



Spatial Structure and Cultural Symbol: A Case Study of China's Dong Ethnic Group Settlement Patterns

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KEYWORDS Anthropological Theory of Space. Cultural Characterization. Dong People. Settlement Pattern. Spatial Structure

ABSTRACT The settlement of human is also a carrier of human production and cultural creation. As such, human settlement has objective and material characteristics along with its subjective, cultural and spiritual characteristics. Based on the field studies of Dong ethnic villages in Southern China, this paper analyses the unique spatial structure and cultural characterization of the settlement patterns of Dong people. The settlement space of Dong people can be categorized into five levels, namely houses, patrilineal communities that centers on drum towers, villages, arable lands, and graveyards. Each level has its own corresponding cultural function and the five levels of space together form integrated villages. In a farming civilization, the settlement space of Dong ethnic villages has its unique symbols of farming civilization, such as "Sa worship," "Drum Towers," and "Kuan organizations." These cultural symbols have helped to maintain the cultural integrity of Dong ethnic villages both internally and externally.