

---

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Shaxi Preservation Project: Negotiation between the Need of Historical Site Heritage and Local Residents

**Jiahui Zhang**

*The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, London, UK*

**Corresponding Author:** Jiahui Zhang, **E-mail:** [zcftjz1@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:zcftjz1@ucl.ac.uk)

---

**ABSTRACT**

It has been a long time since the historical site preservation projects have been developed based on the opinion of experts and authorities in China. However, in the case of Shaxi ancient town, the voice of local dwellers draws the attention of the project developers. The local public, who were usually ignored, has been involved in stages of the preservation plan through the last 20 years. The different voice among native residents, authority and experts is always treated unequally in most project; however, the situation in Shaxi might be different. This is also an important aspect when evaluating the success of the Shaxi Preservation Project compared to the other historic towns. This essay investigates and evaluates the project by table top research and online interviews with local people. It discusses how local residents are considered by the project planners and then involved in the project development.

**KEYWORDS**

Historic village preservation, historic architecture heritage, local dwellers

**ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 01 September 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 04 September 2023

**DOI:** 10.32996/jmcie.2023.4.3.7

---

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Research Background

Shaxi, a small town in Dali State of Yunnan Province, lies in the southwest part of China. The town was mainly dwelled by Bai Minorities. The ancient town of Shaxi has served as an important center of craft and trade since about 400 B.C. and developed into a station on the Ancient Tea Horse Road, which was naturally generated later with the development of the economy in southwest China (Wang et al., 2012). However, due to the rapid change of lifestyle and transportation methods in China in the recent mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Shaxi has been gradually forgotten by the outside world. The fallen of Shaxi met a change in the year 2000 when a Swiss expert in historical architecture preservation visited the village of Sideng, which is the cultural and commercial center of Shaxi. A long-term preservation project was carried out based on the expert's study of the village in the year 2001 and is still being developed today (Pu et al., 2019). Based on the essays from experts on historical architecture preservation, the Shaxi Preservation Project is one of the most successful tests in China and a model for future projects (Renfer, 2017).

#### 1.2 Literature Review

Most of the academic research on historical town preservation in China nowadays evaluates the success of the projects from the position of experts, authorities and investigators. When talking about historic site preservation and development in China today, economic income and development of tourism is always one of the prior aims of the projects, as well as an important measurement indicator of the success determined by the authorities. However, the voice of local people is seldom heard by scholars (Zhou et al., 2015). The reason for the absence of local dwellers throughout the process from project development to the research of most projects is the experts' stereotyped image of the locals as groups of uneducated and their opinions as immature (Wang & Jin, 2017). This essay is going to analyze the success of the Shaxi preservation project from the aspect of the tension between the

preservation project and the local people by listening to the real voice of the local people. The essay aims to discover and discuss the situation of local people engaging with the preservation project and their attitude toward this project, which has an outstanding reputation in many academic writings I have looked at.

### ***1.3 Problem Statement and Objectives***

The first part of the essay aims to investigate the uniqueness and indigenization of the preservation project formulated for the historical town of Shaxi, focusing on the relationship between the local people and the project. This part will be developed based on secondary sources from the eye of experts aiming to figure out how the academic group evaluate the position of local people in the preservation project. The second part will be developed based on my online interviews with a local person born in a family run horse team during the old times as primary sources. In this part, the essay will show the locals' attitude towards the preservation project in Shaxi to see how the aim of the project was fulfilled. In conclusion, the last part of this essay is going to give suggestions for future preservation projects in China by analyzing the successes and regrets of the Shaxi Preservation Project from the aspect of tension between it and the locals.

## **2. Shaxi Preservation Project: Indigenization and Uniqueness**

### ***2.1 Respect for Local Craftsmen and Local Tradition***

The first reason behind the success of the Shaxi preservation project is that the team focused on the reason instead of the appearance of the village orientation by engaging the local people, especially vernacular craftsmen, in the whole project. The Preservation Project in Shaxi is a long-term work with several indigenized principles aiming to recover the heritage of local character and lead Shaxi on to a sustainable development route in the future. A Swiss scholar team was commissioned by the World Monument Fund to visit historical towns in Yunnan Province in the year 2000 and was attracted by the unique local culture and landscapes in Shaxi (Zhang et al., 2016). After the town was listed among the 100 most endangered sites in the world by the World Monument Fund in the year 2001, the Swiss Preservation team started their work on directing the protection of the culture and landscape in Shaxi with a Chinese expert called Huang Yinwu. A 6-stage Preservation Project was carried out officially in 2003 (Wong, 2016).

