



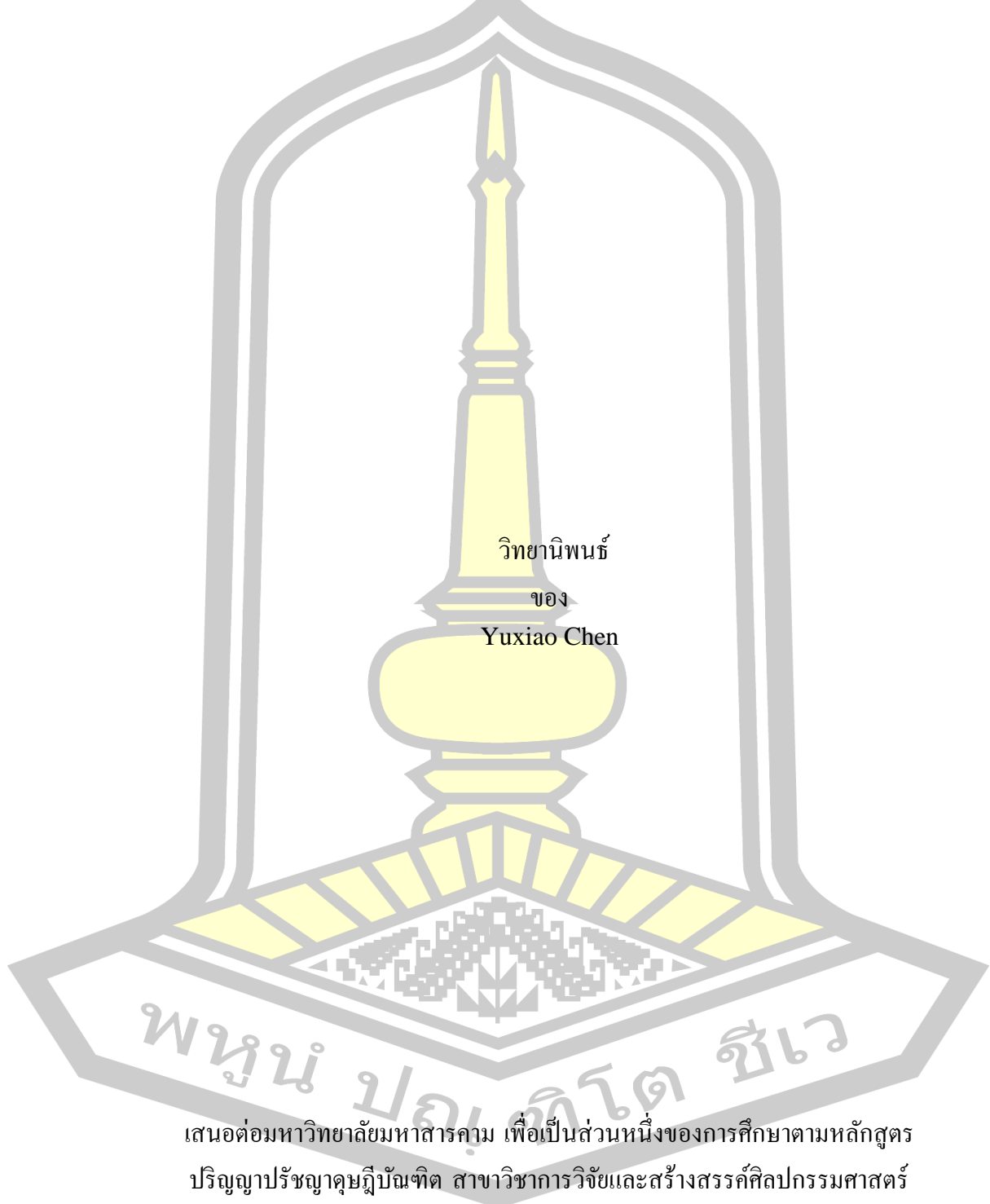
‘The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China’: Symbolic Interaction and Invention  
of Tradition in the Context of Self-Identity Revitalization

Yuxiao Chen

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation  
June 2024

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'เทศกาลวัฒนธรรมดอกโบตั๋นแห่งลั่วหยาง ประเทศจีน': การโต้ตอบเชิงสัญลักษณ์และการ  
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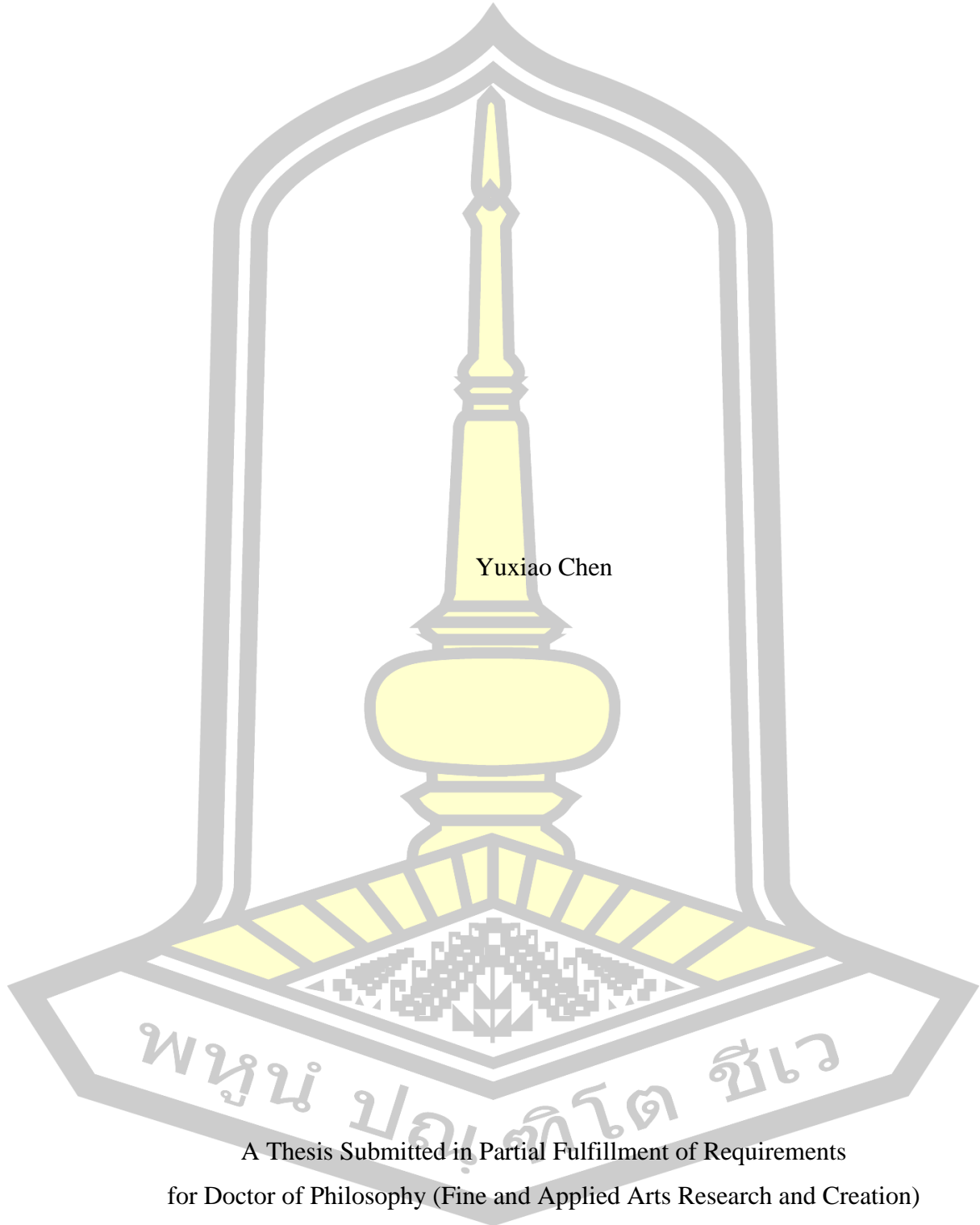


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June 2024

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The examining committee has unanimously approved this Thesis, submitted by Ms. Yuxiao Chen , as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation at Mahasarakham University

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### ABSTRACT

Luoyang Peony is peerless in the world. Modern Luoyang people have invented the unique regional peony festival culture based on the symbolic peony cultural tradition of the region, which contains rich and diverse connotations and has become a cultural gateway for people to understand the area. Festivals are characterized by their ritualistic and celebratory socio-cultural value. However, the cultural analysis of China's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has historically lacked theoretical depth, and it is frequently seen as a vehicle for local marketing, tourism development, and economic progress. This research investigates novel approaches to studying Luoyang, China's peony cultural festivals, drawing on the theories of "Symbolic Interaction" and "Invention of Traditions."

This study uses a qualitative research methodology to obtain relevant information through historical documents and field surveys to fulfill the following four main research objectives: First, to study Luoyang peony culture's history and development. The development of Luoyang peony culture was aided by the city's topography, society, history, and the locals' expertise in peony growing. One outcome of the contemporary development of Luoyang peony culture is the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Secondly, to study the changes in the cultural significance of the Luoyang Peony under the dimension of symbolic interaction between individuals, groups, and society and to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural tradition of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Thirdly, I will study "The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China" in the dimension of Invention of Tradition from 1983-2022. From local to provincial to national festivals, the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been continuously growing and extending to adapt to the rapid changes of the modern era. Today's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been passed down through the generations through invention, and new creations will also be passed down through the generations. Finally, the unit "The 40th Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China 2023" will be analyzed. It verifies that Luoyang people use peonies to construct a symbol for the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and constantly use this to interact with the outside world and revive the city's identity.

Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has a history of development of 40 years. Still, it is not a newly invented thing but an invented tradition under the inheritance of the vast Luoyang peony culture. In addition to helping to reshape the local community's traditional customs and cultural space and making it a significant symbol for preserving the historical memory and cultural identity of the Luoyang people, this invention of tradition and the reenactment of festivals have become vital tools for the city to promote its culture, grow its economy, and strengthen its sense of self. This study looks at the historical significance and developmental changes of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. It also analyzes the factors contributing to its longevity and attempts to offer resources for the sustainable growth of China's modern tourism festivals.

Keyword : Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang China, Folklore Festivals, Symbolic Interaction, Invention of Tradition, Self-Identity Revival



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พหุบัณฑิต ชีเว

Yuxiao Chen

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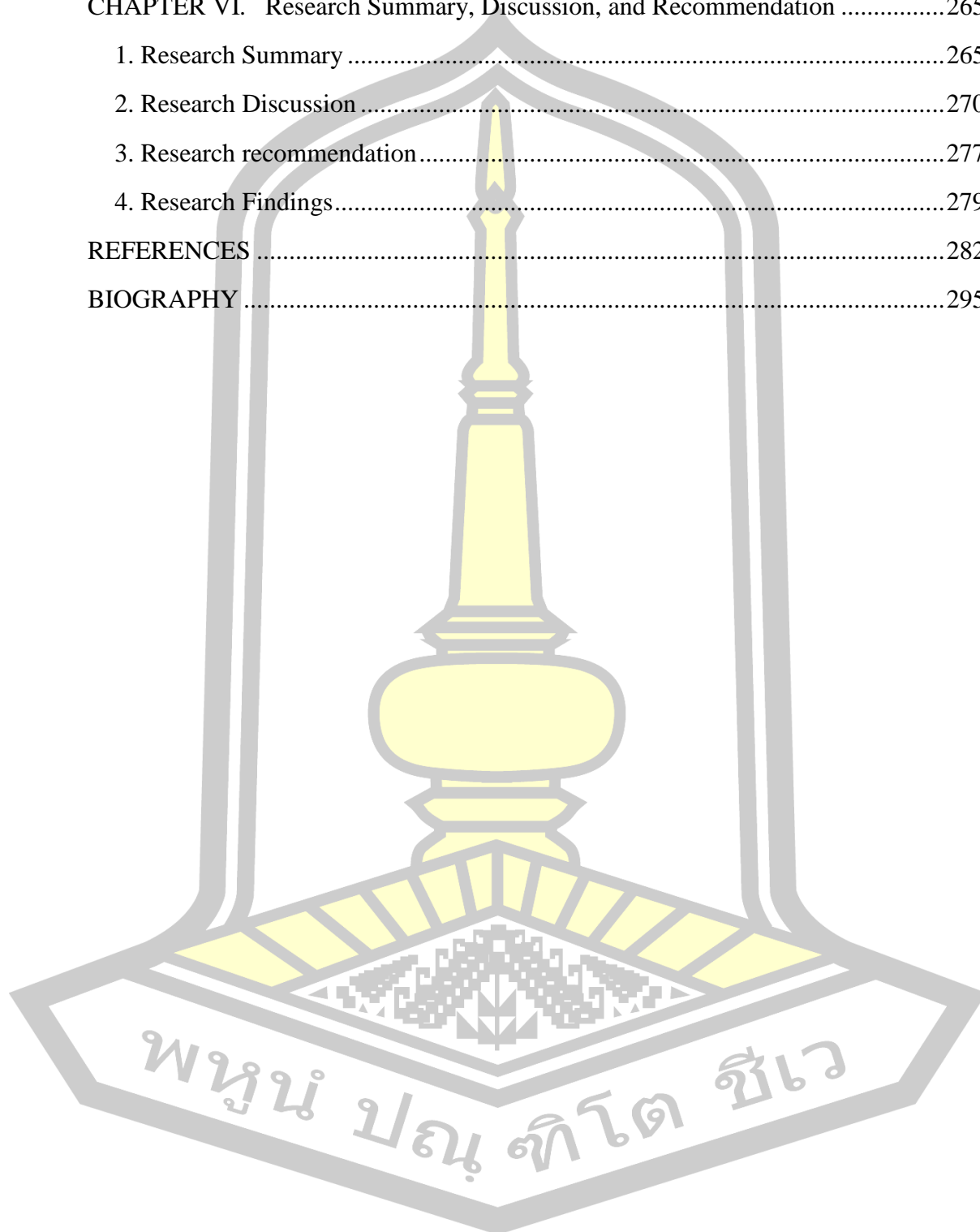
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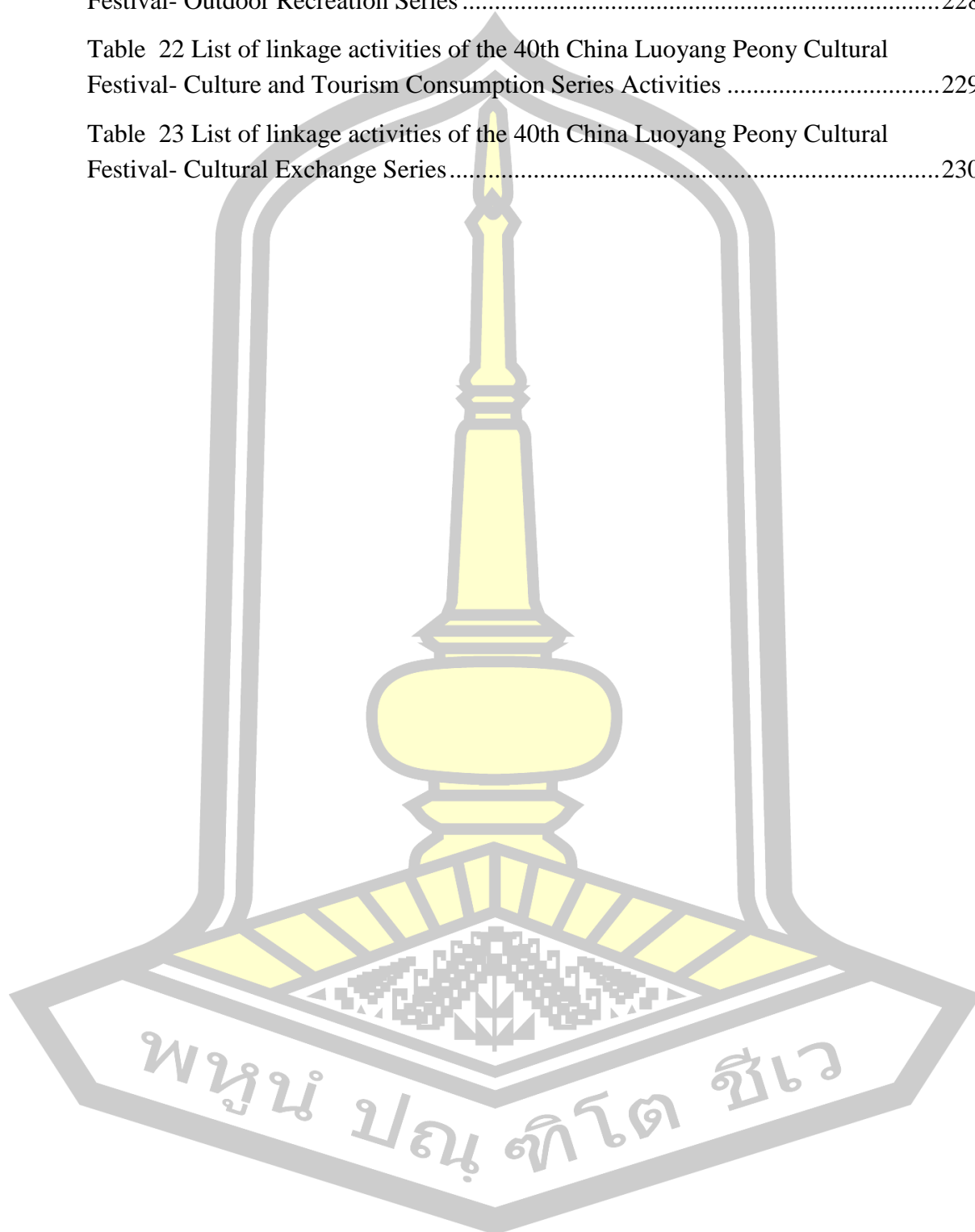
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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### 1. Research background

With thousands of years of natural development and a long history of cultivation, the peony is a valuable flower exclusive to China. It is graceful and exquisite, representing the Chinese people's prosperity and good fortune. Chinese people have a long history of planting peonies, enjoying them, tasting them, singing about them, painting them, and incorporating their thoughts and feelings into the "national beauty and heavenly fragrance" of peonies. This has led to the development of a peony-related cultural phenomenon and a peony-centered cultural system known as peony culture. Peony culture, a significant aspect of Chinese flower culture, is prominent in Chinese traditional culture, particularly in plant culture (Lin, 2016, p.2).

The capital of peonies in China is Luoyang, an acknowledged historical and cultural hub that served as the seat of government for thirteen dynasties. Luoyang Peony has gained international recognition thanks to its ideal climate, rich soil, and distinctive cultural setting. When the Luoyang peony blooms are in full bloom, they create a sea of flowers in which people stroll, admire, sing, dance, and create poetry. During the peony festival, the people and flowers create a beautiful scene (Hu, 2012, p.35-36). Luoyang makes the peony famous in China, while the peony makes Luoyang more endearing. Peonies and their festivals have come to represent Luoyang, and peony culture plays a significant role in Luoyang society.

The Luoyang people have appreciated peonies since ancient China and developed a distinctive peony cultural event over time. The Sui Dynasty<sup>1</sup> is when peony appreciation activities first appeared. Every year, in mid to late April, when the peonies were at their peak of bloom, a peony flower market spontaneously developed, drawing large crowds to Luoyang to take in the sights (Lin, 2016, p.18-19). In the Tang Dynasty<sup>2</sup>, Luoyang's entire population delighted in peonies, with flower gazing being the main event. The peony festival was more successful in the Song Dynasty<sup>3</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Sui Dynasty, a Chinese historical dynasty, 581 AD - 618 AD, with 2 emperors and 38 years.

<sup>2</sup> The Tang Dynasty, a Chinese historical dynasty, 618 AD -907 AD, with 21 emperors and 289 years.

<sup>3</sup> The Song Dynasty, a Chinese historical dynasty, 960 AD -1279 AD, divided into two phases, the Northern Song

and official organizations replaced the unplanned folk flower-viewing events. The “Ten Thousand Flowers Festival” was established by Qian Wei Yin, the retainer of Xi Jing<sup>4</sup>, and it was the first formal peony-viewing event in Chinese history (Wang, 2017, p.179). This is likely the historical forerunner of the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which dates back millennia. During that period, the residents of Luoyang followed fervent folk rituals around the appreciation, arrangement, painting, and singing of flowers. Luoyang’s political and economic standing progressively deteriorated in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties<sup>5</sup>, and the peony celebrations’ activities tended to wane. Early in the People’s Republic of China<sup>6</sup>, the country was riven by civil wars, nearly ending the Peony Flower Festival’s events (Lin, 2016, p.12).

The country prospers, and the flowers blossom. The country prospers and grows. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, with Luoyang’s economic and cultural development, peony cultivation in Luoyang began to recover. In 1959, when Premier Zhou Enlai visited Luoyang, he said the peony is the national flower of our country. It symbolizes prosperity, beauty, and happiness for our Chinese nation and must be rescued immediately. Under the instruction and expectation of Premier Zhou, the Luoyang Government quickly organized a group of professionals to collect and organize the existing peony varieties at that time, study peony scientific research, introduce new peony varieties and expand the planting area. Under the background of China’s reform and opening up, the custom of the Luoyang people to enjoy peonies was rekindled, and peonies were rapidly restored and developed, entering another new climax in history (Wang, 2017, p.200-202).

In 1982, the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of Luoyang City designated the peony as the city flower and decided to hold the annual Luoyang Peony Festival (The name before the name of “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China,” the same as below) from 1983. Since 1983, the Peony Air has been successfully held for 40 years and has become a splendid calling card of Luoyang

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Dynasty (960 AD -1127 AD) and the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 AD -1279 AD), with 18 emperors and 319 years.

<sup>4</sup> Xi Jing, Western Capital, During the Song Dynasty, the capital of China was located in Kaifeng, while Luoyang, located to the west of Kaifeng, was the second capital and was known as the “Xi Jing”.

<sup>5</sup> Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the last three dynasties of ancient China, 1271-1912.

<sup>6</sup> The establishment of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949, is called the founding of New China.

City. The Luoyang Peony Festival was selected into the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2008 (Item category: folklore), upgraded to a national-level festival in 2010, and renamed the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 2011 (Cheng et al., 2018, p.96).

The Luoyang Peony Festival was first organized by the Luoyang Government and is held annually between April 15 and April 25, during the peak peony bloom. The main events are the park's peony flower viewing, the Peony Festival's opening ceremony, a peony lantern show, a folk culture temple Festival, a peony Poetry Festival, an exhibition of peony paintings, a peony book Festival, a folk-art exhibition, a display of cultural relics, and other traditional events.

The first economic and technical Festival was held at the 3rd Luoyang Peony Festival (1985), which opened the curtain of the "economic and trade drama." Luoyang Peony Flower Festival uses flowers to make friends and promote the development of various cultural and economic activities in Luoyang (Lin, 2016, p.22).

Following the Henan Provincial Government's 1991 hosting of the Luoyang Peony Festival, the Flower Festival's content has become more colorful, and its activities have become more accessible to the general public due to the ongoing growth in economic, trade, cultural, and sports activity. Notably, it has added some high-standard and high-quality activities based on the original traditional classic activities and focused on delving deeply into the significance of Luoyang's history and peony culture since it was upgraded in 2011 with support from the Ministry of Culture and the Henan Provincial Government.

The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has gradually formed its unique characteristics and style and has a strong influence and popularity at home and abroad. It has slowly developed from a simple mass flower-viewing tourism event to a large-scale national folk cultural festival integrating flower-viewing and lantern-viewing, cultural exhibitions, scientific and technological exchanges, tourism and entertainment, and economic trade (Cheng et al., 2018, p.101-102).

The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has extensively promoted Luoyang's social, economic, and cultural development, gradually gaining influence covering the whole country and radiating the world. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the most exciting event of the year for Luoyang people. The reason why the city's

traditional festival, Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, with a foundation of widespread recognition among the people, has become a cultural symbol representative of Luoyang's locality mainly includes the following points:

Policy guidance: The state attaches importance to the cultural industry, and the government strongly supports the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. The competition between countries worldwide is becoming increasingly fierce, and the development trend of "cultural-economic integration" and "cultural-technological integration" among countries is becoming increasingly clear. It can be seen that accumulating cultural soft power is an essential foundation for achieving the dream of a strong nation. Therefore, China pays great attention to the cultural industry and successively introduces new policies to ensure the healthy development of the cultural sector (Weng H, 2011, p.211).

As the center of peony culture, Luoyang has formed unique peony cultural traditions in the process of long-term and continuous interaction with other regions and ethnic groups, and the people of Luoyang are very much in agreement with these long-accumulated peony cultures, thus forming the unique locality of Luoyang. The Luoyang peony's extraordinary sense of locality makes it a unique feature for foreigners to identify the place. The individual sense of place of Luoyang Peony makes it a unique feature for foreigners to recognize the place. In the face of globalization, urbanization, and other realities, from the national to the local level, attention has been paid to the excavation and reconstruction of local culture.

The Central Propaganda Department, the Central Civilization Office, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture issued a document on 17 June 2005 requesting that attention be paid to traditional festivals and the promotion of the excellent traditions of national cultures, which fully recognizes the role of conventional national festivals in enhancing national cohesion and identity and promoting local economic development. In 2018, the Municipal Party Committee and the Municipal Government of Luoyang issued a notice entitled Peony Industry Development Plan of Luoyang (2017-2025), which requires the Luoyang peony industry to expand from the single ornamental past to edible, medicinal, health care, cultural and other fields, cultivate and grow the peony industry, accelerate the transformation of the peony industry, and continuously consolidate and enhance the

city's peony industry's status and influence in the country, and promote the impact of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. In June 2020, the Henan Provincial Party Committee and the Provincial Government held a meeting to speed up the deputy center of Luoyang city construction work promotion meeting, which put forward new requirements for the development of Luoyang: to highlight the peony cultural characteristics, create a national culture and tourism consumption demonstration city, build an international culture and tourism destination, and build Luoyang City into an international humanistic communication center and a global culture and tourism city. In March 2023, the General Office of the People's Government of Henan Province issued several policies and measures further to promote the consumption of culture and tourism Notice, attaching importance to local cultural excavation, vigorously boosting cultural and tourism consumption, and better exerting the pulling effect of cultural and tourism consumption on economic growth during traditional festivals.

In China, against the background of the national policy of attaching importance to the cultural industry and strongly supporting the folk festival culture, the governments of different parts of China, while protecting local cultural resources and promoting cultural inheritance, have tried to organize folk festivals through cultural forms with local characteristics and to form proprietary regional festival brands. The revival and prosperity of folk festivals have been taken as a good recipe for promoting the development of the local economy, self-identity construction, and cultural integration of social groups with different cultural backgrounds in the context of globalization. The revival and prosperity of folklore festivals promote local economic development, the construction of self-identity, and the cultural integration of social groups with different cultural backgrounds in globalization.

Festivals are social activities agreed upon and passed down from generation to generation through specific thematic activities on a fixed or irregular date. Festivals are a specific social phenomenon arising from long-term production and production activities in different countries, ethnic groups, and regions, with distinctive local characteristics and mass bases. They are a comprehensive manifestation of the historical, economic, and cultural phenomena of the country, ethnic group, or region, which is why most festivals are significant symbols.

There are more than 30,000 festivals in China, and the number of festivals is

increasing. The nature of festivals can be divided into single and comprehensive festivals; from the content of festivals, they can be divided into ritual festivals, commemorative festivals, celebratory festivals, social entertainment festivals, etc. From the period of festivals, they can be divided into traditional and modern festivals. Well-known festivals in China include the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the Weifang International Kite Flying Festival, the Dalian International Fashion Festival, the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival, and the Qu Fu International Confucius Cultural Festival. Festivals help preserve the place's traditional history and culture, promote its cultural significance, and enhance the connection between people's self-identity and the place. At the same time, in expressing the cultural importance of the place, festivals achieve cultural communication and exchange with other regions and countries, shape the brand image of the place, and promote the place's political, economic, and cultural development.

In March 2020, the Henan Provincial Party Committee and the provincial government held a meeting to accelerate the construction of the Luoyang sub-central city. The conference put forward new requirements for the development of Luoyang: to highlight cultural characteristics, create a national demonstration city for cultural and tourism consumption, build an international cultural tourism destination, accelerate the construction of the Luoyang metropolitan area, form a new growth pole radiating northwest Henan, linking southeast Shanxi, and supporting the high-quality development of the Central Plains city cluster (Lin, 2016, p.57).

The festival's success will play an essential role in promoting the development of Luoyang as an international center for humanistic exchanges, a global cultural tourism city, and an international tourism destination, as well as in promoting the urban circle, enhancing the radiation power. Every spring, the China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival attracts the attention of domestic and foreign tourism enthusiasts, making Luoyang rapidly increase in popularity. Through holding the Peony Culture Festival, Luoyang's urban environment and infrastructure construction have been continuously improved. The various measures launched during the festival to benefit the public have attracted more and more tourists to visit Luoyang during the festival. The successful holding of the festival has enhanced the image of Luoyang in the minds of tourists and also enhanced the reputation of Luoyang as a city (Cheng et al., 2018,

p.111).

Spiritual needs: In the Context of Self-Identity Revitalization, cities urgently need to shape local cultural symbols. In the context of economic globalization, the globalization of multinational companies has led to cultural globalization. People consume homogeneous products brought about by industrial production, erasing the original quality of life and cultural traditions and challenging people's existing lifestyles. Under the background of rapid urban development, the transformation of old cities in urban construction has led to changes in traditional living spaces and lifestyles. Many conventional streets, old place names, old buildings, and historical blocks have been disappearing, and the atmosphere of urban cultural life has begun to decline. At the same time, the city continues to absorb new immigrants, and the town's memory is gradually lost (Wong Q, 2003, p.91- 95).

The impact of globalization and the rapid urbanization process is constantly erasing local characteristics and erasing the uniqueness of places. Places are always in the process of constant communication, integration, and reconstruction, which seriously threatens the survival of traditional local culture. As a result, places often lose their unique meaning and become places that strip away cultural significance and serve the economy. The problem of urban convergence in China is very prominent. Standardization and commercialization have obliterated the characteristics of urban architecture and weakened the regional Cultural characteristics and diversity, and urban crises of homogenization and homogenization appear. The locals are apprehensive about collective amnesia, and the new immigrants go through an anxiety process when assimilating into the local culture.

As a result of the enormous shocks, people's actual life world forms a massive contrast with the happy past they once had. People often lose their values and sense of direction and cannot adapt to the fleeting social changes, weakening or disappearing local cultural identity. As a result, people began to pursue the everyday discourse of local history, traditional culture, and collective memory, expecting to use the fragments of memory to compare with the actual life world to reconstruct multiple identities of themselves in modern society.

The Luoyang government, as the city manager and operator, has also increasingly discovered the critical value of local cultural elements in the city and has continued to explore local cultures with distinctive regional, native, and practical characteristics, building specific local cultural symbols and thus successfully building a local identity (Retrieved from <https://kns.cnki.net/>). The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival highlights regional characteristics. It constructs an easily identifiable local image, thus attracting investors, new residents, and tourists, enhancing the local identity of the original residents, and accelerating the cultural integration of immigrants. Whether it is the government-led cultural propaganda and protection of the flower festival or the bottom-up cultural defense launched by the local people of Luoyang, it reflects the active defense and security of traditional culture by different social groups after the loss of cultural identity on different levels.

Although folklore festivals are unconventional interludes in daily life, their sensational and carnivalesque nature easily attracts widespread participation. It leaves deep memories, evokes people's dusty cultural memories, and forms new collective memories; building Luoyang Peony Culture Festival symbols is significant in promoting local identity (Retrieved from <https://kns.cnki.net/>). The invented tradition of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has changed from its formation, development, and restoration of inheritance and invention. Through the organization of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the actors have continued to enable the participants to interact with the past, with people around them, and with the rest of the world.

Economic drive: Festivals generate local financial income and enhance regional competitiveness. The strong symbiosis between tourism, culture, and festivals has led many local governments to use festivals to develop tourism. By setting up tourism festivals to attract visitors and introducing a wide variety of cultural activities into the festivals, they can give a new lease of life to traditional festivals on the one hand and bring a different experience to visitors from ordinary tourism activities on the other. The presence of festivals gives visitors another way of experiencing the locality, in addition to the tourist itineraries that visit destinations with the cultural and natural resources they have in themselves (Retrieved from <https://kns.cnki.net/>).

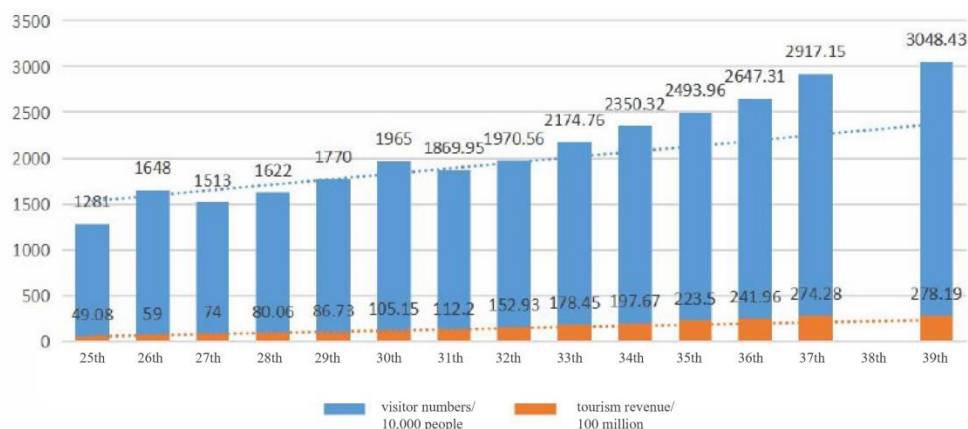
As an essential part of local culture, festivals have many connotations and

expressions, such as entertainment, social interaction, sharing, and carnival. They are no less attractive to tourists than the local attractions themselves. Festivals usually have huge crowds, and the masses' gathering provides the perfect opportunity to develop the market in each region. With the improvement of living standards, people are conscious of enriching their spiritual lives and are willing to leave their homes to participate in cultural activities. Attending festivals is one of the activities that people are willing to choose, and festivals can enrich the lives of visitors while giving them a unique cultural experience (Wang, Interview, 2023).

The most direct economic benefit of the festival is the inflow of visitors' spending. The spread of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has enhanced Luoyang's competitive strength in all aspects, thus driving the economic growth of the whole city. Based on the summary reports on the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival released by media such as Luoyang Daily and Luoyang.com every year after the festival, the author has compiled the number of visitors received and the total tourism revenue of Luoyang City during the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from 2007 to 2022, and drawn a trend chart (Figure 1) (Retrieved from <http://news.lyd.com.cn>).

Due to the impact of the new crown epidemic in 2020 and 2022, the Peony Culture Festival in that year was mainly online, and no official figures were released on the number of visitors and total tourism revenue for that year. It can be seen from Figure 1 that during the past 16 years, the number of tourists and total tourism revenue during the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in China continued to increase. The China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has broken the boundary between culture and economy, making us realize that the festival can bring substantial economic benefits in addition to its role in spreading local culture (Wang, Interview, 2023).

พหุ ประโยชน์ ชั่ว



*Figure 1 The 25th-39th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in China visitor numbers and total tourism revenue trend chart*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Cultural development: The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has become a representative of local cultural symbols. Festivals are often based on locally unique resources, which is a prerequisite for festivals to be dynamic. Luoyang is the city with the earliest capital, the most significant number of dynasties, and the most extended history of capitalization in China, possessing many cultural relics, monuments, and historical materials of high historical value. These cultural relics and monuments constitute Luoyang's unique tourism and cultural resources, and they give life to history, which can be called a living history museum. In addition, Luoyang also has rich tourism resources such as Longmen Grottoes, White Horse Temple, Guan Lin Temple, Lao Jun Mountain, and Bai Yun Mountain. The organization of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has led to more attention and excavation of Luoyang culture, which has been widely spread during the festival. The rapid development of festival tourism in Luoyang has driven the growth of Luoyang's transport, accommodation, catering, entertainment, and other tourism industries and also provided good conditions for the rise of the Peony Festival.

In the context of social culture, festivals are complex, planned events and symbols with rich meanings. Cultural values, regional identity, local cultural politics, and other related socio-cultural issues can be extended through festival rituals and activities. As we all know, Luoyang is an ancient city with a history of thousands of years of civilization, city building, and capital building, with a deep historical and cultural heritage. The China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has brought more

attention and excavation to the culture of Luoyang and has been widely disseminated during the festival (Retrieved from <https://kns.cnki.net/>).

It also gives Luoyang residents a more profound sense of identity and mission for the local culture so they can spontaneously carry out the excavation, preservation, and transmission of Luoyang culture and folk crafts. In recent years, Luoyang has relied on the incomparable cultural resources of other cities and has begun to rely on peony culture to create products. Based on continuing to cultivate and plant peonies, we will develop peony peripheral products, such as peony painting and calligraphy, peony porcelain, peony pastry, peony wine, peony flower tea, and peony seed oil. Through the exploitation of these unique cultural resources, Luoyang culture has been better inherited and carried forward (Wang, Interview, 2023).

