

## Original Paper

# Research on the Protection and Development of Traditional Villages in Xijie Village, Zhuxian Town, Henan Province in the Context of Rural Tourism

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### Abstract

*Traditional villages are the crystallisation of the development of China's agricultural civilisation, carrying profound historical and cultural values. However, under the wave of urbanisation and informatisation, traditional villages in China have suffered considerable impacts, with some of them being destroyed and many difficulties arising from their development. As a wing of mass tourism, rural tourism, inspired by the national rural revitalisation strategy, plays a powerful role in promoting rural revitalisation. Developing tourism with traditional villages is both a protection strategy and a development opportunity. On the occasion of the announcement of the list of six national traditional villages, this paper selects Xijie Village, the only remaining national traditional village in Kaifeng City, Henan Province, as the research object. On the basis of research on the basic situation of Xijie Village, it analyses the current situation of its protection and development, and finally puts forward corresponding suggestions and strategies for its protection and tourism development.*

### Keywords

*traditional villages, rural tourism, Xijie Village, conservation and development*

## 1. Introduction

Traditional villages are a relatively new concept, a product of our country's farming civilisation for thousands of years, representing the historical, cultural and socio-economic values of a certain region, a carrier of our cultural memory and a concrete carrier of our nostalgia. China has identified the first batch of traditional villages since 2012, and so far there have been six batches of traditional villages, and the list of traditional villages has 8,155 traditional villages, and the identification of traditional villages is not only in the protection of history and culture, but also rises to the level of the national law,

and the protection of traditional villages has played a great role in the protection and restoration of villages' historical buildings, cultural customs and vernacular characteristics. The protection of traditional villages plays a great role in the protection and restoration of historical buildings, cultural practices and local characteristics. In the list of traditional villages, 275 villages in Henan have been selected, accounting for 3.37%. These villages include the well-known Guo Liang Village, Chen Jiagou Village, the birthplace of Taijiquan, and so on. The distribution of traditional villages in Henan is very uneven, with 275 national-level traditional villages distributed in 18 provincial municipalities, but Kaifeng City has one village listed as a national-level traditional village in Xijie Village of Zhuxian Town. Traditional villages are the roots of our culture, and the current tourism development of traditional villages is not yet in place. With the rapid increase of urbanisation and the vigorous development of rural tourism, the contradiction between the protection and development of traditional villages is becoming more and more significant.

Traditional villages are leaders in the development of rural tourism because of their own historical, cultural, economic and other values. In the process of development, if the relationship between development and protection is not handled well, it is likely to produce a series of problems. Such as tourism pressure is too large and the contradiction between the infrastructure, in the process of development, the villagers' short-term interests and the protection of the contradiction between the payment. Grasp the historical opportunity under the national strategy of rural revitalisation, use the development of rural tourism to really drive the protection and development of traditional villages, to avoid those historical villages with a long history and rich cultural heritage disappeared in the rolling torrent of urbanisation, so that the traditional villages are better protected, the quality of life of the villagers is better, as well as to let the two to achieve a virtuous circle. This paper studies the tourism development of traditional villages in Xijie Village, Zhuxian Town, Kaifeng City, hoping to provide a reference for the protection and development of traditional villages of the same type.

## **2. Status of Development of Xijie Village**

### *2.1 Overview of Villages*

The Huanghuai Plain is the birthplace of Chinese agricultural civilisation, and the plains also carry agricultural culture. Kaifeng is in the hinterland of the North China Plain, and the only national traditional village in Kaifeng is studied to provide a reference for the development of traditional villages in the plains. Traditional villages have multiple values in the new era, the countryside is a good place for people in the city life to relieve their body and mind, and traditional villages can bring physical and mental comfort and a sense of belonging to traditional culture to people living a fast-paced life. Taking Xijie Village as an example, the study of traditional villages in the plains can bring people closer to the only national-level traditional village under the ancient capital Kaifeng, and let people understand this historical and cultural village that has been forgotten under the halo of the ancient capital, and the study of the protection of the village can enhance the vitality of the village. Combined

with the current development of the village, the existing problems are analysed and solved on the basis of exploring ways suitable for the development of the village. Seize the opportunity of rural tourism and at the same time, seize the best way to protect traditional villages, and provide a way to protect and utilise traditional villages with different histories and cultures. Located in the southeast of Zhuxian Town, Xiangfu District, Kaifeng City, Henan Province, Xijie Village is part of Zhuxian Town, one of the four famous towns in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and is a typical village in the Central Plains where Hui people gather.

