CONSTRUCTING A PRELIMINARY MODEL FOR DESIGNING SACRED SPACE

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Abstract: “Sacred space” has always been a significant location for enhancing human spirituality. The purpose of this research is to define sacred space, clarify the relationship between the “sacred” and the “profane,” and explore the nature, function, practice and types of sacred space to construct a preliminary conceptual model for designing sacred space. This research proposes several contributions in several dimensions: (1) There is a correspondence between “sacred” space and “spiritual” space, and a dual interactive relationship between “external” tangible space and “internal” spiritual space; (2) Sacred space is the “medium” and “symbol” to communicate with god, deity, or personal spirituality; (3) there is a distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane.” Three strategies: buffered space, rite, or sanctified activities could define sacred fields; (4) The field model must inspire the sensation and perception with the sacred aura and visualization to construct the sacred field. The centrality and sacred focus are significant to form the sacred axis. (5) The conceptual model should comprise perceptional self, sacred believed principle, sacred activities, sacred time, sacred space and sacred objects integrated to each other. (6) Designing sacred space should consider with three layers: the heaven, the human, and the earth. (7) Nature, the significant factor of sacred space, should be implicated as the first layer. (8) The methods of experiencing sacred space are gradually moving from formalized religious faith to informal, daily, multifaceted personal spiritual experiences in Taiwan.

Keywords: sacred space, spiritual space, ritual symbolism, enhancing

1. Introduction

Sacred space consistently affects the inner lives of humans, and transcends usual living spaces. Modern man, living in an industrial and information-rich environment and suffering from bodily and spiritual imbalance, must sometimes escape from “profane” environments laden with stress to find “sacred space” to which adjust human’s body and mental health and to enhance spirituality. Since modern lifestyles often exclude the sacred, and because modern architecture excessively emphasizes surface functions at the expense of deeper spiritual needs, the sacredness of spaces has fallen by the wayside [1].

Traditional sacred space is intimately tied to religious faith. However, as society has diversified, spirituality has gradually turned from organized religion to personal spiritual life [2]. The new urban values of the 21st century emphasize the spiritual life, and spiritual experiences are channels to the sacred [3]. Creating sacred space in daily life is therefore an important topic and need. The research purpose of this paper is to define sacred space, clarify the
relationship between the “sacred” and the “profane,” explore the practice, the nature and functions, spatial types of sacred space, and finally construct a preliminary conceptual model for designing sacred space.

This research constitutes exploratory research related to human spiritual experiences. As a result, this research adopts a research design that emphasizes qualitative research through literature review and in-depth interviews, augmented by participation and observation. In relevant literature, Mircea Eliade’s The Sacred & the Profane: the Nature of Religion provides a deep elucidation of sacred space and has often been cited and evaluated by later scholars. To construct a possible “sacred space” design conceptual model, this research cites Eliade’s and other relevant perspectives and compares them to local Taiwanese perspectives with the contents of interviews.

The sacred space could be explored from the following three aspects: the implications of “sacred”, “sacred” and “profane” and definition of the sacred.

1.1 The implications of “sacred”

The concept of “sacred” is derived from Western religion and theology, and particularly from concepts of the Christian religions and theology [4]. The sacred includes the power and properties of “hierophany” and reality [1]. As Mircea Eliade (1987: 11-12) stated: “Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term hierophany. …the sacred is equivalent to a power, … to reality. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy.”

The sacred is holy and pure. Christian baptism involves washing by the holy name of God to achieve cleansing [5], just as the sanctuary connotes protection and shelter [3]. Following the reformation of the late middle ages, the sacred also implied the cleansing of religious architecture. Local implications of the sacred in Taiwan include divinity and holiness. Lin (2003: 44) noted that, “Deities are gods, primordial spirits are gods; the Han refer to the hearts and souls of people as primordial spirits.” The divinity and holiness of the sacred are interlinked; holiness is the nature of deity [5].

