe that although people will always die, their souls can live forever and even reincarnate into reborn people. And the way of reincarnation of this soul is through the bridge, so the bridge has become something that the Dong people must build.

The Wind and Rain Bridge is a shared bridge between living people and souls. Controlling the shared use of public space is wisdom or cultural technology. This is the source of ritual worship on the bridge. The Dong people built the ceremony on this shared bridge, which uses the wind and rain bridge as their soul channel. The wind and rain bridge has become an important mental space for the Dong people.

In conclusion, the emergence of the wind and rain bridge is a unique cultural landscape formed by the influence of natural and cultural factors. This cultural landscape is not only related to

physical space but also contains local wisdom and belief culture related to the production of social space and psychological space and is shaped through continuous spatial practice (Jones et al., 2015). Therefore, the Wind and Rain Bridge is a cultural landscape that plays an important role in physical space, social space, and mental space. All of this is also part of the production process of the public space of Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge.

2.2 The Architectural Dimensions of Wind and Rain Bridges

The unique construction form of the wind and rain bridge is the public space of the Dong ethnic group community. Each part adapts to social activities in a unique landscape environment. In addition, the construction skills of the wind and rain bridge are a kind of "local wisdom," which is regarded as a manifestation of cultural heritage and self-identity.

In Dimensions of Architecture, the Wind and Rain Bridge adapts to the geographical environment and climatic conditions of Chengyang Bazhai, forming a unique construction form. There are "boat-shaped" bridge piers built with bluestone at the bottom to reduce the resistance of water flow; there are bridge spans with simple supported beams or cantilevered wooden beams in the middle to support the bridge; there are pavilions and corridors on the top to shelter from wind and rain (Keane et al., 2012). There is also a unique "bridge temple" structure that carries the traditions and rituals of the Dong people.

The most important part of the Wind and Rain Bridge, the "bridge temple", carries the traditions and rituals of the Dong people and builds the imagination space of the Dong people. There is an "ancestral temple" in the pavilion of the Wind and Rain Bridge. There are statues of a man and a woman in the shrine. The man is called Jiang Lang and the woman is called Jiang Yi, who are the ancestors of the Dong people. The middle tower and the right tower of the Wind and Rain Bridge are dedicated to the "Wu God " and the "Wen God " to eliminate disasters

and difficulties. Influenced by the Han people, the Dong people also worship loyalty, bravery, righteousness, and literature. Therefore, they often use the middle tower and the right tower of the Wind and Rain Bridge, which are located on important roads and have convenient transportation, to set up the Guan Sheng Temple and Wenchang Palace to worship the "Wu God " and "Wen God " in their hearts. In particular, Guan Gong is not only a loyal, brave, and demon-suppressing hero, but also the savior and benefactor of the Dong ancestors and their patron saint. The location of the shrine is also very particular. It must be facing upstream and facing downstream, to protect the village. The bridge temple of Wind and Rain Bridge has become a practice community for the rituals and traditions of the Dong people and has also constructed an imagined community for the Dong people.



Figure 3: Puji Wind and Rain Bridge's Bridge Temple. It enshrines Guan Gong, the "Wu God". On the first or fifteenth day of every month, the Dong people come here to worship.

The bridge temple carries the beliefs of the Dong people. It is an area used by every member of the community and has become a sacred thing to supervise public places and a public space maintained by the community.

Source: Photographed by Chen Lu. May 2, 2023

The bridge temple on the Wind and Rain Bridge, where people worship and pray, was built as a sacred space to promote the common use and maintenance of the Wind and Rain Bridge's public space. This is a cultural technology. From this phenomenon, we can see that ethnic minorities use cultural technology to turn public space into a sacred space and then use

and maintain it together. And this process of creating a sacred space is actually to give the space a new set of meanings. And this set of meanings plays an important role in the creation of public spaces by various ethnic groups.

In conclusion, the Wind and Rain Bridge is not only a building that connects the riverbank in the community in the physical dimension, it contains the resources of the surrounding physical area and the social and cultural life of the Dong people. It plays a role in supporting social space. And to maintain public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge was built as a sacred space for the gods to live, which is the residence of the public psychological space of people in society. This phenomenon is an interesting "ethnic cultural technology" and also a physical and mental space that supports the above social space (Latham & Layton, 2019). Therefore, the Wind and Rain Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai Community is a special place with its own identity. It affects the phenomena of race, invention, and tradition in public space, which is important to the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge in the dimension of ethnic identity in the next part.