The composition of the constitutor was the first specialness of the Shaxi Preservation Project when most Preservation was carried out by local authorities assisted by investigators. Most of them were led by the potential economic value of the historical site to be redeveloped into tourism spots. Aiming at economic income, the projects always focus on the physical appearance of the historical architecture instead of the internal cultural customs and lifestyle of locals, which is the reason for appearance. As a result, some of the historical towns became monotonous while the local people lost their own cultural identity and confidence (Chen et al., 2021). Although the appearance of most architecture in these historical sites still remain in a traditional style, the atmosphere and lifestyle of the local areas have witnessed remarkable change influenced by the shock of 'development' for tourism purpose. Chain stores are commonly seen in these commercial historical towns with assembly line production and foods for sale.

However, in the case of Shaxi, derived by the experts of historical architecture preservation, the project gave priority to the respect of local people and their traditional lifestyle as a method for sustainable development. To gain a better understanding of the local context and phenomenon of Chinese historical architecture, the Swiss preservation team got Huang Yinwu from Southeast University of China engaged in the project since the project was in its early stages. At the same time, Bai language speakers were employed by the preservation team to communicate with native people (Wang et al., 2012). Under the background of a remarkable decrease in the number of traditional architecture craftsmen, the preservation encouraged the recovery of local craft techniques. In the first stage of the preservation project, craftsmen were retained with crafting techniques and smoothly developed those techniques by learning from each other architects from academics. The aim of these efforts was to discover a way for traditional building technology to meet the needs of modern life without the loss of local characters (Renfer, 2017). The local craftsman later became the main force of architecture repair in Shaxi. It not only gave a sustainable answer to the issue of local architecture revival but also made the local craftsmen more creative to face problems during village development in the future (Huang, 2014). All of the respect given to local craftsmen are seen to be unique and brave during a time when most other development project of historical sites were replacing traditional craft techniques with modern ones (Bai & Yang, 2021).

### ***2.2 Specialized Preservation Principles***

At the same time, the Shaxi preservation team established unique targeted preserving principles that went into detail, which is the second reason for the success. As mentioned above, experts were always absent in historical architecture preservation projects at the time Shaxi was starting to be protected. One of the reasons is that there were few experts in the field of architecture preservation at that time in China (Zhou, 2004). The absence of experts also leads to the lack of principles and laws on architectural preservation. There was hardly any full-fledged law and standard of historical site preservation in China when the project was carried out. According to the research by Kang and Zhou (2021), Villages like Shaxi, which belongs to the catalogue of Ethnic Minority Village started to be preserved as a test in 2009, while only a limited number of such historical sites have a chance to be

written on to the protection list. There is still a lack of unified law established on Ethnic Minority Village even today, while the existing laws carried out by the local authority don't reach enough detail to direct the protection (Luo, 2020). In 2003, the preservation project could only cover individual architecture, which is affirmed to be a cultural relic. It was almost impossible at that time to find a law or principle on preserving a whole historical village, not to say a minority one. Therefore, the experts and authority working on the project had to do plenty of research thus develop a complete set of considerate principle throughout the process of preservation. However, the lack of law also gave the expert sufficient freedom which allow the project to be indigenized to the maximum and at the same time carry out the most suitable plan from their points of view. The project goes into detail uniqueness of the local context.

As shown in the chart below, the second stage of the preservation project started with analyzing the local context in order to make a conclusion about the unique language of Shaxi. The preservation team studied the condition and cultural background of the essential architecture or areas, including the ancient stage, Xingjiao Temple, the yard of the Ouyang Family and the Sifang Cross in the town of Shaxi. Based on the argument by Huang (2012), the Chinese director of the Conservation team, traditional buildings carry the public imagination of local culture and history; they are one of the most crucial factors of heritage, which also require, according to the words by Huang, conservation beyond preservation and protection. Rather than repairing the physical condition of historical architecture and landscape, the team focused on the local culture of both religion and civilization carried by the spaces and their appearance in Shaxi Town. This principle will be able to provide an indigenized possibility of the future growth of Shaxi without losing the public imagination shared by the locals (Wang et al., 2012).