#### 2.1.1 Physical Geography

Xijie Village is located in the Huanghuai Plain of the North China Plain, which is part of the Yellow River Alluvial Fan Plain and belongs to the centre of the Yellow Panhandle, where the terrain is flat and the soil is rich and fertile, and the Canal River, the historical river of Kaifeng area, passes through the village, and the village is conveniently located in the Central Plains with convenient traffic, and the S219 Provincial Highway passes along the village, which provides a strong basic condition for the development of the village. The climate of Xijie Village belongs to the temperate continental monsoon climate, in addition to the influence of climate regulation by the Yellow River and other rivers, with four distinct seasons, hot and rainy summers, and cold and less snowy winters, which is suitable for the growth of the cash crop of watermelon, and is also the origin of the famous Kaifeng watermelon.

#### 2.1.2 History

Xijie Village has a very long history, as early as in the Neolithic Age there were footprints of human activities here, and gave birth to a brilliant civilisation, in the Spring and Autumn period Xijie Village began to have early settlements. Since the Tang and Song dynasties, Xijie Village has been a major waterway in Kaifeng area, and commercial activities were born and facilitated by water, making it a famous commercial gathering area. During the Northern Song Dynasty, Kaifeng became the capital of the country, and Xijie Village, as the southern gate of the capital, attracted a lot of people to come here, the most important of which was the Hui ancestors from Shaanxi who came here for travelling, doing business, settling down, and continuously integrating and developing, becoming the earliest ethnic settlement in the area. Since then, through the continuous development of the times, the civilisation of the Central Plains in Kaifeng has gone from prosperity to decline, and the once bustling prosperity has gradually receded, but the local people have been living and reproducing for generations, and it has become a traditional village with ethnic characteristics, and more than 90% of the population of the village are Hui.

#### 2.1.3 Architectural Features

The architectural style of Xijie Village is based on the rural architectural style of the Central Plains, with the unique Hui Islamic architectural features. Residences are basically along the street with large windows on the first floor of the square, and some built along the street attic style with flying eaves of the ancient buildings, the ancient village to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the building colour is grey, giving a sense of simplicity and a pure sense of history. Reflecting the national characteristics of the

architectural content in the windows will reflect the semi-circular and quadrilateral window structure, residential compound above the gate and on both sides of the porcelain plate will be engraved with Islamic Arabic couplets. The layout of the village is centred on the mosque in the village, which is the landmark of Xijie Village and a national key cultural relics protection unit. The mosque was first built in the Northern Song Dynasty, and then expanded and rebuilt in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, making it a 1,000-year-old mosque. This mosque is a courtyard style building, is a combination of Islamic culture and local culture, this architectural pattern of the mosque is rare in the country. With the ancient mosque as the core, Xijie Village expands in all directions, forming a traditional historical neighbourhood with national characteristics such as Beijing Goods Street, Tongfang Street and Xidajie Street, which has a strong Islamic style and traditional appearance.

#### 2.1.4 Cultural Folklore

Xijie Village is a village of Hui people, Islamic culture is relatively strong, the mosque in the village is a place for villagers to carry out cultural activities, villagers will regularly hold traditional lion and dragon dance performances and other folk performances. Xijie Village is located in Zhuxian Town, the village's intangible cultural heritage of woodblock prints is also a feature of the village, Zhuxian Town, the woodblock prints are the root of Chinese woodblock prints, has a long history, and superb production techniques, there are many old shops in the village to make woodblock prints. In addition, the traditional food of Xijie Village, "Halal Snap Bowls", also known as "Halal Ten Bowls of Snap Meat", is not to be missed when travelling here. The cuisine is based on beef and mutton, with 10 bowls of buckled meat, each with a different taste, and has been reported and promoted by many food programmes.

#### 2.2 Analysis of the Current Problems in West Street Village

There are still many problems in the development process of Xijie Village, in general the village is still in Zhuxian Town, part of the comprehensive tourism area, but the development of tourism in the village is still in the initial stage, the development of the village itself as well as the integration of the process of the development of tourism there are a number of problems, the village is still in the initial stage.

##### 2.2.1 Single Industrial Structure and Low Utilisation of Tourism Resources

At present, the main industries in Xijie Village are still supported by traditional agriculture and the emerging tourism industry, in addition to some scattered individual household operations. However, the development of the industry is relatively homogeneous and lacks systematisation and scale. In terms of agricultural products, in addition to common cash crops such as wheat and corn, the village also produces a unique agricultural product-watermelon. Despite the outstanding quality of watermelon, its development has not formed a systematic chain, and it is only cultivated by villagers individually, which is insufficient for the cultivation of special agricultural products. As a result, there is a lack of stable sales channels to protect the villagers' income, which is not conducive to the development of rural tourism.