Part 3: Ethnic Identity and the Meaning of Public Space of Wind and Rain Bridges

This part mainly discusses the significance of the Wind and Rain Bridge to the Dong people before China's ethnic minority policy. In daily life and special life, Wind and Rain Bridge is used by the Dong people as a public space in Chengyang Bazhai. In the dimension of ethnicity, it shows the "self-identity" of the Dong people. Therefore, the researcher presents the meaning of the Wind and Rain Bridge as a "public space" in the community from the perspective of the relationship and interaction between ethnic life and society in the dimensions of daily life and formal life.

3.1 The Daily Life of Dong Ethnic People in Wind and Rain Bridges

The Wind and Rain Bridge is an indispensable public space in the Dong villages. The Dong people's common use, maintenance,

and repair of the Wind and Rain Bridge in their daily lives have built a unique relationship between the Wind and Rain Bridge and the Dong people.

1) The Common Uses of Wind and Rain Bridges in Chengyang Bazhai

The Dong people use wind and rain bridges together in their daily lives. Therefore, wind and rain bridges can show the characteristics of the Dong people's production and lifestyle related to the landscape, as well as their ethnic beliefs and values. For example, the Dong people use wind and rain bridges for transportation and business, shelter from the wind and rain, cool off and gathering, and for military defense and welcoming guests. This shows that the Dong people interact closely in wind and rain bridges and build social relationships. Life in public spaces shapes the meaning between people and between individuals and groups.



Figure 3: Dong people gather on Puji Bridge to enjoy the cool air. On Puji Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai, Dong elders are enjoying the cool air, playing chess, chatting, and gathering on the bridge. The wind and rain bridge has become a space for public communication.

Source: Photographed by Chen Lu. October 3, 2022

It is worth noting that the Dong people also use wind and rain bridges to perform sacrifices and prayers, establishing a collective religious and cultural symbol in public spaces, and demonstrating the meaning of public spaces in consolidating ethnic groups and cultural identity.

2) The Common Maintenance of Wind and Rain Bridges: The Legend of the Blue Dragon and the Creation of Ghost

In the traditional Dong society, the Dong people use legends and create ghosts to jointly maintain the Wind and Rain Bridge. This gives the Wind and Rain Bridge an imaginary level of spiritual space, thus realizing the protection and preservation of the Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space in the overall dimension of the Dong society.

There are two ways for the Dong people to maintain the Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space: one is to endow the Wind and Rain Bridge with the belief of God. The Dong people endow the Wind and Rain Bridge with the Legend of the Blue Dragon as the incarnation of the Blue Dragon who rescued the Dong people from the flood, and the bridge is sacred; on the other hand, the Dong people create ghosts to guide and restrain people's behavior. They create bridge-guarding ghosts that coexist with the bridge to guide the souls of the Dong people's birth and death and regard the Wind and Rain Bridge as a passage for the birth and death of life. Both means are the process of the Dong people creating sacred space to protect public space through cultural technical power. They create sacred space through this power to protect public space, which is also a process of space production.

3) The Common Repair of Wind and Rain Bridges: The Bridgekeeper and Donations

The Dong people manage the wind and rain bridge as a public space in the village, forming a social system (Mahdinezhad et al., 2020). The Dong people have a professional "Bridgekeeper" and a systematic fundraising method to repair the wind and rain bridge. To a certain extent, it has constructed the social system and ethics of the Dong people. The Bridgekeeper is responsible for guarding and cleaning the bridge body and continuing the incense for the gods, and the village gives the Bridgekeeper "Free land" or appropriate monetary rewards. This is a complete and systematic fundraising method.

First, the village elders organize the villagers to raise funds, and then specific elders collect and record the money, and then the wood craftsmen repair it, and finally announce the use of funds. The use, maintenance, and repair of the wind and rain bridge by the Dong people jointly construct their daily life on the wind and rain bridge. The daily life of the Dong people in the wind and rain bridge has become a form of self-construction for them. The Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space has also become a theater for the formation of Dong culture, and the Dong people interpret their ethnicity in this theater.

