

Research on Protection and Development of Xi'an Historical and Cultural Blocks

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Abstract: The historical value and important status of historical blocks makes it irreplaceable in cities. In terms of historical and cultural blocks depending on tourism industry, this paper puts forward multi-layered protection strategy of point (individual building), line (traditional lanes) and plane (activity space), and dynamic mode of "small scale, gradualism and microcirculation" to adapt to the requirement of changes, further explore characteristics of historical and cultural blocks, inspire its vitality, and better inherit history and culture of Xi'an.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

At present, a large number of historical buildings in China are on the verge of destruction. The pattern of traditional lanes is contradicted with the need of modern people. The flourishing tourism industry causes overexploitation. Without unique characteristics in cities and clear local industrial features, the situation of "stereotyped scenes" in different areas is severer. How to protect and continuously develop historical blocks to adapt to the requirement of the new era becomes an important project.

1.2 Research Objectives

This paper, with reference to domestic and foreign protection and development modes of historical blocks, aims to discuss how to develop historical and cultural blocks from the perspective of tourism, put forward comprehensive basic theory frame with reference value, taking Sanxue Street blocks in Xi'an as a specific case, and provide solutions with a certain regularity. In addition, the other objective of this paper is to provide research achievements with practical reference value for the protection and updating of historical blocks inside Xi'an Ming Dynasty City Wall.

1.3 Research Significance

Historical blocks witness the development of a city most intuitively, which not only preserve the living customs, folk culture and aesthetic taste of people at that time, also reflect the historical track of city development in specific period. It is not just formed by generations, but has a history of hundreds of years or even longer. Xi'an, as an ancient city, owns splendid culture and long history that we are proud of. Therefore, for Xi'an, it is particularly important to protect historical and cultural blocks.

2. Overseas and Domestic Research Status

2.1 Overseas research status

Historical blocks occupy an important place in the world's cultural and natural heritage. In August 1933, the 4th meeting of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) passed a programmatic document on the theory and methods of urban planning -*Urban Planning Outline*, later called *Athens Charter*, which is the first internationally recognized programmatic document for urban planning. In Europe, although legislation on the protection of cultural relics began at the

end of the 19th century, the protection of historical blocks is relatively late. After the Second World War, after a period of recovery, people have a new understanding of the protection of historical heritage, and the concept of protection has gradually expanded and deepened, from individual buildings to the surrounding environment, and even the entire historical area.

In Paris, France, the architectural style and lane pattern of the mid-19th century are basically preserved, showing the unique charm of the ancient city everywhere. It is said that Paris “values the ancient style most”. In fact, the game between new and old has always existed. Between the protection of history and the development of innovation, the carefulness of the Parisians is undoubtedly worthy of deep thought. In Paris, even a sculpture in the center of a street, a small church on the side of the road, or a window in a residential house tells the glory of “the history of every corner”.

In Japan, 80% of buildings are newly-built, but most still preserve the old city style. Their tradition of “demolition of old buildings and construction of old ones” is related to their geographical location and history. Because historically, local buildings are mostly wood structures, which are prone to decay and aging, and it is difficult to retain those for a long time. In addition, natural disasters such as earthquake are frequent in Japan, and post-disaster reconstruction is also a common practice. Therefore, an unwritten practice has been formed in Japan that old houses were demolished every sixty or seventy years, and then new houses were built. In the “reconstruction” of old buildings, people do not first demolish old ones and then build new ones, but first build new ones and then demolish old ones. New ones will be built next to the original site, and the old ones will be demolished after new buildings are completed.

2.2 Domestic research status

The protection of China’s historical and cultural heritages mainly experiences three important periods, the formation period of cultural relics protection, the double protection development system period based on historical and cultural famous city, and the multi-layered protection strategy period with clear concepts such as historical and cultural blocks, construction control zone, and intangible cultural heritage.

Shanghai Xintiandi is a historical and cultural tourist attraction in Shanghai. The buildings in the entire block are the townhouses of Shikumenli lane built by the 19th century foreign concessions. In 1990s, Shanghai launched a large-scale demolition and reconstruction of Shikumen, replaced by tall buildings. All the original inhabitants were removed and the block was re-assigned to its commercial and entertainment functions, changing the original residential function. Since then, because Shanghai Xintiandi has won various design awards at home and abroad, its designers have also become popular in China. Various regions start imitating, and the subsequent problem is copying that all the inhabitants are forced to move out. As time went by, China gradually realized that the renovation of historical blocks was not a demolition and reconstruction. The protection of old buildings should be people-oriented. The subsequent Tianzifang renovation project also made up for the regrets of Xintiandi, and did a lot of work from the overall planning, traffic construction, functional positioning, environmental improvement and business adjustment of the block. Tianzifang is not just a commercial district, but also a residential area for people to live in.