1.2 “Sacred” and “profane”

The “sacred” transcends the “profane.” The two are intimately related—where the sacred refers to purity and cleanliness, the profane represents pollution. According to Mircea Eliade (1987: 10), “The first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane.” Li: “According to the sacred/profane dichotomy provided by M. Eliade, society is composed of the sacred and profane worlds. In other words, there is a clear division between the times and spaces of the “extraordinary” sacred and the “ordinary” profane.” [6]

Aside from the division between the “sacred” and the “profane,” there is also the possibility of the two concepts intermingling [4], coexisting [7], and converting. The sacred space pursued by modern spiritual practitioners may involve converting everyday profane environments into the informal sacred [8].

1.3 Definition of the sacred space

Mircea Eliade asserted that (1987: 20): “There is then, a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; …that is sacred the only real and really existing space and… For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others.” Sacred space refers to the “being space” formed by sacred beings [9].

The results of this research provide some findings: (1) The nature of sacred space is most related to enhance the spiritual experience; (2) The definitions are distinct from diverse cultural content; (3) The types of sacred space composed with both of natural and human-made environments; (4) The practice of sacred space include three dimensions: sacred acts, space, and time; (5) Three constructing preliminary models include: the conceptual model of sacred space; The field model; The three relationships; between “sacred” and “profane” space.

2. Literature review

In order to better understand the relevant studies of the subject, related literature review focuses on four primary dimensions including, the nature, the practice, the types, and the spatial factors about sacred space.

2.1 The nature of sacred space

The nature of sacred space includes feeling the “being” constructing the complete internal “ideal world”, and the functions of sacred space.

2.1.1 Feeling the “being”

The nature of sacred space is related to the concepts of “being” and “existence” in philosophy. According to Mircea Eliade (1987:12), “The sacred is saturated with being.” Sacred space is a genuine space of “being,” and from a philosophical perspective, entails the existence of a transcendent and internal sacredness. It is sometimes possible to experience the existence of sacred life through the performance of ritual, in which the sacred is continuously
repeated and deepened [10]. “Spaces of being” constitute the fundamental relationship between people and the environment, allowing the individual to find meaning in existence and life [11]. A sense of being is the most fundamental and certain element of the sacred.

2.1.2 Constructing the complete internal “ideal world”

Individuals typically live in a profane, imperfect world. As a result, most need to construct a symbolically complete ideal world through the imagination of sacred space. Such ideal worlds are typified by the “heavens” pursued by some religions. For example, the Holy Rome of Augustus was once the heaven of Christian imagination [3]. Images such as the Garden of Eden and the construction of chapels as miniature universes represent utopian constructs in which domes symbolize heaven. For Buddhists, ideal worlds include the Paradise of the West. For SoKa lay Buddhists, by chanting the title of the Lotus Sutra and Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo in front of Gohonzon and the altar (see Figure 1), it seems to contact with the heavenly sanctuary with the purificatory rites.

2.1.3 The spiritual and cultural function

The sacred space basically provides two main functions: a place for spiritual enlightenment [8], and a symbolic location for family and group culture.

The home is an important source of sacred space, since it provides a place for worshipping deity, ancestors, and other sacred beings [12]. Religious sacred locations have always been centers of human life and act as places for social gatherings and religious celebrations. Sacred space also has the function of deep cultural identification; for example, the holy city of Jerusalem invokes a strong sense of belonging, history, and identification [12] [7].

2.2 The practice

The practice of sacred space typically involves the performance of sacred acts (e.g., rituals) that involve the interaction of sacred space and time. These three concepts are intimately related. The existence of sacred space involves introducing elements of sacred space, while sacred time defines the beginning and end of sacred acts.