Table 1. Timeline of Shaxi Preservation Project

Phases	Stages	Preservation Targets	Preservation Strategies
Phase 1: Landmark Architecture Preservation	Stage 1. Architecture Complex Renovation	Sideng Square and Surrounding Architecture, Including Shaxi Ancient Stage, Xingjiao Temple.	1. Repairing Ming Dynasty Architecture 2. Trained Local Craftsman with Traditional Techniques
Phase 2: Preservation of Context of Central Architecture	Stage 2. Shaxi Ancient Village Refurbishment	Architecture, Squares and Streets in Shaxi Ancient Village	Developing the Living Conditions in Shaxi Village
Phase 3. Revival and Sustainable Development of the Plain District of Shaxi	Stage 3. Development of Shaxi Plain	Whole Town of Shaxi and landscape on the Plain of Shaxi	1. Landscape Design 2. Protection of Environment 3. Revival of Ancient Tea Horse Road
	Stage 4. Development of Sanitary Facilities	Dwellings in Shaxi	Encouraging the local residents to evolve in building bio-toilets and ecological waste treatment system
	Stage 5. Renaissance on Economy and Culture	Local Residents	1. Microcredit Loan Offered by Local Authority 2. Business Education 3. Handicrafts Workshop 4. Primary School and High School Development 5. Cooperation with Ecotourism Companies
	Stage 6. Publicity on Social Media	Shaxi as a cultural icon	Enhance the Public Awareness of preservation by Propagandize the cultural and physical environment of Shaxi.

A specific issue the team faced in Shaxi was the complexity of minorities and their impacts on traditional architecture. As introduced above, Shaxi is mainly occupied by the Bai minority. However, the other 12 minority dwellers in both Shaxi and surrounding areas all had an influence on local architecture or even produced buildings that were different from the local context in Shaxi (Wang et al., 2021). Taking the Yard of the Ouyang Family as an example, the architecture is constructed with a typical Bai minority layout, which is called 'Three Building and One Screen Wall'. At the same time, since the Ouyang family is a Han minority that moved to Shaxi in the Qing Dynasty, the yard has a large number of paintings and carving pieces designed based on Han minority folk stories and old books as decoration of architecture.

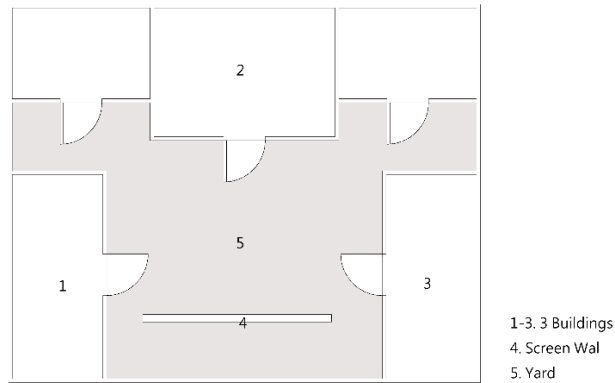


Figure 1. Plan of '3 Buildings and 1 Screen Wall

Besides, since Shaxi was an important station of the ancient trade route connecting China and southwest Asia, local architecture also absorbed elements of other countries, including Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar. On the one hand, this situation enriched the culture of Shaxi, while on the other hand, it increased the difficulty of summarizing a common architectural language on a town scale. Based on the principle approved by most Chinese experts at the time of the 2000s and even today, every individual historical architecture should be repaired completely the same as it was originally built in history (Huang, 2017). However, in the case of Shaxi, the preservation team gave priority to the integrality and harmony of the town. Some of the vernacular buildings are demolished or transformed to make both the appearance and the function of the town work harmoniously and organically (Pu et al., 2019). The buildings were not repaired as original referencing to the style of a specific period of history but treated as spaces that gradually change and develop for daily activities to carry on.