3. Research and Analysis of Sanxue Street Historical Block

In the Tang Dynasty, the place was originally “the Imperial Ancestral Temple”. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, due to the move of the capital to Luoyang, Chang’an was abandoned. The “Imperial College Stone Classics” outside the city was moved into the city and placed in the Wenxuanwang Temple “at the west corner of the Department of State Affairs in the Tang Dynasty”, and at this time, the Imperial College and Confucius Temple moved here. Later, with the decline and demise of the Tang Dynasty, its status also plummeted, “covered with dust and moss, and the statue was completely destroyed”. In the Song and Jin Dynasties, Tang Imperial College was changed to Jingzhaofu Imperial College. This street was named Nancheng Alley, which attracted a large number of calligraphy lovers to gather here in this period to form the “Temple and College”

(Confucian Temple and Imperial College), which is where the Confucius Temple and the Forest of Stone Tablets are located today. The basic pattern of the Forest of Stone Tablets in the north of the Confucius Temple laid the foundation for the Forest of Stone Tablets today. In the Yuan Dynasty, the colleges of the Yuan Dynasty, the institutions and examination houses managing examinations and the institutions of administrative personnel were adjacent to each other, indicating the clear purpose of imperial colleges. County school is county-level school, which began in Song and Jin Dynasties, at this time, which laid an important position of the cultural and educational center of Xi'an (called Fengyuan City). The social environment in the Ming and Qing Dynasties was relatively stable, and the economy developed in comparison with the past. The wind of respecting for Confucianism and education prevailed. In the 7th year of Chenghua (1471), Shaanxi governor, Ma Wensheng moved to Changan, two country schools in Xianning located at the east and west sides of Imperial College and Confucius Temple, thus forming a pattern of "One Temple and Three Schools". This street was renamed Sanxue Street with these three schools on the north side. The Confucius Temple in the Tang Dynasty is now the Forest of Stone Tablets, and the name of the Forest of Stone Tablets appears. During this period, the amount of stone in the Forest of Stone Tablets greatly increased with large scale, and its influence on urban culture was enhanced. A set of educational institutions of study and examination was formed with the center of the Forest of Stone Tablets, forming a unique urban life and cultural tradition. Baoqing Temple, Wolong Temple, Xiangcheng Temple and other famous temples gathered here and flourished.

In 1905, the imperial examination was abolished, and old schools such as Xi'an imperial colleges and county schools lost their functions. The Forest of Stone Tablets which has been attached to the Confucian Temple and imperial college has embarked on the road of reform with the development of society. It takes the road of independent development as a valuable national culture, forming the tourism mode. The College Door and Sanxue Street began to be transformed, but the research activities such as calligraphy and monument technology continued. With its profound history and splendid culture, it attracted many people.

4. The Current Status of Sanxue Street Historical Block and Problem Analysis

4.1 Current Status

4.1.1 Architectural style

The buildings in Sanxue Street are mainly divided into historical buildings, residential buildings and commercial buildings. Historic buildings include Guanzhong Academy, Baoqing Temple Huata, etc., which are well preserved. Most of the residential buildings were bungalows built from the middle and late Qing Dynasty to the time of liberation. Some of them have been naturally aging, it, however, still does not affect their protection value. Commercial buildings are mainly concentrated in a pedestrian street from the Forest of Stone Tablets to the entrance of Guanzhong Academy. It is also known as College Door. In the early 1990s, it was planned and designed by Xi'an and implemented by Beilin District, to become an antique commercial street with Ming and Qing architectural styles after renovation. In June 1991, the main body project of College Door was basically completed. In October of that year, this ancient cultural street was renewed. The reconstructed College Door restored its former cultural color. The thick and powerful street name in Yan Zhenqing style reached the integration between the memorial archway in the west of the street and the building in the street, and the harmony of its architectural style and historical block.

4.1.2 Lane pattern

Baishulin Street, a main road in the historical and cultural block of Sanxue Street, is located inside Wenchang Door, with Duanlv Door in the north end, and the Forest of Stone Tablets in the west side of the south end, which bears important traffic functions. Its expansion and renovation is included in the 2004 urban construction plan. Take the southbound carriageway of Xi'an Bell Tower, turn left when almost reaching the south gate, and then it is the ancient culture street of College Door. In 1990s, the street was divided into the tourism and commercial pedestrian street system

with traditional architectural style of the Ming and Qing Dynasties along with the Zhubashi bamboo furniture commercial street, Defu traditional residential street and Beiyuanmen traditional commercial street. The street of College Door is widened to 12 meters, and the interior is mainly for tourists and vehicles are also accessible. The block is based on traditional Chinese cultural and commercial theme, accompanied by historical relics and folk culture exhibitions.

4.1.3 Cultural relics

The historical value of Sanxue Street lays a foundation for its powerful tourism resources with overall advantages. The most famous scenic attraction is the Forest of Stone Steles Museum, which is the place for every visitor. The museum is currently the place with the largest collection of ancient inscriptions in China, and the longest history in China. It is a stone library of Confucian classics and a rich archive of historical materials, known as “the unique museum in the world”. In addition, Guanzhong Academy has the reputation of “Beilin storing national treasure and college educating people”. In addition to the inscriptions, the intangible cultural heritage here is also rich, including typical representatives of traditional cultures such as festival folklore, calligraphy and painting, shadow play, traditional opera and folk music that can reflect Guanzhong folk culture.