Luoyang Peony is the best in the world. The custom of viewing peonies in Luoyang has been passed down from generation to generation, and the resulting Peony Festival is an integral part of the folklore of the Luoyang people. The Luoyang Peony Culture Festival successfully applied for the national intangible cultural heritage project in 2008 and was upgraded to a national festival in 2011. It is the folk festival with the most sessions held in China and the “top of the four major festivals” in that country. The Peony Cultural Festival has contributed significantly to Luoyang’s socio-economic and cultural development and has gradually gained a nationwide and global influence. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the liveliest event of the year for the people of Luoyang. Based on identity, the traditional urban festival Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been labeled as a place and has become a cultural symbol representing Luoyang’s place (Retrieved from <http://topic.orgcc.com>).

พหุ ม ประ โท ชี เว

The Symbolic Value of Festivals: The Theory of Symbolic Interaction Expands the Depth and Breadth of Research on Festival Culture. Analysis of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival obviously cannot escape Luoyang's unique natural, social, and historical context, nor can it avoid the cultural collision between tradition and modernity. In this discussion, symbols play a crucial role. Scholars have always read culture within the symbolic mode of meaning and have interpreted this conceptual system symbolically and logically. Roland Barthes even argues that, through the surface of society and culture, everything ultimately boils down to the "myth" of the symbol (D Hsu, SW Tseng, YC Lin. 2006).

Semioticians generally accept that the world is made up of symbols, that everything and every event is made up of symbols, and that the meaning contained in each symbol is integrated to form the overall sense of the event. Similarly, festivals are made up of many symbols that write the logic and rules of their discourse, how the language of the festival tells the participants what the festival is about. Although the theory of semiotics has now become a system, most studies at home and abroad have focused on exploring symbols as a whole (Retrieved from <http://topic.orgcc.com>).

Symbolic interaction is a form of social interaction. It is an important research field of Western humanities and social sciences. It is a highly disciplined and comprehensive concept. It refers to the social interaction activities between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, and groups and groups through societal symbols. Human behavior is meaningful behavior, and to understand human behavior, it is necessary to analyze the meaning actors give to their activities. On the one hand, the determination of meaning depends on the context and situation of the interaction. On the other hand, to some extent, meaning is determined through negotiation between the two parties in the process of self-interaction, object-self interaction, and group interaction (D Hsu, SW Tseng, YC Lin. 2006).

Cultural research on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has always needed more theoretical depth, and the theory and method of symbolic interaction provide a new perspective on the artistic research of the festival. Using a visionary approach to symbolic interaction, we understand the emergence and development of peony cultural festivals, examine the relationship between peony cultural festivals and people and society, and explore the process of giving meaning and using meaning. Using the concept of symbolic interaction, we study the process of peony flowers shared meaning and use by people from the origin of the peony to the present day and how the people of Luoyang use the peony to interact to form the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

## **2. Research objectives**

There are four research purposes as follows:

- (1) To study the historical development of Luoyang peony culture.
- (2) To study and analyze Luoyang Peony Culture in the dimension of Symbolic Interaction with Luoyang people.
- (3) To study “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” in the dimension of Invention of Tradition from 1983-2022.
- (4) To analyze the unit of “The 40th Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China 2023” .

## **3. Research question**

There are four research questions as follows:

(1) To study what kind of geographical, historical, social, and political patterns in Luoyang, and what kind of local wisdom and cultural characteristics of Luoyang people have contributed to the Luoyang Peony?

(2) What meanings have been given to the peony flower by whom to form the symbols of peony culture? What are the symbolic components of peony culture? What is the change of peony culture meaning in the interaction of individual, group, and social symbols?

(3) Under the background of economic globalization, how can local people, local governments, and festival organizers use the tradition of Luoyang peony culture to pass on and invent it? How can the invented traditional Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival develop from a local festival to a provincial or national celebration, with increasing influence in the world, to construct Luoyang's cultural identity and promote the development of the local economy?

(4) From the 40th China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, analyze how to carry out symbolic interaction and traditional invention.

#### **4. Definition of Terms**

##### **4.1 Peony Culture**

This research means the material and spiritual culture that has been created around the peony in China for thousands of years is the total peony culture, which is compatible with many sciences and has a comprehensive composition, including all cultural fields such as philosophy, religion, literature, art, education, customs, and folklore.

##### **4.2 Luoyang Peony Festival**

This research means the name of the 37 festivals related to peony viewing and peony culture held in Luoyang between 1983 and 2010, which was the unified official name at that time, distinguishing it from the historical "Ten Thousand Flowers Festival" and the spontaneous folk flower festivals. It was the predecessor of The Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang, China later on.

##### **4.3 The Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang, China**

In 2011, the festival's official name was changed from "Luoyang Peony Festival" to "The Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang, China." China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is a large-scale, comprehensive economic and cultural festival with peony culture as the carrier and with performances, cultural and sports activities, and financial and trade exchanges as the main contents, which includes peony Festivals

and passes down the folklore activities of peony Festivals.

#### **4.4 Festival Events**

Narrowly defined as a festival, it refers to a series of periodic celebrations of cultural and entertainment performances, trade Festivals, craft demonstrations, and ceremonies based on local cultural characteristics, aimed at residents and tourists, involving multiple interest groups, and revolving around a specific theme (Dai, 2005).

#### **4.5 Semiotics**

This research means the systematic study of semiotic processes and indicating formation. Any activity, behavior, or process involving a sign, where a sign is defined as anything that conveys something (often called meaning) to the interpreter of the sign.

#### **4.6 Symbolic Interactionism**

Human action is socially meaningful, and various symbols mediate the interaction between people. People respond by interpreting the meaning contained in the symbols that represent the actions of the actor, thus enabling their interaction (G.H. Mead, 1932). This research means the changing relationship between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, and groups and groups through the symbolic interaction of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

#### **4.7 Invention of Tradition**

“Invented tradition” implies a set of practices, usually governed by publicly or privately accepted rules with a ritual or symbolic character. An attempt is made to teach specific values and norms of behavior through repetition. Moreover, it necessarily contains a continuity with the past (Eric Hobsbawm, 2004).

#### **4.8 Self-Identity Revitalization**

This research means as a city manager and operator. The Luoyang government is increasingly discovering the value of local cultural elements in the city, exploring

local cultures with distinctive regional, native, and practical characteristics, building specific local cultural symbols, reviving cultural identity, and constructing a local image that can be easily identified, thus attracting investors, new residents and tourists, enhancing the regional identity of existing residents and accelerating the cultural integration of immigrants.

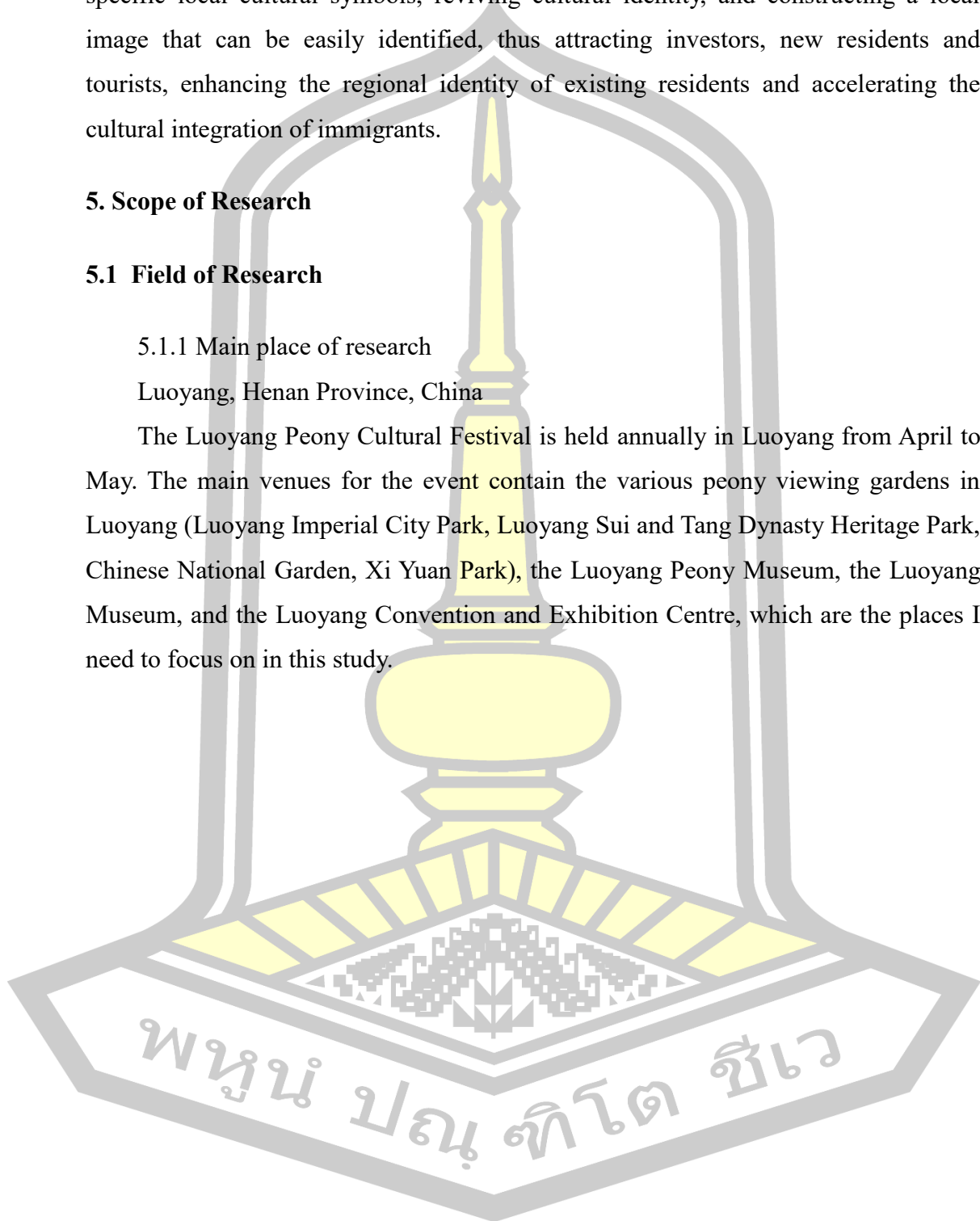
## **5. Scope of Research**

### **5.1 Field of Research**

#### 5.1.1 Main place of research

Luoyang, Henan Province, China

The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is held annually in Luoyang from April to May. The main venues for the event contain the various peony viewing gardens in Luoyang (Luoyang Imperial City Park, Luoyang Sui and Tang Dynasty Heritage Park, Chinese National Garden, Xi Yuan Park), the Luoyang Peony Museum, the Luoyang Museum, and the Luoyang Convention and Exhibition Centre, which are the places I need to focus on in this study.



### 5.1.2 Subplaces of Research

#### (1) Pingle Village, Meng Jin County, Luoyang City

Pingle Village in Luoyang City, known as “The first village of peony painting in China,” has a deep peony cultural heritage, which is conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the development of peony culture and changes in the interaction between local people and symbols.

#### (2) Heze, Shandong

Heze is China’s most significant peony production, scientific research, and ornamental base. The planting area, scientific research and cultivation, and decorative export of peonies in Heze are essential in China’s peony industry. Examining the peony culture in the Heze region is conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the generation, interaction, and development of peony cultural symbols.

## 5.2 Timing Scope

### 5.2.1 Research Study Periods

Research time is from the Sui Dynasty (581A.D.) to 2023, divided into two time periods:

(1) The first period: Sui Dynasty - before the first Luoyang Peony Culture Festival in 1983. Before the Sui Dynasty, Peony was used as a medicinal material, and few people viewed it. Luoyang’s urban economy was prosperous in the Sui and Tang dynasties. People watched peonies, painted peonies, ate peonies, and embroidered peonies, and the peony culture began to form. Moving the world can be said to be the historical source of the Modern Luoyang Peony Culture Festival. During the Yuan and Qing Dynasties, Luoyang’s political and economic status declined, and the cultural customs of peonies tended to weaken. Early in the founding of New China, social turmoil, peony culture, and customs were almost interrupted. New China was almost interrupted. New China After the establishment, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Chairman Jiang Zemin, and others inspected Luoyang. Under the instructions of the national leaders, Luoyang’s peony cultural customs began to recover. Throughout this time, the rise and fall of the nation and the city are intimately correlated with the peonies. This is a crucial time for the historical tradition of the Luoyang Peony

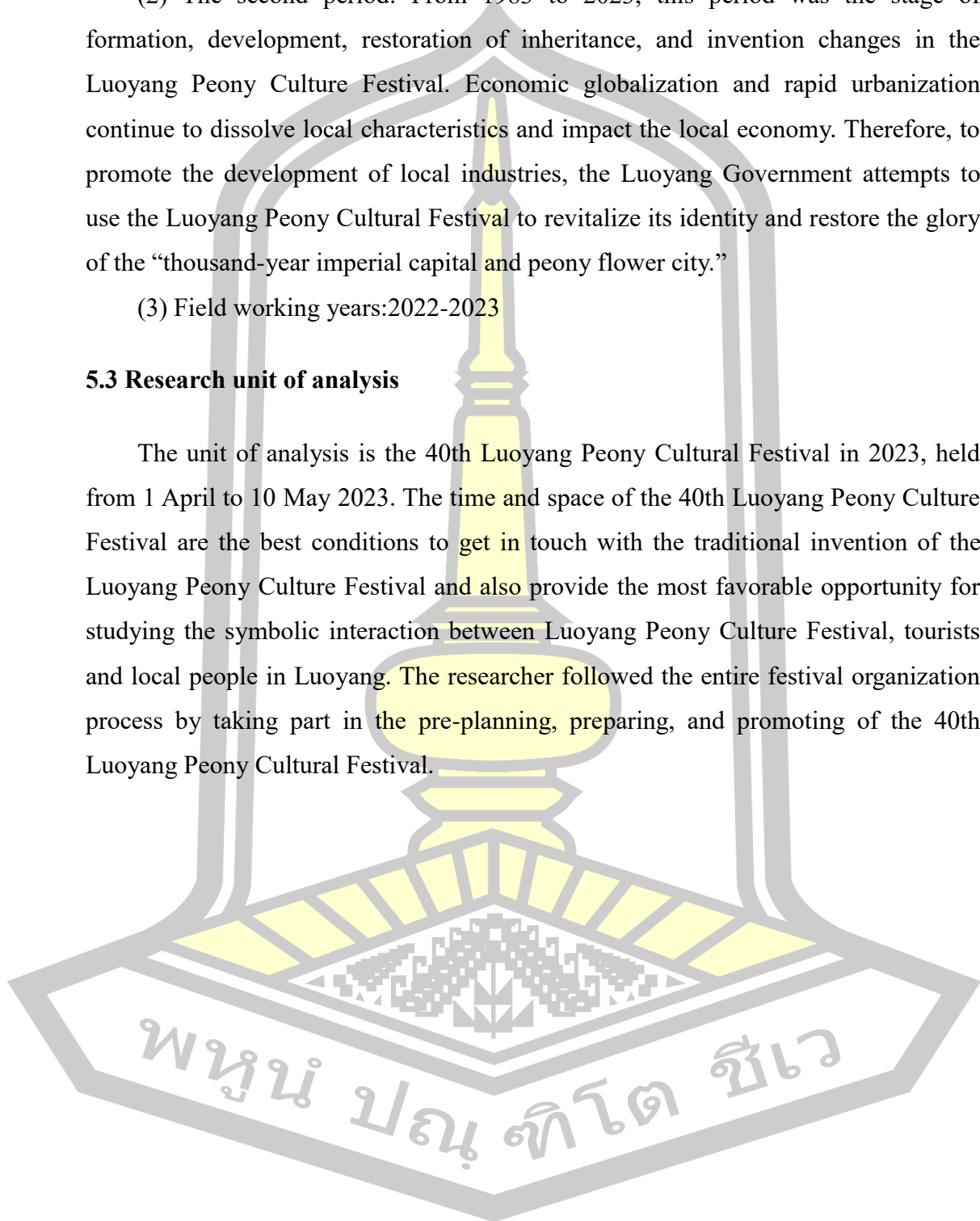
Culture Festival.

(2) The second period: From 1983 to 2023, this period was the stage of formation, development, restoration of inheritance, and invention changes in the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival. Economic globalization and rapid urbanization continue to dissolve local characteristics and impact the local economy. Therefore, to promote the development of local industries, the Luoyang Government attempts to use the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to revitalize its identity and restore the glory of the “thousand-year imperial capital and peony flower city.”

(3) Field working years:2022-2023

### **5.3 Research unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis is the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 2023, held from 1 April to 10 May 2023. The time and space of the 40th Luoyang Peony Culture Festival are the best conditions to get in touch with the traditional invention of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival and also provide the most favorable opportunity for studying the symbolic interaction between Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, tourists and local people in Luoyang. The researcher followed the entire festival organization process by taking part in the pre-planning, preparing, and promoting of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.



## 6. Research Methodology

This research uses “Qualitative research methodology”. The structure of the methodology is given as follows:

### 6.1 Research Populations

6.1.1 Staff of the Organizing Committee and Executive Committee of the China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival.

The organizing committee and executive committee of the China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival jointly participated by the Ministry of Culture of China, the Henan Provincial Government, and the Luoyang Municipal Government, which are fully responsible for all the work of the flower festival. The literary and artistic directors of the cultural system are mainly involved in the creation, editing, and directing of the cultural and artistic celebration programs of the Peony Flower Festival.

The Executive Committee consists of an office, a primary activity group, a flower viewing and gardening group, a publicity and reporting group, an economic and trade investment group, a tourism promotion group, a city construction and appearance group, a safety and security group, a reception service group and an efficiency monitoring group. The staff of the Organizing Committee and the Executive Committee of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival have first-hand and vital information about the Peony Culture Festival, a crucial research population for my research.

#### 6.1.2 Local people of Luoyang

The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the liveliest event of the year for Luoyang and has a broad base of widespread recognition. The custom of viewing peonies has been passed down from generation to generation, and the peony flower show developed from it is an integral part of the folklore activities of the people of Luoyang. Interviews and research with the local people of Luoyang are conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the changing dimensions of symbolic interaction between the peony and the people of Luoyang.

#### 6.1.3 Peony Culture Research Scholar

Wang Xiu and Zhou Yansheng, nationally renowned scholars of peony culture,

have published many books and research reports related to peony culture. They have made significant contributions to the dissemination of peony culture in Luoyang and the expansion of the influence of the ancient capital of Luoyang in the country and even internationally.

#### 6.1.4 Domestic and foreign visitors

The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is a highly participatory urban folk event for domestic and foreign visitors, with profound cultural connotations and significant social influence. The active and proactive participation of domestic and foreign visitor groups in the festival plays a vital role in developing the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

#### 6.1.5 Festival Planning and Research Development Group

Festival planning is a complex, professional, and continuous task that is difficult. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was successfully declared a national intangible cultural heritage project in 2008 and was upgraded to a national festival in 2011. Experts and professors in tourism, sociology, art, and literature, as well as experts from state institutions, provide technical solutions and intellectual support.

#### 6.1.6 Peony growers

Peony planting can be seen everywhere in Luoyang without the hard work of the peony growers. The peony industry in Luoyang has become large-scale, with a large number of peony growers. Through visits to representative peony farmers in Luoyang City, interviews, research, and audio recordings, and by compiling comparisons, we could experience the true face of the Peony Cultural Festival.

## 6.2 Instrumentation for data collection

6.2.1 Transcripts of fieldwork, mapping, measurements, etc.

6.2.2 Interview Questionnaires.

6.2.3 Tools for recording audio and video, cameras and camcorders, etc.

## 6.3 Data Collection

### 6.3.1 Fieldwork

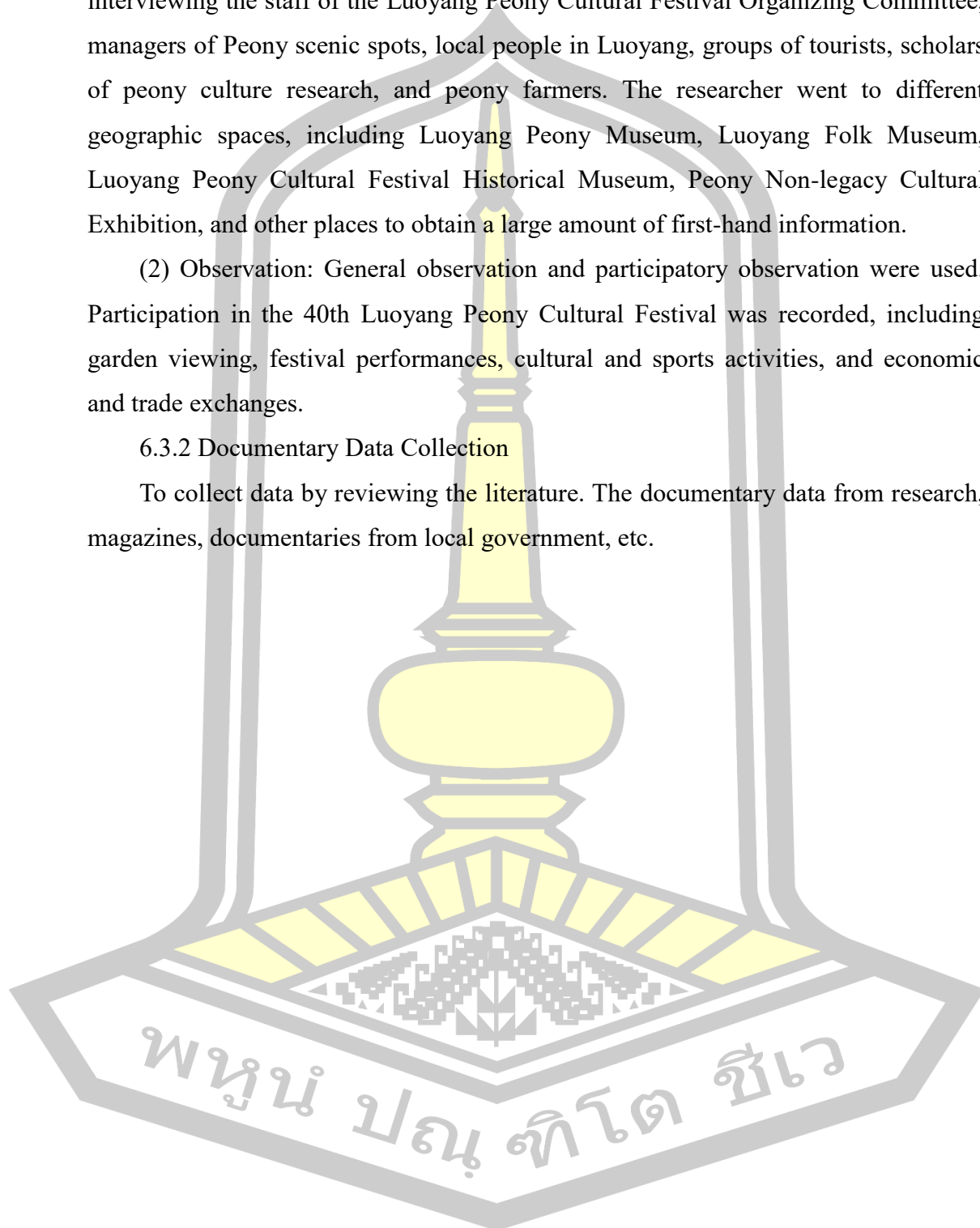
(1) Interviews: The researcher used formal interviews, informal interviews,

focus group interviews, in-depth interviews, and general interviews in my fieldwork, interviewing the staff of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Organizing Committee, managers of Peony scenic spots, local people in Luoyang, groups of tourists, scholars of peony culture research, and peony farmers. The researcher went to different geographic spaces, including Luoyang Peony Museum, Luoyang Folk Museum, Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Historical Museum, Peony Non-legacy Cultural Exhibition, and other places to obtain a large amount of first-hand information.

(2) Observation: General observation and participatory observation were used. Participation in the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was recorded, including garden viewing, festival performances, cultural and sports activities, and economic and trade exchanges.

#### 6.3.2 Documentary Data Collection

To collect data by reviewing the literature. The documentary data from research, magazines, documentaries from local government, etc.



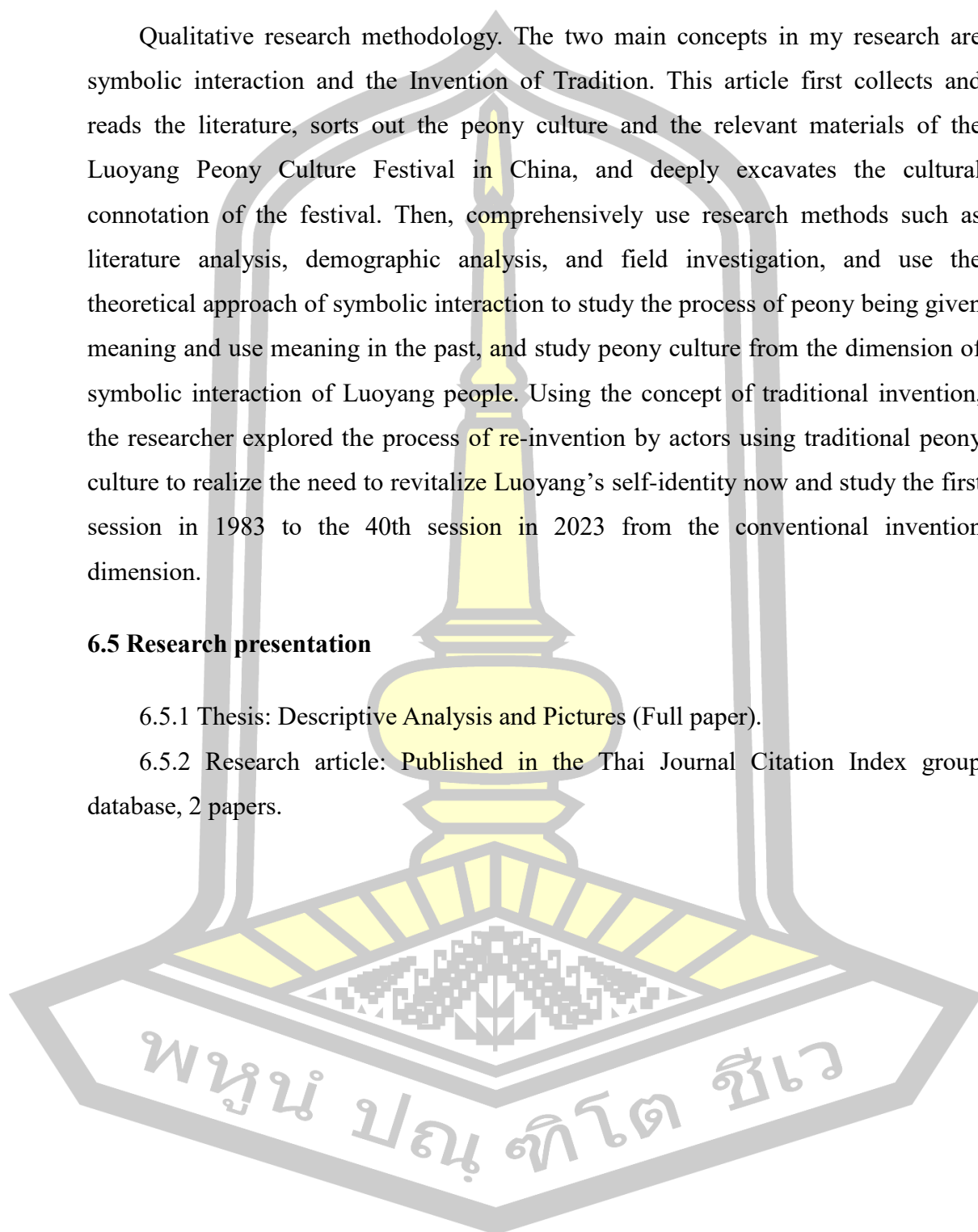
## 6.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative research methodology. The two main concepts in my research are symbolic interaction and the Invention of Tradition. This article first collects and reads the literature, sorts out the peony culture and the relevant materials of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival in China, and deeply excavates the cultural connotation of the festival. Then, comprehensively use research methods such as literature analysis, demographic analysis, and field investigation, and use the theoretical approach of symbolic interaction to study the process of peony being given meaning and use meaning in the past, and study peony culture from the dimension of symbolic interaction of Luoyang people. Using the concept of traditional invention, the researcher explored the process of re-invention by actors using traditional peony culture to realize the need to revitalize Luoyang's self-identity now and study the first session in 1983 to the 40th session in 2023 from the conventional invention dimension.

## 6.5 Research presentation

6.5.1 Thesis: Descriptive Analysis and Pictures (Full paper).

6.5.2 Research article: Published in the Thai Journal Citation Index group database, 2 papers.



## 7. Literature Review

### 7.1 Literature Review on Research Text

#### 7.1.1 The Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang, China

Using “The Peony Cultural Festival at Luoyang, China” as the theme term, the researcher searched the three major databases of Science Direct, EBSCO, and ProQuest for foreign language literature. Still, there needed to be more relevant literature. More research needs to be done on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in Europe and the United States.

There are abundant studies on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in China. Considering the academic quality of the journals, as of May 1, 2023, 305 documents were obtained through advanced searching of the journal data on China Knowledge Network (CNKI), and the source categories were selected as core journals or CSSCI source journals. Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival for subject search, a total of 28 documents were obtained.

Combing through the literature, it is found that the research on Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has gone through three stages: the first stage was before 2001, during which the festivals in China were in the initial stage, and Luoyang Peony Flower Festival was only held to the eighth session, and there were fewer researches on the festival, which were mainly the reports of some periodicals and newspapers on the peony industry and the holding of peony festivals; the second stage is from 2002 to 2010, after the 16th National Congress was held, the importance of cultural construction was emphasized. The second stage was from 2002 to 2010. The importance of cultural construction was noted after the 16th National Congress of the Party was born. Against this background, the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival accelerated its development. Scholars began to pay attention to the study of the festival, analyzing the situation of the festival from various aspects, identifying the existing problems, and putting forward countermeasures; the third stage was from 2011 to the present, after upgrading it to the national level, the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival of China has been gradually developed to a mature stage, and the perspective of the study of the festival began to diversify, from the cultural industry, tourism, and the cultural industry. The research perspectives on the festival have also

started to diversify, and studies on the China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival have begun to appear from the aspects of the cultural industry, tourism development, festival branding, and tourist' loyalty.

(1) Research on Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the perspective of cultural connotation.

In China, peony culture has received attention from many researchers in the academic world, involving many aspects. Li Jiali (2018) discussed the origin of a peony from the biological point of view and concluded that the Chinese peony consists of three main groups of varieties. In *The Complete Book of Chinese Peony*, Lan Baoqing and Li Jialin (1998) gave a detailed exposition of the development of peony culture. Wang Shiduan's (2002) book *The Peony in Luoyang* combed the development process of peonies in Luoyang and discussed the reasons why the Luoyang peony stands out among the many peonies in the country. Wei Wei's (2017) *A Comprehensive Study of Chinese Peony Culture* combines the history of the development of peony culture and its manifestations to discuss China's peony culture comprehensively. Li Lianghou and Wang Chunyi's (2007) *Analysis of the Multiple Characteristics of Peony Culture* examines the characteristics of peony culture through the study of natural, historical, and literary aspects of peony. Lei Yan's (2006) *A Study of the Cultural Imagery of Peony Folklore* applies the relevant theories and methods such as folklore and folk culture. The study of peony-related folklore in material, food, and amusement discusses the formation of China's unique cultural images and their main contents. The reasons for the formation of China's striking peony artistic imagery and its contents are discussed. Wang Yancheng and Ma Xinqiang (2006) believe that peony culture is the unique charm of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. However, at present, more attention should be paid to the market value of the festival, and its cultural value needs to be addressed, which has led to the backwardness of the research on peony culture. It is proposed that the peony culture should be fully explored and integrated into the festival.

(2) Research on Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the perspective of historical development.

China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is one of the outstanding cultural festivals in China, and many scholars have studied the festival from the perspective of

history and festival culture. Cai Yangxue (2013) reviewed the Chinese Luoyang Peony Culture Festival from the perspective of cultural inheritance and industrialization development and summarized the general path of the festival's cultural industry development. Zhang Nannan (2016) examines the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from four aspects: the history of the festival, its development history, the reasons for its long-term organization, and the impact it has had on Luoyang's urban development. At the same time, three suggestions were made for promoting the development of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival: focus on local characteristics and innovation, rational planning and layout, clever organization and arrangement, and market-oriented flower Festivals. Bai Zhilun (2018) combined the evolution process from the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival to the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage and analyzed the inheritance and development of peony culture in this process, from which he found the existing problems and then put forward the countermeasures for the future development of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

### (3) Research on Branding of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, China.

Zhang Meng (2013) analyzed the French source market of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the preferences of foreigners visiting China, found out the development focuses of developing the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and combined with the sorting out the advantages and problems of the brand development of the Festival, proposed a branding strategy of the Festival for the French market by applying branding-related theories and communication strategies, and proposed new perspectives on the overseas publicity of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Offers a new perspective for the overseas promotion of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Jixing (2017) proposed five dimensions of brand association of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and three visitor loyalty measurement indicators, namely revisit, recommendation, and favorable publicity, constructed a research model of brand association and visitor loyalty of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, and through empirical research, came to a conclusion that the dimensions of brand association of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival have a significant positive impact on visitor loyalty. Lin Qiongli (2018) believes that to create festival tourism activities with a certain degree of popularity and influence, it is necessary to achieve this through branding

and management, and in his dissertation, he discusses the branding advantages of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, identifies the existing problems and puts forward strategies to promote the branding development of Peony Cultural Festival. He Xuhui (2018) analyzed the experience and issues of branding development of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the perspective of festival tourism and branding. He put forward the development path and direction of branding of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

#### (4) Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and Luoyang Urban Development

Li Zhaohui (2017) researched the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival for five consecutive years during the 12th Five-Year Plan period using questionnaires and interviews, and based on a large amount of data obtained, he studied China's peony culture festival in five aspects: the festival's influence on the city's public space, the city's cultural supply, the city's tourism economy, the city's cultural construction, and the coordinated development of the town and the countryside. The impact of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on urban development. Wang Xingxing and Chen Lidan (2018) conducted a study on the shaping of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on Luoyang's city image. They concluded that the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has a good role in enhancing Luoyang's city visual identification system, city behavioral identification system, and city conceptual identification system and that, according to the results of the study, from the three aspects of the festival itself, the establishment of a news media center communication strategy for the festival, and the government's macro-control, the Suggestions are made to enhance further the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on the shaping of Luoyang's city image. Using qualitative research methods, Sui Jingyu (2020) studied the development history and organization of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and concluded that the festival has positively impacted Luoyang's economy, culture, city image, and ecological environment.

#### 7.1.2 Festivals Research

Searching "Festival" and "Tourism Festival" as the theme words and collecting information for the research text, the relevant research direction focuses on festival brand management, festival culture research, festival tourism marketing, and other related socio-cultural and marketing perspectives.

Research on European and United States festivals first appeared in the 1960s and

1970s. Boorstin (1961) proposed “pseudo-events” for the first time in his book *Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, that is intentionally arranged events and initially explored the impacts of events from social, economic, cultural, and political aspects and the social, economic, cultural, political, and other elements of the event’s impact to carry out a preliminary discussion, is considered the first from the tourism point of view on studying festivals in the literature. Meyer (1970), according to the festival’s theme on the classification of tourism festivals, and the United States and Canada will conduct a comparative study of tourism festivals. Comparative study. In the 1990s, the research on foreign tourism festivals gradually became in-depth and focused on the transformation of product marketing. The first monograph on tourism festivals was Get Z (1991), “Festivals, special event, and tourism,” in which the authors put forward the point of view of transforming the festivals into saleable tourism products, pointing out that the organization of festival activities is mainly from the festival content and specific performance. Roche (1994) conducted a thematic study on how cities with the ability to carry out large-scale festivals can obtain policy support from policy influence. Crompton and McKay (1997) studied the consumption behavior patterns of tourists participating in tourism festivals and festivals, the perception of festivals, and the loyalty to festivals. Research.

Regarding tourism festival market research, Formica and Uysal (1998) use cluster analysis to analyze the different motivations for the participation of Italian festival visitors. Chabra D, Sills E, and Rea P (2002) study the main factors influencing festival spending, including the festival’s enjoyment level and the tourists’ socio-economic characteristics.

Research on community participation in tourism festivals: Fredline E and Faulkner B (2001) studied residents’ responses to sports and leisure events organized in the community and their opinions on sports events. Tyrrell, Brian J, and Israel (2008) used modeling to analyze methods for evaluating the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourists’ participation in community festivals and developed a series of indicator rating systems.

Research on festival brand management techniques: Abbott J.L (2000) analyses the clustering operation of festival brands, control, and management techniques; Vogelsong H.G (2006) analyses the impact of clustering on festival brands and how

positive tourism festival brands can create a festive atmosphere, but research on tourism festivals needs to analyze the effects of management and services.

To sum up, the research results on festivals in Europe, America, and other countries have some characteristics: Firstly, festivals are often combined with events, and research is carried out in the form of tourism festivals, with particular emphasis on the impact research of significant events. Second, there are many kinds of research methods, mainly focusing on comparative research and case studies. Third, in-depth studies on the organization and operation of tourism festivals have vital practical guidance significance.

