Investigation on the Remaining Situation of West Post Road in the Ancient City of Jinyang—Taking the Ancient Village of Zhoujiazhuang, The First Station in the West of Taiyuan as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Through the field investigation, site visit and other methods, this paper analyzes the ancient village of Zhoujiazhuang, Jinyuan District, Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province. It is found that the ancient village is located in the ancient post road when going out of the ancient city of Jinyang in the west, and it is a very important link in the post road. There are many historical and cultural relics around the ancient village. Through the collection and arrangement of the building information and documents, the paper analyzes the surrounding environment and architectural layout of the ancient village, so as to provide the basis for the protection and utilization of the traditional village as well as the sustainable development strategy.¹

KEYWORDS

The Ancient Village of Zhoujiazhuang, Fengyu Valley; The Ancient Post Road, Engraved Rock.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient times, Taiyuan area was surrounded by mountains from east, west to the north, so the trade between inside and outside as well as the deployment of

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military hubs were mostly through the valley between the two mountains. As the only passage of going out the ancient city of Jinyang from the west, Fengyu Valley was such an valley with this kind of important role. The Fengyu Valley was called "Lingqiu Valley" before the Tang Dynasty. After the Tang Dynasty, it was changed to this name. There is a river named Shahe River flowing through the Fengyu Valley, a post road on its north bank, which connects Taiyuan with the Gujiao City. The ancient village of Zhoujiazhuang is located in the western section of the post road and is the last station from Taiyuan to the west, it is also the first station for people to go to Taiyuan. As an important link in the post road, it carries rich historical information.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The ancient village Zhoujiazhuang is located in the southwest of Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, with geographical coordinates of 37° 46' north latitude, 112° 23' east longitude and 1073 m above sea level. The cultural relics and natural landscapes are various in Fengyu Valley, such as two of the Eight Sights of Taiyuan, which is very famous in Ming and Qing dynasties. There are eight traditional villages are spread orderly here, including the first station when going out the ancient city of Jinyang from the west—Diantou Village, as well as the first station when going in the Taiyuan area from Gujiao City—Zhoujiazhuang Village.

THE ANCIENT POST ROAD IN TANG DYNASTY

From the northeast of Zhoujiazhuang Ancient Village, there is a two-meter-wide post road running through the ancient village from east to west. This post road runs from the ancient city of Jinyang in the west which is connected with the Gujiao City and Loufan City, which provides great convenience for trade between east and west as well as the military deployment in Fengyu Valley. Shahe River was a seasonal river, the river is almost cut off and the river bed is exposed in the dry season, so the pedestrians and wagon train can pass through the river course; in the high water season, the river is full of water and even the flood is surging. During the Spring and Autumn, due to the construction technology limited, it should be transported only by river course during the dry season, if the high water season, it is necessary to bypass the two mountains, and then enter Taiyuan Basin.

The Taiyuan as north capital in Tang Dynasty, which was changed to Beijing in 742 A.D., that was the heyday of Taiyuan in the whole history. At this time, as a main road that connecting with Gujiao and Loufan to the west, the Fengyu Valley post road must be broadened and properly maintained, so the caravan went to and fro in constant streams. Along both sides of the post road, there will be built a lot of stations and taverns, buildings and merchants laid the foundation for the latter formation of the villages.
On the north bank of Shahe River, the post road and surrounding villages have been affected by the flood for a long time. Through analysis according to the construction damage situation and the construction techniques of the existing residential buildings in the ancient village of Zhoujiazhuang, the distribution of residential buildings in the village are developing in a trend from high to low and from east to west. In order to avoid the flood, people can only build caves to live in high mountain ranges, however, the steep mountains cannot satisfy the larger courtyard space, so the most of cave houses in the villages which are located high in the village do not have a courtyard, but a narrow passageway from the village road is used as the access road. This is totally different from the traditional quadrangle form of Shanxi, because the height difference is too big, there is even no courtyard wall outside the entrance road. Although there is no form of "courtyard," not has privacy space, the interrelationship among buildings in different elevation were increased. This is also a perfect embodiment of suiting its measures to local conditions and man as well as nature live in harmony when building the ancient village of Zhoujiazhuang.

Figure 1. Layout of the village.

Figure 2. The ancient post road.

Figure 3. Stone carving.
ENGRAVED ROCK IN SONG DYNASTY

On the west side of ancient village Zhoujiazhuang, there is a mountain before the temple, on the east hillside, there is an engraved rock on the cliff of the middle section of the ancient post road. The stone carving is the record of praying for rain and celebrating for rain in the fourteenth and fifteenth year of emperor Huizong of Song (1113 A.D., 1114 A.D.). [1] The stone carving is divided into two pieces, which are carved on a cliff about 3 meters above the ground. Each block consists of 6 to 7 columns, each column with 5 to 6 characters. The handwriting is basically clear, part of them have fallen off due to the number of years.

CONCLUSIONS

There are eight traditional villages along the Fengyu Valley, where many stone arch cave groups built with local stone materials are retained, which form a building form with obvious regional characteristics; there are abundant kinds of intangible cultural heritage as well as the customs and activities of the remaining farming civilization in the valley. Researching on the layout and architectural characteristics of traditional villages deeply in Fengyu Valley is of great significance for the protection and sustainable development of regional traditional villages.

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