

# Research on the role transformation and social relationship evolution of Ethnic Village Residents

## ----- Based on the perspective of spatial production theory

Guo Tingting<sup>1\*</sup>, Zheng Heqing<sup>1</sup>, Ma Jing<sup>1</sup>, Wang Leilei<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Tourism, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou 510006, China

<sup>2</sup>Guangzhou Panyu Polytechnic, Guangzhou 440100, China

\*E-mail: 1449801598@qq.com

**Abstract:** Taking Nangang Millennium Yao village as an example, based on Lefebvre's three dimensional social theory framework of spatial production, this study analyzes the internal influence mechanism of spatial production, residents' role transformation and social relationship evolution in the process of tourism development. The results show that: in Nangang Millennium Yao village, the elite use the original power to build institutional space and occupy the dominant position of discourse; the bottom villagers try to build living space and realize the reproduction of social relations. The interaction between the two sides makes the local land from agricultural land to economic land. This study combs the tourism development of Nangang Millennium Yao village, and provides an empirical analysis of the impact of tourism on the social process of ethnic villages.

**Keywords:** ethnic villages; space production; role transformation; social relationship evolution

### 1. Introduction

Since the 1960s, with the significant change of spatial structure and the continuous emergence of spatial problems, space and spatiality have become important contents of social daily life. Now "space" has become a core paradigm that people can't avoid. In the context of globalization and urbanization, under the influence of internal economic development and people's livelihood improvement requirements, external tourism demand boost, capital injection and government advocacy, some ethnic villages have become profit seeking places for various stakeholders and tourism consumption space to be deliberately produced, and eventually formed different interests of local communities, government departments, foreign investors and tourists. The social space composed of stakeholders and the economic space dominated by tourism industry. In this process, a series of space problems, such as space extrusion, space deprivation and space fracture, come one after another. Therefore, tourism space needs a theoretical review and reflection. Using the theory of spatial production to explain the phenomena and problems in the process of tourism has become one of the focuses of many scholars.

China is a multi-ethnic country. Since the 1990s, many regions have made use of the local unique natural environment and national culture to choose ethnic village tourism as an important way to get rid of poverty and promote regional development. But at the same time, the development of tourism also brings about the structural contradictions of tourism space, such as ecological destruction, the disappearance of local memory, the constant digestion of nostalgia and the imbalance of Space justice. These structural contradictions lead us to ethical thinking about the governance of tourism space, and are also practical problems that need to be interpreted and solved urgently.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1 Research on spatial production of tourism destination

In the 1960s, Lefebvre put forward the theory of spatial production. Spatial production is a ternary

framework, including the following three parts: (1)"Practice of space": corresponding to the "perceived space" dimension, it refers to the production and reproduction behavior of social individuals or groups to social components such as buildings, roads, blocks and so on. (2)"Representation of space": corresponding to the dimension of "conceived space", it refers to the power, consciousness, knowledge and capital possessed by the rulers through government documents, written regulations and formal marketing advertisements. (3)"Representational space": corresponding to the dimension of "living space", it refers to the space produced and occupied by residents and users in their daily consciousness and local knowledge. "Representational of space" and "Representation of space" shape or activate "Practice of space" in the way of domination or resistance. "Practice of space" supports and embodies "Representational of space" and "Representation of space". Three dimensional space is inseparable from each other and coexists at the same time.

In the field of tourism research, Young, taking two tourism communities in Queensland, Australia as examples, believes that tourism place is the result of social construction and negotiation, and its local significance comes from the development of tourism industry on the one hand, and tourists' consumption on the other hand. The domestic research on tourism space production began in 2005. Taking Lijiang ancient city as an example, Zong Xiaolian analyzed the process and influence of tourism destination commercialization by citing the concept of space production. After more than ten years of development, the application of space production theory in the field of tourism has accumulated a lot of achievements, and the research content is mainly in the connotation of tourism space, Main body of production, process characteristics and dynamic mechanism and so on.