Through advanced searching of journal data on China Knowledge Network (CNKI), selecting core journals or CSSCI source journals for the source category, and subject searching with the theme word “festival,” a total of 542 documents were obtained. Before 2000, there were almost no teaching materials and monographs related to festivals and activities in China, including translations of teaching materials from abroad. Before 2000, there were virtually no teaching materials and monographs about festivals in China, including translations of foreign teaching materials. However, after 2006, due to the demand for the development of festivals in China and the gradual attention of experts to the tourism management industry, several teaching materials and monographs related to festivals appeared one after another. For example, the foreign translation of Leonard Hoyle Jr.’s *Convention and Exhibition and Festival Marketing* (2003), William Otto’s (2002) *large-scale event project management*, Lynn Van Der Wagen’s (2004) *Event Project Planning and Management*, and so on.

Chinese scholars began to study modern festivals in the 1980s, but no academic group or theory was formed in the early days. Based on the search of CNKI and CSSCI databases, we learned that there were only 32 articles related to festivals in the six years from 1994 to 1999, while in less than five years from 2000 to 2005, there were 324 articles related to festivals in the search. From 2006 to 2022, the number of articles related to tourism festivals has reached 102,683.

Bao Jigang (1993), for the first time, put forward the concept of “Event,” “Tourism Event,” and “Event Tourism,” since then, the study of domestic tourism festivals has become tourism research. Since then, studying domestic tourism festivals

has opened up new horizons for tourism research. Lv Zhen and Wang Yanhong (1995) put forward the principles of planning and designing tourism festival brands based on case studies of festivals in Xi'an and Luoyang. Zhu Peijun (1998) proposed that market operation is an essential way of tourism festival branding by studying the problems of industrialization integration and market operation of urban tourism festivals. Li Li and Cui Weihua (1999) analyzed the constituent elements of tourism festivals and put forward the implication effect based on element analysis.

After the 21st century, the research perspective of domestic academics on tourism festivals began to change, research ideas became more and more reasonable, and the degree of attention also increased. Dai Guangquan (2003) systematically analyses and evaluates the research results of events, festivals, festival tourism, and event tourism in Western countries and puts forward the construction idea of branding tourism festivals through some typical festival research.

As for the development of tourism festivals, experts and development teams from different regions have mainly proposed development and planning based on the needs of locals or specific festivals according to where the festivals are held, and there has yet to be a systematic methodology. Li Yuxin, Lv Min, You Hui, and other experts have researched the characteristics of regional tourism festivals and the development of tourism festival brands in Qingdao, Beijing, Gansu, and Qingdao respectively.

As for the planning and marketing operation of tourism festivals, Pei Hitch (2004), based on the analysis of the current situation and prospect of local tourism festivals in China, emphasized that establishing franchised enterprises or joint ventures is necessary to ensure that the festivals are presented to the tourists in a high-level and quality. Huang Yumei (2011) made a detailed study on the function of our current festivals, Pan Wenyan (2014) proposed a study on the mechanism and path of tourism festival industrialization according to the different modes of formation of tourism festivals, summarized the ecology of the festival tourism industry chain and its product system, and refined and summarized a variety of development modes of festival tourism industry clusters and agglomerations. Most other studies are on a city or a typical case without systematic research theory development.

Festival-related books and teaching materials have also begun to be written. The earliest monograph on festivals is the 2006 Huang Xiang Shi Wuhan Tourism Festival

brand design Case. At the same time wrote China's first tourism festival brand research monograph, *Tourism Festivals and Branding – theory, case*, Wang Yongjia's *Event Management*, Lu Xiao wrote *Festival Event Planning and Management*, and Lu Xiao wrote *The Festival Event Planning and Management. Planning and Management of Festivals and Events* by Lu Xiao and *Ethnic Festivals and Local Identity* by Zhu Hong. These writings have elaborated on the status of China's festival development and the development strategies from different perspectives.

In summary, Chinese studies on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and urban festivals present the following characteristics: Firstly, compared to foreign countries, domestic tourism festival theoretical research needs to be more robust for heavy case and regional festival culture research, especially systematic academic research. Secondly, most of the research focuses on the function research of festivals. Thirdly, it attaches importance to managing the operation mechanism of festivals.

## 7.2 Literature Review of Research Concept

### 7.2.1 Literature review on “symbolic interactionism”

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological and social-psychological theory. Symbols are things that have symbolic meanings to a certain extent. Since the 1970s, semiotic ideas and related theories have been gradually introduced into the field of tourism research by Western academics. Symbolic interaction is a form of social interaction that refers to the social interaction activities that occur through symbols between individuals and individuals, individuals and groups, and groups and groups in society. Symbolic interaction theory is an essential element of social interaction theory. Theories about symbolic interaction germinated in the stream of consciousness of the Scottish moral philosophers, represented by Adam Smith, Hugh Moore, and others, who proposed that if a science of humanity is to be established, attention must be paid to the basic fact that people are interconnected and that it should focus on interpersonal communication and sympathy.

Academic research on the theory of symbolic interaction has many results; these research results used in our lives have an excellent explanation; used in urban festivals on the city image is also very relevant to the shaping of tourism image of the tourist destination has a role in promoting. The following briefly introduces the

representative figures of symbolic interaction theory and its main ideas.

#### (1) Charles Cooley's "Looking-Glass Self" Theory

According to Cooley's idea of the "Looking-Glass Self," a person's self-concept is formed during interaction with other people, and a person's perception of himself reflects other people's perception of himself. People start their self-concept by imagining other people's appraisal of themselves. In this way, each person is a mirror of the other, reflecting the other. We can see that if a tourist destination wants to shape its tourism image better, it can consider two aspects: firstly, the management bodies and managers of the tourist destination should play an organizational role, and the tourist destination can constantly communicate with other tourist destinations, and learn, summarize and generalize the suitable image for its tourist destination in the communication of the organizations. They can understand and translate the ideas and methods ideal for shaping the image of their tourist destinations and guide the generation of the tourist image of the tourist destinations on the right path. Secondly, according to the characteristics of its tourism resources, the destination can conduct questionnaire surveys and feedback to the tourists to map out the shaping of the destination's tourism image, and then according to the situation of its resources combined with the needs of the tourists, to grasp the direction of the shaping of the destination's tourism image.

#### (2) Brummer's Symbols as Mediators of Social Interaction

Brummer argues that society is the result of symbolic interaction between people and that the most typical feature of human society is symbolic interaction, which is mediated by the use of symbols to interpret or determine the meaning of each other's actions. Brummer points out that people's 'reactions' to each other are not the direct product of their actions but are based on the meanings they attach to each other's actions. Thus, interpersonal interaction is mediated by using symbols to interpret or determine the meaning of each other's actions. In other words, each of us has our own particular culture, knowledge, and experiences, and our interpretations of society and others are constantly influenced and conditioned by these specific elements of ourselves.

There are three bare assertions in Brummer's theory of symbolic interaction: Firstly, he believes that human beings act towards an object mainly according to the

meaning they attribute to it and that the same thing has different meanings to different people. Secondly, this means that people ascribe to things arising from their interactions, i.e., their attitudes. Perceptions are always influenced by others, and one's definition of something always finds its roots in the definitions of others. Thirdly, Brummer points out that these meanings of things are not static but are readily modified in reinterpretation.

According to Brummer's idea, to create a better image of tourism, the tourist destination must first construct local tourist symbols and give them meaning. This process of assigning meaning is an excellent opportunity to promote tourist attractions and resources only so that the people accept and recognize the meaning of the tourist symbols provided by the tourist place. The tourist spot will be known by tourists, thus enhancing the popularity of the tourist spot so that tourists come to the spot after such a virtuous cycle to create a suitable tourist image of the place. Of course, the most challenging thing in this process is to excavate, construct, summarize, and conclude a tourism symbol suitable for the scenic spot and give it a meaning that people accept.

### (3) Goffman's dramaturgical theory

Goffman divides interactions into two categories according to the situations in which they occur. One is confined to society: regular, continuous contacts inside predetermined parameters, and the other is unbounded, spontaneous interactions. Goffman's theory was called "Dramaturgical Theory" because it examined social interactions from a theatrical perspective and linked people's actions to dramatic acts. In addition, based on dramaturgical theory, he proposed "Impression Management." He believed that in this kind of performance, we are all concerned about and try to control the impression we leave on others. We make others form the impression we want through words and gestures, so this is the "Situational definition" we create for others, and this process is called "Impression Management."

In the process of shaping tourism image, we also need impression management. As long as the tourist resources of the scenic spot are perfect enough, the environmental hygiene is comfortable. The service attitude of the staff is good enough, only better impression management will leave a better impression on the tourists, and acquiring a good impression is also an essential part of image shaping. The good impression is also a necessary part of the image shaping.

### 7.2.2 Literature Review on the “Invention of Tradition”

In many social and cultural development theories, “tradition” is regarded as a cultural resource opposite to modernity. In his book *Tradition*, American sociologist Edward Shils comprehensively and systematically explored the connotation and definition of tradition for the first time. According to Shil, tradition is the product of human behaviors, thoughts, and imaginations, including people’s beliefs about various things, images of people and events, practices and institutions, and any past handed down from generation to generation. It has people’s beliefs about different things, images of people and events, practices and institutions, and anything passed down from the past to the present and handed down from generation to generation (Shils, E., 1981). At the same time, tradition is essentially an open and dynamic system in which all traditions are subject to constant change. Only emergencies survive, but these emergencies can present traditional value symbols (Handler & Linnekin., 1984).

*The Invention of Tradition*, co-edited by British social historian Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, the national costumes of Scotland, the reinvention of canonical books in Wales, the change of royal ceremonies in England, the change of ceremonial rituals in India under British rule, the imitation of the English middle-class lifestyle by African peoples. Moreover, changes in national festivals and popular culture in Britain, France, and Germany from 1870-1914 focused on the invention of traditions in Britain since the Industrial Revolution. He classifies these traditions into three broad categories. First, those that establish or symbolize social cohesion or membership of groups, real or imaginary. Second, those that show or legitimize institutions, identities, or power relations. Third, those whose primary purpose is to the transmission of beliefs.

It is also noted that where traditions are invented, they are often not because the old ways are no longer valid or existent. However, because they are intentionally not used or adapted, and where ancient traditions are still relevant, they need neither to be revived nor invented (Hobsbawm et al. T., 2012).

(1) Regarding the invention of tradition, some scholars have explored the advantages and disadvantages of invented tradition from the perspective of the political nature of tradition, reflected on the gains and losses of traditional invention,

and analyzed the constraints therein.

Richard Bauman, an American folklorist, introduced the concept of "Traditionalized Practice" in his article *The View of Tradition in the Definition and Study of Folklore* and regarded tradition as a political practice. He argues that tradition is something other than some old story or way of speaking. However, it is a politically valuable tool for the present, and people claim the authority of tradition mainly for rhetorical purposes (Yang & An, 2006, P.22).

Liu Xiaochun, in *The Cultural Politics of Folk Tourism*, argues that local folk tourism, infused with ideological and commercial economic factors, has been invented as a cultural capital capable of generating economic and social benefits and as a symbolic system with distinctive cultural connotations and values, has increasingly become a shell of forms left empty of their original meanings. The flourishing of folk culture tourism, resulting from the interaction of power politics, capital, and local culture, manifests localized modernity and expresses cultural-political violence (Liu, 2001, p. 8).

(2) The phenomenon of producing, inventing, and reconstructing local traditions exists in many parts of contemporary society. It is of great concern to the academic community, with scholars focusing more and more on process studies.

Five academic papers were published in the 3rd issue of *Folk Culture Forum* in 2007, in which Liu Huiping briefly analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of inventing traditions and warned against pseudo-folklore from the perspective of today's competition for the development of mythological figures, folklore festivals and other cultural resources in various places. Huang Jingchun, in response to the local government's economic policy of "culture on the stage and economy on the theatre," puts forward a reflection on scholars' attitudes towards academic research in terms of truth-seeking and goodness-seeking, arguing that professional scholars should not seek "goodness-seeking" to concur with the needs of the local community, thus losing the purpose of academic research in terms of truth-seeking. Based on the value orientation of humanities, Zhong Zongxian believes that pseudo-folklore should not be easily identified and that the study of tradition should be concerned with a more extended period and a more expansive space. Starting from festival folklore, Liu Xiaofeng argues that traditional festivals did not exist from the beginning but are the

result of the self-innovation of festival culture time and time again in history. Xuan Bingshan also recognizes the rationality of traditional invention. In his view, inventing new traditions is not a truth-seeking process (Liu et al., 2007, p.10-32).

He Xiuli, in her article *The Inheritance and Invention of the Tradition of the Confucius Ceremony in Qu Fu*, believes that traditional ceremonies are dynamic and generally go through the process of change of continuation, rupture, or revival and that they are inherited alive in the process of constant invention, so it is a tricky thing to sort out the historical evolution of traditional ceremonies in a complete way (He, 2015, p.33-35). Yang Jiehong believes that in the current era of cultural tourism fever, heritage, background protection, and traditional culture are products invented to meet the requirements of the times. Many traditional cultures have been reborn by giving new connotations of the times in innovation, enhancing national cultural self-confidence, and promoting the sustainable development of the economy and society. At the same time, there is also excessive commercial exploitation of traditional culture, which leads to vulgarization, homogenization, fragmentation, and other evils of conventional culture. He suggests that the invention of traditions in the context of the new era must be in line with the requirements of the development of productive forces, absorb the foreign excellent culture, contribute to the synergy of different social strata, respect the principle of the people's subjectivity, and satisfy the needs of the general public for a better life (Yang, 2021, p.4-9).

(3) Some scholars have recognized that in the process of the invention of local traditions, the rights of elites and the people, of officialdom and the private sector, of the state and the local community, and different believers have confronted each other, but have gradually converged in the end.

Yue Yongyi, in *The Politics of Rural Temple Festivals: A Study of the Fan Zhuang Dragon Festivals in North China and Reflections on the Cognition of "Folklore,"* argues that in the process of modernization, the construction of local culture has always been in the midst of a relationship, and analyses the process of production of temple Festivals in terms of the Dragon Festivals, pointing out that local cultural elites have continuously absorbed the representations of scholars as well as officials, trying to align their narratives with the culture of the elites, their scholarly views, and their official representations, so that they have a better understanding of

local traditions than the public. It is pointed out that local cultural elites constantly absorb the representations of scholars and officials and try to make their representations consistent with elite culture, academic views, and official representations so that the text of their authoritative interpretations of the Dragon Festivals penetrates the local society (Yue, 2007, p.19).

Cai Yanhuan, *From Invention of Tradition to Social Facts - The Guangzhou Manchu Gold Awarding Festival*, argues that the Gold Awarding Festival has only been established for thirty years, but since its establishment, it has been named after the Manchu people and that the festival has been celebrated for 354 years. The article argues that it has only been thirty years since the festival was established. However, since its inception, it has been commemorated with the historical significance of the 354th anniversary of the naming of the Manchu ethnic group, lengthening the vertical dimension of time in the context of new traditions. It does not matter if the neighbors do not know about the new festival because what is more important is that the festival's existence deepens the sense of the presence of the ethnic group in the present time through the presence of the Other and the We. (Cai, 2019, p.96-98).

(4) Scholars have also paid due attention to the creative impact of tourism on cultural traditions, including factors such as the media, tourists, and mass consumption.

Liu Zhengai, in his article *Recovering the City of Hetu Ala*, suggests that in the space and time of tourism development, history, and culture have been exploited and given economic significance in an unprecedented form. In this process, history fully embodies its characteristics that can be constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted. She argues that market logic is dominant after culture becomes a tourist commodity. After generating economic benefits, a new historical consciousness and culture are formed simultaneously (Liu, 2004).

Guang Yingjiong and Zhang Xiaoping's article, *Inheritance and Development of Ethnic Festivals Based on the Perspective of Tourism Anthropology*, describes a functional fit between the Water Splashing Festival and tourism in terms of the function of rituals. Tourism development can be regarded as another invention of tradition. The cultural connotation and inheritance environment of the Dai Water Festival in Xishuangbanna has undergone significant changes. The cultural

connotation and inheritance environment of the festival has undergone significant changes. Ethnic culture passes on unique cultural symbols through ethnic festivals and is passed on and developed in the form of “Cultural Reproduction” spawned by tourism development. In this process, the government and the general public are also involved in the transmission of ethnic culture in the modern context, and the contemporary mass media are changing and shaping the style and mode of modern ethnic culture in all aspects (Guang & Zhang, 2010, p.45-49).

Liu Xiaochun’s book, *The Order of Rituals and Symbols: History, Power, and Memory in a Hakka Village*, analyses the complex connection between the evolution of two belief rituals in Hakka townships and the family, community, country and local political, economic and cultural resources, while he points out the characteristics of the existence of traditions in the contemporary era, and that the vitality of the traditions today, may be the result of the fact that people have used the traditional symbols to justify certain behaviors, making it evident that people use traditional symbols to satisfy specific needs in their daily lives, and the acquisition of such satisfaction is a socio-cultural re-creation of conventional symbols (Liu, 2003).

### **7.3 Literature Review of Research Model**

There is no research on The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang, China, within the structure of the concepts of symbolic interaction and Invention of Tradition in the context of Self-Identity Revitalization.

## **8. Concept, Theory, and Conceptual Framework**

### **8.1 Concepts and arguments of this research**

First of all, using the concept of symbolic interaction, research from the origin of the peony to the present, the process of peony flowers has been given meaning and use of meaning. How do Luoyang people use peonies to interact to form Luoyang peony culture? Secondly, using the concept of Invention of Tradition, explore the formation, development, restoration of inheritance, and invention of the invention tradition of the Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang, China. Participants have established interactions in the past, interact with people around them, and interact

with other countries to realize Luoyang's identity construction and cultural rejuvenation.

**Symbolic interaction:** The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the liveliest event of the year for the people of Luoyang. The traditional festival, which the city's people widely recognize, has become the cultural symbol of Luoyang. This cultural symbol plays a crucial mediating role in people's social interactions. Studying the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival as a cultural symbol requires interpreting the meaning actors give to their activities. Festive acts are all meaningful; their meaning is not fixed and unchanging. On the one hand, the determination of meaning depends on the context and situation of the interaction and, on the other hand, to some extent, meaning is determined in the course of the interaction through negotiation between the two parties; it is neither pre-determined nor static, but is generated, modified, developed and changed in the course of the interaction.

**The invention of tradition:** The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was held in 1983, with a history of more than 40 years. It is not a tradition in the real sense but a continuation of the peony-viewing behavior strongly loved by the people of Luoyang and an invention of the traditional peony culture, which has been created in contemporary times in the production and life of the people of Luoyang and the politics of the government. Recently, it has been made in the production and life of the local people in Luoyang and the politics of the government. After adapting to the development of society, it has the characteristics of "liveliness" and "flux." It changes constantly according to society's needs and people's lives. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is a cultural genre passed down from generation to generation. It is continuously reinvented as communities and groups have adapted to their surroundings and interacted with nature and history.

## 8.2 Research Conceptual Framework

The text of the study is The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang, China; the context of the study is Self-Identity Revitalization, and the concepts used are symbolic interaction and Invention of Tradition (Figure 2).

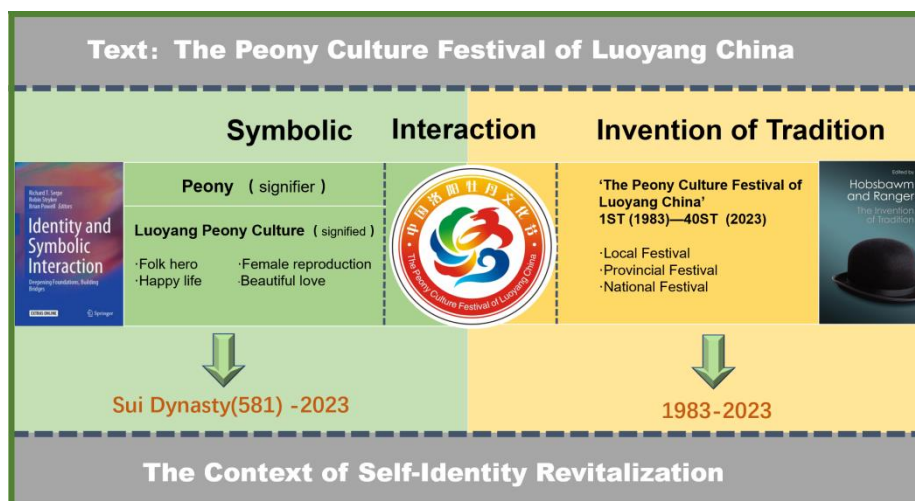


Figure 2 Diagram of the research framework

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

## 9. Benefits of Research

### 9.1 Theoretical values

(1) Improving the theory related to symbolic interaction and the Invention of tradition. In recent years, propositions about symbolic interaction and the Invention of tradition have appeared on various occasions with a very high frequency and have become a hotspot of attention and discussion among the public and scholars. However, most current studies at home and abroad are only general analyses of the general level of symbolic interaction and the Invention of tradition. Studies on the symbolic interaction of traditional festivals in specific cities are relatively rare. This paper studies the content and hierarchical structure of Luoyang peony cultural symbol interaction, re-examines the history of urban festivals from the perspective of traditional invention, and expands the theoretical basis for classifying these two fields. A systematic and comprehensive investigation can make the results of this study fill the gap in this specific academic field.

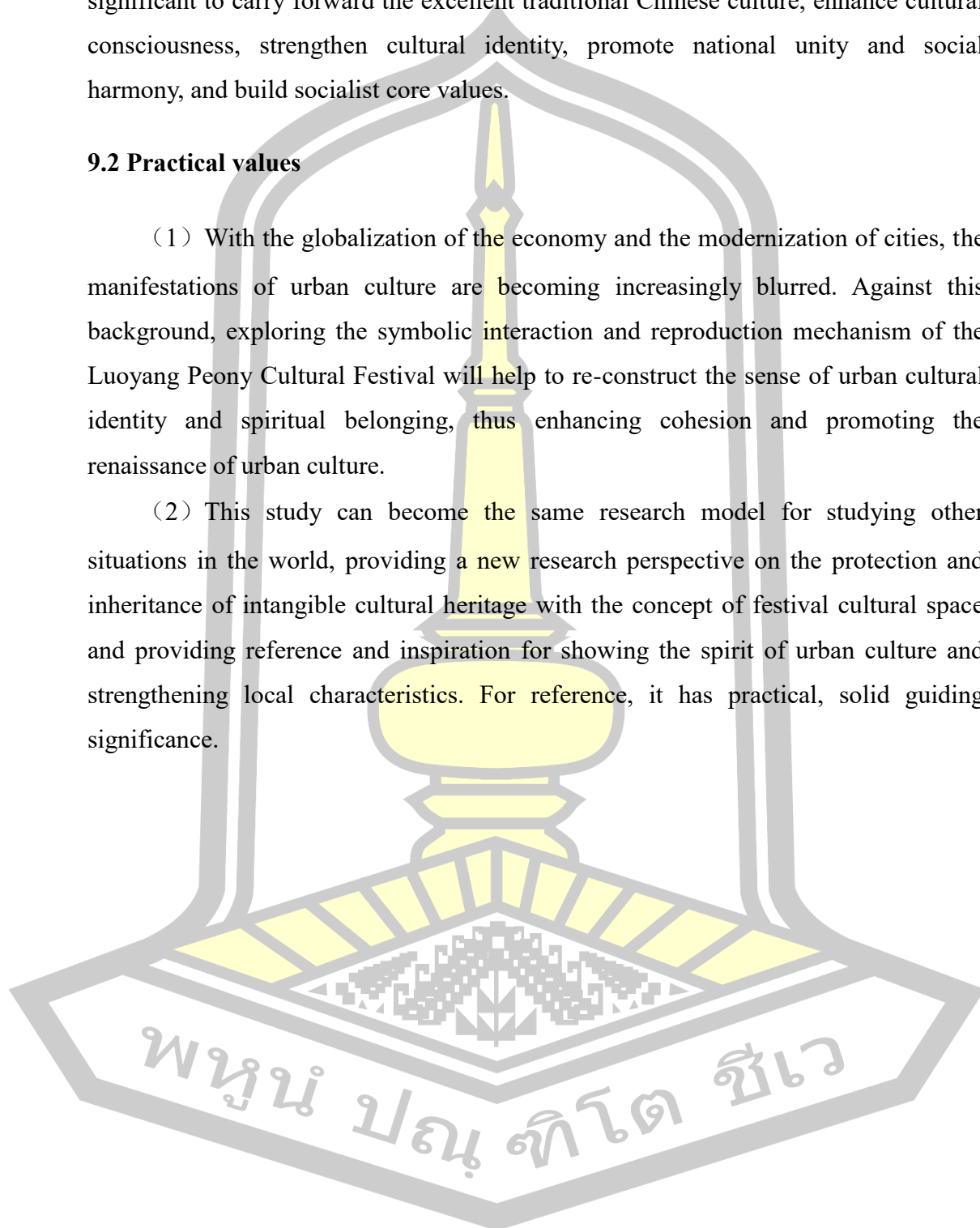
(2) An in-depth study of such social and cultural phenomena as the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the perspectives of anthropology and sociology can help to understand further the value and role of the Festival in the social and historical time and space of Luoyang and further improve our knowledge and understanding of the

impact of the festival culture on the development and influence of the city. It is also significant to carry forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture, enhance cultural consciousness, strengthen cultural identity, promote national unity and social harmony, and build socialist core values.

## 9.2 Practical values

(1) With the globalization of the economy and the modernization of cities, the manifestations of urban culture are becoming increasingly blurred. Against this background, exploring the symbolic interaction and reproduction mechanism of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival will help to re-construct the sense of urban cultural identity and spiritual belonging, thus enhancing cohesion and promoting the renaissance of urban culture.

(2) This study can become the same research model for studying other situations in the world, providing a new research perspective on the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage with the concept of festival cultural space and providing reference and inspiration for showing the spirit of urban culture and strengthening local characteristics. For reference, it has practical, solid guiding significance.



## CHAPTER II

### History and Development of Luoyang Peony Culture

#### Introduction

This chapter examines the genesis of the modern Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the historical context of Luoyang's natural and social surroundings. It also covers the history and evolution of Luoyang peony culture.

Firstly, combing through the connotation and brief history of the development of Chinese flower culture, it can be understood that Chinese people are used to associating the natural attributes of flowers with humanized qualities and embody profound humanistic connotations with the help of flower symbols and the Luoyang peony culture is an integral part of the Chinese flower culture, which is one of the excellent traditional cultures in China. Secondly, it analyzes the origin of peonies and the development history of Luoyang peony culture, analyzes the geographical environment, social environment, and local cultivation wisdom that promote the growth of peonies in Luoyang, analyzes the cultivation status of peonies in Luoyang in different historical periods, the peony ornamental customs of Luoyang people, and explores the historical origin of the formation of contemporary Luoyang Peony Culture Festival. Finally, it examines the modernization and development of Luoyang peony culture. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is a product of the modernization and development of Luoyang peony culture. It conducts a preliminary discussion on the development and impact of Luoyang peony culture and the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival from the local, national, and world dimensions.

## 1. Chinese Flower Culture

### 1.1 Flower and Flower Culture

“Flower” refers to ornamental plants with beautiful posture, bright colors, and fragrant smells and is the reproductive organ of plants. Flower has a narrow and broad sense. The little sense of flowers only refers to the ornamental value of herbaceous plants, such as orchids, chrysanthemums, lotus, petunias, etc. The broad sense of flowers refers to the appreciation of the plant in general, both with the ornamental value of herbaceous plants but also includes flowering shrubs such as plum blossoms, peach blossoms, moon, osmanthus, and other flowering trees, bonsai. There is a certain quality of plants in flower, leaf, fruit, stem, bud, root, posture, landscape, wonder, and fragrance. They can be called flowers (Sun, 2006, p.15).

China’s vast land and complex and varied natural ecological environment has given birth to many plant resources. China is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, with the most flowers and one of the world’s flower varieties. One of the origins of the domestication of the cultivation of flowers has a very long history. Due to the increasingly close relationship between flowers and people’s lives, in the long process of historical development, flowers have been continuously integrated into people’s culture and life content, into people’s thoughts and emotions, and gradually formed a flower-related cultural phenomenon and a flower-centered cultural system, i.e., the flower culture (Wei, 2009, p.4).

### 1.2 Connotation of Chinese Flower Culture

The perception of flowers as the epitome of beauty and a lucky charm has spread throughout the globe. Like everyone else, Chinese people adore flowers naturally and think they are equally lovely to flowers. Nonetheless, the Chinese have a more profound knowledge of flowers and a deeper understanding of emotions, so in addition to recognizing the static beauty of flower shapes, they are also skilled at identifying the dynamic changes that occur in life’s events. Chinese people have long appreciated flowers, which may arouse sentiment and be free of symbolic significance.

Chinese people have a floral culture that stems from their appreciation of flowers' inherent beauty. Flowers' biological traits and ecological habits provide insight into the relationship between human nature and the various natural attributes of flowers, as well as human sentiments and the development of the biological traits and humane qualities that link the formation of universal social concepts to people's diverse psychological desires (Zhang, 2007, p.75).

The plum blossom, which dares to come out of the snow, and a tree blossoms alone in the world's spring, has a good reputation for being a symbol of purity and innocence because of the opening of the plum blossom on the snowy and icy ground. For example, the lotus is praised for its bright and clear natural posture and noble character of coming out of the silt but not dyeing, pouring clear ripples but not a demon. The plum bloom is heroic, fearless, frozen, and clean because of its opening in the ice and snow; it is not out of the ground when there is a section, and the clouds are still in vain. Bamboo is modeled after the biological traits of humanization quality; for instance, producing the cultural meaning of modesty and humility is complex if the bamboo is firm.

Chinese flower culture has a close relationship with Chinese nationality and history. In China, flowers have aesthetic value and are endowed with cultural connotations, and culture is embedded in the flowers, which unite the character and temperament of the Chinese nation (Zhang, 2004, p.128). The "Ten Famous Traditional Chinese Flowers" contain different levels of spiritual and cultural heritage in China, with deep and heavy historical connotations, and each is unique in the flower industry. Chinese people also have exciting names for flowers, such as Mimosa, which is called "Shy Grass," mottled bamboo, which is called "Pretty Bamboo," and cacti, which are called "fairy palm." Just from these customized names, it can be seen that the Chinese people have feelings towards flowers (Table 1).

*Table 1 The natural characteristics and compassionate aspects of the ten most well-known traditional Chinese flowers*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Flower name	natural quality	Humanized quality
Plum blossom	Plum blossoms bloom in the cold, beautiful and vulgar	Possessing an optimistic disposition that embraces optimism is consistent with the Chinese people's admirable traits of indomitability, perseverance, and bravery in the

peony	The flowers are large, beautiful in shape, colorful, and fragrant	face of adversity. Peonies, also referred to as the “king of flowers” and the “national beauty and heavenly fragrance,” represent happiness and auspiciousness, family prosperity, national prosperity, and tranquility in the hearts of Chinese people. The title “Hermit among Flowers” alludes to the Chinese people’s desire for a tranquil rural lifestyle. Chrysanthemums represent people’s noble traits - behaving morally and refusing to follow the flow.
chrysanthemum	Fearless of severe cold, blooming in the season of withering flowers	Known as the “gentleman in flowers,” he is unafraid of storms, indifferent and elegant, symbolizing the simple, pure, and implicit character.
orchid	The flowers are elegant and fragrant, often growing in secluded places	Known as the “Queen of Flowers,” it symbolizes happiness, love, beauty, peace, and friendship.
rose	Beautiful flower pattern and lingering fragrance	Like the blood donated by millions of martyrs, the azaleas scattered throughout the mountains and fields symbolize people’s warm and beautiful emotions toward life.
Rhododendron	Growing mainly in the mountains and fields, the flowers are colorful and magnificent in full bloom.	You are implying noble qualities, pure and innocent.
Camellia flowers	The flowering period is long, the colors are bright, the flower shape is beautiful, and it looks adorable.	Lotus represents a pure and transcendent spiritual quality, symbolizing a woman’s noble personality and beautiful meaning.
lotus	Lotus grows in the mud, but the flowers are immaculate	Symbolizes nobility, auspiciousness, loyalty, and beauty.
Osmanthus fragrans	The flowers have elegant and noble colors, are fresh and refined, and their fragrance makes people feel refreshed and refreshed.	Pure love symbolizes purity and is also used to praise the noble character of women.
narcissus	Standing tall and graceful, with pure white flowers	

Chinese flower culture embodies the natural attributes of plants and their profound humanistic connotations. Chinese flower culture incorporates the following three main features:

**Enlightenment and purification.** Flowers win people’s love with their beautiful flower shape, rich flower colors, and strong fragrance emitted by itself. When people appreciate the lovely gesture of flowers, they unconsciously examine themselves, stimulate their love of life, expect a comfortable mood, pursue a better life from the senses, and constantly purify and enhance the human soul. When people take the lotus flower as a symbol of superior quality, when people see it, it will naturally sprout a lot of high-purity quality pursuits and inspire them to continue to work in this direction.

**Interpersonal inspirational.** In contemporary society, people pay attention to interpersonal communication; flowers, the silent, beautiful symbols, become the most persuasive language through the transmission of flower culture, promoting communication so that people live healthier, more harmonious, and more interesting

(Zhou, 2004, p. 20). In all kinds of communication occasions, sending decent flowers to suitable objects, on the one hand, expresses one's standard of life. At the same time, it also transmits and sends the sender's good wishes or recognizes the other party's good qualities.

Research reference. The flower culture formed in a place must result from interaction with the local natural environment, humanistic environment, social customs, and other elements. However, it is also a psychological pattern of people's pursuit of a better life, but it also obliquely describes its unlimited vitality. In a sense, it can sufficiently respond to the spiritual and cultural outlook of a place or a region from the other side (Chen, 2015, p.15).

Flowers can convey different High-level cultures to others, producing many comprehensive effects (Zhou, 2004, p.20). Attaching importance to the development of floral culture is conducive to the healthy life of people and the diversified development of social material civilization, and it is an enabler for the harmonious development of colonial society. Based on this perspective, it is meaningful to study the flower culture of a place, which has a critical reference significance for promoting the place to do an excellent job in cultural construction. At the same time, studying the characteristics and essence of the flower culture of the region is not only conducive to better promoting its own advanced culture but also can tap the potential to constantly make up for its shortcomings and ensure its own culture is evergreen (GS et al., et al. & Zhang, et al., 2015, p. 212-215).

### **1.3 An outline of the evolution of Chinese Flower culture**

Flower culture is an integral part of the culture of a country and a nation, so the formation and development of flower culture is bound to rise and fall with the rise and fall of the culture of the country and the nation. From the beginning, Chinese flower culture has been deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture and art, such as painting, calligraphy, literature, gardening crafts, etc. It has a close relationship with ancient myths and legends. It is also inseparable from the thoughts of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and various schools of thought in history, so it can be said that the Chinese flower culture is developed based on the traditional solid culture in China.

It is confirmed from archaeological remains that in the Late Paleolithic (3 million

years ago), when there was no writing, the ancient ancestors of the Chinese people carved beautiful flower patterns in nature on rough stone tools and even dyed them with beautiful colors, which were used to beautify their lives, and this may be the earliest manifestation of the Chinese floral culture. Flower culture also developed further in the Neolithic period (10,000 years ago), when flowers became a part of people's lives with their practicality and beautification.

In China, the earliest written records of flowers began in the 11th century BC in the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty. During the Warring States period (475 BC-221 BC), flowers played a considerable role in the people's material and spiritual life. In particular, flowers were endowed with sentimental colors and symbolic meanings, which marked the beginning of the development of Chinese floral culture towards a new stage (Zhou, 2004, p.57-60).

During the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC-220 AD), the art of flower arrangement began to sprout. Chinese flower arranging skills were already very high during the Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties (221 AD-580 AD). The flower appreciation was also exquisite, starting to achieve a higher level of artistic enjoyment and creation. During the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties (581 AD-1270 AD), the development of Chinese flower culture entered into a prosperous and mature stage, occupying an important position in Chinese traditional culture, with the whole nation planting, selling, appreciating, and arranging flowers. The Chinese flower industry is unprecedentedly developed (Zhou, 2004, p.57-60). According to research, at that time, tea, painting, incense, and flower arrangement were collectively known as the "four arts," which became an essential part of the cultural cultivation and elegant life of the literati and the scholarly class. During this period, flower science and technology books, flower literature, flower crafts, flower painting and bonsai, flower arrangement, and other works of art were endless, brilliant achievements that can be called the heyday of the development of flower culture in Chinese history.

During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties (1271 AD-1912 AD), there were many writings on various types of flowers in China, which were comprehensive, rich, and scientific, marking the perfection and systematization of the theories of flower cultivation and application in China. From the Qing Dynasty to the early days of the founding of New China (1912 AD-1945 AD), due to the weakness and corruption of

the rulers, imperialist aggression, China's successive wars, the decline in national strength, economic recession, stagnation of the floriculture industry, flower planting a few of the barren. Until after the founding of new China (1945 AD-present), with the recovery and development of the national economy, urban garden construction gradually attached importance to the development of the flower industry, and flower culture presented a new blossoming situation.

In modern times, flowers have become a must for major festivals and social activities, a part of popular culture and entertainment activities, an essential role in beautifying the lives of households, and even a symbol and icon of the city and its people. Flower culture is a collection of human wisdom and inspiration to meet the career and improve the quality of life of the spirit of consumer goods.