For the development of tourism in Xijie Village, tourism resources are relatively abundant, however, in

the process of development, the utilisation rate and deep excavation of these resources are still insufficient. The village is mainly supported by Islamic resources as the core, forming a relatively single tourism industry. Tourists often only rush to see the temple landscape, the lack of in-depth tour experience. Historical, cultural and folklore resources have not been effectively integrated into the tourism experience, and folklore performances are only grandly presented at traditional festivals, failing to fully integrate their roles in tourism development. Regional tourism integration is low, tourism development lacks comprehensive synergy and fails to give full play to its driving effect, tourism resources have not been comprehensively developed, resulting in insufficient development momentum. Most tourists only visit the temples or buy woodblock prints, and stay for a limited time.

#### 2.2.2 Low Quality of the Cultural Environment in Historic Districts

Located on the southeastern edge of Zhuxian Town, Xijie Village has not been integrated into the vast commercial system of Zhuxian Town, the scale of commercial activities in the village is limited, and the commercial environment has not yet formed an obvious scale effect. Until 2016, Xijie Village was selected as one of the fourth batch of national traditional villages. Before that, no different from other general villages, although Xijie Village has rich resources, but failed to give full play to them. After being ranked among the national traditional villages, the Xijie Village Historical Neighbourhood has experienced rapid development. However, the construction of the neighbourhood has shown a relatively homogeneous trend, and compared with other ancient villages, there are obvious problems of homogenisation and hollowing out of the construction. The rich cultural connotations of the historic district have not been deeply explored, so it is not strong in attracting tourists and has relatively few repeat visitors. Several traditional neighbourhoods, centred on mosques, have failed to fully demonstrate their unique cultural advantages, which in turn affects the prominence of the cultural advantages of the rest of the village.

#### 2.2.3 Inadequate Protection of Traditional Buildings

Xijie Village has many existing ancient buildings, there are national key cultural relics protection unit mosque, a thousand years of history, there is a county-level cultural relics protection unit, in addition to 23 ancient homes, these ancient homes is the village of Xijie Village, and even Kaifeng area of the village of the evolution of the living fossil. Most of these ancient dwellings are left over from the Ming and Qing dynasties, the age of the more distant, after hundreds of years of history, many dwellings are in a more fragile state, before the local residents did not pay too much attention, as well as repair funds and other practical reasons, resulting in some architectural integrity has been destroyed. In addition, under the impetus of the booming economic development, local villagers have not highlighted the awareness of heritage protection in order to follow the trend of the times. In order to improve their quality of life, they occasionally demolish old dwellings in order to build more modern and comfortable residences, unfortunately leading to the destruction of some traditional buildings. After Xijie Village was recognised as a traditional Chinese village, the traditional dwellings were partially restored, but a long-term strategy for the conservation of the dwellings has not yet taken shape. In

addition, houses built by individual villagers show distinctive personalities and differ from traditional architectural styles, resulting in the further compression of space in the old village and the stripping away of traditional connotations.

#### 2.2.4 Inadequate Tourism Infrastructure and Village Management Mechanisms

Rural tourism thrives not only on its intrinsic charm, but also on a sound infrastructure of supporting facilities. These facilities cover a wide range of areas, ranging from public living facilities, leisure venues and even recreational facilities, all of which play a key role. The relatively late development of tourism in Xijie Village has resulted in inadequate public facilities, a scarcity of public toilets and a lack of appropriate public open spaces. The management organisation of the village is limited to the village committee, with no management organisation dedicated to the development of ancient architecture and tourism, nor is there any professional management personnel. In addition, there is a lack of clear planning for the development of the village, as well as a lack of clear internal rules and regulations to regulate the behaviour of villagers and tourists.

### 3. Conservation of Xijie Village and the Development of Rural Tourism

#### 3.1 *Heritage Conservation of the Western Street Village*

##### 3.1.1 Enhancing the Concept of Protection

In today's social context, the vulnerability of traditional villages is becoming increasingly evident. These villages carry unique and non-renewable historical and cultural resources, so the importance of conservation is self-evident. In this context, local government departments should attach great importance to the protection of traditional villages, and actively strengthen the corresponding protection publicity. Necessary measures should be strengthened to enhance the protection of traditional villages, enhance the conservation awareness of the residents, closely combined with the protection and development of rural tourism, so that the villagers can benefit from the protection. Further stimulate the conservation awareness of the residents, while cultivating the cultural self-confidence of the villagers, and ultimately form a virtuous circle, not only to protect the benefits, but also to enhance the cultural self-confidence.