### **2.3 Attention to Local Population Structure**

The third reason for the success is that the preservation team paid attention to local population composition by dealing with a decrease in the loss of local people, especially young adults. As the preservation project carried on, Shaxi witnessed a common issue faced by most of the historical towns and villages, which was the loss of young adults.

The first reason is that influenced by the boom of the internet and social media in recent years, the young generation is exposed to the big gap between the living conditions and career opportunities in cities and the old town of Shaxi. Not only in the town of Shaxi, as Wang (2015) argued in his article, many local people from historical towns all around China are leaving their hometowns because of the shabbiness of their old houses and the low economic income in old towns and villages. As the preservation project in Shaxi went on, the younger generation started to find their cultural identity and confidence. Some of them chose to stay and develop their career in Shaxi because of the development of living conditions (Fan & Li, 2018).

However, not long after the project was carried into later stages, investigators and individuals from big cities were attracted by both the natural and cultural environments of Shaxi. More and more local people found it as an economic opportunity to lend their renovated old house in Shaxi to outsiders. Many Shaxi people moved out of the old village and built new houses not far outside Shaxi. Most of them live on the rent paid to their old houses and agricultural incomes. This was the least that the expert team wanted to see since the local cultural heritage in the old town of Shaxi was fading during the loss of local dwellers. Although the preservation team was expecting a return of prosperity in Shaxi by encouraging tourism development at the very beginning of the project, their ideal host of most activities carried on in Shaxi was still the local. To solve this problem, the preservation team revived the Chenghuang Temple, 2 kilometers away from the center of Shaxi town. The temple was a center of cultural activities in ancient times but was taken over to be a granary by the government later. This revival plan aims to share the pressure on the town of Shaxi brought by the impact of tourism at the same time, provide a new communication center of cultural spirit for both the locals and the visitors (Huang, 2017).

## **3. Reaction of the Local: Real Voice from the Native**

### **3.1 A Privately-owned Museum and its Owner**

During my visit to the town of Shaxi in 2019, I went to a private museum run by a Bai minority local called Ma Siye. The museum is located on the second floor of his private ancient house with a collection of traditional horse equipment and Bai minority crafts. Some of his collections have a history of more than hundreds of years. Ma Siye's family was a member of the ancient tea horse

team during ancient times. He told us that he went to a modern city for more career opportunities than most of the other local young adults 10 years ago. However, as the preservation of Shaxi was carried on and propagandized by the local authority, he decided to go back to Shaxi and contribute his effort to revive the prosperity of his hometown. The Museum of Ma has become more and more popular in recent years, and he also developed a tourism route so that visitors can experience a part of the journey of the ancient tea horse team.

### **3.2 An Interview with the Museum Owner**

The preservation project and its principles had been broadly known by the local public. During my interview with Ma, he introduced that the Shaxi preservation project, as well as the preservation team, especially the Swiss experts Jacques Feiner and Huang Yinwu, was widely known by local people, no matter their age. As he and most of the other local people understood, the preservation project has a basic principle of repairing the original appearance of historical architecture. As mentioned above, although this widely utilized principle was referenced by Huang Yinwu, he had a critical attitude toward it. This is a misunderstanding between the expert's team and the local. However, we can still see an effort the project carrier made to conduct propaganda. The reason for this misunderstanding, first of all, might be the difference in educational background. When evaluating the principle, Huang Yinwu made several critical arguments that may not be easy to be completely understood by the public. Secondly, since the preservation team has made a great effort to ensure the harmony of local architectural languages, the public might not be sensitive enough to distinguish the changes in historic architecture during the development process. Jin and Che (2015) made a comparison between the preservation plans carried out in the towns of Shaxi and Xinhua. As she argued, the project in Xinhua, which was carried on by the local authority without any direction from architecture preservation experts, remarkably changed the lifestyle as well as the relationship between local spaces. Most of the vast new buildings have been built in the village recently for tourism reasons. Compared to the town of Xinhua, Shaxi has received a more gentle and natural preservation plan, which developed the local living conditions well at the same time, didn't interrupt the atmosphere of the local context.