Five thousand years of development history of the Chinese nation created a rich and splendid Chinese floral culture; Chinese floral culture has become a bright pearl in the treasury of oriental culture, which is rooted in the fertile soil of China, growing in the life of the public, and deeply affected by the cultivation of other cultures and arts and thrive. Chinese flower culture has a strong foundation of traditional culture, rich in national flavor characteristics, broad and rich content, and colorful forms of expression. The content of Chinese flower culture includes the following aspects:

(1) Describe the scenes of various floral activities in the social life of the past generations, such as the flower markets, flower shows, and flower festivals in various dynasties and regions, to show the prosperous and joyful social outlook;

(2) Depict the gracefulness of various flowers to show the beauty of nature so that people can enjoy beauty;

(3) Introduce ancient and modern celebrities to appreciate flowers, praise flowers, or the process of flower breeding to increase people's knowledge of life;

(4) Introduce the biological characteristics of flowers, cultivation techniques of flowers, information, experience, as well as new scientific methods and technologies;

(5) Combine flowers with literature, painting, sculpture, bonsai, flower arranging, songs, dances, and many other arts, specifically flower books, flower poems, flower paintings, flower songs, flower dances, flower food, flower drinks, flower brocades, flower handicrafts and so on, each with its characteristics.

## 2. “Peony” and Peony Origin

### 2.1 Peony’s Name

#### 2.1.1 Peony’s Biological Names

The peony (scientific name: *Paeonia suffruticosa* Andr.) is a famous traditional Chinese flower belonging to the species of angiosperms, the class of dicotyledons, the family of Paeonia, and the group of peonies (sect.Moutan), which is a perennial woody plant. The peony group consists of nine wild species and one cultivated species with more than a thousand varieties, among which the nine wild species are The Dian Peony (*P.delavayi*), The Central Plains Peony (*P.cathayana*), The large-flowered yellow Peony (*P.ludlowii*), The Sichuan Peony (*P.decomposita*), The ovate-leaved Peony (*P.qiui*), The purple-spotted Peony (*P.rockii*), The dwarf Peony (*P.dulcis*), The Yang Shan Peony (*P.ostii*), and The round-lobed Peony (*P.rotundiloba*) (Kumazawa, M., 1972, p.179). Angiosperms are the most primitive species in nature, and peonies are angiosperms whose origin can be traced back to the Cretaceous Period, which is tens of millions or even more than 100 million years ago.

Peony has high requirements for the growing environment. It grows in warm, cool, dry, and sunny environments. The suitable temperature for flowers to bloom is 17-20°C, and it can tolerate a low temperature of -30°C at the lowest. When the temperature rises above 25°C, the plant will go dormant and cannot be exposed to the intense sun. It grows well in neutral sandy loam soil that is loose, deep, fertile and well-drained. Acidic or clayey soils tend to inhibit its growth.

China is the center of peony origin, differentiation, and evolution. Nine wild peony species are native to China, of which six are found in Luoyang and its surrounding areas, and peonies from other countries in the world are directly or indirectly imported from China. In ancient times, wild peonies were widely distributed in Mang Mountain, Jinping Mountain, Wan’an Mountain, and Song Mountain around Luoyang, and nowadays, a certain number of wild peonies are still growing in the deep mountainous areas of southern and southwestern Luoyang, Yang Mountain, Bai Yun Mountain, which have become highly precious wild resources in Luoyang. In addition, Luoyang has also introduced some wild peonies from Shanxi,

Yunnan, Tibet, and other provinces and regions, which enriches the wild peony population. There are nine prominent color families, ten flower types, and 1379 varieties of peonies in Luoyang (Table 2) (Pan, 1995, p.340-349).

*Table 2 The natural distribution range of wild peony species*  
Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Number	Wild peony species	Natural distribution range
1	The dwarf peony ( <i>P. dulcis</i> )	Partial regions of Henan Province, Shanxi Province
2	The ovate-leaved peony ( <i>P. Qiu</i> )	Xixia of Henan Province, Shennongjia and Baokang of Hubei Province, Xunyang and Shangnan of Shaanxi Province
3	The Yang Shan peony ( <i>P. ostii</i> )	Western part of Henan Province
4	The purple-spotted peony ( <i>P. rockii</i> )	Gansu Province, Shaanxi Province, Henan Province
5	The Central Plains peony ( <i>P. cathayana</i> )	Baokang, Hubei, and Song of Henan Province
6	Dian peony ( <i>P. delavayi</i> )	Yunnan Province, Sichuan Province, Xizang Province
7	Sichuan Peony ( <i>P. decompose</i> )	Sichuan Province
8	The round-lobed Sichuan peony ( <i>P. rotundiloba</i> )	Sichuan Province, Gansu Province
9	The large-flowered yellow peony ( <i>P. Ludlow</i> )	Xizang Province

### 2.1.2 Analysis of the Ancient Name “Peony”

The word “peony” appeared a lot in the literature from the Tang Dynasty. Zheng Qiao of the Song Dynasty recorded in *Storytelling - Insects, Herbs and Trees* that the peony had no name at the beginning, so it was named according to the name of the Chinese peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*). Peony came out late and was first heard in the Tang Dynasty. Through reading and arranging the related documents in ancient China, I found that the peony originated in China had many common names in ancient times, and through the recognition of these names, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of the peony, and we can also understand the wide geographical distribution and spread of peony at that time. In ancient times, the peony was also known as “wood Chinese peony,” “Lu Fei,” “Shu Gu,” “Yao Huang, Wei Zi,” “Flower King,” “Flower,” and “Luoyang Flower.” (Lin & Chen, 2017, p.12).

(1) “Wood Chinese peony.” In China, the peony did not have an independent name at first, and it was called the Wood Chinese peony together with *Paeonia lactiflora*. In modern plant taxonomy, peony and *Paeonia lactiflora* belong to the genus *Paeonia* of the family *Paeoniaceae*. They are very similar in appearance, and the most direct way to differentiate between them is to look at the rhizomes, as peony is a persistent herb, while peony is a woody plant. According to this distinguishing feature, the ancient people called wood peony.

(2) “Lu Fei” and “Shu Gu”. These two aliases are the local dialects of peony in different ethnic groups and regions in China. As introduced by Luoyang Peony Research Institute experts, peony originated in many places in China. At that time, besides Luoyang and its neighboring areas, there were also the areas of Yan’an and Yichuan, the area of Zhejiang, the location of Shandong, and the areas of Linxia, Yuchong, and Longxi, the present day. These peony distribution places above did have dialects in ancient times.

(3) “Yao Huang, Wei Zi”. In Chinese poems and songs reciting peony, Yao Huang Wei Zi often refers to peony. Yao Huang and Wei Zi are only two traditional varieties of peony. Yao Huang and Wei Zi are only two conventional varieties of peony, and people call Yao Huang the king of flowers and Wei Zi the queen of flowers; accordingly, the literati use Yao Huang Wei Zi as a synonym for peony (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Peony “King of Flowers” – “Yao Huang”,  
Peony “Queen of Flowers” – “Wei Zi”

Source: Photographed by a researcher at Peony Park, Luoyang, 2023

(4) “King of Flowers”. This title comes from the Tang Dynasty, when the whole country loved peonies, and they were given this name. Xue Fengxiang recorded in *the History of Bo Zhou Peony that the Tang people called the peony the king of flowers, and until now, the peony is still called the king of flowers by the Chinese people.*

(5) “Flower”. Ouyang Xiu, a poet of the Song Dynasty, wrote in his *Records of Peony in Luoyang* that the peony is not named but is called a flower. The peony is said to be the only actual flower in the world. This also reflects the prevalence of peony in Luoyang at that time. The people of Luoyang in the Tang Dynasty only considered the peony as a flower.

(6) “Luoyang Flower”. China's peonies are planted in Luoyang, Beijing, Heze, Peng Zhou, Lin Xia, Tong Ling County, etc. Although peonies can be grown in many parts of the country, Luoyang peonies are better in variety and large flowers. The peony has gained the reputation of being “The best peony in the world” after it has bonded with Luoyang, so it has been nicknamed the “Luoyang flower.”

### 2.1.3 Analysis of the Current Name “Peony”

Li Shizhen of the Ming Dynasty recorded the origin of the name “Mou Dan” in his *Compendium of Materia Medica* (Figure 4). The peony is called “Mou” because it produces stems on its roots even though it bears seeds. Its red flowers are called “Dan” (Li, 1979, p. 12). When the word “Mou” is used for plants, it refers to the male plant, which does not bear seeds. Ancient people found that peonies reproduce asexually in nature, mainly through the stems on the roots, so they are called “Mou.” The peony is an androdioecious plant without distinguishing between male and female plants. However, in nature, the germination rate of peony seeds is meager, and peony mainly reproduces asexually by rooting out of stems, which is related to the meaning of “Mou” (Lin & Chen, 2017, p.12). In addition, after a long period of artificial cultivation, a wide variety of peonies have been formed. In some varieties, the pistils and stamens have all turned into petals, which increases the ornamental value but loses the ability to bear seeds, which is entirely consistent with the meaning of “Mou” (Figure 5).



Figure 4 Normal pistils and stamens on a peony

Source: Photographed in by researcher at Peony Park, Luoyang, 2023



*Figure 5 Peony flowers with stamens turn into petals and cannot produce seeds, corresponding to the meaning of “Mou.”*

Source: Photographed by a researcher at Peony Park, Luoyang, 2023

The Compendium of Materia Medica explains that the word “Dan” in “Mou Dan” refers to the color of the peony flower. However, some experts do not agree with this statement and believe that “Dan” should refer to the color of the peony root. Most of the flowers of wild peonies are white, and red ones are rare, and most of the red varieties were cultivated at a later stage. Moreover, in the early days, people used peony as a medicinal herb by using its root, and the part used for medicinal purposes was known as “Dan Pi”<sup>7</sup>(Figure 6), which is reddish.



*Figure 6 The connotation of the word “Dan” is consistent with the peony’s crimson roots*

Source: Image from Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com/images/search>), 2022

<sup>7</sup> Dan Pi, the root bark of peony, is a traditional Chinese medicine with the effects of clearing heat and cooling blood, harmonizing blood and eliminating blood stasis.

## 2.2 Diverse Perspectives on the Peony's Origin

### 2.2.1 The Wild Peony's Origin

Records on peonies can be explored from two aspects: firstly, pharmacological records, i.e., those of wild peonies, and secondly, records of cultivated peonies, mainly referring to the ornamental cultivation of peonies.

The first pharmacological record of peony was recorded in Ouyang Xiu's *Records of Peony in Luoyang*, which states that Peony did not contain any text at the beginning but contained medicines in traditional Chinese medicine (Ou Yang, 2010). This is the most direct pharmacological record that can be verified. This is the most direct pharmacological record that can be verified (Figure 7) (Gansu Provincial Museum, 1975). Based on this estimation, peony has been used in medicine for more than 1,900 years, and the use of peony as an essential medicinal herb in ancient times has been recorded in the classic literature on herbs such as the Classical Evidence of the Materia Medica, Newly Revised Materia Medica, and Compendium of Materia Medica.



Figure 7 Medical slips from the Eastern Han era recording prescriptions for peonies

Source: Unearthed in Cypress Township, Wu Wei County, Gansu, 2023 (

<https://www.bing.com/images/search>)

### 2.2.2 How Cultivated Peonies Came to Be

Cultivation, domestication, and artificial hybridization can produce thousands of cultivated peonies. The academic world has many different views on the origin of cultivated peony. One view is that it began in the Tang Dynasty, and another view is

that it started before the Tang Dynasty, which can be further divided into the claims that it began in the Sui Dynasty, the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Jin Dynasty, and others (Lin & Chen, 2017, p.12). According to historical evidence, it is indisputable that peony entered the stage of ornamental cultivation in the Tang Dynasty, based on the record of Liu Zongyuan's *Long Cheng Lu* of the Tang Dynasty: Tang Gaozong<sup>8</sup> feasted his ministers to enjoy double-headed peony (Liu, 2000, p. 148, 151), which indicates that peony was cultivated in the palace during the period of Tang Gaozong, which was exclusively used for the appreciation of the royal nobles in the palace. According to Duan Chengshi's *Youyang Miscellany Chopper* of the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Mu Zong<sup>9</sup> planted peonies with thousands of leaves in front of his palace. The flowers began to blossom, and the aroma of the peonies was overwhelming (Duan, 2000, p.701). Together with nearly 500 peony poems and lyrics in the All-Tang Poetry, it confirms the glorious history of peony cultivation in the Tang Dynasty (Dai, 2008).

It is indisputable that peonies were cultivated for ornamental purposes in the Tang Dynasty. Still, the key lies in the question of whether or not cultivated peonies appeared before the Tang Dynasty or even earlier. Taking this issue further forward, I tend to lean towards the viewpoint of Mr. Yan Shuangxi of Henan Agricultural University that the cultivation of peonies began in the Sui Dynasty, which is mainly based on the record of the ancient Chinese novel *Hai San Ji* records Emperor Yang of Sui Dynasty<sup>10</sup> set up a land of 200 miles for the West Garden<sup>11</sup> and urged the whole world to enter into the flower garden, and the Yi State entered into 20 boxes of peony. It can be seen that although the number of cultivated peonies was relatively small in the Sui Dynasty, the developed places were mostly found in the palace. It can be seen that although the number of peonies grown in the Sui Dynasty was relatively small, and the places where peonies were cultivated were mostly found in the palace, it is enough to prove that peonies were already grown artificially in the Sui Dynasty (Yan, 1987, p.92-100).

The author agrees that peony cultivation began in the Sui Dynasty for three

<sup>8</sup> Li Zhi, Emperor Gaozong of Tang (July 21, 628 - December 27, 683) was the third emperor of the Tang dynasty.

<sup>9</sup> Li Heng, Mu Zong of the Tang Dynasty (July 26, 795 - February 25, 824) was the twelfth emperor.

<sup>10</sup> Yang Guang (569 - 618) was the second emperor of the Sui Dynasty.

<sup>11</sup> The First royal garden in Chinese history, "Xi Yuan" (today known as "Xi Yuan Park in Luoyang City, Henan Province"), was constructed by Emperor Yang in 605 A.D.

reasons: First, Emperor Yang of Sui built the Xi Yuan Park in Luoyang, recorded in monographs such as *Hai Shan Ji*. Second, there is a record of peonies placed in the bedroom of Emperor Wen of Sui<sup>12</sup> in the *Qing Yi Lu* of Song Dynasty by Tao Gu, which shows that peonies were placed in the bedroom and must have been cultivated (Tao, 2001, p.92). Thirdly, works on peony literature and art emerged in large quantities in the Tang Dynasty. Forming a large-scale peony required a specific accumulation process in time, and it should not have begun only in the Tang Dynasty.

To sum up, according to the materials available, the author believes that the origin of artificial peony cultivation should be the Sui Dynasty. Therefore, peony ornamental cultivation has lasted for more than 1,600 years. If it is traced back to the past, it needs more evidence to be excavated and supported.

### 3. Reasons for Luoyang Peony Culture's Growth

#### 3.1 Luoyang Is a Great Place to Grow Peonies

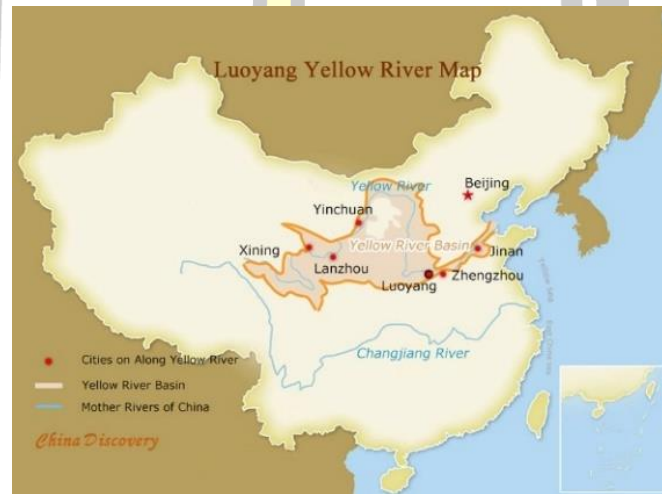
Luoyang is located in the central plains of China, the western part of Henan Province, longitude E112° 26' 50.37" , latitude N34° 37' 9.01" , across the middle reaches of the Yellow River on both sides of the north and south coasts, the ancient because it is located in the northern part of the Luo River, the north of the water is known as the "Yang," so the name "Luoyang" (Figure 8). In ancient times, it was also known as Xi Jing, Xi Hao, Luo Yi, Luo Jing, etc. Luoyang, in the middle of the world, known as "the hinterland of nine continents," now has jurisdiction over one city, eight counties, and six districts, with a total area of 15,208 square kilometers and an urban area of 544 square kilometers, and a resident population of 7,069,000 people at the end of 2021 (Xu, 1996, p.3).

Luoyang has a complex topography and landscape, with high terrain in the west and south and low terrain in the center and east. The eastern part of the city is a hilly valley, the northern and central part of the city is hilly, the south-central part is a low mountainous area, and the south-western part is a middle mountainous area (Liu & Wang, 2000, p.75-81). Liu Bang<sup>13</sup>, the founder of the Han Dynasty, once said, I have

<sup>12</sup> Yang Jian (July 21, 541 - August 13, 604) was the founding emperor of the Sui Dynasty.

<sup>13</sup> Liu Bang (256 BC or 247 BC - June 1, 195 BC), the Gao Di of the Han Dynasty, was the founding emperor of

traveled a lot in the world but have only seen Canyang (Luoyang). Emperor Yang of Sui ordered the transfer of the capital to Luoyang in the second year of his ascension. Emperor Yang of Sui exclaimed that Luoyang was the best place in the world because of its excellent topography and feng shui, convenient land and water transport, and safe terrain. It can be seen that Luoyang, with its unique geographical location and suitable climate, has been an excellent place to build up the country and recuperate since ancient times.



*Figure 8 Regional map of Luoyang*  
Source: China Discovery, 2022

Luoyang is a good place for human habitation and a precious place for the growth of flowers and trees. Ouyang Xiu's poem reads, Luoyang has the most favorable ground for flowers, and peonies are especially strange worldwide. It shows that peonies grow well in Luoyang because of their geographical location (Xu, 1996, p.12, 14). When a researcher visited the Peony Museum in Luoyang, a garden expert said that Luoyang was a strange place where peonies grew well, but when they went abroad, they slowly deteriorated, or at least their flowers were not as big as they used to be. The peony in the field was general, and when it came to Luoyang, it was "resurrected. Many people in Luoyang have this feeling.

The geographical location of Luoyang is suitable for peony growth, one of which is the climate. Luoyang belongs to the warm temperate continental monsoon climate, with four distinct seasons, namely, spring breeze, summer rain, autumn coolness, and

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the Han Dynasty and the first emperor of commoner (family) origin in Chinese history.

winter snow, suitable temperature (average temperature of 14.86 degrees Celsius), not too hot in summer and not too cold in winter, sufficient sunshine and moderate rainfall (average annual precipitation of about 600 millimeters). In the spring of February and March, when the temperature in Luoyang is above freezing, peonies slowly sprout, revealing their young leaves and pointed buds, and in mid-to-late April, when the temperature ranges from 10°C to 25°C, peony petals slowly open. The climate of Luoyang matches well with the needs of the peony's growth cycle (Xu, 1996).

The second is soil. Since ancient times, there has been a folk proverb that if you plant suitable peonies, you must take soil from Luoyang, which explains the symbiotic relationship between peonies and the local soil environment of Luoyang. There are more than 27,000 dry and branched rivers in the Luoyang area, of which more than 7,500 have water year-round or seasonally, and there are 34 larger tributaries with watersheds of more than 100 square kilometers (Liu & Wang, 2000, p.75-81). Numerous rivers, such as the Yellow River, Luo River, Yi River, and so on, have been alleviated together to form the Luoyang Basin, which is fertile and dense, which is very favorable to the growth of peony plants, which is relatively drought-loving and fearful of waterlogging (Figure 9).

The Geological Survey Institute of Henan Province and the Geology and Mining Bureau of Luoyang City announced the results of an investigation, which found that the ancient volcanic rocks widely distributed in the basin of the Yi River and the Luo River had been weathered into fine sand and clay through hundreds of millions of years of geological action and were carried by the river and deposited in the lower reaches of the Yi and Luo Rivers, so that the content of all kinds of microelements in the soil in the area of Luoyang, especially manganese, copper, zinc and molybdenum, was significantly higher than that of the other areas. Manganese, zinc, and molybdenum are precisely the essential trace elements for plant growth, and heavy metals such as cadmium and copper, which are usually regarded as harmful, have been proven to have a significant helping function for the development of peonies (Xu, 1996, p.35-40).

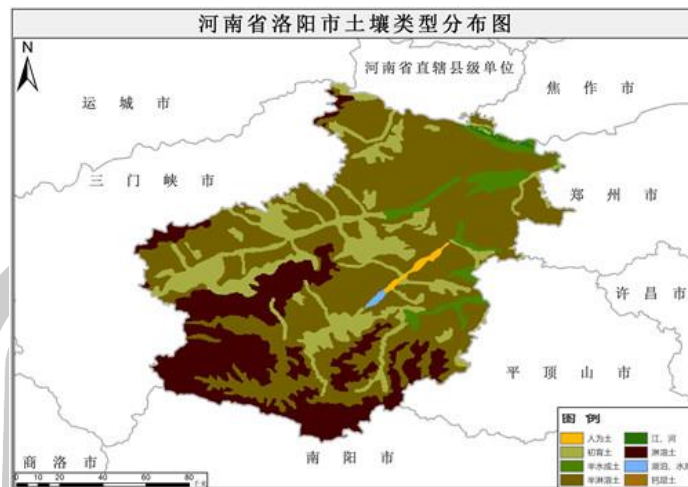


Figure 9 Distribution of soil types in Luoyang

Source: China Geographic Remote Sensing Ecology Network, 2021

### 3.2 The Historical and Cultural Background of Luoyang

#### 3.2.1 Historical background of the thousand-year imperial capital of Luoyang

If you want to ask about the rise and fall of things in the past and present, please only look at the city of Luoyang (Sima Guang, *Passing through the Old City of Luoyang*) (Dai, 2008, p.211). Luoyang has more than 5000 years of civilization, more than 4000 years of urban history, and more than 1500 years of history founding the capital. It is called the “Thousand-Year Imperial Capital,” the earliest capital in China, and it has the most extended duration and the most significant number of dynasties. With a history of over 5000 years of civilization, 4000 years of urban history, and 1500 years of capital-building history, Luoyang is known as the Thousand-Year Imperial Capital, the earliest capital city in China with the most extended history and the most significant number of dynasties, the important birthplace of the Chinese civilization, the starting point of the Silk Road in the East, and the vital hub of the Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal. There are six world cultural heritages, two world geological parks, five national 5A scenic spots, nine representative national non-legacy projects, and it has been selected as a “National Famous Historical and Cultural City,” “China’s Excellent Tourism City,” “National Culture and Tourism Consumption Demonstration City” and so on.

Starting from the Xia Dynasty, there were successively Shang, Western Zhou,

Eastern Zhou, Eastern Han, Cao Wei, Western Jin, Northern Wei, Sui, Tang, Hou Liang, Later Tang, and Later Jin. A total of 13 dynasties set up their capitals in Luoyang, with 105 emperors having ruled there, and there were also the dynasties of Xin Mang, Hou Zhao, Northern Zhou, Later Han, Northern Song, and Jin, etc., which used it as a companion capital (Retrieved from <http://www.hm160.cn>). The people of Luoyang regard Luoyang as the capital of peony. People in Luoyang attribute the magical connection between Luoyang and peonies to the ancient capital's "earthly energy" and "kingly energy."

### 3.2.2 Luoyang's thick and rich cultural heritage

For more than 1,500 years, Luoyang served as the country's political, economic, cultural, and transport center, where many famous historical figures lived, and many scientific and cultural achievements were born for the benefit of future generations. Various cultures mingled in Luoyang, leaving a rich cultural heritage here.

The historical tradition of Luoyang's flourishing gardens and flowers. Emperors, generals, princes, and noblemen of successive dynasties have built countless forest gardens here, in addition to their palaces and official residences, private houses, and mansions. The Eastern Han Dynasty built the Shang Lin Garden, Hsien Yang Yuan, Hongde Yuan, etc. The Wei and Jin Dynasty built the Fang Lin Garden, Hua Lin Garden, Jingu Garden, West Tour Garden, etc. The Sui and Tang Dynasty built the West Garden, the Forbidden Garden, the Shang Lin Garden, the Ping Quan Garden, etc. Song Dynasty Luoyang gardens have been developed to a much higher level regarding the number of horticulture plants. The Song Man Li Gefei's *Record of Famous Gardens in Luoyang* described more than twenty famous gardens in Luoyang at that time, such as Fu Zheng Park, Tian Wang Garden, Dong's East Garden, Dong's West Garden, Zhao Han Wang Garden, and so on (Li, 1992). The flourishing of gardens is always decorated with flowers and trees, and the flourishing of flowers and trees in Luoyang has been recorded in countless historical records.

The Longmen Grottoes represent cave culture. Longmen Grottoes is a world-class tourist attraction and the most typical representative of Buddhist culture in Luoyang, attracting many domestic and foreign tourists annually. Longmen Grottoes were first excavated in 494 years after Emperor Xiaowen moved the capital to Luoyang in the Northern Wei Dynasty. Since then, they have been mined for more

than 1,400 years through the Eastern Wei Dynasty, the Western Wei Dynasty, the Northern Qi Dynasty, the Northern Zhou Dynasty, the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and the Northern Song Dynasty. The Longmen Grottoes have 2,345 niches, more than 100,000 statues, 50 pagodas, and more than 2,860 inscriptions. In 2000, the Longmen Grottoes were inscribed on *the World Heritage List*, and the caves preserve a large number of religious, fine arts, architectural, calligraphic, musical, clothing, medical, and other aspects of the physical material, and is a large-scale museum of stone carving art (Retrieved from <https://baike.so.com>).

Tang Tri-Color Glazed Ceramics represents the ceramic culture. Tang Tri-Color Glazed Ceramics art is an ancient Chinese ceramic firing art treasure and an intangible national cultural heritage. Brightly colored, lively, and lifelike. It has become one of Luoyang's most important representatives, adding an essential piece of tourism development in Luoyang (Byczynski, L., 1994). In addition, Li Xuewu, a native of Luoyang, based on inheriting the traditional ceramic craft of Tang Three Colors, combined with the aesthetics of the general public and the characteristics of Luoyang, created a new school of ceramic art based on the firing technique of Tang White Porcelain - Luoyang Peony Porcelain, and the birth of the new type of art porcelain "Peony Porcelain," which made peonies continue to be elegant on the porcelain and was praised as It was hailed as the never withering peony flower.

Luoyang soup culture. Luoyang food is famous for its soup culture. Whether it is the magnificent 24-style water seating or the usual daily breakfast and dinner of tofu soup, meatball soup, and non-turning soup, soup is an essential part of Luoyang food. Foreign tourists often come to Luoyang to experience the authentic Luoyang soup food, which is not experienced in other regions. Foreign tourists often come to Luoyang to experience authentic Luoyang soup food, a gastronomic enjoyment they will not participate in in other areas.

(5) Philosophy and Religious Culture. China's earliest historical document, Hetu and Luoshu,<sup>14</sup> is a Chinese Taoist, Confucianist, metaphysical, and scientific document that originated in Luoyang. Ban Gu's *Book of Han*, Laozi's *Tao-te Ching*, and Sima Guang's *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* were all written in Luoyang. The White Horse

<sup>14</sup> Hetu and Luoshu, two mysterious patterns handed down from ancient China, contains the profound theory of cosmic astrology, known as the "Magic Cube of the Universe", is the source of Chinese culture, yin and yang, the five elements of the arts and mathematics.

Temple in Luoyang is the birthplace of Buddhism in China and was the first temple built after Buddhism was introduced to China in the Eastern Han Dynasty (Liu, 2021, p.177-179).

The city of Luoyang presents a thick historical and cultural heritage and urban charm. Before the establishment of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, these historical and cultural resources of Luoyang were presented in a fragmented form, which gave tourists the impression of a single culture in Luoyang. Through the integration of local historical and cultural resources, supported by the historical development of the thousand-year imperial capital of Luoyang, the cultural resources of the city of Luoyang, and the peony flower as the medium, forming the basis for building the tourism festival brand of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

### 3.3 Luoyang People's Peony Cultivation Wisdom

Six of China's nine major wild peony varieties were found in Luoyang. It is evident that Luoyang is one of the earliest places of origin of wild peonies in China, and it is also an essential place of dissemination with a long history of cultivation.

As introduced earlier, the cultivation of peonies by the Luoyang people is documented to have started in the Sui Dynasty. In 604 A.D., Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty built the capital of Luoyang. The *Hai San Records* read that Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty set up a 200-mile area for the Western Garden and ordered the world to import flowers. Yizhou imported 20 boxes of peonies, including Heh red, Fei Lai red, Yuan Jia red, Drunken Yan red, Yun red, Tian Wai red, Yifu Yellow, Soft Stripe Yellow, and Shivering Wind Jiao... Peony cultivation techniques were already available in the Sui Dynasty.

Since the Tang Dynasty, the world has loved peonies (Song Dynasty, Zhou Dunyi, *The Sermon on the Love of Lotus*). In the early Tang Dynasty, since Emperor Xuan Zong of Tang<sup>15</sup> loved peonies, the white wild varieties could not satisfy his ornamental requirements, so there were a lot of specialized florists to cultivate and manage peonies. Song Shanfu, a native of Luoyang in the Tang Dynasty, who was good at horticulture, was praised for his skill in improving peony colors, and he was

<sup>15</sup> Li Longji, Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (685A.D.-762 A.D.) Ninth Emperor of the Tang Dynasty.

honored by the people of the time as a florist, and they were astonished to see that he had the best skills in the world (Liu, 2000, p.3). The emergence of colored peony cultivation technology changed the standard of peony aesthetics, and peonies began appearing in the world with a big red and purple image. Cultivation of peonies was widespread in Luoyang's palaces, temples, celebrities' houses, and people's residences, and at this time, there were about 40 or more varieties of peonies.

In the Tang Dynasty, peonies began to flourish in Luoyang after Wu Zetian<sup>16</sup>, who loved peonies so much that she could be regarded as a significant figure in the development of peonies in Luoyang. In Li Ruzhen's *Mirror Flowers* of the Qing Dynasty, there is a legend about peonies in Luoyang. Wu Zetian was drunk in winter and ordered all the flowers to open up. On the next day, only the peonies disobeyed the order. They did not open, so Wu Zetian was furious and ordered the peonies to open up with fire before noon, and if they broke the order, their seeds had to be exterminated. The peonies were opened up on time. Of course, this folk legend is not credible, but it also shows that the peony cultivation technique of heat to promote flowering might have already existed in this period (Figure 10). The poet Bai Juyi of the Tang Dynasty, in his poem *Two Poems on Peony Flowers*, described the peony cultivation technology in Luoyang, which had already reached a certain level at that time, in which peonies were given umbrellas surrounded by fences, transplanted, and ensured that they would not change color, which is the same as today's scene of valuable peonies being surrounded by giant umbrellas and fences at the Peony Cultural Festival of China. The scene is the same.



*Figure 10 Extending the blooming period of peonies with sunshades*

Source: Photographed by a researcher at Shenzhou Peony Garden, Luoyang, 2023

<sup>16</sup> Wu Zetian (February 17, 624A.D. - December 16, 705 A.D.) was Chinese history's only orthodox female emperor.

During the Song dynasties, people became more familiar with the peony's growth habit and mastered its growth cycle. The cultivation techniques of Luoyang peony formed a complete system from soil selection, cultivation season, water and fertilizer management, grafting and propagation, breeding of varieties, branching and pruning, and prevention of pests, etc., and the scale of cultivation of the peony in Luoyang reached an unprecedented level. According to Ouyang Xiu's *Luoyang Peony Records and Customs No. 3*, there was a flower grower surnamed Dong Men in Luoyang at that time, known as "Gate Garden," who was a master of peony grafting, and rich and powerful people asked him to graft peonies. He would pay for grafting in autumn and then pay for the flowers in the spring of the coming year, and it was worth 5000 yuan to graft one peony plant alive. It was recorded in Zhang Ruyi's *Luoyang Flower Catalogue* during the reign of Emperor Zhezong of the Song Dynasty that at this time, the number of peony varieties had reached 119, among which there were widely famous and valuable varieties, such as "Luoyang Red," "Yao Huang," "Wei Zi," etc., all of which are treasures with a history of more than 800 years (Liu, 2000, p.26).

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the cultivation technology of peonies became more perfect, and flower growers made a scientific summary of eight aspects of peonies, such as seeding, planting, dividing, connecting, watering, raising, healing, and avoiding. By the Qing Dynasty, there were 163 varieties of peonies. The cultivation techniques of ancient Luoyang peonies still have a particular guiding significance to the production of peonies.

From the end of the Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, peonies were withering away due to the country's turmoil, wars, and people's insecurity, and only 50 varieties of peonies were left in Luoyang. After founding the Republic of China, based on inheriting and restoring the traditional peony cultivation techniques, the Luoyang people further mastered the biological characteristics, ecological habits, and life cycle of peonies, etc. In the 1950s, to restore peony cultivation, Luoyang transplanted a large number of peonies and developed peony cultivation techniques, and set up the China Peony Research Institute, where a group of masters of peony cultivation, such as Wang Yuehong, Wei Chunmei, and Zhang Huanling, emerged and made outstanding achievements in the cultivation techniques of peony, especially in

the cultivation techniques of peony, (Liu, 2003, p. 70).

The emergence of many peony varieties took time to happen. The laws of peony cultivation mastered by Luoyang people nowadays come from the deep and loyal love of the people of Luoyang for peonies, the thousands of explorations into the unknown by their predecessors, and the wisdom, inheritance, and perseverance of peony masters and horticulturalists who have been emerging from generation to generation to select and breed peonies diligently. Persistence. Thousands of varieties have been cultivated, making Luoyang a treasure trove of essential varieties of Chinese peonies. In February 2007, the cultivation techniques of Luoyang peonies were selected as one of the first batches of intangible cultural heritages in Henan Province.

#### **4. An Overview of the Development of Luoyang Peony Culture in History**

##### **4.1 Origin of Luoyang Peony Culture**

###### **4.1.1 Overview of Luoyang Peony Culture**

Luoyang peony culture belongs to the superstructure, involving almost all cultural fields such as philosophy, religion, literature, art, education, customs, folklore, etc., compatible with many sciences, and constituting an extensive range, which eventually formed a multidisciplinary science of Luoyang peony culture that includes botany, horticulture, pharmacology, geography, literature, art, folklore, and other disciplines. It is an integral part of the culture of the Chinese nation and the science of Chinese mythology (Yuan & Wan, 2002, p. 67).

The Luoyang peony culture can be divided into different levels and aspects, such as academic culture, language culture, folk culture, and physical culture:

Academic culture: It contains peony philosophy, peony religion, peony natural science, peony humanities, peony literature, art, etc., characterized by written carriers and writings. For example, the cultural phenomenon formed by recognizing the natural attributes of peony through modern scientific knowledge and adopting various technical means to rationally develop and utilize the resources of peonies, such as multiple cultivation techniques, breed selection and breeding techniques, bonsai and pot planting techniques, production and application of medicinal herbs, relevant laws and regulations, etc. (Retrieved from <https://max.book118.com>). It also contains the

general term for specific literary and artistic works reflecting people's emotion and sensibility towards peony, such as poetry, calligraphy, painting, and other works.

Language and writing: It mainly refers to the oral language of folklore, such as the flower language and interest in peonies, myths, and legends, as well as the language works with peonies as the content of theatre, film, and music about peony handed down through the ages in China, which are the tools used in the academic culture of peony and the foundation of academics.

Folk culture: It is expressed in flower-appreciation activities, social customs, and so on, and does not necessarily have a written carrier. For example, peony viewing activities during the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, peony diets, lanterns, and worship of the Peony God of Flowers.

Physical culture: various buildings, ceramics, carvings, and cultural relics handed down through the ages. Most are manifested in the architecture, furniture carvings, craft carvings, and the artistic conception and design of peony-specialized gardens in the palace and folklore.

Therefore, all the books, historical materials, monographs, anthologies, notes on the content of Luoyang Peony, poems and fugues on Peony, stories and legends, novels, legends, legends, calligraphy, paintings, operas, movies, TV, patterns, paintings, songs, gardens with peony as the theme, all kinds of appreciating activities (e.g., flower Festivals, flower exhibitions, book exhibitions, painting exhibitions), and economic and cultural activities related to peony belong to the category of Luoyang peony culture. The Luoyang peony culture is a part of the national culture (Wang, 1990, p.21-24).

Luoyang peony culture is a part of national culture. Compared with other types of culture, Luoyang peony culture has more robust biological, pharmacological, horticultural, aesthetic, and literary characteristics, as well as a more robust local flavor, a stronger sense of richness and wealth, a stronger reminiscence of life, a more robust atmosphere of life, a more substantial atmosphere for tourism and so on (Yuan & Wan, 2002, p.90). The cultural information provided in Luoyang peony culture can reflect the general characteristics of Chinese culture, which Professor Li Baoguang

called the “Cultural Holographic”<sup>17</sup> phenomenon (Li, 1994, p. 56).

#### 4.1.2 Luoyang Peony Culture’s Rise in the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD)

From the biological and historical evidence of peony in the previous section, we can see that the origin of Chinese peony culture can be regarded as peony entering the field of literature if it is counted from the entry of peony into poetry in the *Classic of Poetry*. Suppose the peony was recorded as a medicinal plant in *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* during the Qin-Han period. In that case, the peony can be regarded as a peony entering the pharmacy field. If the peony appeared in the famous painting *Luo Shen Fu* of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the peony could be considered as entering the field of art (Jin & Wang, 2009, p.199).