## **2.2 Research on Residents' role and social relationship**

The and role of villagers in space production have been paid attention by scholars, and two research paths and results have been formed. On the one hand, villagers are the dominant role (passive position). The main body of power and capital takes up the local space and controls the rural landscape space. The villagers are forced to live in the imposed rural space and become the transferors of new space power. Therefore, the village management, villagers' life and psychology have also undergone spatial production, and the villagers are in a state of "Aphasia" in this process. On the other hand, villagers are the dominant role (active position). Villagers have the ability of independent decision-making and self judgment. They resist spatial representation by embedding, resisting, aggressive resisting, backfire and regeneration. Some villagers independently seek development opportunities and develop space forms with different functions, attributes and meanings from the original rural architectural space. However, in this process, how the role of residents is forced to change step by step and how it interacts with social relations has not been clarified.

## **3. Case selection and research methods**

Nangang Millennium Yao village is located in Liannan Yao Autonomous County, which retains the splendid Yao culture. The village covers more than 360 buildings and more than 100 residents. It is the largest and best preserved village among the existing Bapai Yao ethnic groups. It is also considered by experts of Yao studies in Beijing and Guangxi to be the oldest and most distinctive Yao ethnic group in China, known as "the first Yao ethnic group Village in China" and "the Millennium Yao ethnic group". Therefore, it is scientific and typical to take this as the research sample.

The project team went to Nangang Millennium Yao village in November 2020 to conduct a field survey. The interviewees were mainly local villagers, scenic area managers and some government staff. A total of 30 samples were collected and about 120000 words were recorded. The interviews include: the changes of residents' livelihood, the perception and behavior of tourism development, the use of village space, the relationship between individuals and local communities and scenic spot management companies, etc., which collected a lot of relevant information.

## **4. Analysis of spatial production of Nangang Millennium Yao village**

### **4.1 Representation of space: the elite subject uses the original power to construct the institutional space and occupy the discourse subject position**

The main body (government, manager, planner, etc.) in the level of spatial representation has greater power in the process of space production, which makes space practice biased towards itself, so

that they can produce space according to their own rules, and project specific social relations into the real space. In the process of space production, these subjects either follow the original space image or reconstruct its space image, so as to promote the space production of ethnic villages and cause the space change of ethnic villages. In this process, the managers in some areas will listen to the villagers' opinions to build, so the villagers' expectations play a passive role. With the continuous development of tourism industry and the entry of foreign enterprises, the corporate operation mode of enterprises has brought a considerable number of tourists to the scenic spot, which makes the enterprises have a certain right of discourse on space disposal, the government's power of spatial disposal gradually shrinks, and the elite (investors, planners, etc.) level discourse power increases.

In the early development of Nangang Millennium Yao village, the local government took the absolute discourse power in the process of practice. In 2014, the government introduced enterprise investment. The company invested in gupai and established Guangdong Millennium yaozhai Tourism Development Company to take over the tourism projects of gupai and carry out tourism development activities outside the protection scope of Nangang gupai. The government is mainly responsible for the protection and supervision of Nangang ancient Pai. The company upgraded the original infrastructure of gupai and built a number of new facilities at the same time. The village gate, Dragon Pavilion, cattle altar, Yao dance square, lover Pavilion, ancient stables, Paiyao silver exhibition hall, ethnic handicraft shops, corridors and pavilions and other facilities have been built. Secondly, without damaging the appearance and overall style of the ancient Paiyao architecture, the company focuses on highlighting the ethnic characteristics of the local Paiyao people, such as hanging ox heads in many places of the scenic area and decorating the buildings in the scenic area with drum, pattern and other elements with Paiyao characteristics. Every traditional festival of Paiyao, the company will launch corresponding tourism projects, including Yao long table banquet and Yao song and dance show.

#### ***4.2 Representational space: Villagers try to construct living space and realize the reproduction of social relations***

The representational space is the daily life space that people try to change and occupy. It is the place where practice and cognition interact. It is dominated by the representation of space and full of contradictions and struggles. The contradictory relationship between space representation and representation space is the opposition between the space dominated by commercialization and bureaucracy and the space experienced in daily life. Space is reflected in the reproduction and transformation of space itself as a social relationship.