Therefore, the Dong people's creation of wind and rain bridges is not only a creation at the level of physical space but also includes the creation of wind and rain bridges in mental space and social space. The wind and rain bridges, which have the meaning of physical space, mental space, and social space, in turn, shape the national identity of the Dong people.

3.2 The Special Life of the Dong Ethnic People in the Wind and Rain Bridges

The special life of the Dong people mainly includes rituals and traditional festivals. The Dong people established rituals and traditions in the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge. The spatial practice and production embodied the "ethnicity" and also constructed their "self-identity". This is the important meaning of Wind and Rain Bridge as a community public space in the traditional Dong society. Various rituals and traditions are established in Wind and Rain Bridge or related to it. Therefore, the ritual maintains faith, shows ethnic identity, and inherits culture, including important festival activities of the Dong ethnic group (Stephen May, Tariq Modood, and Judith Squires. 2004).

1) The Unique and Elaborate Dong Building Rituals of Wind and Rain Bridges

In the traditional society of the Dong people, the Ritual of building a wind and rain bridge is a process that closely connects the wind and rain bridge with the village. In the unique and complicated bridge-building Rituals, the wind and rain bridge, as a connection between people

and gods, and between people, constructs the spiritual temperament and worldview of the Dong people. From "Foundation Laying Ritual" to "Beam Setting Ritual", to "Stepping on the Beams Ritual", and finally "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual", each Ritual has a unique meaning and is accompanied by different roles in the Ritual. The Dong people confirm their ethnic identity in the Ritual. The following researcher describes it through an example of a "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual".



Figure 4: "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual" in Tongdao County, China. When a new wind and rain bridge is built, the Dong people will hold a grand Stepping on the Bridge Ritual. They will spread indigo Dong cloth on the bridge, and Mr. Geography will lead other Dong people to step on the Dong cloth and cross the bridge.

Source: <http://www.tongdao.gov.cn/t> [Accessed on March 2, 2024]

The "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual" is a grand Ritual held when the wind and rain bridge is completed. A piece of Dong cloth is laid on the bridge, and a person of high moral character or good fortune walks across the bridge on the Dong cloth, followed by other Dong people. According to an interview with Chen Yuetiao, Dong villagers in Chengyang Bazhai. When Yongji Bridge was built in 1911, the Dong people in Chengyang Bazhai specially invited a 36-year-old man with grandchildren from outside to perform the "Stepping on the Bridge

Ritual". They believed that this was a very blessed person who could bring blessings to the Dong community through the "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual". The Dong people believe that "Stepping on the Bridge Ritual" can prolong the life of the elderly, and make young people grow physically and wisely, and women who have not given birth can get pregnant.

2) Connected with the soul of the Sacrificial Bridge Ritual, Addition Bridge Ritual, and Settle Bridge Ritual

In the Dong belief, the wind and rain bridge are a passage for the soul, which separates and transitions the original state of the Dong people (Okoli, 2015). This is considered a "rite of passage". In "Sacrificial Bridge Ritual", "Addition Bridge Ritual" and "Settle Bridge Ritual", the actual transition function of the wind and rain bridge naturally extends to a symbol of connecting life and death and the yin and yang worlds. Take the "Sacrificial Bridge Ritual" related to individual souls, the "Addition Bridge Ritual" to bless children's safety, and the "Settle Bridge Ritual" to guide children's souls to the world of the living as examples, all of which express people's hope for the transformation from one state or situation to another (Pan et al., 2018). In this transformation, the "cultural identity" of the Dong people is expressed.

3) Crossing the Bridge Rituals in Dong Ethnic Weddings: Transformation of Identity and Display of New Identity

In the wedding ceremony, the Dong people obtain and display a new identity through the "Crossing the Bridge Ritual" and the practice of crossing the wind and rain bridge, and maintaining their "ethnicity". Dong weddings usually last for 4 days. On New Year's Eve, the bride crosses the "bridge" made of carrying poles in front of the man's house, symbolizing the bride's transformation from a daughter to a wife. On the first day of the New Year, the bride carries water across the wind and rain bridge, and on the third day of the New Year, the bride returns home to pass through the wind and rain bridge, which are both processes of displaying a

new identity. Therefore, the wind and rain bridge play an important role in this process. The bride's "Crossing the Bridge Ritual" and crossing the wind and rain bridge, ritual behavior not only represents the process of marriage and family formation, but also the inheritance of the Dong ethnic tradition, and at the same time shows the participation and dedication of social members to the community and family (Rogers et al., 2012).