As for the formation of peony culture in Luoyang, according to historical records, Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty built the Western Garden in Luoyang and ordered the world to supply peonies and flowers. Twenty boxes of peonies were imported from Yizhou and were planted in the Western Garden. Since then, peonies were artificially cultivated for the first time and entered the royal gardens (Yuan & Wang, 2002, p.32). As the emperor planted peonies in the palace garden and the culture of enjoying peonies gradually influenced the officials and people below, the people of Luoyang loved and respected peonies, and the peony culture of Luoyang began to rise in an absolute sense.

After the rise of peony culture in Luoyang and the gradual expansion of the scale of peony viewing in Luoyang, it soon developed and prospered. Peony cultivation in Luoyang began in the Sui Dynasty, flourished in the Tang Dynasty, and became famous in the Song Dynasty. The country was peaceful and prosperous during these dynasties, with good governance and harmony. Luoyang was the imperial or the accompanying capital and an important political, economic, and cultural center in these dynasties. The rulers favored peonies; some of them set up the West Garden to plant peonies, some of them ordered the transplant of peonies to the Upper Garden<sup>18</sup>, and some of them made the folk repair the gardens and plant peonies extensively, which gradually formed a peony-viewing solid atmosphere. As a result, a stable

<sup>17</sup> Prof. Li Baoguang proposed the term "cultural holography" based on the "holographic theory," which is the doctrine of people studying the characteristics and laws of the comprehensive relationship between things and information. A part of the information is often a microcosm of the whole, reflecting the complete relationship between things.

<sup>18</sup> Upper Garden: the royal ornamental garden established by Emperor Wu Zetian.

peony-viewing atmosphere was steadily created. Literati and scholars concentrated in Luoyang, and peony literature, art, folklore, and flower events were frequently sung, which made the peony in Luoyang the center of attention, and the peony cultural system in Luoyang was gradually developed (Yuan & Wan, 2002, p.67).

## 4.2 Historical Development of Luoyang Peony Culture

### 4.2.1 The Luoyang Peony Festival in the Tang Dynasty (619-960 AD)

Peony entered into artificial cultivation in the Sui Dynasty. However, the history of the Sui Dynasty was only 27 years, so peonies could only be planted on a small scale in the whole country in such a short period. Therefore, the first flourishing period of peonies in history should be the Tang Dynasty, which followed the Sui Dynasty. The Tang Emperor Li's family was a high-ranking official in the Sui Dynasty, so the practice of planting peonies in the palace was inherited after he became an emperor. Also, because the hometown of Empress Wu Zetian, Shanxi, was the distribution place of wild peonies, Empress Wu planted peonies all over Luoyang, where she ascended to the throne. Since then, under the careful cultivation of peony farmers, the varieties of peonies in Luoyang were constantly updated, and more and more people came to see the flowers, which laid the foundation for Luoyang to become an early peony blooming place in China. During the Tang Dynasty, peonies were planted more and more widely in Luoyang, with more and more varieties, and the culture of peonies in Luoyang was fully developed.

Peonies were found in various fields of art, such as poems and songs, literati paintings, decorative embroideries, bronze ornaments, ceramics and jade carvings, and inscriptions and murals. In particular, peony poems emerged in significant numbers in the Tang Dynasty. The author searched the 42,863 poems of 2,529 poets of the Tang Dynasty with the keyword "Peony" in the *All-Tang Dynasty Poetry Library*, and 102 poems described the peony of Luoyang in the Tang Dynasty after checking them. The peony poems of these famous poets were widely disseminated, which further increased the influence of the peony of Luoyang in the whole country. The impact of Luoyang peony in the entire region was further grown (Retrieved from <http://www3.zzu.edu.cn>). For example, Liu Yuxi's *Only the Peony is the True National Color*, and *It Moves the Capital When in Bloom* are famous poems depicting

the peony bloom in Luoyang at that time. Li Bai's *Clouds Think of Clothes and Flowers Think of faces*, and the dew is thick on the threshold in the spring breeze, a song of ancient times, depicting the peony's national colors and heavenly scent. The famous paintings of Zhou Fang, a painter in the Tang Dynasty, were also widely disseminated in the country. In the famous painting of Zhou Fang, *The Painting of Ladies with Flower Hairpins*, it can be seen that the ladies are wearing peonies in full bloom on their heads, which also reflects that it was the fashion of the Tang people to wear peonies on the top of their heads, which shows that the peony custom flourished in Luoyang during the Tang Dynasty.

In the middle of the Tang Dynasty (800 AD -900 AD), the social atmosphere was open, and the people followed the example of the aristocrats in the imperial palace in enjoying peonies. The Tang poet Bai Juyi's *Peony Fang* describes that when the peonies bloomed, almost everyone in Luoyang enjoyed them. In the late Tang Dynasty (900-960 AD), some merchants found business opportunities from the prevalence of peony viewing, and business-minded officials made use of their authority to encircle land in the suburbs and began to cultivate and plant peony flowers on a large scale, as well as to conduct commodity trading. Bai Juyi wrote in *Ten Songs of Qinzong Yin - Buying Flowers*, depicted that the price of a clump of dark-colored peony flowers was equal to the tax paid by ten medium-sized families in a year, which showed that the cost of the best peonies was so expensive that it was difficult for the ordinary people to buy them (Li, 1998, p. 20).

However, Luoyang's royal gardens were destroyed after the "An Shi Rebellion"<sup>19</sup>. The trend of enjoying peonies in the gardens gradually diminished, but the custom of peony viewing and cultivation among the people did not stop. The peony culture of Luoyang continued to develop and grow at this time.

#### 4.2.2 "Ten Thousand Flowers Festival" appearance in the Song Dynasty (961 AD -1270 AD)

In the prosperous Tang Dynasty, the peony was endowed with cultural imagery symbolizing the country's prosperity. During the Song Dynasty, peonies were taken entirely out of the gardens of the imperial palaces. They entered the homes of ordinary

<sup>19</sup> An Shi Rebellion, December 16, 755-February 17, 763, a civil war in which the Tang Dynasty fought for dominance.

people, becoming a flowering plant for everyone to enjoy, and the people of the Song Dynasty held peonies in high esteem. Everyone, from the nobles of the imperial palaces to the ordinary people, strongly desired to perpetuate the great prosperity of the Tang Dynasty. Thus, the peony was given supreme status in the conception of the Song people. Especially during the Northern Song Dynasty (961-1127 AD), Chinese society was in a relatively stable state for a long time, with a developed commodity economy, expanding cities, colorful cultural life of the citizens, and the prevalence of hedonism, all of which pushed up the improvement of peony cultivation techniques and the expansion of the scale of peony cultivation. The development of peonies in Luoyang entered its heyday.

During the Song Dynasty, not only did peony appreciation evolve into a folk custom and become an activity for all people, but also peony became one of the primary materials in the cultural fields of poetry, painting, porcelain, embroidery, sculpture, and religion, and peony culture penetrated every aspect of the social life of the Song Dynasty at this time (Li, 1998, p. 25). At this time, peony cultivation techniques were developing. The varieties of peonies were enriched, and a large number of monographs on peonies came into being, such as Ouyang Xiu's *Record of Peonies in Luoyang*, Zhou Shihou's *Record of Flowers and Trees in Luoyang* and Li Gefei's *Record of Famous Gardens in Luoyang*, etc. Among them, Ouyang Xiu's *Record of Peonies in Luoyang* was the first comprehensive peony study in China, which recorded not only the varieties of peonies and the floral customs of Luoyang but also the peonies. It not only recorded the peony varieties and Luoyang flower customs but also described the cultivation methods such as planting, cultivation, watering, and pest control, which provided essential documents for the study of peonies and the blooming of peonies in Luoyang during the Song Dynasty, and it was written in the book that most Luoyang people had flowers in their homes (Ou Yang, 1998, p.117).

The unprecedented scale of peony cultivation and viewing in the Song Dynasty saw that every time the flowers bloomed, both the literati and the ordinary people in Luoyang competed to enjoy the flowers, and a festive flower-appreciation customary event, Ten Thousand Flowers Festival emerged in Luoyang (Li, 1998, p. 27). At that time, Qian Weiyan, the governor of Luoyang, loved peonies so much that he

organized a festival for people to enjoy. Thus, this officially organized festival was dedicated to peony viewing. When the flowers were in full bloom, peonies were used as barriers, and bamboo tubes were filled with water, inserted with peonies in full bloom, and hung on beams and pillars, so it could be said that all eyes were covered with flowers. The elegant people from all walks of life met friends with flowers, sang songs over wine, and composed poems, and the ornamental activities gradually entered into a good state (Zhang, 2007, p.4732). Under the influence of the government, the public also went out to enjoy peonies. Men and women, young and old, wearing peonies on their heads, gathered where the flowers bloomed, drinking wine and enjoying the artists' performances (Shao,1985, p.123). We can also see that during the Ten Thousand Flowers Festival of the Song Dynasty, a flower market was held at night, where people bought flowers, sold flowers, drank wine, and sang and danced all night.

To sum up, the author believes that the Ten Thousand Flowers Festival in Luoyang during the Northern Song Dynasty is the past of the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, and the traditional activity of the Peony Lantern Festival in the modern Peony Cultural Festival is inherited from it. For the first time in the history of China, peony festivals were held. It was in the background of the developed commodity economy in the Song Dynasty, and the prosperity of the peony complemented the development of the economy. In the author's opinion, this is mainly reflected in four aspects:

The Rise of Flower Master Profession. Ouyang Xiu's *Records of Peonies in Luoyang* recorded that rich people would invite a flower grower to their homes, make a contract in autumn, and pay him for his work when the flowers blossomed in the following spring, and a single "Yao Huang" could be worth as much as 5,000 copper coins (Ouyang,1998, p.117). At that time, peonies were planted in the homes of Luoyang people, and such a large-scale planting of peonies naturally required a large number of flower growers and even helpers to take care of the peonies, so the annual expenditure on flower catching and planting was a considerable amount of money for the people of Luoyang at that time.

Private Gardens Paid for Flower Appreciation. When Ouyang Xiu wrote about the variety "Wei Zi" in *Flower Interpretation*, he mentioned that the flower is in

bloom, if you want to enjoy it, each person will be charged ten Min<sup>20</sup>, and the Wei Clan receives ten Min a day (Ouyang, 1998, p.201). The poem describes the “Wei Zi” as a peculiar flower planted in Wei Renpu’s home. If one wants to see it, each person has to pay dozens of coins, so the minister of Wei is very economical, and he can collect nearly ten thousand coins only for the ticket to enjoy the flower every day.

The Sale of Peony Flowers. As mentioned before, night flower markets were for buying, selling, performing, and playing during the Ten Thousand Flowers Festival. Zheng Shi’s poem *Second Rhyme to Prime Minister Cheng’s Peony Viewing* said that the best flowers bloomed in Luoyang, and a horse carrying a gold cake will repurchase them (Zheng, 2005, p.105). Not only did the local people in Luoyang buy and sell peonies, but also people traveled from other places to Luoyang to buy peonies. Due to the high demand for peonies then, the price was speculated to be very expensive.

Tourism consumption brought by peonies. In the Song Dynasty, there were nearly a hundred poems about peonies. The author read them and found that many poets came to Luoyang specifically to enjoy peony flowers, and they were the “tourists” of a thousand years ago. The arrival of tourists would undoubtedly generate the consumption of food, clothing, housing, and transport. As mentioned above, people visited the Peony Flower Market at night. They drank wine, showing that the Peony Flower Market traded peony flowers and drove related industries such as catering, entertainment, etc. All of these things boosted the economy of the western capital, Luoyang City, and the economic development, in turn, would also promote the development of peony culture.

#### 4.2.3 Transfer of Peony Cultivation Centers after the Yuan Dynasty (1271 AD - 1944 AD)

During the Song Dynasty, after Luoyang peony entered its heyday, Qian Weiyan, the founder of Ten Thousand Flowers Society, began to pay “Tribute” to the imperial court, which meant paying tribute to the emperor for the local valuable flowers without compensation. The so-called “Tribute Flowers” are the free local useful flowers to the emperor. At first, only the best flowers were paid as tribute. However,

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<sup>20</sup> The ancient people called the strings of coins “Min”, one was about seven hundred and seventy coins.

after that, the ruling class's desire became increasingly inflated, and the imperial family and bureaucrats almost swept away the peonies in Luoyang. According to records, the imperial court monopolized the flowers even before they opened, and when they bloomed, they were transplanted away with the flowers and the soil. All the novelty of the flowers was plundered away, the people had no flowers to enjoy the natural enthusiasm for the retreat, there was no market, and the flower masters unprofitable will turn to other industries.

The political situation was chaotic towards the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. The people were in dire straits, the minorities in the north began to invade, and the political and economic status of Luoyang in China began to decline, so the people had no interest in enjoying peonies anymore. As a result, few new peony varieties appeared, and the area under cultivation was reduced (Zhang, 2007, p. 20). With the disappearance of the government-organized Ten Thousand Flowers Festival and the flower market, the flower Festivals began to be transferred to the private sector, and the Luoyang peony gradually declined.

Fortunately, the influence of Luoyang peony culture began to spread to the neighboring areas of Luoyang. Although the official Luoyang Flower Festival disappeared, when the Song Dynasty crossed south<sup>21</sup>, celebrities from all walks of life purchased some peony varieties and brought them south. Hence, the center of peony development began to move south. At the end of the Song Dynasty, peonies in Chen Zhou (Huai Yang, Henan Province), and Tian Peng (Chengdu, Sichuan Province) quietly emerged (Jin & Wang, 2009, p. 41). Several monographs on peonies appeared with local peonies as the object of study. The Peony Genealogy of Tian Peng is the most typical of these monographs, giving Tian Peng the name "Little Luoyang." The records in *The Peony Genealogy of Tian Peng* confirm this point and explain in detail that more than half of the sixty peony varieties recorded in the book came from Luoyang.

In the history of peony cultivation, the people of Luoyang went through a historical stage in the Yuan Dynasty in which peony was carried forward and backward, developed but relatively low. Then, in the Ming Dynasty, the influence of

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<sup>21</sup> The Southern Song Dynasty, also called Jianyan Nandu or Gaozong Nandu, is a historical event that occurred when King Kang Zhao Gou of the Northern Song Dynasty fled south to the Jiangnan region to find the Southern Song Dynasty. He did this to avoid being pursued by the female Jinns following him in the north.

the Luoyang peony culture began to spread to other regions and ethnic groups in China. Bo Zhou in Anhui Province became the new center of peony cultivation in China, and apart from Bo Zhou, where peonies were abundantly cultivated, peony cultivation in Cao Zhou Peony (present-day Heze City, Shandong Province) and Beijing also flourished. Peonies were grown in Gansu Lanzhou and Lin Xia in Gansu, as well as in Jiangyin, Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Shanghai in Jiangnan (Jin & Wang, 2009, p. 41).

During the Qing Dynasty, Cao Zhou (Heze City, Shandong Province) became the most famous peony-producing place in the country, cultivating many famous ancient masterpieces. The peony cultivation area in Cao Zhou had reached more than 500 mu in the Qing Dynasty, and more than 100,000 peonies were exported yearly and shipped to Guangzhou, Tianjin, Beijing, Hankou, Xi'an, and Jinan for sale.

In the early years of the Republic of China in Luoyang, the peony was once again in trouble due to the warlords and warlords. Later, during the "Cultural Revolution,"<sup>22</sup> peonies were regarded as poisonous weeds corrupting the spirit. More than 100,000 peonies planted in 200 mu in Luoyang were cut down and burnt as firewood. To protect the peony, some farmers claimed that it was a medicinal herb and that its skin, flowers, and roots could be used as medicine. Only then did some of the peonies in Luoyang remain, which also became the "seeds" for the restoration of the peony later on (Zhang, 2007, p.22). Throughout the history of the development of the Luoyang peony, it can be seen that when it flourished, it must have been a period of national wealth, social prosperity, and stability, and dynastic changes or wars often accompanied the loss of the peony.

As we can see from the above peony cultivation status in various dynasties, geographically speaking, Luoyang was the center of peony cultivation in ancient times, whether it is Cao Zhou, Hangzhou, or Hangzhou in East China, Lanzhou in Northwest China, or Chengdu in Southwest China, all transplanted peony varieties of Luoyang are cultivated and reproduced in various places. On the whole, the development of Luoyang peony culture, along with the development of cultivation of

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<sup>22</sup> The Cultural Revolution, officially dubbed the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," was a period of civil unrest from May 1966 to October 1976. It was unintentionally started by leaders and used as a prop by counter-revolutionary groups. The revolution caused grave consequences for the Party, the State, and the people of all ethnic groups, and it left behind terrible lessons.

Luoyang peonies, has experienced several significant booms and busts since the Sui Dynasty, including the Sui Dynasty (the early stage of development), Tang Dynasty (the blooming period), the “Anshi Rebellion” (the declining period), the Later Tang Dynasty (the restoration period), the Northern Song Dynasty (the blooming period), the “Jing Kang Rebellion” (period of decline), Southern Song Dynasty to Ming and Qing Dynasty (period of prosperity), its peony cultivation center also shifted, spread, and expanded and the influence of Luoyang peony culture began to penetrate from the center to the periphery and the cultures of other nationalities (Table 1).

*Table 3 Peony Cultivation Center Transfer and Diffusion in China*  
Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Dynasty	Sun Dynasty	Tang Dynasty	Five Dynasties	Northern Song Dynasty	Southern Song dynasty	Ming Dynasty	Qing Dynasty
Time	581-618	618-907	907-960	960-1127	1127-1279	1368-1644	1644-1911
Cultivation Center	Luoyang	Xi'an	Luoyang	Luoyang	Tai Peng	Bo Zhou	Bo Zhou
Secondary Cultivation Centers	/	Luoyang, Hangzhou	Chengdu, Hangzhou	Chenzhou, Hangzhou, Chengdu	Hangzhou, Chengdu	Luoyang, Beijing, Chengdu	Beijing, Shanghai, Xi'an, Jiaxing, Tongling

## 5. Modernization of Luoyang Peony Culture

### 5.1 Development of Luoyang Peony Culture after the Founding of New China (after 1945 AD)

#### 5.1.1 Luoyang Peony Culture Entered the Life of Luoyang People Again

Before 1949, the development of peony in Luoyang encountered a bottleneck because of social, political, historical, and war factors, and peony cultivation was greatly affected. At the early restoration stage, only about thirty peony varieties were left in Luoyang, and large-scale folk viewing activities were silent for a while (Bai 2019, p.65).

In 1959, when Premier Zhou Enlai came to Luoyang for inspection, he said the peony flower was the national flower of our country. It is graceful and magnificent and symbolizes prosperity and good fortune for our Chinese nation, so it should be rescued quickly. Under the instruction and expectation of Premier Zhou, the Luoyang Municipal Government promptly organized a group of professionals to collect and

sort out the existing peony varieties, conducted scientific research on peonies, introduced new varieties of peonies, and enlarged the planting area (Figure 11). In April 1960, Liu Shaoqi, President of the State Council, and his wife visited the peonies in Wang Cheng Park and praised them. The peony is all right, and the peonies of Luoyang are gorgeous! (Figure 12) Under the instruction of the state leaders and the background of China's reform and opening up, the custom of Luoyang people's favorite peony viewing was rekindled, and peony was rapidly restored and developed into another new climax in history.



*Figure 11 Premier Zhou Enlai Visiting Luoyang Peony in 1959*  
Source: Luoyang City Chronicle, 1984



*Figure 12 Chairman Liu Shaoqi Visiting Luoyang Peony in 1960*  
Source: Luoyang City Chronicle, 1984

With the deepening of reform and opening up and the rapid development of China's politics and economy, the government built a national peony garden around

Mang Mountain, a 10-kilometer-long peony corridor in Luo Pu Park, and a peony gene bank of more than a thousand acres. According to statistics, in 1990, the peony varieties reached 538. In 2007, the statistics came up with more than 980 varieties and 23 million plants (Retrieved from <https://max.book118.com>). After 2020, it will reach more than 1380 varieties. There are 1,379 varieties of peonies in Luoyang, with a planting area of more than 150,000 mm in the city, more than 160 production bases, and an annual output of 30 million seedlings. Sixteen peony gardens have been built in urban Luoyang, including the National Garden of China, the Botanical Garden of Sui & Tang Dynasty City Ruins, the International Peony Garden, the National Peony Garden, and the Divine Peony Garden. There are also two alpine peony gardens in Ji Guan Cave and Bai Yun Mountain, and peonies can be seen in the street greenery and gardens everywhere (Bai, 2019, p.67).

On 5 August 1964, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications issued a set of peony unique stamps, with a total of 15 stamps, five of which featured peonies from the traditional varieties of Luoyang peonies, namely the second one, “Kunshan Luminous”; the fifth, “Yao Huang”; the sixth, “Er Qiao”; the thirteenth, “Dou Green”; and the fourteenth, “Wei Zi” (Figure 13). The peonies on the other ten stamps also come from Luoyang. According to statistics, for more than half a century, every major historical event in China, such as the First Asian Table Tennis Championships in 1972, the 10th Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan in 1988, and the return of Hong Kong to the motherland in 1997, and so on, the Luoyang peonies can be seen in all the stamps.





*Figure 13 Peony Special Stamps*

Source: Chinese stamp (<http://www.chinesestamp.cn/2149.html>)

Luoyang initiated the peony development strategy in 1989, capitalizing on the thriving peony culture. It consistently conducted research and discourse on peony art and academic culture, exchanged peony cultivation techniques, investigated the medicinal and edible uses of peonies, and pioneered the advancement of peony literature. Encourage the growth of peony-related industries such as painting, needlework, sculpture, paper cutting, porcelain, cakes, and swallows; preserve and pass on these artisanal crafts; and develop new ways to portray peony culture. Furthermore, the peony science and technology industry will grow even more as technology advances. Examples include the creation of peony tea, peony health care products, peony skin care products, peony seed oil, and other deep-processing industries, all of which will contribute to the rebirth of peony science, technology, and culture.

Nowadays, people in Luoyang give all beautiful things the name of “peony.” People call a large literary magazine Peony Magazine. The most spacious avenue is Peony Avenue, the most spectacular bridge is Peony Bridge, and many novel commodities are crowned with the name Peony. In these years, several national beauty contests were held during the Luoyang Peony Festival. People called the most beautiful lady “Miss Peony” (Wang, 1990, p.151-155).

On 24 October 2023, the Fifth Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fourteenth National People’s Congress of Henan Province reviewed and approved the

*Regulations on the Protection and Development of Luoyang Peony in Luoyang* (Retrieved from <https://lysrd.henanrd.gov.cn>), which regulated and managed the protection and management of peonies in Luoyang City's administrative area, as well as the development of industry and cultural inheritance. Moreover, management of peony within the administrative area of Luoyang City, providing clear guidelines for the protection and development of peony in Luoyang City, promoting the cultural inheritance of peony, creating a peony flower capital, building a flower city in the northern part of the country, and promoting the high-quality development of peony and its related industries. This approval has attracted significant attention from all walks of life. Luoyang City has written a flower into the law and elevated it to a high level of protection by rules and regulations.

#### 5.1.2 Peony Became the National Flower of the Chinese People

The national flower refers to the flower that is particularly famous in its own country as the national symbol, which is the symbol of the culture and spirit of a country or nation and has solid national feelings. More than 100 countries have established national flowers, while China has yet to find them.

The selection of China's national flower is mainly a dispute between peony and plum blossom, and in the two informal selections in the 1980s, one plum blossom won the first place, and the peony was the second; the peony was the king, and the plum blossom was the second. In 1987, the "Ten Famous Flowers of China" were Plum Blossom, Peony, Chrysanthemum, Orchid, etc. Accordingly, in 1991, there was a controversial selection of the national flower, and Peony was elected. In the influential selection of the national flower in 1994, the China Flower Association was entrusted to select the national flower in the country. The result was that there were 18 provinces in favor of the Peony as the national flower, and 11 provinces were in favor of the Peony, Plum Blossom, Lotus, Chrysanthemum, and the 4 Flowers as the national flower. Two provinces favored the Peony, Plum Blossom, Orchid, Chrysanthemum, orchid, and Chrysanthemum four as the national flower (Chen, 2016, p.19).

In 2003, the China Flower Association organized the selection of the national flower again. After more than two years of work, a meeting of the secretaries-general of the national flower associations was held in 2005 to discuss the issue of the

national flower. As a result, 79 percent elected peony as the national flower, 13 percent selected plum blossom as the national flower, 4 percent orchid chosen as the national flower, and another 4 percent elected peony or orchid as the national flower (Chen, 2016, p.19).

Also in 2005, the Chinese Horticultural Society, the Beijing Landscape Architecture Society, and the Shanghai Landscape Architecture Society jointly convened a “Seminar on the Selection of China’s National Flower”. Most of the delegates supported the selection of peony and plum blossom as China’s double national flower, while many still insisted that one country, one flower should be promoted.

In the new historical period, peony culture has been given a unique connotation of the times. In this year’s 2023 National People’s Congress, Wang Xiu, a deputy to the National People’s Congress, once again suggested that peony should be identified as the national flower of China. To sum up, regardless of opinion, the peony is a strong contender for the national flower of China, and it is the flower that best represents the country in the hearts of Chinese people. Peony has been a symbol of prosperity since ancient times, and nowadays, it is the people’s longing for a better life, a better future, and the best expectation for the country and the motherland. From ancient times to the present day, peony culture not only nourishes the people of Luoyang in terms of spiritual and cultural aspects, but it has also become a cultural symbol for the city of Luoyang in pulling the economic growth and constructing the city’s image (Wen & Kong, 2016, p.41). The development of peony culture in Luoyang has foundation and potential; we should write articles about the national flower, highlight the unique advantages of the peony industry, and give full play to the role of international dissemination of peony culture.

## **5.2 Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the National Dimension**

As the scale of peony planting expanded, people began to concentrate on flower-appreciation activities in several major parks in large numbers, and the number of foreign tourists gradually increased, the custom of peony-appreciation in Luoyang at the time of the annual rainy season reappeared again. By 1982, the custom of enjoying peonies in Luoyang had gained a specific mass base. The number of foreigners

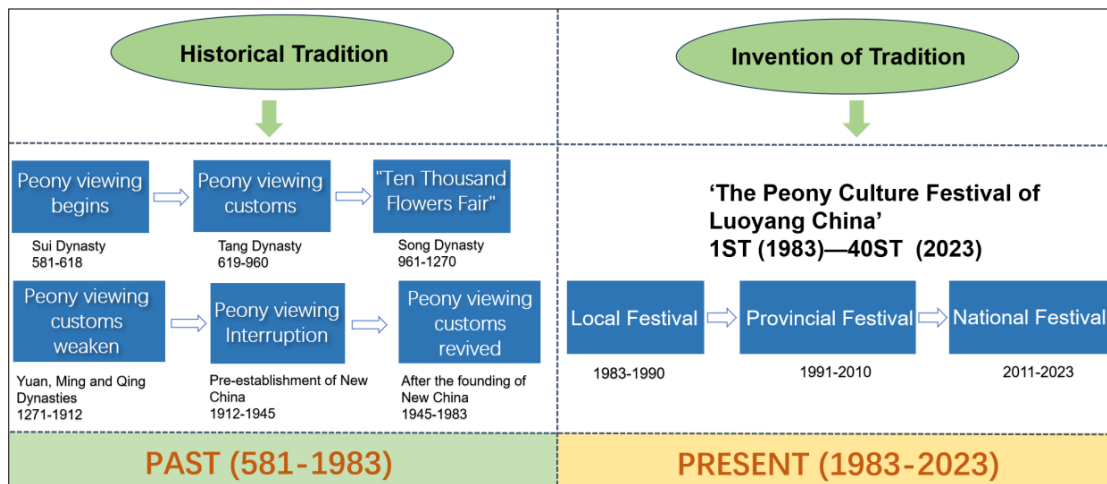
coming to Luoyang to enjoy peonies was also increasing year by year, so the government decided to start holding the “Luoyang Peony Festival” to disseminate the culture of peonies better and promote the development of the city of Luoyang.

The contemporary revival of the Peony Festival also shows that although the expression of traditional culture was once silent, the soul of traditional culture is still alive in the peony flowers that survived social upheavals, in the social responsibility of the peony families, and the memories and bloodlines of local people. Luoyang has successfully held 40 China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival sessions up to 2023 (Figure 14). The festival’s success has enhanced Luoyang’s popularity and rapidly developed the tourism industry. Meanwhile, the peony culture industry, mainly composed of tourism commodities and deep-processed products, has quickly grown. The Peony Cultural Festival of Luoyang won the titles of “China’s Outstanding Festival City,” “China’s Top Ten Festivals,” and “China’s Top Ten Conventions and Exhibitions.”

The success of the Peony Cultural Festival has also promoted the rapid development of peony-related cultural industries. There are nearly a hundred peony-related enterprises and institutions in the city, producing more than 200 kinds of peony-related beauty products, unique cuisines, health care products, etc. There are many peony industry employees, and peony-related commodities are sold all over the country and exported to many countries and regions worldwide. The commodities with the most local cultural characteristics include peony paintings, peony handicrafts, and peony diets; other peony commodities include peony animation, medicine and health care, cosmetics, essential oils, pollen, seed oil series of natural health care products, and many other kinds.

It can be seen that peony culture has been deeply rooted in the production and life of Luoyang people for thousands of years and has become an essential part of their life course and humanistic bloodline. It can be said that the formation and development of peony culture is inextricably linked with the profound cultural heritage of Luoyang; on the other hand, the development of peony culture has also witnessed the rise and fall of Luoyang, the ancient capital of the 13th Dynasty. Since peony culture was born in the flourishing times of the Tang Dynasty, peony has been associated with beauty and abundance for thousands of years. It has gradually become

a symbol that still gives people a sense of cultural identity and spiritual strength today.



*Figure 14 History and Changes of Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, China*  
Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

### 5.3 Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the Global Dimension

#### 5.3.1 Spread of Luoyang Peony Abroad

Peonies are native to China, and peonies from other countries were directly or indirectly imported from China. The Luoyang peony has a relationship of origin and inheritance with peonies from different regions of China and significantly influences the development of peonies abroad.

The Japanese peony's spread first influenced the Luoyang peony's spread in foreign countries. Japan is not the origin of the peony. During the Kaiyuan period of the Tang Dynasty (724-744 AD, the Nara period of Japan), Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty was in Luoyang for many years. He received Japanese envoys to China many times, and then the envoys brought Luoyang peonies to Japan. After introducing Luoyang peony varieties to Japan, they were planted in the gardens of Japanese temples and dignitaries and then spread to the people. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Japan introduced some varieties from China one after another, which were called "Chinese varieties," and most of them were traditional Luoyang peonies such as "Yao Huang," "Er Qiao," and "Dou Green." The Japanese peony has the birthmark of Luoyang (Jin & Wang, 2009, p.45). For an extended period, the medicinal value was the main driving force for the proliferation and development of peonies in Japan, while the ornamental value was in a secondary position. Japan is now the largest

peony cultivation country in the world, second only to China.

After that, Luoyang peonies began to spread to European countries through the “Ancient Silk Road” (including the Land Silk Road and the Sea Silk Road), and in 1656, a trade representative of the Dutch East India Company visited China and saw peonies. He saw peonies and reported on this previously unseen flower when he returned home, describing peonies as plants with flowers similar to moonflowers but without thorns on their stems (Bai 2019, p.35). In 1786, Joseph Banks, a famous horticulturist and president of the Royal Society of England, saw this report and looked at many peonies in Chinese paintings, and asked Alexander Duncan, a surgeon of the East India Company, to collect peonies for him in Guangzhou and Luoyang, etc. The peonies collected by Alexander Duncan in China were planted in China in 1787. Alexander Duncan ordered peonies in China for him. He grew them in the Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew) in 1787, and in 1789, one of them produced heavy magenta flowers, the first Chinese peony to set foot on the European continent. In 1880, Robert Fortune was dispatched by the Royal Horticultural Society of Great Britain to collect peonies from different parts of China; some of them were said to be the best peony varieties in China at that time; at the same time, he introduced the peony species used for grafting into peonies. At the same time, he also introduced peonies for grafting peonies and taught the traditional Chinese peony grafting and propagation techniques to Britain. The peony varieties and propagation techniques that Fortune introduced from China to Britain laid the foundation for developing peonies in Europe. They solved the problem of peonies that had previously grown poorly in Britain. Later, the progressive spread of these peonies in Europe led to the cultivation of peonies in other European countries, and through the domestication and cultivation of European horticulturists, a group of peony varieties suited to the local environment - the European Peony Variety Group was formed (Bai 2019, p.65).

Around 1820, peonies were introduced to the United States from England, followed by a steady stream of peonies imported from Japan and China. However, by the early 1900s, peonies were still a relatively rare flower in the United States, and cultivation was far less common than in Europe. From the 1920s to 1930s, peonies were imported from Japan, Europe, and China, which led to the continuous development of peonies in the U.S. People in the U.S. love peonies so much that they

call peonies the king of the flower garden. However, the color of American peony varieties shows that most varieties have purplish-red stripes on their petals, an essential characteristic of Luoyang peony varieties. In recent years, the United States has imported many peonies from China, and the peony industry in the United States is now developing rapidly.

The peony has been spreading from Luoyang to the southeast and northwest of China and across the seas and oceans worldwide. Peonies are said to have come from Luoyang, and the colorful peony events in the area are often called “Little Luoyang” or “Little Xi Jing.” Currently, China ranks first in the world in terms of cultivated area and the number of varieties of peonies. Peonies are grown in over 20 countries, such as Japan, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, Australia, Singapore, North Korea, Holland, Canada, etc. Outside of China, there are more peonies cultivated in the area, and there are several varieties of peonies in Japan, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries.

### 5.3.2 World Influence of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

While exporting peony varieties and cultivation techniques, China has also spread its peony culture abroad. Due to different historical, geographical, and linguistic environments, Chinese and foreigners have different perspectives and ways of thinking, so it is essential to carry out peony culture dissemination activities from an international perspective.

The peony culture of Luoyang has a long history, deep heritage, and wide application. Historically, Luoyang peonies, as important messengers, have “traveled” to more than 20 countries, including Japan, the United States, Britain, and France, creating “peony diplomacy.” Nowadays, the people of Luoyang grow peonies, enjoy peonies, paint peonies, and use peonies in medicine and tea, integrating the beauty of peonies and the use of peonies into all aspects of production and life. Luoyang Peony has frequently appeared on the world stage in the new era of a better life. It has been featured in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, the 2011 Taipei Flower Expo, the 2012 World Park in Holland, the 2014 Beijing APEC Meeting, the 2015 “9-3” Grand Parade, and the 2012 Beijing World Expo. It has become an envoy to promote cultural exchanges, showing its unique elegance and national colors to the world’s people. The peony’s extraordinary blossoming

highlights Luoyang's elegance and represents the level of China, ushering in its moment of glory.

Since the founding of New China, crafts with peonies as the theme have been widely spread to Asia, Europe, and America, and the exchanges and development of peony culture have been continuously realized through the form of culture and art. In March 2017, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and the Ministry of Finance jointly formulated the *Revitalization Plan for Traditional Crafts in China*, which points out the direction for developing traditional crafts. Luoyang is actively expanding the exhibiting and marketing of conventional peony crafts. In 2022, the export of Luoyang peony handicrafts will reach RMB 17 million.

Paying full attention to the dissemination and acceptance of peony culture by today's new media and new audiences, including film and television works, short videos, etc., as well as methods such as self-media dissemination, and the application of meta-universe, artificial intelligence, and other melting digital scenes. Integrate peony into digital artworks, actively explore the new role of peony in modern art creation, create more artworks that meet the needs of the new era in a way that is pleasing to people, and continue to develop the role of good literature, painting, and traditional craftsmanship in the shaping and dissemination of peony culture. 2021 Shooting of the documentary film *Chinese Plants that Changed the World*, through which the world was shown the Luoyang peony's style. The filming team will trace the path of peony spreading, starting from China and traversing the United States, Britain, Holland, New Zealand, Italy, Germany, Japan, and other countries, presenting the magnificence and magic of peony from the perspectives of life, science, aesthetics, civilization, philosophy, etc., and demonstrating to the people of the world the sentiment of peony.

A series of yearly peony festivals and events have significantly boosted the industrial development of the city and the international influence of peony culture. Using flowers as a medium to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of peony culture, create Chinese cultural identity, and deepen civilization exchanges and mutual understanding are the inherent requirements for the international dissemination of Luoyang peony culture in the new era. Using flowers as

a medium, the ancient capital Luoyang has successively formed friendship cities with Japan, France, Bulgaria, the United States, South Korea, Russia, etc. The 39th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival will be held in Okayama, Japan, and Tours, France, in 2021, and the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival will be held in New York's Times Square in 2023, where the peonies will bloom on a big screen. The Luoyang peonies were blooming on the big screen in the square, attracting many passers-by to stop and watch.