##### 3.1.2 Classification and Zoning Protection of Ancient Buildings

According to the level of traditional architecture in Xijie Village to divide the protection of the area, Xijie Village has national, county-level ancient buildings. In the national heritage conservation unit mosque area is divided into the core protection zone, the county-level protection unit for the buffer protection, for other ancient villages set up as a general protection zone, in the protection zone must be protected first, in the protection of the basis for the development of tourism. In addition to the overall coordination of the village building to make a unified plan, in other ordinary residential self-personality on the basis of the optimisation of transformation, is the style of other residential and traditional architecture unity, enhance the overall coordination of the village building.

### 3.1.3 Protection of Traditional Intangible Tourism Resources

Xijie Village is rich in intangible cultural treasures, and these valuable resources are of great value to the development of tourism, cultural heritage, and the lives of the villagers. However, the participation of the younger generation in the transmission of intangible culture in Xijie Village is insufficient, and there is an urgent need to strengthen the support for traditional culture such as woodblock prints in Xijie Village. It is desirable for relevant learners and practitioners to receive appropriate funding to promote the transmission and innovation of intangible culture. In addition, given the Hui ethnic group's unique lion dance and other folklore performances, a well-planned performance should be planned and organically integrated into rural tourism. With the rapid development of the information age, relevant institutions can also use online media to strengthen the protection and dissemination of villages. For example, by means of real-time live broadcasting and the construction of an exclusive website, the popularity of Xijie Village can be expanded, and at the same time, the opinions and suggestions of the public can be absorbed, so as to present this traditional treasure in front of the eyes of the world.

### 3.2 Tourism Development Measures in Xijie Village

#### 3.2.1 Optimise Industrial Structure and Promote Integration of Tourism Resources

For the current industrial structure of the village should be further optimised, change the individual form of agricultural planting, the village's agricultural development must be cultivated with their own characteristics of agricultural products, based on the village's own village status advantages to form their own brand of agricultural products, the development of rural tourism, the need for characteristics of the countryside to support things, in turn, rural tourism can promote the sale of agricultural products. To see the village as a holistic tourism area, traditional architecture, intangible cultural heritage, folklore, agricultural products and other resources are integrated with each other, with the development of tourism to promote the overall protection and development. Integrate tourism resources into the village's food, clothing, housing and transport, and promote the integrated development of rural tourism and traditional villages through intercultural penetration.

#### 3.2.2 Enhancing the Environmental Quality of Historic Districts

Historic districts are unique in that they carry rich historical and cultural connotations, and several of the historic districts in West Street Village need to be further upgraded in terms of their environmental quality. The first step is to improve the appearance of the streets and buildings in the neighbourhood, in order to show the unique beauty of the nation and to highlight the neat and orderly internal and external environments in a more profound way. The second is to focus on constructing the historical and cultural atmosphere of the historic district, focusing on the sublimation of cultural connotation at an in-depth level. On this basis, the creation of a historical and cultural atmosphere should be stepped up, with merchants and villagers dressing modestly in traditional costumes and playing music with a mood. However, it is crucial to set up activities and venues involving culture and folklore in order to give tourists a rich and varied tourist experience.

#### 3.2.3 Increase Financial Investment to Improve Infrastructure and Management Mechanisms

As Xijie Village has been recognised as a national traditional village, the protection of Xijie Village has a legal basis, and the State will also give relatively more financial support to protect and improve the appearance of traditional villages. While the state gives financial support, the local community should also increase the input of funds through various forms, such as government input, villagers' fund-raising, fund-raising by religious believers, etc. The funds should not only be used directly in the village, but also in the village itself. Funds should not only be used directly for the protection of villages, but also for the scientific protection and management of villages by professionals, the establishment of professional organisations for the protection of villages and the development of tourism, as well as encouraging the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in villages.

#### 4. Conclusion

With the country's elevation of rural development to a national strategy, the protection of traditional villages has entered a golden period. In this context, the development of rural tourism is considered an effective path for the protection and development of traditional villages in the new era, and it is expected to solve the problems encountered by villages in the process of tourism development in a targeted manner. This paper takes Xijie Village as an example, and through the analysis of the current situation of protection and tourism development, it puts forward corresponding protection suggestions for villagers, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and other levels. In addition, specific development countermeasures are proposed from the perspectives of integration of tourism resources, enhancement of the environmental quality of historical neighbourhoods, improvement of infrastructure, and improvement of the management system.

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#### Note

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