Therefore, the wind and rain bridge play an important role in the Dong people's acquisition of a new identity and the display of a new identity. Today, this bridge and the Dong wedding are "theaters for creating self-identity" and at the same time, they are also the reproduction of the identity of the Dong people. It is also a stage for touring and integrating into the context of the commercialization of others.

4) Dong Ethnic Festivals Associated with the Wind and Rain Bridges

The interactive ritual of ethnic festivals is a purposeful construction, which attracts people from the ethnic group to the festival rituals (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Through the holding of the rituals, a community with strong cohesion and common self-identity is built. The wind and rain bridge builds a space for communication between individuals and groups during the festival, and the Dong people further confirm that "we are Dong people" in this process.

For example, the Dong people celebrate the "Bridge Worship Festival" on the second day of the second lunar month every year. This festival links bridge repairs and road repairs with good deeds and at the same time links bridge worship with population prosperity and ethnic continuation. Festivals have become a symbol of culture and identity, reflecting the Dong people's worship of primitiveness and cultural values.

In addition, during the "Guan Gong Grinding Knife Festival" on May 13 every year, the Dong people will perform various sacrificial rituals such as "sacrificing knives", reed pipes, pipa dances, spring ox dances, reunion dances, and eating hundreds of family banquets, praying to Guand Gong and asking him to sharpen knives

in the sky, and the sharpening water will become rain on earth to nourish farmland. Guan Gong Grinding knife is a sign of "good weather and a good harvest", which is the Dong people's expectation for a good harvest of grain and a rich life.



Figure 5: Dong people hold a banquet on the Wind and Rain Bridge to celebrate the "Guan Gong Grinding Knife Festival". Dong people brought traditional foods such as glutinous rice, fish, sour meat, etc. prepared at home, and took them to the Wind and Rain Bridge to share with other people in the village.

Source: <https://www.sohu.com/> [Accessed on 8 June 2023]

It is worth noting that the last activity of the "Guan Gong Grinding Knife Festival" is to gather the population on the Wind and Rain Bridge to eat a hundred-family banquet. The statue of Guan Gong is enshrined on the bridge temple of the Wind and Rain Bridge. On the day of the Guan Gong Knife Sharpening Festival, the Dong people bring food from home to share, or everyone performs the rituals, performances, and customs of this festival together. This part is part of the process of creating a public space for the Wind and Rain Bridge.

Therefore, the important characteristics of tradition and ritual are the key conditions for giving special meaning to Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge. The Wind and Rain Bridge has become a public space for important rituals such as life transition rituals and wedding ceremonies.

Social life and belief culture interact and interweave in this space, giving it important meanings such as life reproduction and identity transformation. More importantly, the Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space has become a theater for the Dong people to construct their identity, gathering the collective memory and cohesion of the ethnic group, and maintaining their ethnic identity.

In summary, in daily and special life, those things related to the Wind and Rain Bridge are interrelated (Talen, 2000). In particular, rituals play an important role, allowing everyone to see the importance of the Wind and Rain Bridge in their lives and society in a dimension beyond rationality. It is created as an imaginary space for passage to heaven or the afterlife, weddings, and other important events, especially those conducted together. This is a phenomenon in which the Dong people create meaning for the Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space. At the same time, the Wind and Rain Bridge also symbolizes "how the Dong people in Chengyang Bazhai are different from others."

Part 4: Wind and Rain Bridge and Meaning Change of Public Space in the Process of Minority Development

The meaning change of public space is an important phenomenon that points out the major issues of ethnicity and country related to national policies. Public space exists all over the world and in different social environments. Political and cultural policies directly affect the use and maintenance of public space.

In the context of the policy of Minority Development, the Dong people have a dual identity. Culturally, they are still an independent "ethnic", but they have become a "minority" under the national framework (Valentine, 2008). This allows the Dong people to use these two identities to interact more with the community inside and outside in the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge, so Wind and Rain Bridge has a new meaning. In the Process of Minority Development in China, the phenomenon of the new meaning of Wind and Rain Bridge occurs in

two ways: first, the meaning change of Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space within the community. Second, the meaning change of Wind and Rain Bridge as a cultural symbol in the external society.