## Conclude

Chinese people are naturally fond of flowers, which are closely connected with their lives and have been endowed with diversified symbolic meanings by Chinese people, becoming a cultural carrier. Chinese people know peonies as the king of flowers because of their large size, beautiful shape, color, and fragrance. It is an essential representative of Chinese flowers and the “National Flower” of Chinese people. Peony is a symbol of the prosperity and happiness of the Chinese nation. The peony cultivation in Luoyang began in the Sui Dynasty, flourished in the Tang Dynasty, and became famous in the Song Dynasty, which has a history of more than 1,600 years. With the increase in the number of varieties of peonies in Luoyang and the expansion of the scale of cultivation, peonies have gradually become an object of aesthetics. The people of Luoyang have planted peonies, enjoyed peonies, tasted peonies, sung about peonies, and painted peonies. Peonies have been constantly integrated into the culture and life of the Luoyang people, as well as their thoughts and emotions. They have created countless poems and lyrics, paintings and calligraphies, legends, dresses, folklore, festivals, and so forth related to peonies.

To realize the rejuvenation of the city of Luoyang, the Luoyang government organized the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 1983. The unique geographical environment of the Luoyang area, the long history and splendid culture of Luoyang, the wisdom of the Luoyang people in cultivating peonies, and the continuous flower-appreciation customs of the Luoyang people are precisely the critical factors that have enabled the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to be formed. It is impossible to understand that the formation of the festival cannot be separated from the specific era and social background in which it is situated and that the festival is a product of modernization in the development of Luoyang’s peony culture.

## CHAPTER III.

### **Luoyang Peony Culture in the Dimension of Symbolic Interaction of Luoyang People**

#### **Introduction**

In the context of symbolic interactions between individuals, groups, and societies, this chapter examines how the cultural significance of the Luoyang Peony has changed over time. It also offers insights into the evolution of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and its cultural traditions.

Firstly, Luoyang peony culture's symbolic elements, which also make up the festival symbols of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, mainly include the peony viewing customs of Luoyang people since ancient times, Luoyang peony literature, Luoyang peony art, and the folk customs related to Luoyang peony. Secondly, the meaning system of Luoyang peony cultural symbols is analyzed from the constituent elements of Luoyang peony cultural symbols, whose imagery mainly includes folk heroes, national prosperity, happy life, good love, and female reproduction. Finally, Luoyang people interact with other individuals, groups, and societies through the production of peony and peony cultural symbols, analyze different groups' decoding and understanding of symbols of different meanings of Luoyang peony culture, and the peony cultural symbols go from aesthetic symbols to national symbols to tourism symbols, to form people's overall impression of peony cultural symbols.

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## 1. Explanation of the relevant concepts

### 1.1 Conceptual Interpretation of “Symbolic”

#### 1.1.1 Saussure’s semiotics theory

Anthropologist Leslie White believes human behavior stems from symbols (Haviland, W., 2011, p.177). The symbol is the fundamental mark that distinguishes human beings from animals, only human beings can create and master symbols, the human brain analyses, processes, converts, and stores symbols, and the process of human consciousness is, in fact, a method of symbolization. Saussure, the founder of modern semiotics, pointed out, we can envisage a science that studies the life of symbols in social life, which will form part of social psychology, and therefore part of general psychology, which we call semiotics. It will tell us what symbols are made of and what laws govern them (Charles, Albert & Roy, 1987, p.20-22). Saussure’s vision of semiotics was expansive, presenting a developing theory of semiotics. In his discussion of linguistic symbols, Saussure argues that linguistic symbols are composed of “Sound Image” and “Concept.” “Sound Image” refers to the impression that sound brings to people and the traces that sound leaves behind; “concept” refers to a collective, shared concept, and the combination of concept and Sound image is called a symbol. To express the relationship between the two more, Saussure replaced “sound image” with “signifier” and “concept” with “signified,” and the relationship between energy and reference is the sign.

In layman’s terms, “signifier” refers to the pronunciation or sound of a symbol, and this sound or pronunciation can sometimes be fully rendered, and sometimes it takes place in one’s mind. The “signified” is the thing in your head corresponding to the sound when you hear or think of it. For example, the flower “signifier” refers to all the phonetic and literal symbols that people give to the flower. In English, the pronunciation of it is [ˈflaʊə], and the literal writing is “flower.” “signified” means that when one hears or sees the word “flower,” one’s memory retrieves the image of a colorful, fragrant flower.

#### 1.1.2 Roland Barthes’ Semiotic Theory

Saussure’s semiotic theory is based on linguistics, which is not universally

applicable, and the relationship between signifier and signified is a one-to-one or one-to-many combination, which has some limitations in application. With the development of the times in the 1960s, the French semiotician Roland Barthes (from now on referred to as Barthes) added the element of culture based on Saussure's signifier and signified and formed the secondary semiotic theory.

Barthes stresses that this process of behavior that combines the signifier and signified into a single unit is called meaning effect, and the result of the behavior is semiotic. All meaning systems have an expression plane (E) and a content plane (C). The expression plane corresponds to the signifier, the content plane corresponds to the signified, and the relation between the two is called (R). The role of meaning is also the relationship between the plane of expression and the plane of content, that is, the relationship between signifier and signified (Barthes, R., 1957, p. 55). In this way, the symbolic expression is recorded as ERC, which constitutes a first-level extended system.

Hypothetically, this primary symbolic system can, in turn, serve as a component of another system, a secondary system, or an extension of the primary system. There are two ways in which the primary system enters the secondary system. One is that the secondary system becomes the plane of expression, also known as the signifier. The expression for this secondary system can be recorded as (ERC)RC, with the first system constituting a plane of direct reference (also known as the plane of expression, which is the signifier). The secondary system is known as the plane of connotation (the plane of content, which is the referent) (Barthes, R., 1957, p. 55). From this, it can be said that connotation is composed of a system of meaning and a plane of content, where the system of meaning is a primary system of signification, and the two systems combined are known as the secondary system, also known as the system of connotation.

*Table 4 Primary system to become secondary system's signified*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Primary Symbolic System	ERC			(plane of expression) (system of meaning)
Secondary Symbolic System	E	R	C	(plane of content)

The other is that the primary system becomes the content plane in the secondary

system, the signifier. This secondary system expression can be recorded as ER (ERC), and Barthes speaks of meta-languages of everything as belonging to this category. A meta-language is a system whose content plane consists of a system of meanings. A meta-language system is composed of a meaning system and an expressive plane.

*Table 5 Primary system to become secondary system's signifier*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Primary Symbolic System			ERC	(plane of expression)
Secondary Symbolic System	E	R	C	(plane of content) (system of meaning)

From the above analysis, we can see that Barthes's secondary semiotic theory is based on Saussure's symbols of signifier and signified and then introduces culture to form a secondary semiotic system, which consists of a system of meanings (a combination of signifier and signified) and a plane of content (signified), also known as the system of connotative. The signifier of the culmination is called the culmination item, and the signified of the culmination is the ideology, which is constantly changing with the change of time and the transmutation of culture, and its forms are various.

The connotation system starts to analyze the ideology behind the symbols, which is embodied in culture, which makes the subtle relationship between symbols and culture become an inseparable and indivisible mutual influence. When culture intervenes in symbols, the subtle influence of culture on people will cause people's cognition of the symbols to change and reconstruct the symbols.

*Table 6 The connotation system schema*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Primary symbolic system (system of meaning)		Secondary symbolic system (system of connotation)
signifier/plane of expression (E)		signified / plane of content (C)
plane of expression (E) / signifier	plane of content (C) / signified	

According to Barthes's semiotic theory, with the example of "flower" to explain to see, "flower" signifier and signified the composition of the flower of the primary symbol system, based on which to add the role of culture and then analyze the symbol of the "flower," the formation of a secondary symbolic system, "flower" refers to the meaning of a richer. The referents of the "flower" system are the result of cultural

influences, and the diversity and contemporaneity of cultures make the referents of the system varied and changing (Barthes, R., 1975, p.55). Specific historical periods have corresponding historical cultures, so the signified of the culmination will change with the culture or era of the time. It is also at the heart of Barthes's semiotic theory that the production of symbolic meaning and culture are interconnected and inseparable and that interpreting the definition of a symbol should not ignore the cultural influences behind it.

*Table 7 Meaning system of "flower"*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Primary symbolic system (system of meaning)		Secondary symbolic system (system of connotation)
Symbols of Flowers		Beauty/Blessings/Hope
flower / [ˈflaʊə]	Images of Flowers	

### 1.1.3 Luoyang Peony Culture symbolic

Peony viewing and peony cultivation have a history of thousands of years in Luoyang, and the colorful Luoyang peony culture has been gradually formed during this long course. From the viewpoint of Saussure's linguistic semiotics, the energy and reference of Luoyang peony symbols are the sounds and shapes of the Luoyang peony, which is a process of linking the sounds and shapes of Luoyang peony in people's minds. The difference between "Luoyang peony" symbols and "Luoyang peony" cultural symbols lies in the role of culture, which makes people's memories of "Luoyang peony" more diversified.

The connotation system of "Luoyang peony" cultural symbols refers to "Luoyang peony culture," which is the presentation of its symbols under the effect of culture. Along with the expanding cultivation of peonies and the increasing variety and quantity of peonies, peonies have become more and more closely connected with people's lives. People meet to enjoy peonies, sing about peonies in poems and songs, eat peonies by mixing wine and marinade, and wear peon-throughs by embroidery and sewing, which all together make up a long, deep, and rich culture of peonies (Dong & Xu, 2008, p.75-79).

Peony culture in Luoyang is rich in connotation. In terms of scientific and technological culture, since the peony has been cultivated artificially, its cultivation

technology, transplantation technology, medicinal value, and so on have attracted the attention of countless people, and relevant scientific research has been fruitful. Regarding natural and biological culture, there is systematic research on peonies' flower color and petals, roots, stems, leaves, and varieties of peonies. In folk culture, literature and art, poems and songs, historical monographs, proverbs and legends, carvings and paintings, operas and music, costumes, and architecture have been richly fruitful and have been known for centuries and are still influencing our lives and spirits. Since "Luoyang peony culture" contains many aspects of "peony," the ideology it presents in people's minds is not unique. Although it is presented differently in people's minds, it is essentially a manifestation of "Luoyang peony culture" (Liu, 2003, p. 90). Although they are presented differently in people's minds, they are all essentially manifestations of "Luoyang peony culture" (Liu, 2003, p.90). By analyzing the Luoyang peony cultural symbols with Roland Barthes' secondary symbol system, we explore how the meaning of the symbols has changed in different times.

*Table 8 The Connotation System of Luoyang Peony Culture Symbolism*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Primary symbolic system (system of meaning)		Secondary symbolic system (system of connotation)
Luoyang Peony Symbolic		Luoyang Peony Culture Symbolic
Luoyang Peony (Pronunciation)	"Luoyang Peony" Cultural Symbol (Beautiful Plants)	Peony Ornamental Symbols, Peony Cultivation Symbols, Peony Literary Symbols, Peony Art Symbols, Peony Customary Symbols, etc.

## 1.2 Conceptual Interpretation of "Interaction"

### 1.2.1 Connotation of Interaction

Interaction is the most essential form of establishing mutual contact between people. In people's lives, talking with others, attending classes, surfing the Internet, watching TV, playing on mobile phones, and even talking to themselves are actually in the process of interaction. Simply put, interaction is the process of interacting with each other. In today's society, with the development of science and technology, the popularity of computers, and the widespread use of electronic products, interaction is not only limited to face-to-face. People can use mobile phones, the Internet, video

cameras, and other media to interact non-face-to-face. However, the importance of linguistic symbols in interaction remains untouchable; linguistic symbols mediate human interaction and are an effective tool for constructing thought (Mead & Morris, 2006). People try to use a common vocabulary to understand or make others understand themselves in interaction, but often there is a bias. This is because the language expression is closely related to the interaction subject's education, occupation, social status, the social environment in which they live, and other factors, and when the interaction parties do not have the same cultural background or similar life experiences, the interaction is more complex (Smelser, 1995, p.180). For example, a tourist who has been to Luoyang to see the peonies will have a more direct perception of the appearance and culture of the peonies in Luoyang. In contrast, a person who has yet to go to Luoyang to see the peonies will not be able to form a clear image of them, and their communication about the peonies may need to be more in-depth.

#### 1.2.2 Modes of interaction

Interaction includes self-interaction and social interaction. Self-interaction is the interaction that occurs within an individual. In contrast, social interaction has other interactions and group interactions, which are interdependent social interactions that occur through the dissemination of information between individuals, individuals, and groups, and groups and groups in society (Spykman, 1925, p. 30).

Self-interaction. Self-interaction can be understood as interaction within the individual and is a necessary pathway for forming and developing the self. Through self-interaction, a person can know himself, have his ideas, and be able to take action on himself. Self-interaction is social and is the internalization of social interaction. Self-interaction is dynamic and enables a person to know himself in connection with others and society, continuously achieving self-development and perfection, thus achieving human socialization (Blumer, H.,1986).

Other-self Interaction. Other-self interaction refers to the interaction between "I" and "he," where "I" refers to a single person and "he" refers to a person other than "I." "I" refers to a single person, and "he" refers to someone other than "I," either as a single person or as a group. He and I interact with each other through symbols such as speech, writing, body language, media, etc. When I am in a position of absolute

superiority, the interaction shifts in favor of me and him. When the “I” is in a position of absolute superiority, the result of the interaction is in favor of the “I” (Blumer, H., 1986). However, in general, the outcome of other-ego interactions is often a matter of opinion, with neither party being able to persuade the other to accept their point of view, and the result often deviates from the expected outcome. Therefore, to make other-ego interactions achieve good results, it depends more on the effective use of symbols.

Group interaction. It refers to the interaction between groups, which includes the interaction process between members within and between different groups (Blumer, H.,1986). Social life is carried out in the form of groups. People always live in different sizes and types of groups. Groups to complete a specific task, its members are bound to interact with other members of the group or members of other groups, but usually, groups and groups do not directly interact with each other, and the interaction between them is mainly through the interaction between members of different groups.

An in-depth understanding of how group behavior occurs relies on dissecting the interaction processes of members within the group. Leaders in a group are at the center of the group’s network of relationships and can exert influence on the members of their group. Their decisions tend to be accepted by most group members and become the group’s decisions. In addition, group members usually tend to follow the group. When a group member finds that their concepts and behaviors are inconsistent with those of the majority of the group members, they will often feel nervous, which in turn creates a kind of psychological pressure and prompts them to agree with the mainstream concepts and behaviors of the group, and the phenomenon of people in a group who demand to agree with the majority of the people is called herding behavior. Factors such as group leadership, group pressure, and herd behavior in group interaction will gradually make the group’s attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors converge to the same (Caulley, D. N.,2005).

### **1.3 Conceptual Explanation of “Symbolic Interaction”**

Symbolic interactionism is microbiology that studies the face-to-face interactive interactions and roles of people and the resulting causes or changes in these activities

and processes, and is concerned with the role of symbols in the process of subjective understanding, seeking to understand human behavior through the analysis of interactive processes, to understand how social factors affect distinctive aspects of the individual, how the individual factors differentially act on different aspects of the society, and how this mutually determining process comes about, etc. Symbolic interactionism was inherited and developed in the 1930s, and it flourished in the 1970s with many creative ideas and research programs.

In his 1890 book *Principles of Psychology*, William James introduced the concept of the “Self” as a multifaceted product of relationships with others, emphasizing the socially imposed role of behavior. James asserted that the number of social selves a man has depends on the number of other individuals who know him (Morris & William, C, 1937). Charles Horton Cooley’s contribution to symbolic interactionism was the “Looking-Glass Self” and the “primary group,” the most famous of which is the proposition that the self and society are twins. The most renowned proposition is that self and society are twins, he believed that people could act as mirrors for each other, reflecting the image of the person in front of them (Cooley & Schubert, 2001). John Dewey further viewed the constitution of personality as a matter of habit, insisting on a close relationship between the individual and society. William Isaac Thomas’s contextual definition provides a primary methodological principle for symbolic interactionism, arguing that explaining human behavior requires a balance between the subjective and objective facts of human experience and that the objective facts are constituted by the context, which requires an individual or a group to respond appropriately (Barthes, R., 2001).

The discussions of the above four scholars on the relationship between human beings and between human beings and society have significantly impacted the symbolic interaction theory. Their explorations have come to fruition in the hands of the American social psychologist George Herbert Mead, who, based on summarizing the results of the research conducted by his predecessors, systematically discussed the idea of symbolic interactionism for the first time. Mead revealed how the mind, self, and society emerge and develop through interaction, and he attached great importance to the use of symbols by human beings and the role of symbols in human actions and interactions. Drawing on James’s notion of the “social self” and Cooley’s notion of

the “Looking-Glass Self,” Mead develops three stages of ego development: the playful stage, the playful stage, and the generalization stage, and he stresses the importance of human-specific symbols, especially linguistic symbols, in the formation and development of the ego. The critical role of human interaction relies on symbols, and the meaning of a symbol depends on how it is understood by both interacting parties (Marti, G., 2007). Symbols need the meaning given to them by a particular group of people as a carrier, so symbols are social, symbols mediate between the external behavior of people and their inner world, symbols are a social phenomenon and, at the same time, an individual phenomenon, so they are a bridge between the individual and society.

After Mead, Blumer, Kuhn, and others developed Mead’s ideas. Herbert Blumer was the first to propose the concept of “symbolic interactionism,” and his debate with Kuhn on interactionism became the central theme of developing the interactionism system after Mead. The development of their theories eventually constituted the basic theoretical framework of contemporary symbolic interactionism, i.e., the establishment of two primary schools of modern symbolic interactionism - the Chicago School led by Brummer and the Iowa School led by Kuhn (Chomsky, N.,1985). Both schools of symbolic interactionists pay special attention to the problem of symbolic communication and believe that symbolic communication is the main symbol that distinguishes human beings from the animal kingdom, that human beings exist not only in natural physical environments but also in extended environments that human beings can think, and that we respond to our social environments according to the meanings that things have for us, and that social interactions can be conducted smoothly only if both interacting parties can determine and understand their respective situations and can communicate symbolically, social interaction can be carried out successfully ( Blumer, H.,1986).

To sum up, symbolic interactionism is the basic view of social interaction: Symbols play a vital communication role in the process of people’s social interaction, and human interaction is carried out by using symbols, which is symbolic interaction. Human behavior is meaningful behavior, and understanding behavior requires an interpretation of the meaning that actors assign to their activities. Meaning is not fixed; on the one hand, the determination of meaning depends on the context and

situation of the interaction; on the other hand, to a certain extent, meaning is determined in the course of the interaction through the negotiation of the two parties; it is neither pre-determined nor static, but arises, is modified, develops and changes in the course of the interaction. In the process of interaction, people tend to interpret the thoughts and intentions of others from their point of view by playing the role of others and use this as a basis for guiding their behavior. That is to say. People tend to know themselves and form and modify their self-concepts in the context of the attitudes and perceptions that they perceive others have towards them.

## **2. Symbolic Components of Luoyang Peony Culture**

### **2.1 Luoyang People's Customs of Peony Viewing**

Peony viewing is the core of Luoyang peony culture, and all other forms of peony culture are accompanied by the display of people's emotions after viewing peonies. At the same time, peony viewing is also a traditional and representative program of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, and it is one of the main events of the whole festival.

#### **2.1.1 Viewing Peony Color**

The Tang Dynasty poet Li Zhengfeng's Poem on Peony, with the line the national color is sound in the morning and the heavenly fragrance stains the clothes in the night, hailed the peony as the "national color and the heavenly fragrance" (Dai, 2008, p. 120). The peony is known as the "national color," inseparable from its rich flower colors, divided into nine significant colors: white, pink, red, yellow, purple, blue, green, black, and compound colors (Table 9). Each color has its intensity. For example, the red family has big red, peach red, deep pink, purple-red, fire red, etc. In the pink color family, there are pink, pink-white, pink-purple, etc. The same peony variety can be found in different colors in different places (Wei, 2009). Moreover, the same peony variety may change its flower color in additional years, in other locations, and under other cultivation conditions. The same flower will have different color changes at various stages of opening. For example, the "Hou Lian Jin Dan" variety is water-red when it first opens, big red when in full bloom, eye-catching red, and fire-red or silver-red in the late stage of fading, while the "Zhao Pink" is pink when it first

opens, and pink-white when in full bloom. “Zhao Pink” is pink at the beginning of blooming, light pink at the full bloom, and pink and white at the end. The “Er Qiao” is one of the more peculiar varieties of peonies, with two colors of purple and pink blooming on the same flower, and the petals of the “Dao Jin” variety show two colors of red and pink.

*Table 9 The nine Major Flower Colors of Luoyang Peony*  
Source: Photographed by the researcher in Luoyang Peony Park, 2023

white color scheme	pink color scheme	red color scheme
		
green color scheme	yellow color scheme	purple color scheme
		
black color scheme	blue color scheme	two-tone color system
		

### 2.1.2 Smell Peony Fragrance

Peony is also known as “heavenly fragrance.” Generally speaking, the fragrance of plants with large and colorful flowers is light, but peonies contain rich natural spice substances, which not only have large and beautiful flowers but also have a mild and refreshing fragrance, which is very pleasant to smell. Many famous poets of all ages have sung about the fragrance of peony, and peony has been given the titles of

“Heavenly Fragrance,” “Wild Fragrance,” “Unusual Fragrance,” “Cold Fragrance,” “National Fragrance,” and so on. Peony has been honored as “Heavenly Fragrance,” “Wild Fragrance,” “Exotic Fragrance,” “Cold Fragrance,” “National Fragrance,” “First Fragrance,” and so on (Peng & Tan, 2014). Li Shanfu wrote that fiery red peonies bloomed competitively, and the strange fragrance of the flowers should only be found in heaven. Pi Rixiu praised the fragrance of peonies as the No. 1 Fragrance of Independence on Earth. Xue Neng hailed peonies as a “Cold Fragrance” in Peony. Zhang Huai told peony as a “wild fragrance”; and Huang Tingjian praised peony as a “clear fragrance” (Peng & Tan, 2014, p. 86). Different viewers have different scent feelings when they smell peony flowers. There is a specific scientific basis for this. According to research, it is found that the different colors of peony flowers have different scents: purple and black peonies have a strong smell, pink and yellow ones have a ghostly scent, and red and white ones have an unmistakable scent (Zhao, 2004, p. 77).


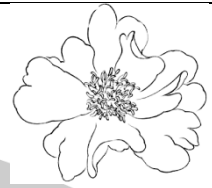









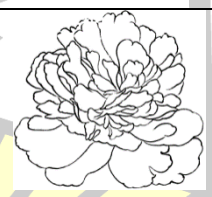




### 2.1.3 Appreciation Peony posture





Apart from the color and fragrance of the flowers, peonies also have a variety of unique flower styles. First, it is to appreciate the flower shape of the peony. The peony’s flower shape is an essential basis for classifying peony varieties. Peony flowers are mainly composed of sepals, corolla, stamens, pistils, and other organs, and the shape, number, and arrangement of these organs gradually change with artificial cultivation. Most wild peonies have one or two rounds of petals, which have increased after artificial cultivation and evolution. According to the petal level of peonies, peonies are usually divided into three types and ten types (Table 10). Three types are monopetalous, heavy petalous, and lush, and the ten types are single-valve type, lotus type, rose type, chrysanthemum type, hydrangea type, tongue type, crown type, golden ring type, thousand-layer daikaku type, and Louzi daikaku type (Zhao, 2004, p.80).

*Table 10 The ten major flower types of Luoyang peony*

Source: production by researcher, 2023

No.	Typology	Photograph	Tracing Image	Features
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1	Single-valve type			Petals in whorls of 1-3, broad, spreading, gynoecium normal
2	Lotus type			Petals in whorls of 4-5, broad and uniform, when open, resembling a lotus flower
3	Chrysanthemum type			Petals in 6 or more whorls, cascading and tapering from outside to inside.
4	Rose type			Petals in whorls of 8 or more, tapering from outside to inside
5	Tongue type			Outer petals broad and neat, stamens petaloid, becoming thin and elevated from outside to inside.
6	Crown type			Outer petals protruding, middle petal broad and flat, crown-shaped
7	Hydrangea type			Stamens fully valvular, compactly arranged, globose
8	Golden ring type			Outer petals are broad and spreading, and middle petals are narrow and vertical.

9	Louzidaikaku type			It comprises two or more single flowers of the millipede type overlapping on top and bottom.
10	thousand-layer daikaku type			It comprises two or more single flowers of the Louzi group overlapping on top and bottom.

Admire the peony plant. Peony is not only in blossom but also in a different perspective to see the beauty of peony posture. Peony plants also have great ornamental value, such as branches, leaves, buds, and stamens.

Peony Branch Appreciation. Peony branches and trunks are pale and mottled, seemingly withered but with new buds. Especially for peonies of longer age, their branches and trunks are even more pale and majestic (Figure 15). Therefore, people give peony branches and trunks a high appraisal, leaving many poets and painters an excellent space for reciting poems and pouring ink on them.



*Figure 15 Peony Branch Appreciation*  
Source: Photographed by researcher, 2023

Peony Leaf Appreciation. It is often said that a good flower needs green leaves to set it off, and peony leaves are verdant. Some of them are layered, some are sparsely interspersed, some are upside down, and some are peculiar, which in itself is a kind of artistic combination, and to lift the colorful flowers, the spirit of the green leaves willing to play a supporting role cannot fail to convince people. I can't help but be impressed (Figure 16).



*Figure 16 Peony Leaf Appreciation*  
Source: Photographed by researcher, 2023

Peony Buds Appreciation. Whenever spring begins, peony buds sprout with bright and tender colors and strange forms that change daily, making them look touching and lovely and giving people a great space for imagination (Figure 17). In recent years, peony growers have started to select and breed different peony buds with different colors and shapes during every Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to broaden people's horizons.



*Figure 17 Peony Buds Appreciation*  
Source: Photographed by researcher, 2023

Appreciate the stamens of peonies. The stamens of different flower types and varieties of peonies are also very varied. Some are like a collection of gold, some are like a collection of jewelry, some are like the rising of ceremonial flowers in the air, and some are like a cloud of sunshine, and their attractive postures call for an endless number of people to count them (Figure 18).



Figure 18 Appreciate the stamens of peonies  
Source: Photographed by the author,2023

## 2.2 Literary Expression of Luoyang Peony Culture

### 2.2.1 Myths and Legends of Luoyang Peony

In Zhang Fuxing's *Stories of Peony in Luoyang* and Xie Jiixin's *Records of Luoyang Galaxies*, a total of 51 legendary stories about the peony in Luoyang are recorded, mainly in the types of character legends, scenery legends, flower legends, and local custom stories, which have become an essential material for the study of the origin and development of the culture of the peony in Luoyang. In the stories, they show such beautiful qualities as filial piety to parents, defiance of difficulties, love of home, protection of nature, the rescue of animals, practicality, punishment of evil and promotion of goodness, love of peony, trust, and love between husband and wife, defiance of power and nobility, and unity of heart.

#### (1) Legends about the Origin of Peony in Luoyang

In the story, *The Origin of Peony*, *The Birthday of Peony*, and *Wu Zetian's Devaluation of Peony*, the origin of wild peonies or cultivated peonies in Luoyang is told in the form of myths and legends. Through these myths and legends, the people of Luoyang praised the peony for its beauty, nobility, and richness and glorified the peony's defiance and courage.

*The Origin of Peony* tells the story of villagers on Mang Mountain in Luoyang who are infected with a disease. To save everyone, a young man walked over 99 streams and 99 ridges in search of the legendary *Ganoderma lucidum* grass. Eventually, his filial piety and perseverance in defying hardships moved the immortals, who helped him fly to the heavenly palace and came to the alchemist's room of the Queen Mother, where he filled his coat pocket with gold pills.

Unexpectedly, the Queen Mother finds out that the gold pills are lost. In a hurry, the young man scattered all the golden pills from the sky, and the pills fell on Mang Mountain, turning into beautiful flowers with roots that could cure diseases and save people's lives. The townspeople loved and appreciated this beautiful flower and gave it a unique name because it was the golden elixir of the Queen Mother, so it was called "Mu Dan." The story praises the boy's good qualities of filial piety to his parents, love for his fellow citizens, courage to sacrifice, and perseverance (Zhang, 1985, p. 32).

In another story, *The Birthday of Peony*, when the plague spread in Luoyang, and the people were suffering, the Peony Festival, to save the people, privately descended to the mortal world on the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar and sowed the peony seeds in the mountains and gullies of Luoyang. In the spring of the following year, thick and healthy peonies grew everywhere, and the people cured the plague by digging up the roots and boiling the medicine. So, the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar was set as the birthday of the peony, and people came in groups to commemorate the kind-hearted peony festival on that day. People believed that the beautiful and healing peony was not a mortal thing but a magic spell of the heavenly peony Festival and regarded the peony as a sacred thing, which shows that the local people of Luoyang loved and respected the peony (Zhang, 1985, p.38).

Regarding the origin of the peony in Luoyang, the story of *Wu Zetian's Degrading the Peony* is the most widely circulated, loved, and recognized version of the story by the people of Luoyang. It tells the story of how the Peony Festival refused Wu Zetian's unreasonable order to have all flowers bloom in the winter months, and when all flowers bloomed, only the peony was left, defying the power and nobility. Wu Zetian got angry, burned all the peonies, and relegated them to Mang Mountain, a barren place where they bloomed even more vigorously and beautifully. Wu Zetian got even more angry and burned them to death with a single fire. However, the peony blossomed even more beautifully in the late spring of the following year after being burnt by the fire. This kind of solid heart and unyielding spirit left Wu Zetian with no choice but to give up the peony, after which the unswerving and tenacious peony took root and sprouted in Luoyang, and entered into thousands of households (Zhang, 1985, p. 50).

*Mangshan Junior* follows the antecedents in *The Origin of Peonies* and tells the story of the origin of artificially cultivated peonies. After the golden dan of the Queen Mother fell to the ground and turned into peonies, they grew more and more abundantly, attracting people to come to admire them. One day, a young man found a group of men cutting and digging peonies. The young man immediately stopped them, but he was beaten to death. In a cave, he heard a female voice calling him. He woke up and found a bowl of medicine beside him. After drinking it, he was completely cured the next day, so it turned out that the peonies that he had saved at Mang Mountain were peony fairy who came to repay his kindness. Under the guidance of the peony Festival, the boy transplanted the peonies on the mountain to the courtyard of his house and took good care of them. The peonies in the courtyard were so beautiful and colorful that the townspeople were full of praise and followed his example, and the artificial cultivation of peonies thus began. This story tells the story of a self-reliant, brave, and fearless boy who protects peonies and cultivates them and anthropomorphizes peonies into peony fairy who know how to repay favors and are hardworking and have outstanding looks, which is also the peony in human form in people's fantasy, which is charming and attractive, with a flower-like face, and with a kind, capable and intelligent character, expressing the people of Luoyang's cherishing of peonies and caring about them. He was retrieved from [www.hlwh.net](http://www.hlwh.net)).

In these legendary stories about the origin of peony, whether it is the golden elixir of the Queen Mother or the gods in the sky, one can feel everywhere that Luoyang people love peony, glorifying it as the elixir that cures the sick and saves the people, the goddess who defies the power and nobility, and the flower fairy who is grateful to the people for their kindness and gratitude. People love the peony and are thankful for its appearance, so they weave a beautiful legend about the origin of the peony, giving it a beautiful character and spreading it widely on earth.

(2) Legends about the origin of the names of different varieties of peonies

Among the more than 1,300 varieties of peonies in Luoyang, almost every valuable variety contains a touching story behind it. It is also the central and most valuable part of the peony legend, with high value for sightseeing and cultural research. Different varieties of peonies are named by numbers, such as One Twist of Red, Two Qiao, and Ten Kinds of Brocade. By colors, such as Lipstick Red, Bean

Green, Splash of Ink, and Purple. By the characters' surnames, such as Yao Huang, Wei Purple, and Zhao Pink. The characters' names include Drunken Concubine, Luoshen, and Xishi. By other flower names, such as Snowy Pear Blossom, Pomegranate Red, and Shengli Lotus. By the names of the places, such as Yunnan Pink, Penzhou Purple, and Luoyang Red, and by the names of animals, such as Flower Butterfly, Silver Lion, Drunken Lion, and Pink Lotus. Butterfly, Silver Lion, Drunken Mandarin Ducks; there are also those named after moods, such as After the Rain, Green Mountain Reclining Snow, Wulong Holding Sheng, Spring River Floating Brocade, and Pond Dawn Moon, which are full of poetic and picturesque meaning, and make people reverie endlessly.

The Luoyang Peony Garden has a purple peony called "Ge Jin Purple," which shines with purple light, burns with different colors, and is exceptionally gorgeous. There is also a white peony called "Yuban White," which is as beautiful as the bright moon in its white color and lovely style. Their names come from the legend of *Gejin Purple and Yuban White*, which describes the story of a scholar from Luoyang, Chang Da Yong, who traveled to Cao Zhou in Shandong Province in search of valuable peonies and formed a marriage bond with a peony fairy, Ge Jin, and facilitated the marriage between his brother, Chang Da Qi, and Ge Jin's cousin, Yu Pan, which ultimately ended in tragedy, making it a poignant story. The legend of *Outlaw Liu Huang* describes a man named Liu who loved to plant peonies in Luoyang. The peonies he planted were so suitable that urchins often destroyed them, and every time he caught someone, he would be punished with a morning's labor or beaten with a board several times. Therefore, the urchins nicknamed him "Outlaw Liu". One year, he cultivated a golden-colored peony, whose flower color surpassed that of "Yao Huang," and later on, people named this flower "Outlaw Liu Huang" (Retrieved from <https://www.jianshu.com>). *Wei Purple Peony* tells the story of Wei Hua, a peony flowerer who came down to earth to marry Zhao Yi, a hardworking and kind-hearted flower grower, and then was separated. Wei Hua had no choice but to leave, leaving behind a child who was transformed into a new species of peony called Wei Zi (the son of Wei Hua) before leaving (Retrieved from [www.hlwh.net](http://www.hlwh.net)).

Biologically, these precious and unique peony varieties use cultivation techniques such as grafting and crossbreeding. Still, the people of Luoyang have an

incredibly romantic imagination, weaving beautiful stories about justice, loyalty, love, defiance, and other sentiments for different varieties of peonies so that when people appreciate different varieties of peonies, they learn about the different stories and thus feel the beautiful qualities and spirits carried by the peonies, and also make people outside Luoyang know more about peonies. It also allows people outside Luoyang to feel the local people's deep love for Luoyang peonies through these origin stories.

### (3) Stories about People and Peonies

Throughout the ages, countless literati praised and chanted peonies, and their charms have been unforgettable to many people. Stories about people and peonies are vibrant, reflecting people's cherishing and love for peonies everywhere, and it is the demonstration of these stories has made the wind of peony appreciation flourish in Luoyang.

*Li Bai's Drunken Poem on Peonies* tells the story of the appreciation of peonies by Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Yang Guifei. The famous musician Li Guinean and the poet Li Bai composed poems and sang songs at this flower appreciation party, the highest moment in Li Bai's life. Amid beautiful flowers and wine, Li Bai wrote three peony poems in a row, each of which was a perfect example of the beauty of peonies and concubine, highlighting the luxury and affluence of the Great Tang Dynasty (Xie & Peng, 2016, p. 6).

The Story of *Bai Juyi and the White Peonies* tells the story of Bai Juyi, who was appointed to an unknown official position and had nothing to do all day. Not being reappointed, and in his depression, he came across the white peonies in the same situation. The white peonies are numerous and elegant in color, but people are only interested in the big red peonies. They do not care about the white peonies and trample on them, just like the poet himself, who is talented and serves as a government official but is also neglected and unused. Before his death, Bai Juyi instructed his family to bury him on Fragrant Hill in Luoyang and load his grave with white peonies, which shows Bai Juyi's love for white peonies.

The story of Ouyang Xiu and the Peonies of Luoyang is told in *The Peonies of Luoyang*. In 1030, Ouyang Xiu was appointed the governor of Xi Jing (Luoyang). After Ouyang Xiu came to Luoyang, he missed the peony blossom season three times due to business. With great regret, he met the Peony Festival of the Palace of Flowers

in a dream, which took him to admire the peony gardens in eight places, namely, Dan Shou, Yan Zhou, Qing Zhou, Yue Zhou, Chen Zhou, Bo Zhou, Cao Zhou, and Luoyang, and he still thought that the peonies in Luoyang were the most beautiful in comparison. (Ke, 2007, p. 33). He wrote the first treatise on flowers and trees in the history of China, "*The Record of Peony in Luoyang*."

In addition, Shao Yong, a famous mathematician and scientist, also had a deep relationship with Luoyang Peonies. It is said that Shao Yong loved Luoyang peonies and planted various kinds of peonies around his ancestral hall. He was so good at observing that he knew the shape of peonies' flowers and leaves as well as he did, and he could tell which variety of peonies it was by touching the leaves of peonies with eyes closed, and he was praised as "Peony Master." Pei Du, a famous prime minister of the late Tang Dynasty, was still thinking about peonies when he was seriously ill and lying in bed, I will die without seeing this flower, which is pathetic, and If I die under the peonies, I can be a ghost with a good style. Hence, the peonies were in full bloom in the garden on the next day. After Pei Du had a good look at the colors of the flowers, he passed away peacefully.