2.2.1 Sacred space and sacred time

There is a close association between sacred time and the strength of the perception of sacred space. Ritual atmospheres are often distinct from everyday spiritual space experiences, particularly in seasonal rituals, living ceremonies, or special celebrations [6]. Mircea Eliade suggested that, “For religious man time too, like space, is neither homogeneous nor continuous;” “...there are the intervals of a sacred time, the time of festivals,..., time constitutes man’s deepest existential dimension; it is linked to his own life, hence it has a beginning and an end” [1]. In addition to a type of static pondering and meditation, individuals can separate the sacred from the profane for short periods through dynamic dance rhythms and other means. These rituals produce spiritual joy for an instant [8], since nature, the object of worship, is everywhere.

2.2.2 Sacred space and sacred activity

Sacred activity held in the sacred space usually represents its own culture symbolism of rituals. Different religions, believes and spiritual practice adopt various models of sacred activities.

(1) Cultural symbolism of rituals

Rituals constitute a primary model for sacred activities. Meaningful rituals necessarily include cultural symbolism and implications of purification [13]. Ritual purification symbolizes the “rebirth” of minds, allowing the spirits to return to their original states [1]. The initiation rituals of prehistoric societies, coming-of-age ceremonies [10], and baptism in the Christian faith all restore new life. The performance of rituals purifies the space and ensures its sacredness, preventing pollution [14]. The complex rituals performed by Daoist priests in Taiwan involve ritual spaces modeled on sacred fields, symbolizing the arrival of numerous saints [15]. Some rituals are repeated on an annual, monthly, or daily basis. Participation in rituals is one of the central activities of religious life, and can produce sacred power.

(2) Models of sacred activities

The performance of sacred activities such as sacred recitation and dynamic spiritual dancing, including Christian hymns, Buddhist chants, and Islamic Sama, is a sacred experience that comprises part of the religious ritual process [16]. Tuan (2006) suggested that sacred music and sacred dancing can be analogized to heavenly music. Performing these activities leads to the feeling of sacred experience. Through these activities, it is possible to share sacred tranquility and produce power in reverent atmospheres. These activities allow practitioners to create definitions of sacred fields. Abstinence from various items and activities can cleanse the spirit and help individuals pray. Abstinence is a path that must be taken to reach heaven, and constitutes a

Figure 1. SoKa altar
Figure 2. Meditation
Figure 3. Chanting
future mode of becoming one with deity. The most sacred ritual in Christianity is the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper [17]. In addition, quieter prayer, worship, meditation (see Figure 2), chanting (see Figure 3), and diversified spiritual practice, provide modern spiritual practitioners with freer modes [8] of sensing the being of deity or communication and connection with one’s own spirit or the universe.

3. Types of sacred space

Types of sacred space include natural environments and human-made environments, as shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Types of Sacred Spaces](image)

3.1 The Natural Environment

The universe represents a sacred creation by the hands of the gods; the entire world is sacred [1]. People reside in the two major systems of the world—the sky and the earth—and can sense the oneness of the sacred sky and the diversity of the sacred earth.

The sacred spaces of many ancient cultures were deeply connected to the sky. The sky itself is composed of elements of sacred landscapes [18]. Eliade (1987: 118-120) suggested that, “The sky shows itself to be infinite, transcendent..."most high" spontaneously becomes "an attribute of divinity." The Indo-European supreme god, Deus, denotes both the celestial epiphany and the sacred.” The sacred sky is of absolute height and has the “sacredness” and symbolism of being the “one and only.”

Sacred space types on the earth include forests, sacred trees, sacred mountains, sacred rivers, sacred lakes, sacred springs, and sacred waters. Indigenous people often perform symbolic rituals in forests [17] [10]. Natural sacred landscapes, such as mountains, are locations where one can approach gods, particularly on mountain tops close to the sky [7]. Water is the spring and source of all life and symbolizes the sum of the universe and purity. It is where all can be deposited, and is therefore often considered in connection with the sacred [1]. Ando pointed out that “the sacred river of nature, the Ganges River, is the most sacred and symbolizes all that is sacred; all sacred rituals from birth until death are related to this sacred ground, in which the true sense of reincarnation can be felt” [19]. The Ganges River symbolizes the heavenly world; the altars of Indian homes often hold pure water from the Ganges [14].