4.1 Inside Community: Multi-Meaning of 'Yongji Bridge' in the Context of Minority Development

Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space within the Chengyang Bazhai Dong ethnic community, constructs a complex and multi-dimensional meaning in different contexts and is related to ethnic belonging, social development, economic development, cultural heritage, and other aspects (Wang & Liu, 2022). The researcher uses the case of Yongji Bridge to demonstrate:

1) 'Yongji Wind and Rain Bridge' and Nation-State

The development process of China's ethnic minorities began with the implementation of ethnic minority policies since the founding of the People's Republic of China and has continued to this day. Ethnic minority policies are a national policy of China for ethnic minority groups. The state manages ethnic minority affairs through this national policy, thereby maintaining and consolidating the unity of the country (Luo Chunqiu, Zhu Yunsheng & Dai Jun. 2020). Under the environment of national policies, the Dong people changed from an "ethnic" to a "minority", and their identity changed. In addition, national policies also affected the use and maintenance of public spaces in the Dong community, and these changes caused changes in the meaning of public spaces.

In the context of the nation-state, Yongji Bridge symbolizes ethnic equality and connects ethnic minorities with the state. The state highlights the policy orientation of equal and harmonious development of multiple ethnic groups through the identification and careful restoration of the cultural relics of Yongji Bridge. This symbolic meaning profoundly reflects the complex and subtle interactive relationship between nationalism and national

identity. On the spiritual level, it builds a bridge of emotional resonance and collective identity among different ethnic groups.

In *The Production of Space*, Watson (2009) emphasized that social space is a social product. In addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of control, and therefore a means of domination and power. The state uses national policies as a power technology to influence and change the way the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge in the Dong community is used and maintained, which in turn affects the meaning of the public space. In the traditional Dong community in the past, the meaning of the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge was to build ethnic identity; but now, in the multiple contexts of modern society, the meaning of the public space of the Wind and Rain Bridge has become complex and diverse, and this meaning spans the society. The internal and external worlds are widely integrated, and new meanings are constantly generated in the dimension of "ethnic identity negotiation".

2) Yongji Bridge in the Process of National Cultural Tourism

In the context of National Cultural Tourism, Yongji Bridge is open to external sharing to develop the economy. As a public space shared by the outside world, Yongji Bridge has triggered changes in community identity and sense of belonging, social interaction, and social change. The influence of this tourism economy has changed the original meaning of the Wind and Rain Bridge, becoming a connection and integration between the community and the outside world. The researcher uses a case to demonstrate:

Under Tourist Gaze, to satisfy the tourists' experience, the Dong people in Chengyang Bazhai took out the traditional "road-blocking ritual" and changed it into a performance for communication and interaction with tourists. The following is the process of the researcher using the method of participatory observation to record the performance at Yongji Bridge:

On May 1, 2023, which is China's statutory holiday Labor Day, many tourists came to Chengyang Bazhai for tourism. At 9:30 in the morning, about a dozen women in Dong costumes stood in line at the Yongji Bridge with red umbrellas. The two Dong ladies at the head of the line pulled up red cloth strips to block the tourists who wanted to enter the village through Yongji Bridge. Then two leading Dong women came out of the team. They asked the tourists whether they wanted to enter the village. When they got a positive answer, they proposed that the tourists should use antiphonal singing to unblock them before they could enter the village. Then, the two leading Dong women led other Dong women to sing. After singing, it was the tourists' turn to sing. After several rounds of repetition, the tourists were qualified to enter the village. Then the red cloth blocking the road was untied, and the two leading Dong women served their unique rice wine to the tourists. After drinking this bowl of wine, the tourists became good friends with the Dong people, and this bowl of wine represented welcome.



Figure 6: The road-blocking welcoming performance at the Yongji Bridge. Under the Tourists Gaze, the road-blocking ritual of the Yongji Bridge has changed the meaning of the

public space of the Yongji Bridge, from a functional defensive space to a tourist experience space.

Source: Photographed by Chen Lu. May 1, 2023

From the above phenomenon, we can see that in the traditional Dong society, the road-blocking ritual is practiced in the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge, and the Dong people construct their identity and cultural identity through the ritual; in the modern society of tourism context, the road-blocking ritual is replaced by performance under Tourist Gaze, and it becomes a commercialized phenomenon.