### 2.2.2 Poems of Luoyang Peony

#### (1) Traditional Peony Poems

There are more than 500 peony poems recorded in the *All-Tang Poems*. Of course, there are far more poems praising the peony in Luoyang, and according to the latest statistics, there are nearly a thousand peony poems in Luoyang. The Luoyang peony poems are not only the product of the perfect combination of poems and flowers but also the reflection and epitome of Luoyang's politics, economy, and culture. The traditional peony poems have the characteristics of chanting fragrance, chanting beauty, singing cleanliness, celebrating love, and expressing one's will. Counting the poets and literati of the past dynasties, such as Li Bai, Du Fu, Bai Juyi, Liu Yuxi of the Tang Dynasty, Xu Yin, Sun Bream, Pi Rixiu of the Five Dynasties, Ouyang Xiu, Fan Zhongyan, Sima Guang of the Song Dynasty, and Dong Qichang, Li Dongyang, Cao Yin, Li Qiu, and so on in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there was almost no one who did not depict and glorify the peony of Luoyang. Ancient peony poems are historical witnesses to the development and prosperity of the Luoyang peony. These poems reflect the various aspects of the wealth and development of the

Luoyang peony from different perspectives. The poets either depicted the prosperity of the peony when it was in full bloom or expressed their feelings and aspirations for their family and country, outlining the general picture of the poetic creation of the Luoyang peony from different perspectives and at different levels (Li, 2007, p.6). These poems' local customs and folklore are essential references for studying Luoyang culture today.

In the Sui and Tang dynasties, with the cultivation of many peonies in Luoyang, literati used the peony flower events to drink wine and compose poems. Bai Juyi's *Peony Fang*, Flowers bloomed and fell for twenty days, and people in the city went crazy, indeed depicting the grandeur of peonies in the Tang Dynasty. Shao Yong's *Peonies in Dongxuan*, Only Luoyang is wonderful in spring under the world and represents the beauty of the peonies in Luoyang. Zhang Xiaoxiang's *Tesha Xing* described the peonies as the best in the world. Zhou Mi's *Spring in the Palace of Chu* depicted a picture of peonies in the Golden Valley with gorgeous colors. Wang Xin's *Raccoon Stream* also pointed out that the peonies were the most popular in Luoyang because spring air is sufficient in the city. The poem *Raccoon Stream* also points out in the form of a poem that the peony in Luoyang is the best in the world because of the fullness of spring in Luoyang, which is the same as Ouyang Xiu's *The flowers of Luoyang are the most suitable for the land*. Li Tingzhong's *The Sky of the Partridge* writes about when peonies bloomed in Luoyang (Li, 2007).

In the Song Dynasty, Luoyang Peony was the only one in the world, and Luoyang Peony's poems became more mature and prosperous, and the recitation of Peony was pushed to the peak of the era. During the period of the Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, Yuan Haowen, Ma Zuchang, He Qiaoxin, Kong Shangren, and so on, based on inheriting the traditional peony poems and compositions, further explored the field of expression of the peony. In *Jiang Cheng Zi* of the Yuan Dynasty, Hao Wen wrote that the famous peonies Yao Huang and Wei Zi were as beautiful as the beauty of the country and the goddess of Wu Mountain. In *Peony* of the Ming Dynasty, Xu Wei wrote that he was unable to color peonies because he had not been to Luoyang and had not witnessed the richness of the peonies in the city. In *Viewing Flowers in Luoyang* of the Qing Dynasty, Kong Shangren illustrated that Luoyang had been a famous city of flowers since ancient times (Li, 2010, p. 40).

## (2) Modern Peony Poems

The innumerable poems about peonies that have been passed down demonstrate how well-known it was long ago to admire flowers and recite poetry. Poetry is still used by modern individuals to express love, make friends, and add poetry to special occasions. The first Luoyang Peony Festival took place in 1983. Aside from enjoying the flowers, the main cultural event was the Peony Poetry Meeting, which was organized by the Henan Provincial Writers' Association and the Literature Federation of Luoyang City. They invited well-known poets from across the nation to Luoyang to enjoy the flowers. It was an extraordinary occurrence in the literary world at the time when the Federation of Literature of Luoyang City and the Henan Provincial Writers' Association invited well-known poets from across the nation to Luoyang to enjoy flowers and debate poems (Li, 2007, p.3). Since then, the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival has featured poetry recitations and flower appreciation as regular events. The Luoyang Peony Poetry Festival has also taken place 40 times in conjunction with the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. These poems include a wide range of topics and vibrant artistic forms, and they are strongly tied to the future and destiny of the nation, the country, and the times.

Most contemporary Luoyang peony poems are written by literati, poetry lovers, and ordinary people after their experiences of traveling to Luoyang and viewing peonies. Among them, the 38th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival “Luoyang Peony Poetry Meeting” was attended by 117 participants, and more than 130 peony poems were compiled; the 39th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival “Luoyang Peony Poetry Meeting” was attended by 106 participants, and more than 170 peony poems were collected. The 40th Luoyang Peony Culture Festival “Luoyang Peony Poetry Meeting” was a new beginning after the epidemic had dissipated, with 185 participants and more than 250 peony poems compiled (Figure 19). These works are the bold exploration and pioneering of modern peony poetry creation and mark the renewed prosperity of peony poetry creation in Luoyang under the new historical conditions.



*Figure 19 Luoyang Peony Poetry Meeting*

Source: Luoyang Daily (News<http://news.lyd.com.cn/system.shtml>)

In recent years, as the influence of peony culture expanded, the scale of Peony Poetry Meeting grew. The “China-US International Peony Poetry Meeting” was held as scheduled during the Peony Cultural Festival in 2016. The form Peony Poetry Meeting is more energetic and diversified, inviting poets from many countries to join the event, and Chinese and foreign poets and painters discuss and exchange views on the inheritance and memory, inheritance and innovation around the traditional Chinese culture (Retrieved from [www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn)). With the help of multiple languages, we united the pure emotions of human beings with poetry and the beautiful encounter between poetry and peony; we sang praises to peony, hometown, and motherland together and expressed our aspirations for a better life.

### **2.3 Artistic Expression of Luoyang Peony Culture**

#### **2.3.1 Luoyang Peony Ceramic Art**

The artistic application of peony was first seen on pottery vessels in tombs during the Eastern Han Dynasty, with a small number of abstract peony patterns. During the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, the image of a peony appeared frequently on many kinds of pottery wares, and the pattern was more abundant. Since the Tang and Song dynasties, there has been a wide range of cultural relics with peony motifs in various dynasties and periods, which can be said to be too many to mention. For example, Luoyang Jin Jia Ditch unearthed a Three-color applique with a lid jar. The middle of its abdomen has blooming peony, petals, overlapping, completely open, yellow and green color combination, stamens are visible, a stroke, detailed and vivid, the edge of the outline with fine lines, smooth and full, lifelike. In Tawan village in the eastern suburbs of Luoyang, unearthed in a tomb coffin in the Tang Dynasty, there is an Eagle Head Pot. The lower right side of the pot is a single petal peony in full

bloom, simple and elegant, with a glaze color that is even, stamens that point to yellow-blue, and the color coordination is fresh and elegant.

From the Song dynasty, as China's porcelain-making technology continued to improve, peony motifs began to appear in large numbers on ceramic artifacts, which echoed the prosperity of the Song dynasty's peony flower events, in which peonies were portrayed on ceramics and other daily-use objects for adornment and the expression of good wishes (Xu, 1996). There are many such collections of various types of cultural relics in the Luoyang Museum, such as the Song dynasty White-glazed, red and green colored porcelain bowl with folded flowers unearthed near the Ying Tian Gate site in Luoyang City, and the Song dynasty Three-colored peony porcelain pillow unearthed near the Baima Temple in the eastern suburb of Luoyang City (Figure 20).



*Figure 20 Ceramics with Peony Motifs from Luoyang*  
Source: Photographed by researcher at the Luoyang Museum, 2023

In modern times, Li Xuewu, a native of Luoyang, based on the white porcelain firing technique of the Tang Dynasty, used kaolin clay, which is rich in many mineral elements in the west Henan region of China, as the production material and went through several technological processes, such as raw material grinding - mixing slurry - filtering mud - shaping - molding - drying - plain firing - glazing - glazing, combining with the firing techniques of other types of porcelain, to create a new school of artistic ceramics - Luoyang Peony Porcelain (Figure 21), which is one of the most famous porcelain products in China. At first glance, it looks like the real one, which perfectly combines the elegance of the peony and the delicacy of porcelain, and it is known as a never withering peony flower. The Peony Porcelain has been sent to various countries as a national gift, spreading the culture of Chinese peony to the outside world.



Figure 21 Modern Peony Ceramics from Luoyang - Peony Porcelain

Source: Photographed by researcher at the Peony Porcelain Museum, Luoyang, 2023

### 2.3.2 Luoyang Peony Graphic Art

The rich peony resources in Luoyang provide a unique, practical space for creating peony art. Chinese people have been painting peonies for a long time. The earliest application of peonies in painting can be traced back to the Eastern Jin Dynasty when it first appeared in Gu Kaizhi's *Nymph of the Luo River*; in which peonies in full bloom were painted in a life-like manner on the bank of the Luoyang River. During the Tang Dynasty, the political, economic, and cultural development was highly prosperous, and through active foreign exchanges and learning, the art aspect was characterized by diversity and openness, and there were more and more paintings of peonies. The Tang painter Zhou Fang's *Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers* (Figure 22) depicts an aristocratic woman with dainty peonies embroidered on her dress and all kinds of peonies in her hair (Wang, 1990, p. 151-155).



Figure 22 Zhou Fang's Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers

Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

In the Five Dynasties, there emerged Xu Xi, Liang Yu Jing, and other great masters of bird and flower painters of later generations, among which Xu Xi's peony paintings were the best, and his masterpiece *Jade Hall of Fortune* (Figure 23) has been handed down to the present day. The peonies are paired with magnolias and

begonias, with a few blooming pink and white heavy-petalled peonies at the front end of the image, gradually deriving vertically from the back to create more peonies in clusters of crowded flowers competing for beauty and splendor.



Figure 23 Xu Xi's *Jade Hall of Fortune*, Fifth Dynasty  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

During the Song Dynasty, the mature period of Chinese bird and flower painting, the peony, as a symbol of wealth and auspiciousness, became the painters' first bird and flower painting choice. It was improved in terms of intention, conception, and technique, which led to the advancement of the whole art of peony painting. The representative painters during this period were Xu Chongsi, Xu Chongzhu, Huang Jucai, Zhao Chang, and so on, whose peony paintings had different flavors and styles. According to the record, Zhao Chang especially loved folding peonies. In his painting looking closely at the local peony engraving with sparse and dynamic brushwork, the painting was highly energetic, focusing on the overall form of peonies and opening up a new style of lively, clear, and elegant (Figure 24). The *Xuan He Paintings* of the Song Dynasty recorded the works of famous painters of all generations in the palace collection, a biographical history of paintings, in which there are 146 spools of peony paintings from the Fifth Dynasty to the Northern Song Dynasty, showing the process of the development of peony paintings and the changes in their aesthetics (Cheng, 2010, p. 20).



*Figure 24 Song Dynasty Zhao Chang, Painting Peonies*  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

Chen Jiakuan's Peony Painting depicts a peony in full bloom, with overlapping green leaves holding a large, full-bloomed peony in meticulous detail, the stamens of which are visible (Figure 25). Lv Jiqing's peony paintings in the Ming Dynasty are unique, lively, and dashing. In the Qing Dynasty, Wang Jianzhang's unique biological beauty and symbols of good fortune and wealth give people spiritual cultivation and aesthetic feelings.



*Figure 25 Peony Paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties*  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

After the establishment of new China, with the peonies flourishing, peony painting was inherited and developed. In 1980, the Luoyang Federation of Literature

and the Luoyang Association of Fine Arts jointly organized a large-scale peony painting Festival, which displayed peony works of various styles in Luoyang. After the first Peony Flower Festival in 1983, the art of peony painting gradually became prosperous. Peony painters continued to emerge like a spring. Several painting academies were established, such as the Luoyang Peony Painting Academy, Luoyang National Painting Academy, Luoyang Painting Academy, Luoyang Women's Painting Academy, and several other painting academies (Peng & Tan, 2014, p. 105).

Contemporary nationally renowned Luoyang peony painters include Wang Xiu, Zhou Yansheng, Wen Liuchuan, Li Jinxue, Suo Tiesheng, Lin Shaojie, Wang Housheng, Cheng Quanlin and so on, whose peony paintings, though each with its strengths and styles, share a common characteristic, that is, they are close to the times, close to the life, and close to the people's aesthetic fashions, and they have made positive contributions to the dissemination of the culture of the peony of Luoyang, and to the expansion of the impact of the ancient capital of Luoyang on the whole country and even the international community. It has positively contributed to the dissemination of Luoyang peony culture and the expansion of the influence of the ancient capital, Luoyang, in the country and even the world. Primarily, Wang Xiu, the "Master of Chinese Peony Painting," is known as the founder of the New Peony Painting School and the leading figure of peony painting in Luoyang, as he adopted the traditional ink and watercolor small-writing brushwork and integrated the color techniques of oil painting, watercolor and gouache, and his paintings are full of compositions, colorful and vivid, and his peonies are graceful and rich, smooth and natural (Figure 26).





*Figure 26 Modern Peony Paintings (By Wang Xiu, Zhou Yansheng, Wen Liuchuan, Cheng Quanlin, Li Jinxue, Suo Tiesheng)*  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

In addition to professional painters, many local farmers in Luoyang are also involved. Pingle Village, Pingle Town, Meng Jin County, Luoyang City, is the only peony painting production base in China, with more than one hundred peony painting professional households creating more than 100,000 peony paintings every year, which is regarded as “The first village of peony painting creation by peasants. Nowadays, a painting, an acre of grain, a small peony, and a big industry have become the daily portrait of Pingle Village (Retrieved from <https://baike.baidu.com>). Villagers welcome the New Year by painting peonies every year. Meanwhile, during the Peony Cultural Festival, villagers in Pingle Township can be seen painting peonies in places with a high concentration of flower appreciation, and tourists usually buy their peony paintings for 10-100 RMB. For them, painting peonies is no longer an elegant art but an ordinary way of life (Figure 27).



*Figure 27 Peony Painting in the First Village of Peony Painting in China-Pingle Village*

Source: Photographed by a researcher at Pingle Town, Luoyang, 2023

### 2.3.3 Luoyang Peony Sculpture Art

The peony is recognized as a flower of good fortune and wealth and is often

decorated on ancient buildings as an essential part of architectural carvings. Peonies are carved in the main, second, and third halls of Guan Lin<sup>23</sup> in Luoyang, as well as in the Shan-Shaan Guild Hall<sup>24</sup>, Luze Guild Hall<sup>25</sup>, and Lv Zu Temple.

Guan Lin is where the head of Shu General Guan Yu was buried during the Three Kingdoms period and is one of the three major Guan temples at home and abroad. The main hall of Guan Lin was built in the twenty-first year of the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1593 A.D.), the second hall in the twentieth year of the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1592 A.D.), and the third hall in the twenty-second year of the Jiaqing reign of the Qing Dynasty (1817 A.D.), and the door panels of the three halls are decorated with peonies in high relief, with detailed carvings, and with peonies in full bloom, with large bones and unfolding petals in a distinctive level of compositional symmetry (Figure 28) (Yan, 1987, p.156). The researcher can't help thinking that Guan Yu, who has been on horseback all his life, shouldn't like flowers and grasses, so why did Guan Lin Temple carve so many peony flowers? Asked the staff, the answer is very simple, it is not that Guan Yu likes peony flowers, but Luoyang people like peony flowers, and Luoyang craftsmen like peony flowers, so they carved a lot of them.



*Figure 28 Peony Sculpture at Guan Lin Temple, Luoyang*  
Source: Photographed by the researcher at Guan Lin Temple, Luoyang, 2023

Peonies are carved and decorated on the eaves and square columns of the

<sup>23</sup> Guanlin, located in Guanlin Town, Luolong District, Luoyang City, Henan Province, is the place where the head of Shu general Guan Yu was buried during the Three Kingdoms period, with a shrine temple in front and a burial mound in the back, making it one of the three major Guan temples at home and abroad.

<sup>24</sup> Luoyang Shan-Shaan Association Hall, located in the old city of Luoyang City, Henan Province, Jiudu East Road, the museum site covers an area of more than 10,000 square metres, was built in the Qing Dynasty, Kangxi, Yongzheng years, has a history of nearly 300 years.

<sup>25</sup> Luze Guild Hall is located at the south end of Dongguan Xinjie in the old city of Luoyang. It was originally built by the merchants of Shanxi Lu'an and Zezhou, and was the meeting place for the merchants of Lu'an and Zezhou in Luoyang at that time.

Guildhall in many parts of the Guildhall, with petals rolled up, and the knives are exquisite, which is very beautiful. The buildings of Luze Hall were decorated with many groups of wood carvings of animals and flowers, especially peonies, which were carved with the four-layer translucent carving technique. The peonies had large flowers and were elegant and magnificent, which appeared glorious (Figure 29). In ancient architectural wood carvings, all peony works were carved in high places, and the peony is a rich and noble flower, so its position must be higher, which can also show the Luoyang people's love for peony (Yan, 1987, p. 113).



*Figure 29 Wood carving of peonies in the Shan Shaan Guild Hall, Luoyang*  
Source: Photographed by the researcher at Shan Shaan Guild Hall, Luoyang, 2023

In 1983, to hold the First Luoyang Peony Festival and improve the landscape of the peony flower beds, the Peony Festival Statue was built in Wang Cheng Park. It is 5.8 meters high and made of alabaster. It was inspired by a beautiful legend based on the story of *Emperor Wu's Derogation of Peonies*, in which the Peony Festival Statue has a graceful and elegant appearance, which expresses the people's love of peonies and also signifies the spirit of defying the most potent power. Now the statue of the Peony Fairy has increased the interest of tourists in viewing peonies and become a must-visit attraction for tourists visiting Wang Cheng Park, and hundreds of thousands of Chinese and foreign tourists used to take photos here every year.

In 2018, an 8-metre-high sculpture, with the Five Olympic Rings on the top and peonies underneath, was completed in the Sports Park of the New District, Luoyang. The sculpture was completed, adding another landmark sculpture in Luoyang. In 2017, Luoyang Railway Station was constructed as a landmark sculpture in the square. The sculpture has a total height of 13.159 meters, with a trapezoidal LED electronic screen on four sides of the column and a peony flower shape on the top. As a peony flower capital, many sculptures in Luoyang have peony elements, peony

street lamps, AD gates, pavement fences, and so on (Figure 30).



*Figure 30 Peony elements in Luoyang*  
Source: Photographed by the researcher in Luoyang, 2023

#### 2.3.4 Luoyang Peony Photographic Art

Peonies are also the protagonists in the lenses of many photographers, and a piece of artwork shows the various forms of the “King of Flowers.” After the Third Peony Flower Festival in 1985, all the central peony ornamental gardens in Luoyang City began to organize peony photography, contests, exhibitions, and other colorful cultural activities to increase the participation of the public and tourists in these activities. The photography works all use peonies as their images. Photographic works take peony as the picture’s theme, and various styles are displayed colorfully. Many works use the flower as a metaphor for the country, events, and people and deeply excavate the expressive power of the main body. These works interpret the cultural essence of the peony to the fullest extent. Every year, the award-winning works of the Peony Photography Competition are recorded in the large-scale photographic album *Peonies of Luoyang*. Nowadays, peony photography also adopts online exhibitions, using online topics, H5, long pictures, and other forms through text introduction, images, short videos, and other means (Figure 31).



*Figure 31 Peony Photography Competition Entries*  
Source: Duan Wanqing, Han Chengming Photography

Gao Junhai, vice chairman of Henan Provincial Photographers' Association, and his photography team launched the "Peony Smiling Face" international image project in 2015 to take at least 10,000 images of "peony smiling faces" of people holding peony flowers and smiling faces in different countries and regions in the world, especially in the countries along the Belt and Road, to spread the peony culture and convey friendship and good wishes (Figure 32). Over the past eight years, they have gone into more than 100 cities in more than 60 countries and regions, pointed their lenses at people of different nationalities and occupations, and framed their smiles with peony flowers to form a picture of "Peony Smiling Face." More than 20,000 Peony Smiling Faces have formed a vast image library, and behind each "Peony Smiling Face" is a beautiful story of people-to-people communication. The photographic works have been exhibited in Turkey, India, Indonesia, France, Romania, and other countries and have received wide attention from domestic and foreign photographic circles for their unique influence. These massive "Peony Smiling Faces" image materials were eventually compiled into the Peony Smiling Faces International Image Archive. The mass of "peony smiling face" video materials were finally collected into the Peony Smiling Face International Video Archive, endeavoring to make the Luoyang peonies with good wishes to perfume the world (Retrieved from [www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn)) (Figure 33).



Figure 32 “Peony Smiling Faces” Photography Exhibition  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://news.dahebao.cn/dahe/appcommunity/1346785>)



Figure 33 “Peony Smiling Faces” Going to Different Countries in the World  
Source: [http://news.lyd.com.cn/system/2019/01/31/030986961\\_07.shtml](http://news.lyd.com.cn/system/2019/01/31/030986961_07.shtml)

## 2.4 Folk Customs Expression of Luoyang Peony Culture

### 2.4.1 Luoyang Peony Diet

Peonies are colorful and fragrant, and the food made from them is good in color, aroma, and taste but also has specific effects on beauty and skin care. Peony food custom has a long history. It is recorded that Li Wu, the minister of military festivals in Later Shu, gave peony flowers to his friends and presented them with singing pastry, using peony petals and singing pastry together to be fried and then eaten, which is a very sophisticated food method. The scholarly community admired it as elegant (Cai, 2015, p. 4). Today, there are also many peony dietary customs, such as peony swallows in Luoyang water feasts, peony flower slipped fish slices, tenderloin shreds, peony silver ear soup, etc. Together with peony pastries, peony tea, and peony wine, people in Luoyang like to entertain their guests with peony banquets full of colors and aromas (Cheng, 2010, p.31). Nowadays, in the development of the peony diet culture in Luoyang, there are mainly traditional varieties of peony swallow dishes, peony cakes, and peony wine and tea.

Peony Swallow Dish. The most famous peony food which is made of white radish, sea cucumber, squid, and chicken, and the finished product is like a white peony flower with eye-catching color floating on the surface of the soup. In 1973, Premier Zhou Enlai accompanied Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada to eat the dish, and he jokingly said, the peony of Luoyang was the best in the world and swallowed flowers in the dish. Since then, it has been renamed “Peony Swallow Dish.” "Peony Swallow Vegetable" has become a unique local food in Luoyang, and most of the tourists who come to Luoyang will taste this dish, which is fragrant and fresh and won the praise of the VIPs.

Peony Flower Cake. According to *Sui and Tang Delightful Tales*, the inventor of Peony Cake was Wu Zetian. One year, when peonies were in full bloom, she led her court ladies to visit the garden to enjoy the flowers. She had a sudden idea to order her court ladies to pick a large number of flowers of various colors and then go back to the palace to make a cake according to her design by pounding it with rice and steaming it into a cake, which is called “Hundred-Flower Cake” (Cai, 2015, p. 4). Nowadays, the peony cake is filled with carefully soaked peony petals, with selected peas, red beans, red dates, etc., which makes the food fragrant and nutritious, and the shape of the cake is designed as a peony flower. This masterpiece of skillfully integrating history and culture into traditional food adds highlights to the peony cultural industry and the development of tourism in Luoyang.

Peony Flower Tea. The traditional peony flower tea is made from the petals of peonies of edible varieties in full bloom, but Luoyang Peony Flower Tea combines the national flower of peony with the national beverage tea, creating a new tea form of "the national flower with the national beverage. Luoyang Peony Flower Tea has become a new star among the signboard tourism products of Luoyang City (Figure 34).



Figure 34 Luoyang Peony Diet (Peony Swallow Dish, Peony Flower Cake,

*Peony Flower Tea)*

Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

Peony Wine. Peony wine is made from peonies, which has the effect of nourishing the liver and kidney, lifting the qi and raising the essence, blending the fragrance of flowers with that of wine so that people can savor the sweet aroma of peonies while enjoying the mellowness of the wine, so that they can taste and evaluate the fine wine and at the same time bathe in the baptism and inculcation of the traditional culture, and now Peony Wine has been recognized by the people of Luoyang and the tourists from all over the world (Figure 35).



*Figure 35 Luoyang Peony Diet (Peony wine)*

Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

#### 2.4.2 Luoyang Peony Lantern Festival

Colorful lantern culture is an essential traditional folk custom and cultural activity in China. The old tradition of enjoying peonies by day and watching lanterns by night has become the ancient tradition of the Luoyang Peony Festival since the “Ten Thousand Flowers Festival” in the Song Dynasty. With the development of the times, the lantern activity has been given new contents, and this ancient folk-art treasure has been rejuvenated (Retrieved from <https://baike.baidu.com>).

In the first Luoyang Peony Festival in 1983, the municipal government set up the City Lantern Exhibition Command Department, and more than 380 groups of excellent colored lanterns were concentrated on the main roads in downtown Luoyang during the Peony Festival. After holding seven consecutive unpaid lantern shows along the streets, the Luoyang Municipal Government moved the lantern show to Peony Park and renamed it “Luoyang Peony Lantern Show.” With the annual Peony Flower Show, the Luoyang Peony Lantern Show has been held 40 times due to the active participation of the major factories, mines, enterprises, institutions, and

scientific research institutes in Luoyang City and the strong support of the general public (Figure 36).

The contemporary Peony Lantern Festival, based on inheriting the traditional lantern-making craft, introduces modern photoelectricity technology, absorbs the nutrition of other art disciplines, integrates sound, color, light, movement, and shape, and combines ornamental, exciting, and knowledge into one, and gradually forms five major lantern series, namely, Embroidered China, Famous Monuments and Sites, Historical Allusions, Peony as National Flower, and Folk Customs and Customs. During the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, almost every peony ornamental park, the main road of Luoyang, significant squares, and major museums become a sea of peonies and lights, making people forget to return. The most attractive light show for tourists is the Ying Tian Gate Light Show at the Palace Site of Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City. The Ying Tian Gate 3D Light Projection Show uses the visual impact of the naked-eye 3D, dazzling, and shocking light show, i.e., the beautiful and modern sound, light and electricity, and other high-tech ways to reproduce the thousand years of historical changes.



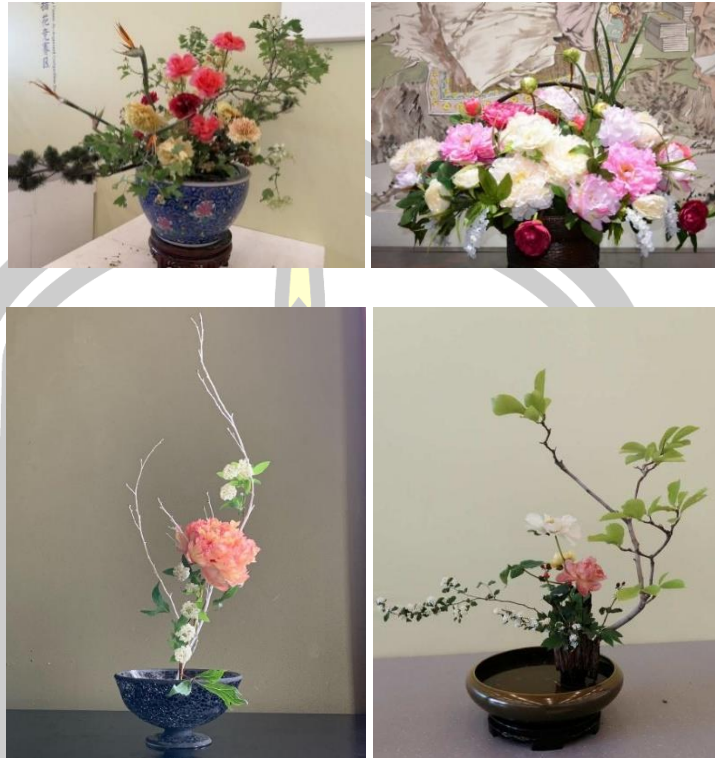
*Figure 36 Luoyang Peony Lantern Show*  
Source: Luoyang government website, 2022

### 2.4.3 Luoyang Peony Flower Arrangement

Flower Arrangement originated from the Buddhist flower offering, *Southern History Volume 44*, there is a lotus offering to the Buddha, the monks impregnated with its stem, want to flowers do not wither. Later, flower arrangements were slowly separated from the Buddhist ceremony, used for decoration and appreciation, and gradually became popular in society. With the economic development after the Tang Dynasty, flower arrangements became a part of daily life, and the “Four Arts of Life” in the Song Dynasty included flower arrangements, hanging paintings, lighting incense, and tasting tea (Ou, 1988, p. 21-22).

Peony is often used as a symbol of wealth, auspiciousness, and happiness in traditional Chinese folk aesthetics and has been loved by people throughout the ages. Therefore, peony has been widely used in conventional flower arrangements in China, folk flower arrangements, court flower arrangements, and Buddhist ceremonial flower arrangements for Buddhist rituals or Zen rooms, an organic combination of natural and man-made beauty. Ouyang Xiu’s *Records of Peony in Luoyang* recorded the custom of Luoyang is, by and large, good for flowers, and in springtime, no noble or lowly people in the city are all arranging flowers. This shows that the custom of arranging flowers was prevalent at that time, and one can imagine that Luoyang was full of blooming peonies. Decoration in the Ming and Qing dynasties emphasized that the material must be meaningful and the meaning must be auspicious. Hence, combining peonies with other flower materials to express the meaning of good luck and happiness using harmonies and associations was popular. Many examples have been widely passed down and are still influential today. For example, the combination with longevity stone means Wealth and Prosperity (Figure 37).

Since 1988, when the Spring of Wang Cheng Peony Flower Arrangement was held during the Sixth Luoyang Peony Festival, it has been held 24 times. It has become a regular program of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. The art of peony flower arrangement has developed to the point that people now have higher requirements for the accompanying floral materials and the configuration of the relevant floral vessels, etc., and require that they can embody the laws of art such as variety and unity, harmony and contrast, rhythm and cadence (Retrieved from [www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn)).



*Figure 37 Peony Flower Arrangement “Spring in the City of Kings”*  
 Source: Photographed by researcher at Wang Cheng Park, Luoyang, 2023

### 3. The Signify of Luoyang Peony Cultural Symbols

#### 3.1 Peony as a signify of Folk Hero

##### 3.1.1 Heroic Qualities of Peony in its Growth Habits

A peony is a beautiful and valuable flower. In ancient China, when peonies were in bloom, faced with peonies in a variety of colors, the wealthy and evil gentry robbed the flower growers of planting beautiful flowers and the tradition of “flower supply” for the ancient Chinese royal family if the peonies were moved out of the original place in a short time. No professional flower grower cared for the peonies beside the newly planted place. The flowers would wilt and die in less than half a month. If the peony is moved out of its original place within a short period and there is no professional florist to take care of the newly planted place, the flower will wilt and die in less than half a month. However, if the wilted peony is returned to the hands of the flower grower and carefully tended, it will be revitalized and bloom again. The peony will only bloom brightly in the hands of the flower growers who have worked hard to

cultivate it. The peony's appearance of being in love with its old master is personified by the flower growers, especially the poor ordinary people. It represents the quality of being loyal to its master.

The peony also has a growth habit that is called "sacrificing life but not flowers" by the Luoyang people, which means that if the peony is hastily transplanted before the blooming period in spring or if its nutrient demand for average growth cannot be met due to changes in the weather and soil, the peony will concentrate all its nutrients on the flowers, even if the roots have no nutrients and are dying, they still want to ensure the previous peony flower can bloom (Chen & Wu, 2005, p.45). The meaning of flowers is to produce beautiful flowers for people to enjoy. The peony's willingness to give up its life for the sake of its sense of existence has been personified by the people who love it, who believe that this habit of the peony is very similar to the spirit of the ancient warriors in China who preferred to die rather than give up their lives. In the eyes of Luoyang people, peony is a warrior who is not afraid of death and would rather sacrifice his life to complete his blossoming task.

### 3.1.2 Heroic Qualities of Peony in Literary Works

More than half of the myths and legends of Luoyang peonies give the peony the image of a hero. For example, *The Legend of Flower Er Qiao* tells the story of two sisters, Daq Qiao, and Er Qiao, who bravely killed the all-abominable giant black dragon to save peonies and were transformed into "Er Qiao Peonies" after sacrificing their lives. *Lotus Bag Peony* tells the story of Chun Rui, the daughter of a flower farmer, who was loyal to her beloved and refused to marry a dignitary with her death despite the vital power. Then, she was transformed into "Lotus Bag Peony" after her death. *Flame of the Dan Furnace* tells the story of peonies destroyed by landlords and bullies and given heroic images. Still, the abandoned dead branch, moistened by the tears of the original flower owner, blossomed anew and was named the "Flame of the Dan Furnace" (Bai 2019, p65). The beautiful peonies in the above legends were all transformed by brave heroes after their deaths. It is exciting to illustrate the origins of the names of different peony varieties in the form of myths and the people who personified peonies. In the most widely circulated myths in Luoyang, such as *The Peony Degraded by Empress Wu*, *The Peony in Ge Scarf and Jade Plate*, and *The Young Man of Mang Mountain*, peonies were deified into the identity of immortals.

The peonies that had risen to the identity of immortals at this stage had already escaped from the end of their deaths.

In ancient China, people looked forward to heroes to save the world during natural and artificial disasters. So far, it can be seen from the fact that people transformed their love for peonies into the phenomenon of “personifying” and “divinizing” peonies that the role of the peony has been upgraded to the position of folk hero and folk protector, and this change of role has deeply penetrated the folk people’s view of hero belief.

### 3.2 Peony as a signify of National Prosperity

#### 3.2.1 The Peony’s Rich and Atmospheric Appearance

A peony is a kind of ornamental flower with a large flower size, which is dozens of times larger than a plum blossom and two or three times larger than that of a chrysanthemum. There are often more than one hundred peonies blooming at the same time on a peony tree, so in the early spring season, when hundreds of flowers are blooming, the peony looks very atmospheric compared with the group of peonies (Lei, 2008, p.20). The researcher visited the Peony Park in Luoyang during the 40th Peony Cultural Festival. There was a tall peony that was particularly eye-catching. According to the introduction of the staff, this peony tree was 1.75 meters tall with a crown of 4.2 meters, occupying an area of about 15 square meters, and surprisingly, there were 324 peonies, with hundreds of fuchsia-red blossoms blooming in a dense. In addition, the blue peony “East Sea Waves” blooming in the Peony Festival Viewing Area of Wang Cheng Park has an average diameter of 23cm (Figure 38). These peony scenes make people feel the “Rich and Atmospheric” of peonies.



*Figure 38 Peonies open in the park*

Source: Photographed by the researcher at Wang Cheng Park, Luoyang, 2023

The word “Big” is pleasant in Chinese people’s minds, “tolerant is big,” and “be generous and know what is big,” are all positive words. Folk saying: Baby boy if big hands and feet will catch money, women hip conference to raise male children, even the good days in the eyes of the people of the folk is also used “big fish and big meat” to describe this inertia thinking... China has always been a predominantly agricultural country, and the people’s living standards are generally low, as well as people can’t manage the reality of natural disasters are closely related to the natural state of mind, making people Under this realistic mindset, people expect a lot from everything they get, and expect that the benefits they get from it may last longer (Lei, 2008, p. 28). Slowly, the people locate their joy and love for the peony in its atmospheric appearance.

### 3.2.2 National Prosperity and Flower Prosperity

Peonies are incredibly demanding in climate, environment, soil, and other growing environments, and their flowering period lasts only twenty days. As such precious things, peonies and peony culture will have more excellent development only when they are politically and economically advanced, socially stable, and culturally prosperous. The history of the peony’s prosperity coincided with that of the Chinese nation. Thus, the Luoyang peony was regarded as a symbol of wealth and auspiciousness, the country’s wealth and prosperity, and the people’s stability and happiness.

Peonies entered into artificial cultivation during the Sui Dynasty. Still, the Sui Dynasty only had a history of 27 years, and when the Sui Dynasty died, people’s main task was to escape from the war and survive, so peonies were very scarce at the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. However, in the early and middle peaceful times of the Tang Dynasty after the Sui Dynasty, peonies flooded into the people, and the peony flower events became increasingly grand. In the late Tang Dynasty, the development of peonies also weakened with the country’s turmoil. In the early Song Dynasty, with the stability of the country’s politics and economy, Ouyang Xiu’s *Record of Peonies in Luoyang* recorded in detail the current situation of peonies in Luoyang, the Peony Flower Market in Luoyang, the sale and purchase of peonies, and the songs and dances of the people, etc., with detailed portrayals, which can indicate that the flourishing period of peonies was also the period of the country’s political and

economic stability so that the people could have the leisure to grow peonies and enjoy peonies. On the contrary, few records of peony and peony culture development exist in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, Liao, Xi Xia, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties, etc. In history, these dynasties were in wars, and the country's politics and economy were unstable, so the peony did not have a stable development environment, and the development of peony culture was also relatively slow (Li, 1979, p. 210-218).

Every society is like this: only when the material needs are satisfied are opportunities for spiritual and aesthetic activities. The existence of a peony is inevitably dependent on a social background that is politically and economically more stable, so the prosperity of the country can be seen from the prosperity of the peony. People in Luoyang believe that raising peonies at home is like living a rich life. Premier Zhou Enlai praised peonies as the national flower of our country during his visit to Luoyang, which is a symbol of the prosperity and happiness of the Chinese nation, so it can be seen that peonies symbolize the prosperity of the country, the rejuvenation of the nation, and the meaning of national prosperity and national security are recognized and supported by the whole nation, representing the people's expectation and pursuit of a happy, beautiful and affluent life. For this reason, the Luoyang people call the peony "Prosperity Flower" (Lei, 2008, p. 30).