4.2 Problems faced

4.2.1 The mixed architectural style

The high population density, a small per capita living area and overuse of Sanxue Street, result in the destruction of houses and the deterioration of the overall environmental quality. The more crowded the houses, the worse the building quality, in another word, population density is inversely proportional to construction quality. Residential buildings in the block are generally built by residents in a self-built way, causing serious disruption and chaos. Its construction technology and construction methods are relatively simple, and various disorderly reconstructions, additional construction, and demolitions have destroyed many traditional buildings, which has a negative impact on the overall appearance of historical and cultural blocks.

4.2.2 The destroyed lane pattern

The composition, arrangement and context of the lane space are vivid representations of the collective memory of urban residents. The lane space, as the most basic material space in life, containing many activities, including walking, staying, sitting, watching, talking and so on. With the continuous development in recent years, as a famous traditional commercial street in Xi'an, College Door has achieved good economic and social benefits and has become a window for tourism in the old city of Xi'an. However, there are still some problems. Due to the demolition and reconstruction in streets, the spatial arrangement of the original blocks has been greatly damaged. Some streets and roads have been laid down for years in disrepair, with uneven roads. The roadside stall business is common, and the roads are generally narrower, so in the peak of tourism, there will be the problem of people crowdedness, and the road capacity is greatly reduced.

4.2.3 The unclear tourism characteristics

Xi'an culture is famous for its long history in the world, but under the influence of various relevant factors in the market, the tourism characteristics are increasingly unclear. Souvenirs should be derived from regional traditions, closely related to traditional culture. It is not only an important source of finance, but also a good cultural carrier. Through its dissemination, it directly plays the role of image propaganda. For a long time, cultural products of Sanxue Street cannot highlight the regional characteristics, and the homogenization of products in other scenic spots in China is serious, one thousand scenic spots sharing one tourist souvenir, which also made many tourists feel boring. The lack of material carriers causes the disappearing characteristics of blocks and the weakening tourist attraction.

5. Suggestions on the Protection and Development of Sanxue Street Historical and Cultural Blocks

5.1 Construction groups

Considering the geographical location of Sanxue Street block, according to the concept of “Cultural Relic Purple Line” proposed by Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage, firstly, it is recommended that the area within 20 meters of the inner wall of the Ming Dynasty City Wall be restored to a horse track or designed as a green space to solve the contradiction between urban development and cultural relics protection. Except for buildings protected and cultural protection units, the overall height of the building should be controlled below 9 meters. Secondly, the construction control zone must be established on the periphery of the historical and cultural blocks to protect the view quality of the historical and cultural blocks. Thirdly, because the different activities of local residents, tourists, etc. in historical blocks need to be coordinated, it is necessary to ensure the modern life of the residents, but also to protect the original features of the historical blocks, which requires delineating several sections in the block and taking different protection policy. For buildings to be used, the exterior appearance should be preserved, and the interior is allowed to be modified to represent the alternation of the old and new architectural culture.

5.2 Traditional lanes

The spatial pattern of Sanxue Street historical and cultural block basically maintains the overall pattern of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, with a certain interface continuity. The individual buildings along the street are arranged in sequence, with relatively simple type. In view of its development model as a tourist attraction, on the basis of the design of traditional streets, it is still necessary to form a patchy and uneven space in the area, and to break the monotonousness of the long linear space by the plane dislocation of individual buildings.

5.3 The protection of immaterial elements

With the development of the economy, people’s requirements for tourism are also getting higher and higher, and the tourism industry and its connotation are constantly enriching, widening and expanding. Although the cultural products in the tourism market currently lack high-end design talents, creative ideas are not uncommon. To avoid the trend of “one souvenir for thousands of scenes”, on the one hand, the protection of copyright and the crackdown of piracy shall be intensified. On the other hand, it is required to dig deep into local characteristics, create resource genes that cannot be copied, innovate intangible cultural heritage, and present them to tourists in a diversified form, thus creating a “one souvenir for one scene” and promoting culture diversity and people’s creativity, realizing the property rights of tourist souvenirs and reshaping the cultural competitiveness of Sanxue Street.

6. Conclusion

As an important memory preservation space in a city, the historical and cultural blocks have the characteristics of high-level cultural heritage and strong attraction of tourism resources, become the key development targets in many cities and undertake the important mission of urban historical memory revival and urban tourism industry upgrading. Therefore, it is required to take tourism development as the direction, re-mobilize the charm of traditional commercial culture, and initiate the upgrading of traditional commercial activities, which will become an important opportunity for the revitalization of traditional commercial districts, achieving sustainable development and restoring the vitality of the block, so that in the collision and integration of traditional culture and modern life, the historical and cultural blocks can exude the infinite charm of unique regional characteristics.

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