3.2 The Human-made Environments

Man-made sacred spaces include sacred cities, religious architecture, sacred landscapes, and “sacred spaces” in communal and private residences. Historically speaking, sacred cities are based on the perception of commonly held beliefs and norms [18]. For example, the capital of the ancient Incan empire was planned from the perspective of sacred landscapes. The entire perspective of life is integrated into sacred space. Jerusalem is a sacred center to Jews, Christians, and Muslims; the entire city is sacred because it is close to God [7]. For Muslims, Mecca is the city with the strongest sacredness [14]. Religious buildings and chapels are a common model for sacred space and symbolize the traditional centers of faith in the religious world. Monasteries are typically set apart from the world. Ando felt the light emanating from the Senanque Abbey and sensed that it possessed some sort of dignified power which could cleanse the spirit; it was the “field of God” [19].

The sacred power of sacred landscapes such as the city of Rome is a place of residence given to God; the sacred streets of Rome lie on hilltops or valleys [11], and the city includes numerous altars [3]. In recent years, public facilities in Britain have provided prayer rooms, places for worship, meditation rooms, and multi-faith residences that reflect social changes [2]. The home is a sacred space for every individual, and often serves as a place for worshipping gods, ancestors (the example for Taiwanese traditional living room—see Figure 5), the spirit, and other sacred beings; the sacred acts from all aspects of life are connected therein [14].

![Figure 5. Taiwanese Traditional Living Room](image)

3.3 Spatial factors

Several significant spatial factors include properties and elements.

3.3.1 Spatial properties

People need to live in sacred “being space,” symbolic of
living in the center of the world [1]. According to Li (1999: 158), “the main hall of traditional buildings is the sacred space; ritual space is placed in the very center. The central axis perspective introduced by M. Eliade constitutes the center of the earth and of the sky.” Sacred positioning provides different cultural meaning to different groups. An example of this is the astronomical positioning of the Incas [18]. It is only possible to construct identification and belonging with direction. The beginning of “space” originates from the appearance of a border [11]. This division is often performed through dynamic rituals of purifying and cleansing the sacred space [9] to ensure that the sacred space is not interfered with.

3.3.2 Spatial elements

Significant elements of sacred space include elements of life in natural factors: light, water, plants, and human-made symbols and sacred icons. Light has always been considered a basic element in sensing spatial being. In the Cathedral at Ronchamp, light enters from many different directions, filling the structure with energy and a sacred atmosphere. The light that grants the monastery such dignity also has the power to cleanse and enhance the spirit [19]. The Hompuku-ji designed by Ando symbolizes the Western Paradise with sunlight from the rear [20] (see Figure 6). The element of water provides a sacred symbol for Eastern and Western religions and spiritual practitioners. Purification through water is a cross-cultural concept [14]. For Christians, baptism is a holy ritual that symbolizes new life [1]. The Water of Eight Virtues from the Pool of Seven Lotuses in the Buddhist scriptures is clear and fragrant [13]. Plants are “sacred trees” that symbolize the greater universe in a conversion of imagery [1]. Sacred trees are an essential element in the concept of sacred space. For Taiwanese, Eight Trigrams is one of the traditional sacred signs, icons and symbols (see Figure 7).

Ando’s “church of light” integrates the cross into the body of the building using symbolic light (see Figure 8). In this structure, the emanation of intangible light is the background for the altar, creating an image of communion between man and God [24]. Buddhists view lotuses as holy symbols. For example, the outdoor lotus pond of Hompuku-Ji symbolizes high degrees of holiness. At times, art is also a model for this concept, with holy lotuses providing a sacred symbol in addition to deity [14].