The local people had been encouraged to engage in the preservation of local architecture and landscape because of the positive publicity and respect shown by the authority and expert teams. According to Ma, the preservation project has a positive reputation among the locals, who are grateful for the efforts made by the experts and local authorities. As Zeng and Tan (2014) argued in their research on the historical houses of the Bai minority, the locals always have a strong emotional connection with their culture as well as the carrier of the culture, which is local traditional architecture. However, the ignorance of local authority and the rapid development of tourism may challenge the cultural identity of historical towns (Chen et al., 2021). The reason for the positive situation of cultural and architectural preservation in Shaxi is the adequate relationship between the preservation team and the locals, which was built up by the proper propaganda of the project. To improve the current situation of architectural preservation in most historical towns and villages, the authorities may need to shoulder the responsibility of guiding the direction and carrying out publicity activities of preserving and reviving (Tang, 2014). It is also important for the authorities and experts to show their efforts made to the preservation as well as their respect for the local culture. Based on the claim by Yang et al. (2017), the most essential subject of minority and cultural heritage is the local people. By expressing respect toward the local culture, the preservation team may help the locals build up confidence in their own heritage. Thus, they will be motivated to protect and treasure the local architecture.

In the meantime, Ma claimed that the loss of local young adults is still happening in Shaxi, though this situation has improved since the preservation project was carried out. One of the main reasons, as argued before, is the gap in living conditions and economic income between the big cities and rural areas of China. Besides advertising the unique culture of the historical villages, it is also important for the authority to enlarge investigations into developing the living and working conditions of the villages. As Ma described during the interview, a lot of young adults going back to Shaxi were aiming to revive the heritage of their hometown. However, they are facing a decrease in financial income at the same time. If the physical condition and economical income of Shaxi could be developed, Shaxi would be more attractive to the locals. To fulfil this target, in both Shaxi and the other traditional villages, the whole country may need to figure out a way of narrowing the gap between cities and rural areas. This requires the cooperation of several departments and experts in different fields. At the same time, the locals, including Ma and his friend, are starting to find new ways of gaining a better life by themselves. For instance, Ma refurbished the upper floor of his house into a museum of tea horse team culture while his friend is planning to run a café with a beautiful field landscape.

## **4. Reflection and Questions**

### **4.1 Why Swiss?**

In the case of Shaxi, it worth to be considering why a Bai Minority in China need to be preserved by a Swiss expert. As mentioned above, at the time of 2000, Chinese authorities started to realize the importance of culture heritage by preserving historical villages and towns. However, there was no developed laws or principles existed at that time. Thus, local governments, as well as the public, had not a general awareness of preserving vernacular architecture. In the meantime, there was also a lack of experts majoring in architecture preservation in the Chinese academic field during the 2000s. As a result, when the Swiss expert pointed out the

importance of architecture preservation in the town of Shaxi, he got complete support from both the academic groups and local authorities. Fortunately, the Swiss team decided to evolve Chinese experts in architecture preservation and local people, especially the architecture craftsmen, into the process of preserving. With the help of a local authority, the expert team built an organic relationship with the locals, which made their work go smoothly later. Compared to the situation in some other areas of China, where the foreign expert teams take all the ownership of preservation projects while having the locals as subordinate labors, the project of Shaxi has made a success in dealing with the tension between preservation projects and the local public.

#### 4.1 What to be Preserved

Beyond preserving the style of architecture, what we need to preserve with development is the style of life. During the process of tourism development in Shaxi, some academics have pointed out the issue that traditional architecture has a layout with inadequate isolation of interior spaces, which cannot meet the needs of modern life. They claim a development on the interior layout and suggest that the traditional houses should be designed to serve as hotels for tourists while the facades should not be changed.