Therefore, both the ritual and the performance are used to project the nation into the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge, and the public space of Wind and Rain Bridge becomes a theater for the interaction between tradition and traditional invention. The rituals of the past and the performances of the present are functions that adapt to different times and societies, are produced for different groups of people and needs, and constantly produce new meanings that superimpose the old meanings (Aelbrecht, 2019).

3) Yongji Bridge and Global World

In the context of globalization, Yongji Bridge has become a carrier of cultural output, connecting China with the world. Yongji Wind and Rain Bridge have successfully connected the road of cultural exchange between China and the world by participating in international intangible cultural heritage exhibitions and receiving international academic attention. The exhibition and research of the Wind and Rain Bridge is a representative of Chinese traditional culture, building a bridge for the mutual communication and integration of Chinese culture and world civilization, and playing an important role in connecting the community with the world.

4.2 External Society: Wind and Rain Bridges as Cultural Symbols of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Regional

Meaning as a culture: The Chengyang Bazhai Wind and Rain Bridge has not been moved, but its meaning has become a cultural symbol, widely used by the outside world, and formed new meanings. As a cultural symbol, the Wind and Rain Bridge plays an important role in various occasions and the display of museums, universities, and highways.

For example: As a national gift, the Wind and Rain Bridge mainly shows its value and significance in the national and historical latitudes. At the important moment of Hong Kong's return to China, the Tongxin Bridge as a gift is intended to express the Chinese people's century-old wish for national reunification. There is also continuous construction of wind and rain bridges in various parts of Guangxi, including in museums, university campuses, and on highways. This display has raised the meaning from the Dong culture to the culture of Guangxi ethnic minorities, forming a unique regional construction in Guangxi. Wind and Rain Bridge creates more meanings in the continuous social practice of human beings. At the same time, it also shows that the use of meaning changes with the changes in time and environment (Boessen et al., 2018).

Technological advancements such as digital communication and social movements like urban revitalization have impacted the understanding of "public space" and "meaning change". The rise of digital platforms has redefined public space to include virtual environments, while social movements have emphasized the democratization of public spaces and the reclamation of cultural meanings. The implications or applications of studying "public space" and "meaning change" are extensive, including informing urban planning, promoting cultural preservation, fostering inclusive societal development, and understanding the dynamics of cultural identity within public domains. Potential limitations of study may include the challenge of capturing the complexity of cultural meanings, the subjective nature of interpretations, and the dynamic nature of public spaces, which may

resist rigid categorizations and analyses. The approach used to strengthen the analysis involves integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from urban studies, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and semiotics to comprehensively examine the multi-faceted aspects of public space and meaning change. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of public spaces and their evolving cultural significance.

In conclusion, as a public space, the Wind and Rain Bridge reflects important aspects of the relationship between ethnic minorities and outsiders, different groups, and different levels. In the context of ethnic minority development, the Wind and Rain Bridge constantly produces new meanings superimposed on the old meanings. Moreover, it not only creates new meanings but also new functions. These new functions are designed to meet the different needs of different user groups. These together constitute the change in the meaning of the wind and rain bridge.

Conclusion

The special phenomenon of the Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge in Chengyang Bazhai reflects the important academic issues of "public space" and "meaning change". The Dong's Wind and Rain Bridge is an important public space in

Chengyang Bazhai, and it has been used to indicate ethnic identity and meaning. The Dong people jointly built the Wind and Rain Bridge by adapting to the local landscape, used rituals and created ghosts, and had the right to supervise things in public places, and jointly maintain and use the Wind and Rain Bridge. Therefore, the Dong people created meaning for the Wind and Rain Bridge as a public space and constructed their ethnic identity in the process.

In addition, in the Process of Minority Development, the Wind and Rain Bridge, as a public space, has formed multiple interactions with ethnic minorities, outsiders, and different groups in a complex social status quo in different contexts and has new functions and new meanings. Therefore, it can be shown that the public space in the world still maintains its original appearance after the change of context and still has functions and meanings to society. Public space integrates the production of physical space, social production, and mental space and is a collection of a set of relationships. Social transformation enables the change of meaning of public space. Therefore, this research expands and strengthens the concepts of "public space" and "meaning change."

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