![Figure 6. Hompuku-Ji](source: Tadao Ando, Author: Philip Jodidio p119)

![Figure 7.](source: Ando Tadao, Author: Philip Jodidio p85)

3.4 Summary

Based on the related subject could be integrated into four dimensions: (1) In the definition of sacred space, whatever the different definition to sacred space from individuals, still exist some significant characteristics: the “sacred” is distinct from the “profane”, must be defined; (2) In the meaning, Sacred space generally constructs the complete internal “ideal world” to enhance, purify and heal the individual spirit from diverse cultural identities; (3) In the practical experience, sacred space must be combined sacred time, spaces and activities (such as the symbolic rite) composed both static and dynamic; (4) In the spatial factors, include the type of sacred space shown in Fig. 1, natural elements (light, water, plants and sacred human-made symbols) forming the orientation to construct the sacred field.

Since the diverse points of views, this research needs to do interviews from Taiwanese native experiences to distinguish what kinds of models for sacred space would be constructed.

4. The Contents of Interviews

4.1 The Method

Interview subjects were selected using purposeful sampling, most of them are significant and famous to Taiwan society in related to this research, the others have involving rich experiences or leading the relevant institution and included 19 scholars, religious and spiritual practitioners, and ritual performers in Taipei, Tainan and Kaohsiung for semi-structured interviews. Interviews lasted from two to four hours from 2007-2009 and included recordings, handwritten notes, and photographs as auxiliary
tools.

Based on the literature review, presented four dimensions had been designed to the following questions: (1) Question 1. “What do you feel in experiencing the ‘sacred space’?” (2) Question 2. “What’s the definition of ‘sacred space’ from your opinion?” (3) Question 3. “What are the significant environmental elements for designing ‘sacred space’?” (4) Question 4. “Do you think if the designed ‘sacred space’ will help you your spiritual environment?” And how does it help?

4.2 The Contents

The results coding from the interviews, indicate some manifested dimensions shown in the following contents:

4.2.1 The Views

The views from interviews comprises the common view (sacred space is distinct from “profane space”) and various comparisons between traditional religious and contemporary spiritual practice views. Interview subject Prof. Li, Fengmao (LFM), the outstanding researcher of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy of the Academia Sinica (the most preeminent academic institution in the Republic of China) in the Han’s culture and the rites (Jul. 16, 2009) suggested “The Han’s sacred space, is the ‘extraordinary’ space. Sacred time is related to worship”. Prof. Wang, Zhen-Hua (WZH), one significant researcher in Chinese cultural architecture, Yi Jing (the crucial Chinese ancient codes), and sacred space (Jul. 16, 2009) presented: “Sacred space is composed with ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ space, both are integrated into the whole.” And he talked about (Apr. 6, 2007): “Real ‘sacred’ is adapted to the nature and the sky”. Dr. Shee Li-Ling (SLL), the researcher deep in Taoism dissertation (Aug. 1, 2009) presented: “All the human spaces are sacred space.” “The human could enhance the spirit and directly transcend the body and mind through various strategies in sacred space to make one individual sacred spiritual practice space.”; Ye Jing-Ming (YJM), 30 years’ spiritual practitioner (Apr. 5, 2007) suggested that “sacred space is a different sort of space, high level human space able to live stably, and an individual spiritual practitioner’s space.”

4.2.2 Two mapping: spirit and nature

(1) Spirit The primary function of spiritual space is to enhance spirituality and cleanse the spirit. In these places, the soul experiences tranquility, joy, and even inner healing. Li, Zhen-Yu (LZY), 20-years practice in meditation (Apr. 11, 2007), noted that “Sacred things exist in the spiritual world.” Yang, Jing-Wen (YJW) suggested that, “Placing oneself in sacred space is as walking on the joyful path of Ananda Marga, while Samadhi is the highest world of joy, or the sacred space of the spirit.” The 40-years devout Christian, Yan, Jing-Hua (YJH) (May 2, 2007) said that, “Sacred space is a very peaceful and tranquil space; It is a holy space where one can pray anytime. Hearts must be opened to treat it with the spirit and sincerity; that spirit is in the deepest recesses of the human heart.” Mo, Xue-Zi (MXZ), the researcher and teacher in Rei-Ki (Apr. 7, 2007): “When you enter a sacred space, you enter a divine space filled with love and being. Through mediation and relaxation, you can humbly join a healing process.” This study uses in-depth interviews to gain the sense that sacred space corresponds to the inner spiritual world.