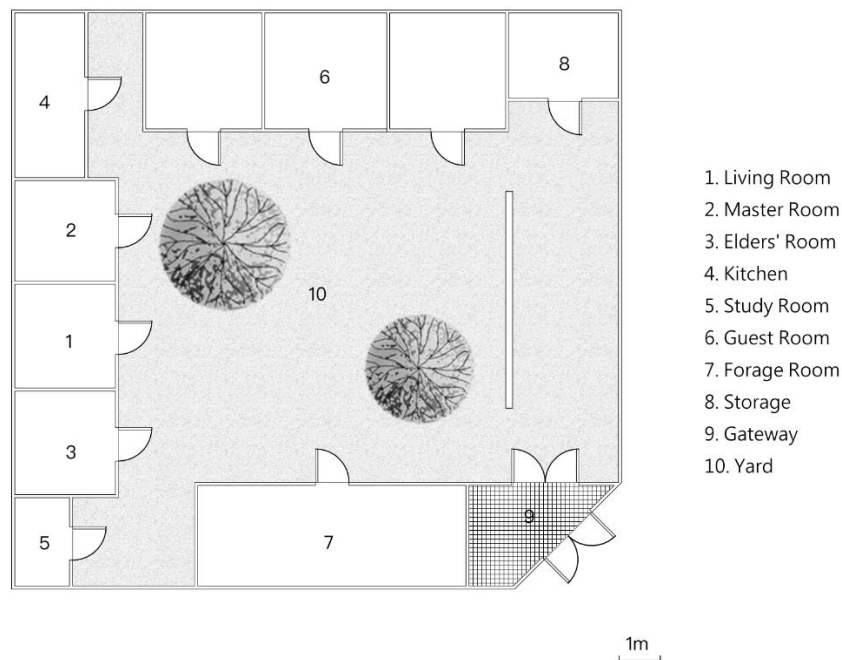


Figure 2. Plan of Typical Traditional Bai Minority Houses

As shown in the above drawing of a typical Bai minority house in the area of Shaxi, most of the traditional architecture has a big yard for daily activities and communications. However, for the tourists, the enclosed rooms are the basis for most of their daily activities, including reading, communicating, surfing on the internet or other habitats they bring from modern city life. This may require a better condition of indoor spaces when they are developed into hotel rooms. Some hotel runners claimed that it is difficult for most of the rooms of local architecture to access natural daylight because of the limited scale and number of windows. It is widely believed in Bai villages that the back window facing open streets means leaking of the wealth of Bai families. As a result, almost every traditional house of the Bai family only has windows to access the view of the enclosed yard, which limits the light and ventilation conditions. Other issues such as the lack of toilets and dining rooms inside traditional houses. The local build toilets outside their house gate and enjoy meals together outdoors in the central yard, which make it inconvenient for tourists with a different way of living. The solutions given by the scholars are always to add spaces with required functions onto the original plan while keeping the old appearance of the exterior, including texture, material and crafting patterns, as a way to preserve.

However, the thing we should preserve is not just an appearance, but the lifestyle. What the tourists want to experience in historic villages is not only the look of local buildings but also a unique way of living. There will be little meaning of restriction by the rule of keeping the original appearance if it conflicts with the convenience of local people's life inside their own house. The expert could work together with the local people to find a lifestyle that is comfortable for local dwellers under the background of nowadays development in China. In the Chinese academic field today, most experts argue that none of the components of preserved architecture should be changed. In the meantime, the local dwellers are forced to get used to the lifestyle in such traditional houses, which is much more inconvenient than the modern architecture. That means the local people are losing their

right to change, develop or find new ways of using their own houses that heritage from their ancestors. Thus, more and more people from historical towns are moving out of their old houses, going to big cities, or even building new houses not far from their old dwellings. However, architecture is only a tool that carries the activities of daily life for the locals, which should adapt to the vernacular lifestyle. No one could decide on the use of an old house for the local families who have owned the house for the last several generations.

To discuss the strange situation that the local people lose their ownership of the traditional houses as soon as they are built, one of the interesting questions is what kind of new-built architecture in historic areas may be preserved. If a toilet is built on a historical site for the tourist by a tourism company, it is hardly possible to be considered as an architecture to be preserved, even with a traditional appearance. If a family from the big cities come to build a house with modern techniques and construction methods and decorate it with the local architectural element, like a large number of Bai style modern hotels recently built in Dali state, there is also a little possibility for it to be considered as an architecture to be preserved. Looking back to the architecture built by locals, the subject to be preserved is actually the traditional building techniques, and every single effort during the building process by local people has the traditional knowledge. The authority may find it more sustainable to preserve the knowledge of building in a traditional way by training the ones who have the knowledge. What really needs to be preserved is the traditional craftsmanship of locals and their knowledge instead of forcing every local family to hand over the ownership of their old house. The craftsman, with all that knowledge in their brain, are able to produce hundreds of traditional houses.