With the arrival of tourists, the company managers found that the unique song and dance of Nangang Yao people attracted many tourists, so they arranged local residents to perform to attract tourists, and each performance was paid. *"Five games a day, two in the morning and three in the afternoon, with income, fixed income and a little income. The more games, the better. You can basically get more than 100 every day"*. In this process, the relationship between local residents and scenic area managers has also changed from hostility to employment. Local residents, under the overall planning of the government, participate in the tourism industry such as opening shops and B & B, or take the initiative to seek development and increase economic income. The relationship among residents, management companies and gupai is also polarized. The power of some residents is gradually enhanced, and they are dissatisfied with the majority of the economic benefits of the management company, and the sense of deprivation increases. For example: *"if you come to visit us next time, you can contact us. We can bring you in without tickets. It has nothing to do with us to charge tickets in scenic spots. We can't participate in any dividends from the income of scenic spots. Now the development of tourism industry is so good, but we have no other income except that we can open B & B and restaurants the scenic company made a big profit"*. Some residents can get considerable economic benefits in the scenic area, stimulate the enthusiasm to participate in the development of the scenic area, and more residents return to the Gupai to make a living, forming a symbiotic relationship with the Gupai.

#### ***4.3 Practice of space: the result of "Representation of space" and "Representational space"***

Practice of space is the production and construction of material space under the influence of space representation, and it is a process and result of the production of social components. In the process of tourism development, the original housing has been transformed into B & B, and the material space function and production mode have changed. The space is planned and developed by the government and management level, realizing the transformation from agricultural space to tourism commercial space.

At the beginning, a small number of tourists came to Nangang Millennium Yao village out of curiosity and want to understand the Yao culture, which brought tourism income to the local. Local people realized that tourists needed accommodation and began to plan for the development of small hotels and primary B & B, "when the scenic spot was just developed in 2003, some tourists came here and asked me if I had accommodation. Seeing that tourists had accommodation needs, I used my old house to open B & B. when I opened the B & B, there was no one else in the ancient platoon". In 2014, Nangang gupai scenic spot was upgraded to a national 4A scenic spot. The tourist facilities and service functions of the scenic spot are also increasingly perfect. The popularity, tourist reception ability and service quality of the scenic spot have been greatly improved. Under such conditions, the annual number of tourists in Nangang gupai scenic spot is increasing year by year. During the Spring Festival, national day and other major holidays, the scenic spot is often full of tourists. "Now this one is just newly opened, and we also have a B & B at the foot of the mountain. It's OK for you at this time (November). If it's a holiday, you have to book in advance, and we're basically a week ahead of time the reservation is over". The local land use has changed from agricultural land to economic land, built into hotels and B & B to earn more economic benefits, and the plot function has changed from agricultural land to commercial land.

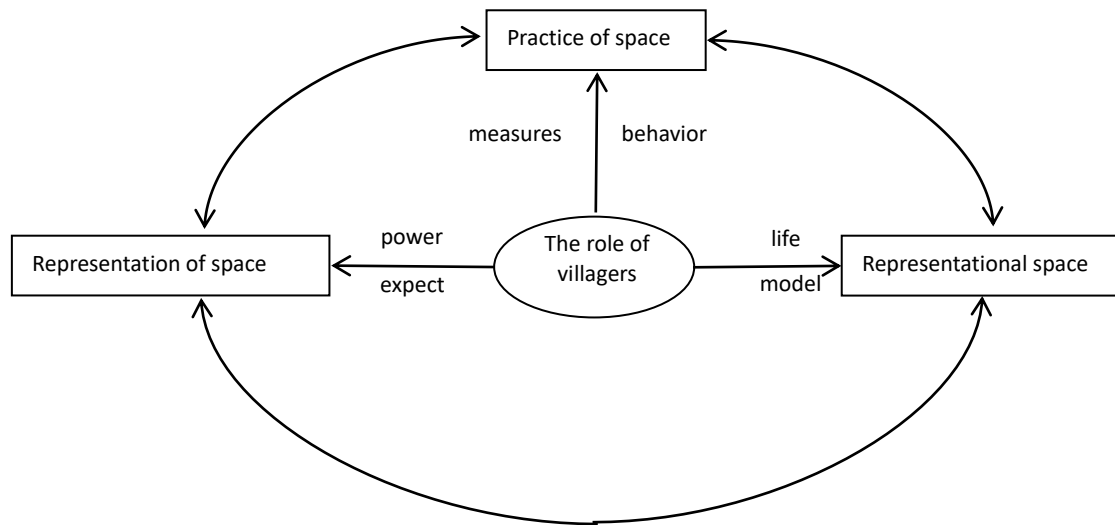


Figure 1 the influence mechanism of space, residents and social relations

Based on the three in one framework of spatial production, we can find that in different stages of tourism development, local governments, local villagers and enterprises play different roles, and the social relationship between residents and scenic management companies, governments and other subjects is also changing. The development of tourism has changed the livelihood of local residents and changed the local social relations.