(2) Nature Prof. WZH (Apr. 6, 2007) suggested that “Nature is the true sacred space and displays the ordinary.” LZY noted that “the construction of sacred space is probably related to the natural world, as in geomancy (translated from the Chinese “Fengshui [Wind-Water]”). Wind can enter and water can exit. In houses that can breathe, air can flow and light can enter. Many people who meditate feel that nature is very important and try hard to find a place with beautiful mountains and water.” Sacred space is related to universe, indicated by some interviewers. The human would accept the universal information (Ye, Jing-Ming), sense the universal energy (MXZ; Chen, Long-Po (CLP), Apr. 21, 2007), and included to the universe (Chen, Yeian-Ho, Apr. 7, 2007).

4.2.3 The activities

From the results of the interviews, according to Taiwanese multi-diverses believes, the sacred acts are composed of traditional religious ritual performance (LFM; SLL; WZH) in special sacred time, the new religious Soka’s chanting (CLP), spiritual practice’s meditation (YJW) and Yoga’s spiritual dancing. The members experienced the common spiritual healing from the ReiKi’s class (MXZ). For Christians, communicate with the divine spirit by reading the bible and pray anytime (YJH). Li, Yong-He (LYH) (Mar. 18, 2007), a geomancer, opined that: “Sacred spaces can involve spiritual practice and meditation for communion with Buddha; linkages to nature and its spirits can be facilitated through the quiet, fragrant, and good air of the deep mountains. By doing so, individuals harmonize with the times, geography, people, and spirituality.”

4.2.4 The spatial factors

(1) Elements Wang, Zhen-Hua noted that “nature has life and light… divine structures must have light, orderliness, cleanliness, and purity.” Dr. Liang, Ming Kang (LMK), the researcher in religious architecture and Master Le Corbusier, (Apr. 8, 2007) noted that “I sensed the sacred light from
churches, such as the Ron champ, the light comes from the stained glass.” “Sacred space would present the symbols, “God is light” (YJH), such as the cross.” SLL suggested that “Trees and water are essential elements in sacred space. Chinese think big and old trees are sacred symbols”. Except the natural elements, the sacred things are also significant to various cultures, such as buddhas’ sculptures, incense, religious music (WLL, Apr. 4, 2007).

(2) **Properties** LFM noted that “the traditional central living room is the ritual space and sacred space, symbolized the center of the sky and the earth, such as the notions of sacred axis from Mircea Eliade’s theory. The sacred space is formed to the ethical order”.

All the sacred elements and spatial properties present the sacred atmosphere, such as the “sublime” (WZH; LMK) and “peace” (YJH). Sacred space is the highest level than the others’ functional places (W ZH).

4.3 **Summary**

Base on the results of interviews, indicated that some Taiwanese specific perspectives to sacred space. The common views are related to spirit and nature. The contemporary sacred activities are more diverse and free than the traditions’. The issue for “Fengshui” (Wind-Water) and “qi” could be explored further in the future.

5. **Analysis of the preliminary conceptual model**

This research has done the analysis focusing on constructing the preliminary conceptual model for designing sacred space from the following three aspects :

1. The three relationships between sacred and profane space, provides one spatial strategy to indicate the significance of sacred space, must be defined.
2. The field model of constructing the sacred ensures one essential spatial quality.
3. The conceptual model of sacred space is the most fundamental core value, and model for designing sacred space.