It is widely believed that architecture preservation is an important part of culture heritage in most countries. However, the question of what (architecture or landscape) is to be preserved and how still needs to be asked. The person who has the priority to answer this question may not be the Swiss expert, nor Professor Huang Yinwu as an outsider of the village. But the local dweller, architecture craftsman as the vernacular expert and local authority who has taken charge of the operation in the village for years. It could be a proper solution that the experts and government give back the right to make choices to the locals by educating them. As argued above, one of the reasons that the local young adults are leaving their hometown is the rapid development of social media, which suddenly exposed the locals to a more modern lifestyle with better living conditions. Although it caused the loss of population in old towns like Shaxi, the development of the internet in remote villages is still a positive situation. What the academic and authority departments could do is to utilize the internet as a tool for equipping the local public with knowledge on how to make their life better without losing their own culture. The locals could be educated to develop their aesthetics and confidence in unique cultures by exposing them to vastly different types of lifestyles. Once they can get rid of their biases about their own culture and lifestyle, they will know what needs to be preserved much better than the experts from outside of the villages or even another country.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, although a large number of Chinese historical site preservation projects have not paid much attention to the voice and benefits of local people, the case of Shaxi has made a great example of seeing the appeal of native residents as one of the main instructions of the preservation development. Furthermore, it is always important to consider involving local people in the whole process of preservation projects in historical villages and towns, which is also an essential reason for Shaxi's current success. As a reflection of the research carried out in this essay, to improve the relationship between the authority, experts and local people, these 3 groups should take their own responses.

First, as the department that holds the power to direct the master plan of preservation and development, the government should carry on publicity activities to help the locals discover their unique identity and find back confidence in vernacular culture, which is not as uncivilized as they thought. Instead of isolating the locals from modern city life, the authorities could provide plenty of methods to expose the locals to a better way of living as well as the richness of other cultures. After broadening the horizon of local people, the authority could return the power of choosing their own lifestyle to the local people. At the same time, to attract more local people to preserve vernacular culture and architecture, the authority should offer help in improving the local conditions to keep up with the level of big cities. Besides, the experts may provide help during this process to use professional skills to improve plans of development. At the same time, they could also learn from each other traditional craftsmen who can also be seen as the local experts.

Last but not least, as the most important part of fulfilling all the plans of culture preservation, the local people could be separated into 3 parts in this essay. Firstly, the craftsman, who has been taking charge of all the architectural construction process since history in minority villages, should engage in the preservation project, communicate and give advice to the architecture preservation experts from academics. Secondly, the young people who have access to modern cities and go back to their hometown, like Ma Siye, could give advice to local people on how to develop their living conditions and improve the local lifestyle. These young adults could also share their stories on finding back their cultural heritage and confidence in minority identity. Last but not least, all the local people should get insight into the different lifestyle in village areas that achieve a living condition as

advanced as it in big cities but not losing the cultural uniqueness at the same time. Thus, they may be brave and well-equipped enough to voice up for their own architecture.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