**5. Conclusion and discussion**

Based on the theoretical framework of spatial production, this paper constructs a theoretical analysis framework of spatial production, villagers' roles and social relations, and reveals the interactive process and mechanism among them through the analysis of Nangang Millennium Yao village. The research shows that the ethnic village is a constructed space, and the transformation of residents' role and social relations within the space is an interactive process, which includes not only the structure of villagers' action caused by the production factors of tourism space, but also the reproduction practice of tourism space caused by the main behavior.

To sum up, the research clearly expresses the interactive mechanism of spatial production, residents and social relations in the process of tourism development, which is not only the exploration of the research on the spatial production of ethnic villages, but also the change process of ethnic villages from agricultural space to tourism space from the perspective of power and society. This study is not only to explore and torture the phenomenon in reality, but also to inherit the historical and cultural memory, coordinate the protection and development, stimulate the enthusiasm of residents and create a good social relationship in the process of rejuvenation and tourism development of ethnic villages in China.

Finally, based on the above discussion, this study hopes to dig out more integration mechanisms of space and residents, space and society in tourism areas from the perspective of daily life practice, so as to supplement the existing empirical research.

### Acknowledgements

Fund Project: General projects supported by National Social Science Foundation of China: Research on protection, activation and utilization of ancient post road cultural heritage in southern Guangdong (19FSHB007); Ministry of culture and tourism's 2019 college student team practice support training project: "Yaolan plan" - Youling Qianhu yaozhai characteristic tourism development assistance plan from the perspective of Rural Revitalization (WLRCD2019-065);Guangzhou University Students' innovation and entrepreneurship training project: the authenticity exhibition of tourism commodities -- Taking Lijiang flower cake as an example (cx2018042).

### References

- [1] Zhao Chun. *Ethical reconstruction in rural space governance under the influence of Tourism: from the perspective of space production theory* [J]. *Journal of Yunnan Normal University (PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDITION)*,2019,51(03):142-148.
- [2] Lefebvre H. *The Production of Space*[M]. Oxford UK & Cambridge USA:Blackwell, 1991:13-40.
- [3] Young M. *The social construction of tourist places*[J]. *Australian Geographer*, 1999, 30(3):373-389.
- [4] Zong Xiaolian. *Study on the form and influence of spatial commercialization of tourist destination -- a case study of Lijiang ancient city in Yunnan Province* [J]. *Journal of tourism*, 2005(04):30-36.
- [5]Guo Wen. *Production and analysis of space: a new perspective of tourism space practice and research* [J]. *Journal of tourism*, 2016, 31(08):29-39.
- [6] Yang jieying, Zhang Jingxiang, Zhang Yiqun. *Rural space production and governance reconstruction driven by market capital: an empirical observation of village y in Wuyuan County* [J]. *Human geography*, 2020, 35(03):86-92+114.
- [7] Hu yunyun. *Research on the process, mode and mechanism of rural social relations reconstruction in the context of tourism* [D]. Anhui Normal University, 2018.
- [8] Martin Phillips. *Differential productions of rural gentrification: illustrations from North and South Norfolk*[J]. *Geoforum*, 2004, 36(4).
- [9] Wei Junfeng, Wu Zhongjun. *The discourse of spatial production and image construction of tourist destination from the perspective of "recessive mediator" -- a case study of Hongyao terraces in Jinkeng Dazhai, Longsheng* [J]. *Human geography*, 2015, 30(06):153-159.
- [10] Sun jiuxia, Monday. *A study on the spatial reproduction of tourism community in the perspective of daily life -- Based on the theoretical perspective of Lefebvre and desetu* [J]. *Acta geographica Sinica*, 2014, 69(10):1575-1589.