### 5.1 The three relationships between “sacred” and “profane” space

The entire world consists of sacred and profane time-space. Sacred spaces are often converted from profane space. This research proposes that the “sacred” and the “profane” are “distinctive,” but also “associated,” indicated in the three models in Figure 9. The first model belongs to the regular sacred space, and the second model is more flexible to follow the rite than the first model. The third model, adapted to contemporary spiritual practice have transferred from the traditional content and strategy of sacred space, and become free.

The first model-distancing, is an absolute division of the sacred and the profane. Based on the traditional views, the sacred represents purity, cleanliness, and holiness, and connotes order in the universe, quality, heterogeneity, and absolutism. The profane represents filth, chaos, homogeneity, and relativism. There is a clear division between the two, requiring a strict definition of spaces to serve as a buffered and conversion zone. These sacred spaces include Buddhist temples, churches, and fixed altars. The second model—intersecting is inter-linkage and coexistence between the sacred and the profane. This type of sacred space is typically based on ritual symbolism and cleansing. As a sacred space, the ritual space achieves a sense of communion between human and god through the special sacred time and the performance of rituals. Consequently, the ritual sacred space is a type of temporary, dynamic and flexible sacred space. So some spaces could be either sacred or profane. The beginning and end of these rituals symbolize the formation and dissolution of sacred space.

![Figure 9. The Three Relationships between “Sacred” and “Profane” space](source: This research)
Everyday and seasonal ceremonies and rituals provide visual images of the sacred field, while sacred music and sounds received by hearing, fragrance sensed by smell, and the rhythm of prayer and worship form a type of deep identity of cultural symbolism. As an intermediary, the rite is one kind of cultural systems to modify the culture and society, and connects human to places. While the rite purifying the space, symbolize the regeneration of the spirituality. The third model-emerging involves a sudden transformation of the profane sanctified into the sacred, performed through informal, free, and flexible means at any time, in any space through the active requests of the individual. Especially for informal spiritual seekers moving away from formal religion often construct external sacred fields and inner sacred space through various sacred and spiritual embodied activities in and of everyday. For example, in the common practice of meditation, the body is the primary sacred center which facilitates specific physical discipline. Self-meditation enhances spirituality in correspondence with the universe. The inner spirit created by this meditation allows for a sense of the sacred. The sacred space has been creative and full of imaginative by self-experiencing process, and the profane space has been sanctified.

As described above, there are three strategies for defining sacred space: (1) buffered zone; (2) temporary ritual spaces; (3) sanctified by physical practice and the expression of sacred activities.

5.2 Field model

The spatial properties of sacred space often involve centrality and focus, direction, territoriality, and layers.

Figure 10 shows that the human body, is the central entity in experiencing the sacred visualization, the aura and atmosphere of sacred space. Once the human body is located at one fixed point in sacred earth, the sensory structure of space involves the body as the center. This symbolized the center of the world; with a sacred focus in specific orientation that forms a sacred axis. The sacred axis identified with various individuals and cultural group, could be usually constructed by the layers of spaces and the ritual performance. With the vertical dimension of the sacred axis, and follow the overall sacred orientations which combine vision, smell, or hearing, to form the sacred field. And within the sacred field, the essential spatial elements such as light, water, plants, air, wind and symbolic signs or icons, generally construct the sacred visualization and atmosphere for communication with god, deities and the universal sacred being. Due to the animal characteristics of people, the uniqueness of the sacred space requires spatial construction with territoriality and field.

Figure 10. The Field Model

"In the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven."

"A door" symbolized the sacred axis connected to sacred focus, which the residence of god, deity and sacred being. The sacred enclosure defines the territory and confirms the sense of sacred perception to enhance human spirit through a door.

The field model for designing sacred space, must inspired the sensation and perception with the sacred aura and visualization to construct the sacred field (especially for natural elements); The centrality and sacred focus (typically for symbolic icons and ritual performance) are significant to form the sacred axis and symbolize ascending to ideal heaven by following the major orientation.