## References

- [1] Bai, R. B., & Yang, D. Y. (2021). Discussion and development suggestion on heritage of bai minority traditional houses in Dali State: Taking Xizhou Ancient Town as an example. *Traditional Houses and Architecture*, 18(11), 64–67. <https://doi.org/10.19892/j.cnki.csjz.2021.11.15>
- [2] Chen, L., Li, J. J., Ge, Y. X., & Zhang, H. B. (2021). Protection and development of tourist ancient towns from the perspective of 'living protection'. *Hunan Packaging*, 36(4), 42–45. <https://doi.org/10.19686/j.cnki.issn1671-4997.2021.04.013>
- [3] Fan, Z. Y., & Li, T. Q. (2018). Revival of minority ethnic villages: Taking Sideng Village cultural preservation and economy development as an example. *Journal of Hanjiang Normal University*, 38(03), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.19575/j.cnki.cn42-1892/g4.2018.03.012>
- [4] Huang, Y. W. (2012). Appearance and spirit of cultural heritage: Relationship between preservation and development of Shaxi Ancient Town. *Architecture Journal*, (6), 50–57.
- [5] Huang, Y. W. (2014). When architects meet craftsman. *Architectural Techniques*, (1), 84.
- [6] Huang, Y. W. (2017). Back to the real historical town: Preservation of Shaxi. *Shanghai Art Review*, (4), 62–65.
- [7] Jin, H. N., & Che, Z. Y. (2015). Comparative study on space morphological changes of Dali tourist town and villages: Taking Shaxi Town and Xinhua Village, for example. *Huazhong Construction*, 33(7), 83–87. <https://doi.org/10.13942/j.cnki.hzjz.2015.07.021>
- [8] Kang, T., & Zhou, Z. G. (2021). Establishment of laws of architecture in minority traditional villages. *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities*, 41(08), 86–93. <https://doi.org/10.19898/j.cnki.42-1704/C.2021.0810>
- [9] Luo, B. (2020). Discussion on laws of traditional minority architecture: Taking Dong Minority in Guizhou as an example. *Art Science and Technology*, (20), 169–170.
- [10] Pu, W. J., Wang, L., & Wei, G. N. (2019). The sustainable development of traditional villages in Yunnan from Shaxi rehabilitation project. *Architecture and Culture*, (3), 195–197.
- [11] Renfer, C. (2017). Considerations of a Swiss Monument preservationist during a visit to traditional villages in China: The Yunnan Shaxi rehabilitation project as an opportunity. *Built Heritage*, 1(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1186/BF03545670>
- [12] Tang, Q. (2014). Study on protection and utilization of rural religious architecture under the background of new countryside construction. *City and Architecture*, (32), 227–228.
- [13] Wang, N., Zhang, X. T., & Gao, L. (2021). Preservation on vernacular heritage and improvement on living condition in historical villages: Dali State of Bai Minority as an example. *Urban and Rural Construction*, (14), 26–32.
- [14] Wang, S. (2015). Preservation method of traditional villages under rapid urbanization. *Urbanization Development Theory*, (10), 2482–2483.
- [15] Wang, S. X., Di, H., & Chi, X. A. (2012). Analysis of images of Shaxi settlement in Jianchuan, Yunnan. *Huazhong Construction*, 30(4), 163–165. <https://doi.org/10.13942/j.cnki.hzjz.2012.04.047>
- [16] Wang, T. P., & Jin, S. (2017). Issues and discussion on tourism development of ancient villages. *Journal of Gannan Normal University*, 38(01), 57–61. <https://doi.org/10.13698/j.cnki.cn36-1346/c.2017.01.012>
- [17] Wong, E. (2016, March 27). *An ancient caravan town in China is reborn*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/28/world/asia/an-ancient-caravan-town-in-china-is-reborn.html>
- [18] Yang, J., Yang, S. L., & Xiao, S. J. (2017). Thinking on traditional society development under the preservation of Bai Minority Villages: Taking Xizhou Town and Dengnuo Ancient Bai Village as examples. *Shanxi Youth*, (22), 38–39.
- [19] Zeng, L. P., & Tan, L. B. (2014). Thinking of traditional resident architecture update protection. *Value Engineering*, 33(18), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.14018/j.cnki.cn13-1085/n.2014.18.380>
- [20] Zhang, Y., Zhu, P., & Yang, J. J. (2016). Discovering and preserving: Vernacular dilemma of Shaxi preservation project. *Journal of Northern University for Nationalities*, (1), 65–69.
- [21] Zhou, Q. S. (2004). Preservation of Chinese traditional towns should ring an alarm. *Urban Problems*, (6), 63–66.
- [22] Zhou, Z., Huang, Y., & Huang, J. (2015). Research on sustainable development of tourism urbanization in minority area basing on resident perception: Taking Dali Ancient City and its surrounding areas as an example. *Modern Urban Research*, (05), 112–118.