5.3 The Conceptual model of sacred space

In order to enhance the human spirits, this research proposes the conceptual model of sacred space shown in Figure11. The central implications of sacred space, involve the sacred human believer as the perceptional self. The believer is located in a tangible outer sacred space which composed with the sky and the earth and constructs an ideal world from his own intangible inner spiritual sacred space. The relationships can be analogized to the interactions in three layers: the heaven, the human, and the earth. The heaven constitutes the highest level and is the ideal inner world, the residence of god or deity (e.g. in Buddhism–Buddha, bodhisattvas, the Western Paradise; Daoism-
deity/heaven or paradise; Christianity – Jesus, God or heaven; Islam – Allah; and the spirit, spirituality, primordial spirit, or other concepts of modern spiritual practitioners) and sacred being. Various ideal worlds generally represent the symbolic paradieses. And the sky is the most high to symbolize the image of the heaven. The earth refers to the location of different sacred spaces and is the intermediary tangible space for the communication between human spirit, and God, deity, and sacred being. Both natural (light, water, plants...etc,) and human-made symbolic or icons sacred space construct the images of sacred space generally symbolize the ideal world in heaven, presented different cultures and believes. Heaven and earth constitute the overall macro universe, while human is symbolic of a micro universe.

While the microcosmic universe of human holding the sacred activities (such as static prayer, worship, and meditation, or dynamic rituals, chanting, and songs) during the sacred time, would be integrated into the macrocosmic universe, the spirit of the individual body is able to sense genuine being, security and sanctuary, tranquility, joy, cleansing, and healing. Sacred spaces have special power to enhance and transcend the human spirit, symbolizing the regeneration and eternity of life. The interaction among the various individual bodies has been producing common cultural identification for families and groups. The conceptual model of sacred space should comprise three layers (heaven, human, earth), both environments (natural, human-made) and sacred activities, according to specific cultures, symbolic entities to communicate the symbolic god descending the earth.

6. Conclusion

Sacred spaces are closely related to human spiritual life and require the personal experience of genuine being through spiritual sensation. This research suggests the definition as "sacred space" including the dual interaction relationships between "external, "tangible" environment and activities, sets up the ideal world of the inner intangible sacred space to enhance the spirit. This research provides several dimensions of the preliminary conceptual model shown in the following findings and contributions: (1) there are three strategies for defining sacred space: (i) buffered zone: to "regular space" such as traditional architecture; (ii) temporary ritual spaces: to "flexible space" suitable for cultural identified symbols; (iii) sanctified by physical practice and the expression of sacred activities adapted to contemporary spiritual practice. (2) The field model for designing sacred space, must inspired the sensation and perception with the sacred aura and visualization to construct the sacred field (especially for natural elements such as light, water, plants, air, wind); The centrality and sacred focus (typically for symbolic icons and ritual performance) are significant to form the sacred axis and symbolize ascending to ideal heaven by following the major orientation. (3) The conceptual model of sacred space should comprise several dimensions including perceptual self, sacred believed principle, sacred activities, sacred time,
sacred space (natural and human-made) and sacred objects integrated with each other. (4) Designing sacred space should consider with three layers: the heaven, the humans, and the earth. The heaven constitutes the highest level and is the ideal inner world. According to the sacred believers’ culture identities and activities, set up the idea world. (5) Nature, the significant factor of sacred space, should be implicated as the first layer. The sacredness of nature is a matter of common consensus. (6) In local Taiwanese sacred experiences, the common belief is that “deity” is “holy,” and that the “holy” can be “deified.” The “spirit” and “soul” of man can also be divine. Interviews with spiritual practitioners who perform rituals or meditation revealed that sacred space is related to geomancy and magnetic fields; this point can be tested in future research. (7) Experiencing sacred space has turned from formal religious faith towards everyday, informal, diversified personal spiritual pursuits. (8) Sacred spaces should be designed with aspects include the undisturbed holiest space as well as more flexible sacred space; the sacred can be invited by sanctifying living space in everyday life.

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**References**