### **3.3 Peony as a signify of a Happy Life**

#### **3.3.1 The Stunning Color of the Peony**

Peony has nine primary colors, red, yellow, pink, green, and other bright colors. In early spring, facing the blooming peonies, ordinary people are happy to see them in full bloom, and even if there is something unpleasant, it will be dispersed by the joyful appearance of peonies. This kind of mentality is related to the color preference of the Chinese people in traditional thinking. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have been willing to put on red and green in festivals and decorate the ceremonies with bright colors, especially in the significant moments of life, which are inseparable from red, for example, wrapping the swaddling clothes of babies with red ropes at the time of their birth, cooking a pot of red eggs for friends and relatives at the time of the first full moon to show their congratulations; growing up on New Year's Eve every year, the small children will receive red packets of New Year's money. On New Year's

Eve every year when they are growing up, children will receive red packets of New Year's money. When they become adults, the bride and groom have to wear red wedding clothes on their wedding day, and the bridal room is decorated with red ornaments. When they are getting old, old people have to hang up red clothes and red lanterns when they pass away, which is commonly known as "joyful mourning" (Lei, 2008, p. 32). Therefore, red, or a series of bright colors with red as the leading tone, is a happy color in folklore, and the beautiful purple and red color of peony flowers is just in line with the character traits of folklore people who regard bright colors as the color of celebration. Therefore, the colorful blossoms of peonies will bring people a festive mood, thus bringing joy to their lives.

At the same time, the peony's large flowers align with the Chinese people's psychological desire to focus on agriculture for a long time and look forward to a good harvest. Like farmers planting different crop varieties, they will always love the crops with the same inputs but with high return yields. On the contrary, if it is a low-yield crop, the people may not work hard again in the coming year. The blooming of the peony is also in line with this kind of mentality of the people. The blooming peony flowers usually bloom several times more than other flowers. When the flowers bloom, the big and beautiful flowers and the gorgeous colors reflect the people's joyfulness and happiness. How can people not be happy when immersed in the pleasant atmosphere of the flowers?

### 3.3.2 Natural attributes of peony's longevity

A peony has a long life cycle and is commonly known as a "long-life flower" in folklore. The life cycle of a peony is called the life cycle from the embryonic stage (seed or bud) to young, weak, strong, and old age until death. In the life cycle of a peony, there are stage changes. In the juvenile period, the growth is slow and generally takes 3-10 years; in the young and robust period, the development is faster and the blooming is luxuriant, which is the best ornamental and medicine-producing (dpi) period, and it generally survives for about 30 years; after that, it enters the old age period, when the growth gradually declines, but if it is renewed and re-strengthened in time, it can continue to bloom.

During fieldwork, the researcher visited a peony named "Yue Shan Hong" in Yichuan, Luoyang, which has a life cycle of more than 200 years and is still growing

well and blooming every year. In CCTV's 2018 Peony documentary, Cui Li, the "Flower King of a Generation" in Chaoyang Township, Meng Jin, Luoyang, is told that there is a 210-year-old ancient peony that blooms up to 1,100 flowers every year (Figure 39) (Retrieved from CCTV.com). In Luoyang Peony Park, there is a world-rare piece of living ancient peony garden in which peonies are more than 100 years old, and the longest-lived peony in the garden is more than 120 years old. The peony is 2.7 meters high, with a crown of 3.7 meters, and has nearly 300 flowers at most. It is known as the "King of Peony" because of its ancient shape and pale strength.



*Figure 39 The 200-year-old peony in Luoyang*  
Source: Photographed by researchers at Meng Jin, Luoyang, 2023

In ancient times, when medicine was backward, people hoped that they and their family members would live a long and healthy life out of fear of death, and they held in high esteem long-lived people, long-lived animals, and long-lived plants. Therefore, people would naturally respect peonies with a life cycle of 100 years and transform their love for peonies into admiration for "longevity flowers." In my field research, I found that in Xinan County, near Luoyang, there is a custom of giving "peony locks" to newborn babies who have just reached 100 days old, which has continued to this day. The "peony lock" has a similar symbolic meaning to the "long life lock" worn by newborns in other regions. After this custom was spread to Luoyang, it was combined with the local peony culture and carved to symbolize peace and longevity.

As we know from the peony dietary folklore in Luoyang, the petals and roots of peony can be made into dishes, tea, flower wine, peony edible oil, and so on.

Although people in the past would not explain scientifically that peony petals contain eight kinds of amino acids, five kinds of microelements, seven kinds of macronutrients, many different types of vitamins, many different types of enzymes, sugars, flavonoids, and so on, people, with the pharmacological knowledge that the roots of the flowers can cure diseases, deduced that peony petals should be edible. The folk people used peonies in their diets not to fill their stomachs but to enrich their daily lives. The folk people used peonies in their diet, not to fill their bellies but to enrich the variety of dishes in their daily lives (Retrieved from <http://ly.orgcc.com>). Accordingly, it is more realistic to attribute the efficacy of peonies in diet to their healthcare function, which means that peony is a healthcare product with positive significance for people's health.

### 3.3.3 Influence of Buddhist Culture in the Tang Dynasty

Buddhism was prevalent during the Tang Dynasty, and due to people's love for the elegance of white peonies and the Tang Dynasty's extraordinary efforts to develop Buddhism, peonies were introduced into Buddhism. There are many ways for peonies to enter Buddhism, such as planting them in temples. The White Horse Temple in Luoyang was the first temple built after Buddhism entered China more than 1,900 years ago. It is the birthplace of Buddhist culture in China, and in the courtyard of the White Horse Temple, before and after the halls and on both sides of the halls, there are flower terraces made of bricks and stones, where peonies are planted, the flowers bloom in spring like brocade. And there are also peony frescoes and architectural engravings of peonies, which are called. The White Horse Temple also has peony murals and architectural carvings, described as flowers and ancient temples shining together. The peony can enter Buddhism with auspicious imagery like the lotus flower in Buddhism, never because of its rich imagery. Buddhism is not trying to get rich, and because Buddhism is responsible for spreading auspicious sounds and saving all people from the sea of misery, the peony is more profound due to the acceptance of auspiciousness and happiness imagery in Buddhism.

## 3.4 Peony as a signify of Good Love

### 3.4.1 Peony as a Token of Love

From the Tang Dynasty to the Northern Song Dynasty, the Shang Si Festival was

a festival of love on the third day of the third month. The first collection of Chinese poems, the Book of *Poetry*, recorded that the way men and women expressed their love on the first day of the third month was to give peonies to each other, and this was the first time that peonies as a flower of love had been mentioned (Cheng & Jiang, 1991). Peony is used as a token of love between men and women in folklore, and those young men and women who are in love with each other borrow the delicate peony to express their love in their hearts, which is the best portrayal of the connotation of love in the peony's cultural imagery.

The peony, as a representative of love imagery, is supposed to be because its beautiful and fragrant appearance allows young men and women in love with each other to express their heartfelt feelings better. The white peony represents the purest love, while the red peony represents the fiery passion in the hearts of young people. This is very much in line with the folk custom of expressing love simply. In Luoyang and other peony planting areas in the Central Plains, many locals call peonies "love flowers."

#### 3.4.2 Peony as the Embodiment of the Goddess of Love

Legend has it that the fairy specializing in growing peonies is the embodiment of beauty and wisdom, the god of love, and the prototype of the peony fairy is Luo Shen Mi Fei. There is a beautiful legend about Luo Shen Mi Fei in Luoyang. Legend has it that in ancient times, there were two ancient tribes, the You He Clan and the You Luo Clan. The You He Clan lived along the Yellow River, and its chief was called Hebo, while the You Luo Clan lived on the two sides of the Luo River, and its director was called Luo Bo. Mi Fei was the daughter of the Fuxi Clan. She was as beautiful as a celestial festival and could sing and dance well. She fell in love with Luo Bo and tied the knot, but the Hebo coveted her beauty and waged war with Luo Bo to snatch Mi Fei. Luo Bo was defeated in the war, and Mi Fei, who could not stand the humiliation, threw herself into the Luo River to kill herself. After her death, the Emperor of Heaven named her the goddess of Luo, the prototype of the Peony Immortal (Li, 2002, p.7).

The love story of Mi Fei and Luo Bo is an intriguing one. The poet Cao Zhi's *Luo Shen Fu*, written during the Wei and Jin dynasties, tells of a love festival between a man and a god, and the Eastern Jin painter Gu Kaizhi was so moved by the story

that he meticulously drew a picture of *Nymph of the Luo River* (Figure 40). The *Nymph of the Luo River* is one of the “Ten Most Famous Heirloom Paintings in China,” which depicts the burning peonies accompanying the goddess Luo Shen, making peonies a token of love and further strengthening the image of Mi Fei as the goddess of love (Wang, 2014, p. 6). Tang Dynasty poet Xu Ning’s poem Peony wrote that Who doesn’t love peony flowers, occupying the good things in the city. It is suspected that it is made by the goddess of Luo Chuan, with a thousand dainty forms breaking the morning sun. It tells that the peony in Luoyang is an excellent work designed and created by Mi Fei herself, and the beautiful and fragrant peony is the incarnation of the goddess of Luoyang, Mi Fei herself. So far, ancient literati and painters have successfully portrayed Mi Fei as a beautiful goddess who is the god of Luo Shui, the goddess of love, and the fairy peony.



Figure 40 Gu Kaizhi’s *Nymph of the Luo River* (partial)  
Source: Baidu Gallery (<https://www.bing.com>)

### 3.4.3 Peony as a Dowry Item

It is a custom in Luoyang to give peonies as dowry when marrying off one’s daughter. The predecessor of Luoyang National Peony Garden was the Li Family Garden in the Ming Dynasty, whose founder was Li Xianting, who married Lv Weizhi, the youngest daughter of Lv Kongxue, a famous Confucian scholar in Xin’an, who brought several “Dan Feng” peonies with her when she got married and planted them in the garden of the Li Family, which is still in bloom year after year, attracting crowds of spectators. Lv Weichun, the eldest daughter of Lv Kongxue, married Yao Rutao, a wealthy merchant from Yao Au Village in Mengjin County, and she also brought five “Dan Feng” and “Luoyang Red” peonies as a dowry (Lei, 2008, p. 27).

In the Ou's house in Gujiachong Village, Baishi District, Lechang County, Guangdong Province, there is a peony left over from the early years of the Qing Dynasty, the variety of which is "Drunken Yang Fei." It is recorded in the documents that the owner, Ou Xianggui, who was in the middle of China, married Deng, a woman from an official family in Luoyang, and Deng's family dowered this peony to the Ou's family, which has been caring for it for many generations and has passed on the fragrance to the present day.

This custom of marrying peonies in Luoyang was later spread throughout the country. When men and women got married after the founding of New China, peony wedding clothes, peony sheets, peony covers, peony sewing machines, peony spittoons, peony water warmers, peony curtains, and so on were the list of necessary wedding materials for the newlyweds. The beautiful and auspicious love symbolism of peony is embodied in the dowry, which is used to wish the newly-wedded couple a hundred years of good luck and everlasting unity.

### **3.5 Peony as signify of Female Reproduction**

#### **3.5.1 The Peony's Lush and Prosperous Outer Form**

In China, flowers have been used as a metaphor for female genitalia since ancient times. When they first bloom, they look like a woman's cunt, and when they bloom, they look like a woman's uterus that is pregnant with newborns. This is also the case in other countries around the world. In ancient India, there is the myth that the God Brahma was born from a lotus flower. In the myth of the origin of humanity among the Zhuang people in China, it is said that after the earth came into being, grass began to grow. Flowers bloomed on it, and out of the flowers came a woman with a cape and hair, who was the first grandmother of humanity, M'Liujia. Chinese Yi myths also tell of the origin of the people from men and women who evolved from the horse flower (Lei, 2008, p. 28).

Peonies have many petals and stamens, especially the heavy petal peony, which has as few as 40 petals and as many as hundreds. Suppose the peony grows slowly into a thicker peony tree. In that case, it can bloom nearly a hundred or more flowers at a time, and the peony's natural attribute of lushness and denseness gives rise to the imagery of reproduction. Traditionally, China has been a country that places great

importance on having many children in the same family. In ancient times, medical conditions were backward, the survival rate of babies was low, and the life expectancy of older people was short, so having many children in the same family was almost unlikely. The author speculates that according to traditional Chinese thinking when people see peonies with hundreds of petals and peony trees with hundreds of flowers, they should associate them with a prosperous family.

### 3.5.2 The Peony's Vigorous Reproductive Habits

Peonies have the habit of "Root propagation." Peonies with a flowering age of more than 4-5 years can separate their roots naturally by hand by the growth texture line, forming the phenomenon of root parting, and after root parting, if the conditions of water, soil, humidity, temperature, and planting season of the new roots are all very suitable, the latest roots, just like the old ones, will be able to blossom beautiful flowers (Yuan & Wan, 2002, p.14). As long as they are planted carefully, the ancient roots can be re-divided and grow as strong as the new ones. The peony's ability to reproduce this way aligns with the traditional Chinese culture of praying for many children.

The folk people's view of reproduction is inseparable from the reality of China's long-standing agrarian society. In the countryside, where plowing by men and oxen was the primary cultivation method, a prosperous family meant many people engaged in labor, which meant the family's harvest would increase yearly. Their wish for a better life would be fulfilled more quickly. After the peony was popularly cultivated in the countryside, its reproduction method became known to ordinary people, and the fact that the peony has more than a hundred petals and the peony tree has a hundred blossoms made the peony a symbol of reproduction added to the beliefs of those who prayed for the prosperity of their families.

## 4. Luoyang Peony Culture in the Dimension of Symbolic Interaction

### 4.1 Aesthetic symbols: interaction between the upper and lower classes in Luoyang

4.1.1 Interaction between the lower and upper classes in the pre-Qin period transformed the peony from a wild plant to a medicinal plant.

In all societies, as in geological structures, there are hierarchical levels of upper, middle, and lower strata and social stratification (David Popenoe, 1999, p.239). According to Mr. Zhong Jingwen, there are three streams of traditional Chinese culture, namely, upper, middle, and lower culture, and according to his definition of folk culture, it is a general term for all kinds of customs and habits that are widely spread in the world (Zhong, 1998, p.110). It can be seen that Luoyang peony culture is a collection of cultures formed by the influence of various social classes.

As mentioned in the previous section on the biology of peony, peony is a kind of angiosperm, which is the most primitive species in nature, and the origin of peony can be traced back to the Cretaceous Period, which is tens of millions of years or even more than 100 million years ago. However, the peony began to come into people's view, and the first time it was paid attention to was during the Qin and Han Dynasties when there were records of its medicinal value. At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, famous doctors summed up the medical prescriptions of Shen Nong<sup>26</sup> who had tasted a hundred herbs in person from the pre-Qin period to the Han Dynasty. The book *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* was written. The medicinal formulas of peonies were recorded in the early Eastern Han Dynasty medical slips unearthed in Wuwei, Gansu Province, a long time earlier than the ornamental peonies documented in the literature and those appearing in literary and artistic works. In his Record of Peonies in Luoyang, Ou-Yang Xiu of the Song Dynasty also stated that Peonies were not planted in writing at the beginning, but were only recorded in *Ben Cao* as medicines (Ou Yang, 2010). As a result, the peony initially gained notoriety as a medical recommendation from individuals of lower social classes due to the peony's wisdom in interacting with them.

4.1.2 Interaction between the upper and lower classes in the Sui and Tang dynasties transformed the peony from a medicinal plant to an aesthetic plant.

Most of the wild peonies and medicinal peonies were single-petal white varieties. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, many peony growers began to cultivate peonies. More and more varieties of peonies were produced, with more affluent, colorful, and

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<sup>26</sup> Shen Nong, a renowned doctor in ancient China who is said to have tasted a hundred herbs and is regarded by the Chinese as the legendary inventor and guardian god of agriculture and medicine and is honored as the King of Medicines.

colorful flowers, which were so striking that the upper classes loved them. The peonies cultivated by the lower classes with hard work began to be tributed to the upper classes. After peonies appeared in the court and wealthy and noble families, peony culture started to enter the upper culture from the lower culture. During specific periods of the Tang Dynasty, the lifestyle of the upper class advocated extravagance. The elegance and magnificence of peonies greatly catered to the aesthetic psychology of certain social classes at that time, so the mainstream society of the Tang Dynasty soon pursued them. The folk began to view peonies on a large scale as an elegant recreational activity. The peony culture radiated from the upper class to the lower class, transforming peonies from medicinal plants to aesthetic objects. Thus, the peony changed from a medicinal plant to an aesthetic object of the people. According to documents and research of later generations, the Tang people's aesthetics of peony also underwent some changes, from the simple appreciation of the peony's external beauty at the beginning to the appreciation of the peony's uncommon temperament and character and then to the association of the peony with prosperity and flourishing, which became the symbol of a peaceful and prosperous world (Lei, 2008, p.31). The people of the Tang Dynasty contributed a lot to using peonies as an aesthetic object.

After the peony was taken as an aesthetic object, the scale of planting became larger and larger, the varieties became more and more abundant, and the number of viewers also increased, so many cultural events around peony began to develop gradually, including peony legends, peony literature, peony art, peony folklore, etc. The images of peony folk heroes, national prosperity, happy life, and good love were displayed at this time. People's discovery of the aesthetic value of the peony and the formation of peony culture are inseparable from the ecological attributes of the peony itself. From understanding to practicality and then to viewing a peony, in this long historical process, people have transferred their psychological senses, such as perception, emotion, and imagination, to the peony to infiltrate and integrate with it.

## **4.2 Ethnic symbols: Luoyang's interaction with nearby regions and other ethnic groups**

### 4.2.1 Interaction between Luoyang and nearby regions

Luoyang, the origin of the peony, is the first peony cultivation center in the

history of China, as recorded in historical records, and it will also occupy an essential position in the history of peony cultivation in the future. Emperor Yang of Sui ordered the construction of Luoyang in 605 A.D. Since then, Luoyang has become the country's political, economic, cultural, and transportation center. The entry of peonies into the royal gardens from the Sui Dynasty is a sign of their formal entry into artificial cultivation, so the first cultivation center appeared in Luoyang in the Sui Dynasty.

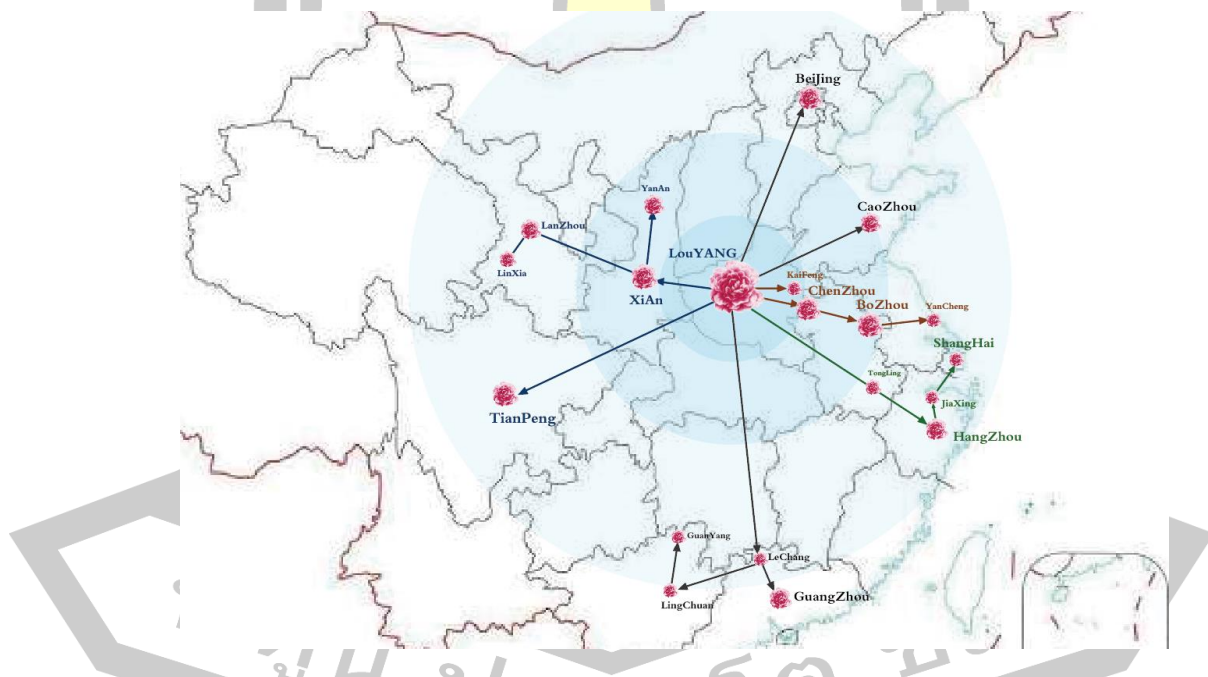
Researchers have consulted many related documents and learned that during the Sui Dynasty, the peony in Luoyang had already begun to spread outwards. There was a fringe area of peony cultivation around Luoyang, roughly distributed in the area where the Yi Luo River Basin flowed near Luoyang, for example, in the current Yi Chuan, Song Xian, Luo Ning, and Yi Yang areas. This is because the Yi Luo River basin flowing through Luoyang is widely distributed with ancient volcanic rocks, which were deposited in the lower reaches of the Yi Luo River after a long period of weathering and are rich in trace elements and coupled with the fact that Luoyang is located in a basin. The climate throughout the year is wetter than in other areas in the Central Plains, creating excellent geology conducive to the growth of peonies (Yu, 1998). In addition, the Sui Dynasty was founded only 27 years ago, so it took much work for peonies to spread out of Luoyang to the surrounding areas. Emperor Yang spent six years building the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, with its center in Luoyang, so this laid the foundation for peonies to be planted along the Beijing-Hangzhou coast in the future.

#### 4.2.2 Interaction between Luoyang and other regions and ethnic groups

Luoyang peony culture is a unique manifestation of Luoyang, but at the same time, it is fluid and changing. Luoyang peony culture is always in a state of interaction and exchange with other places, and the uniqueness of Luoyang peony culture is even more evident in the interaction with other areas. The historical overview of the development of Luoyang peony has been introduced in the previous article. From the “roadmap” of Luoyang peony spreading outward, it can be seen that its diffusion routes are summarized into three (Figure 41). Firstly, it went straight down to the southeast to Chen Zhou in Henan Province and Bo Zhou in Anhui Province, and then went north to Cao Zhou. Secondly, it went to the southwest of

Sichuan Province, and the climate was formed in Tian Peng. Thirdly, with the southward transition of the Song Dynasty in the Northern Song Dynasty, the peony was introduced to Hangzhou, Shanghai, and other places, and then to Shanghai. Thirdly, with the southward transfer of the Northern Song Dynasty, the Luoyang peony was introduced to Hangzhou and Shanghai and then spread to the two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi (Jin & Wang, 2009, p. 41).

As we can see from the above peony cultivation in all dynasties, geographically speaking, Luoyang was the center of peony cultivation in ancient times. Whether it was Cao Zhou, Hangzhou, or Ha Zhou in eastern China, Lanzhou in northwestern China, or Chengdu in southwestern China, all of them transplanted the peony varieties of Luoyang as the starting species and then cultivated them in various places. This is because the Sui Dynasty was the first dynasty in which peonies were grown. Luoyang had the most significant number of peony varieties among all the dynasties and was the center of cultivation many times.



*Figure 41 Path of Luoyang Peony Spreading Outwards*  
Source: produced by researcher, 2023

With Luoyang as the center of peony cultivation history, the rest of the peony cultivation areas can be regarded as the periphery of peony cultivation history. From the geographical point of view, the people of the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties, where Luoyang used to be the center of peony cultivation, gave birth to the peony images of

heroism, happiness, love, and reproduction in their longing for ever-increasing standard of living. These four peony images were brought into the marginal cultivation areas and the peony varieties in the following dynasties. The marginal cultivation areas attached a slightly different degree of importance to the four images in light of their characteristics. The degree of importance of these four kinds of imagery differed in each marginal planting area according to its characteristics.

Most of the ethnic minorities in Northwest China live in the frigid zone and are open and bold, so they introduced the peony's love imagery unabashedly into their "Hua'er"<sup>27</sup> (Zhao, 1989, p. 267). Meanwhile, in East China, there are numerous hills and low-mountain islands, which makes the people living in these locations have varied degrees of importance for these four imageries. Low mountains and islands, making the people living here more moderate, and people in this region plant peonies for the happiness imagery of wealth, good fortune, health, and longevity; the southwest region is mountainous and has rainy weather all year round, making people's living environment more treacherous than that of the Central Plains, so people also seek more happiness imagery. The Central Plains have always been where literati and peony farmers gather, so these revere the heroic imagery of the peony's loyalty and bravery. The lower and middle-class people favor peony's loyalty and bravery (Lei, 2008, p.30). Although the reproductive imagery of the peony also signifies good luck, it is not as direct as that of pomegranate and lotus seedpods, which represent many children. This imagery may gradually fade in the propagation process in the later generations, but it will not disappear in folklore.

As analyzed above, locality itself is a historical product, and global dynamics ultimately influence the history of generating locality, and locality is not only local. It shows a pattern in which the peony center place and the peripheral place echo each other in terms of folklore and cultural imagery. That is to say, although there are some variations in the transmission of artistic imagery in the center and the periphery, the overall trend remains unchanged, i.e., they are all closely related to the actual living conditions of the people and the needs of the local people influence the transmission of each imagery at that time.

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<sup>27</sup> Hua'er, A high-pitched folk song popular in Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and other places in the northwest region.

### 4.3 Tourism symbols: group interaction of multiple discourse rights

#### 4.3.1 Decision-making and organization of the official class

The Luoyang peony cultural symbol has become an aesthetic symbol. Through continuous exchanges with other regions and nationalities, it has become a well-known national symbol and a representative of the uniqueness of Luoyang. Nowadays, facing the impacts of economic globalization and rapid urbanization, the Luoyang localities are trying to use the Luoyang peony culture to drive the development of local industries to revive their self-identity.

Officials, elites, and the public are the social strata usually called the upper, middle, and lower strata. Of course, in addition to their class characteristics, these three classes have a dialectical and unified relationship of interaction, mutual construction, and mutual integration. The national elite and the official class are “co-conspirators” of the national mainstream discourse and usually have the right to speak. 1959, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Luoyang to inspect the city. After learning about the situation of peonies in Luoyang, he immediately instructed: Luoyang city should build a wide range of gardens, vigorously cultivate peonies, and promote the development of peonies. When President Liu Shaoqi came to Luoyang for research in 1960, he hailed cultivating peonies as a beautiful business and wanted to continuously expand the variety of peonies. Under the care of the leaders of the Party Central Committee, Luoyang Peony achieved rapid recovery and development after the founding of the PRC.

However, a critical turning point was when Zhao Puchu, the president of the Chinese Buddhist Association, came to Luoyang in 1979 and wrote the inscription “Luoyang Peony is the best in the world” in the Xi Yuan Park according to the content of Ouyang Xiu’s *Record of Peonies in Luoyang* because people at that time were more straightforward and honest. Although the peonies in Luoyang were good-looking, everyone dared not speak big words about how good they were. Zhao Puchu’s influence and the inscription were very persuasive, which touched Luoyang’s leaders and people at that time, contributing significantly to the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival later on.

In 1979, Luoyang City set up the Luoyang Historical Society. It began to study

the cultivation of peonies in Luoyang during the Tang and Song dynasties, and the study found that the peonies of Luoyang had a significant influence on the whole country at that time. Because the “ten thousand flower fair” had been held in Luoyang during the Song Dynasty, the cultural workers in Luoyang, after discussion, also proposed: Why don't we hold a peony flower Festival to recreate the historical heyday of the peony culture in Luoyang? This was the suggestion of Luoyang's cultural workers, which the municipal party committee of Luoyang highly valued.

Influenced by the decision-making and organizational factors of the official and elite classes in Luoyang, the Luoyang government, as the city manager and operator, has also increasingly discovered the critical value of local cultural elements in the city, and has continued to excavate cultural symbols with distinctive regionality, originality, and practicability, and to construct specific local cultural symbols. The city of Luoyang is quietly changing because of the peony.

#### 4.3.2 Influence and constraints of foreign cultures

In 1978, the wave of reform and opening swept the country and strengthened the cultural exchanges between different places. 1981 Luoyang City and Okayama City, Japan, formed a friendship city, and in the spring of 1982, a delegation from Okayama City, Japan, visited Luoyang; in contact with Japanese friends, the people of Luoyang know that there is a cherry blossom festival in Japan, and whenever cherry blossoms are in full bloom, the people of Japan often take their children with them and raise their families to enjoy the festival, which also attracts many tourists abroad, with excellent economic and social benefits. After this exchange, people in Luoyang began to think about the potential value of peony flowers around them. In 1964, Zigong in Chongqing, China, began to hold lantern festivals, which were very famous in the whole country at that time, and every year, many tourists came from all over the country to enjoy the lantern festivals, which brought a lot of economic benefits to Chongqing. In addition, from a national point of view, in the early 1980s, each city set off a “City Flower” selection craze. Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Kunming, and other towns selected their city flower. Luoyang established friendly relations with the Japanese city of Okayama, the city of Tours in France, and other cities also have their city flower, the city flower at a time as if it were like a city business card, entirely to the outside world to show the city flower. A city card,

entirely to the outside world to show its beautiful style, highlighting the city's unique charm.

The influence of foreign cultures, together with the custom of holding peony flower events in Luoyang since ancient times, led to the call for keeping the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival among the citizens, and the call became higher and higher, which accelerated the breeding of the contemporary Luoyang Peony Flower Festival.

#### 4.3.3 Identification and promotion of Luoyang people

The people are not only the inheritors of traditions but also the inventors, creators, enjoyers, and masters of history-making. If peony culture is the bloodline and DNA of the Peony Culture Festival, then Luoyang people are the skeletal support of the complex living organism of the Peony Culture Festival. Whether or not the people of Luoyang recognize the Peony Culture Festival is of vital importance. Suppose the advocacy suggestions and policies of the officials and elites meet the universal demands of the people. In that case, the three will form a synergy to promote sustainable innovation and the development of traditional culture.

The custom of peony blossom viewing in Luoyang has been passed down from generation to generation, and every year when peonies were in full bloom, peony viewing was overcrowded, and the Luoyang peony event was a part of the daily life of the people of Luoyang. In the early 1980s, when Chinese society settled down after the turbulence, the Luoyang peony event re-emerged, and the number of people who came to Luoyang to enjoy the peony blossoms was increasing yearly. Some came in horse-drawn carriages, some in carriages, some in carriages, and some in carriages. Some came in horse-drawn carriages, some in walking tractors, and some in carts, and the whole family, young and old, came to see the peony flowers. As a result of the overcrowding, almost all the big and small hotels and hostels in Luoyang were filled with people who came to see the peony flowers, and there was no competition for beer, drinks, and bread in the shops. Against economic globalization, cities' cultural and living atmospheres have declined. Places often lose their unique significance and become stripped of their cultural importance in favor of serving the economy; standardization and commercialization have erased the distinctive features of urban architecture and weakened the distinctiveness and diversity of regional cultures, and the urban crisis of convergence and homogeneity has become apparent. Locals are

apprehensive about collective amnesia, while new immigrants go through a process of anxiety when integrating into the local culture, and the Luoyang people have contributed significantly to the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

Despite the favorable circumstances, there are also undercurrents and contradictions: excessive commercial exploitation of traditional culture has resulted in its extreme vulgarization and homogeneity. According to the author's survey, in recent years, the local people of Luoyang think that the Peony Cultural Festival is just a festival held by the government at a fixed time and a designated place, and it has nothing to do with their life after it is over. The people have overlooked that peony culture has long permeated every aspect of their lives. The peony culture in Luoyang is not only reflected during the festival, whether it is the peony planting throughout the year, the peony patterned floor tiles and flags that can be seen everywhere when we walk on the streets of Luoyang, or the food customs of Luoyang people about peonies. From this point of view, such restored traditional festivals have not only recovered their shape but lost their soul. The key reason for this is that the people have become bystanders, and the festivals are not rooted in their production and life and do not meet the universal requirements of the people.

#### 4.3.4 Subject-object interaction between Luoyang and consumers

(1) Self-interaction and Other-I interaction: the formation of individual tourism image of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

The process of forming individual tourism symbols of Luoyang Peony Culture and Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the process of self-interaction of tourists. According to Paul Jigang's division of the tourism process, the individual's perception of local tourism symbols is divided into three stages:

Firstly, in the preparation stage, "I" will gain a good impression of the brand image of Luoyang Peony, which will form the individual's potential tourist destination, and the "Me" will collect information through various channels and make an assessment of the Luoyang Peony. After interacting with "I" and "Me," the individual finally decides to go to Luoyang.

Secondly, in the stage of tourism activities, "I" has already perceived the tourism symbols of Luoyang peony through the peony festival, and compared with the tourism symbols that the "Me" hears, sees, and feels, the individual forms the tourism image

of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

Thirdly, in the stage of memory and recollection, with time, the individual gradually needs to remember the tourism experience of the Peony Culture Festival. The symbolic image of the individual's "I" and the actual representational image left by the "Me" interact again, leaving behind a vague and abstract, bad or good tourism representational image. The individual interacts again with some symbolic photos left behind by the "Me," leaving behind vague and abstract, bad or good suggestive images of tourism.

Individuals will communicate with their friends and relatives with these re-established and modified symbolic images of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival so that they will have a preliminary and hazy symbolic perception of the festival, and this is when the "Other-I interaction" comes. These friends and relatives will initially form an impression of the festival due to the "Other-I interaction." Suppose these friends and relatives have never been to Luoyang to view peonies or have no prior knowledge of the peonies in Luoyang. In that case, the interaction results in their acceptance of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. When they have been to Luoyang to enjoy peony or have already known about Luoyang peony through various channels, then this kind of other-self interaction tends to form a sort of "pulling war" in which both sides of the interaction maintain their views and opinions, or gradually compromise, or each side holds its own opinion, and slowly form their tourism image of Luoyang peony. This is the individual tourism symbol formation process through individual self-interaction and other interactions.

During researcher fieldwork during the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, when asked about the tourism experience of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the interviewees felt as follows:

*The impression of Luoyang is too good. Prices are low, and the people of Luoyang are very enthusiastic and down-to-earth. They will tell you where and how to play, where and how to eat, and the only thing is that there are too many people, and the culture of the Great Central Plains is on the rise.*

--Interviewee "Sun", 9 April 2023 morning

*Avoid the pit at the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. A city I won't visit for a second time, and to be honest, I was disappointed. The peonies in Luoyang are the*

*best in the world, and as a person from Henan, I have to go to Luoyang to enjoy the peonies. The tourist attractions are particularly crowded, and the tickets are not cheap, so I finally gave up. The overall feeling is that I won't return.*

-- Interviewee "Dudu", evening of 16 April 2023

We found that the perception of local tourism symbols varies significantly from individual to individual and generally exhibits a subjective character. This is because individual tourism symbols are affected by a variety of factors in the formation process of individuals, relying on the individual's sociocultural background, personality characteristics, etc. Each nationality, age, gender, education, occupation, hobbies, interests, and aesthetic requirements differ. Their formation of socio-cultural background and personality characteristics are ever-changing, especially in an emergency in tourism activities. The individual's first-hand personal experiences remarkably influence their perception of tourism symbols. Thus, they form different tourism images of the same place or even every other.

## (2) Group Interaction: Formation of Overall Tourism Image of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

Overall, tourism image refers to the sum of perceptions, impressions, and ideas about a place generally held by individuals. The process of forming an overall tourism image is the interaction between multiple members of a group and the interaction between groups and groups. Through self-interaction and other interactions, individuals develop their perceptions and opinions about places, and depending on the perceptions and views, individuals are automatically categorized into one of the groups that hold similar perceptions and opinions. This group generally has similar or close socio-cultural values, and the individual tourism image stored by this group has certain commonalities; through the interaction of members of the group, the socialized image of the tourism place is gradually formed within the group, and this is when group interaction occurs.

Group interaction generally has several interaction outcomes. Although the views and opinions are similar in the same interactive group, there are still subtle differences. Then, they can produce absolute authority over the main body or leaders, experts, or opinion leaders. In that case, they use their influence on other individuals to accept their point of view so that most of the individuals of a place of tourism

image tend to converge to form an overall tourism image of the place. When there is no absolute authoritative member in the same interactive group, individuals in the group are under pressure from the group, and to express their loyalty to the group and maintain good relations with other individuals, they will give up their views and opinions and obey the opinions of the majority of individuals. Suppose one individual rises to be the core person in the group and can exert enough influence on the group. In that case, he will continue to insist on his viewpoint and actively ask other individuals to keep in line with him to strengthen his voice and finally accomplish the goal of unanimity of the opinion of the whole group.

After the centralization and unification within the same group are completed through interaction, the interaction between different groups begins. At this time, convergence psychology becomes the main driving force of inter-group interaction, and the tourism images held by other groups are conflicting and may even be antagonistic. At this point, the individual and his group will avoid conflict and develop a convergence mentality, giving up their own and the other group's views and views of the other group contradictory to the conscious tendency to find a balance between their own and the other group's views. When the other group still cannot accept the compromise view, the other group and the group holding the compromise view have another round of interaction until both sides converge. The final overall tourism image is formed through these different group interactions.

Through the formation process of the overall tourism image, it can be seen that it is less subjective compared with the individual image, which is mainly composed of objective tourism image elements, is the basis of the unique imagination of the local tourism image, and tends to truly reflect the objective state of the destination, with relative stability.

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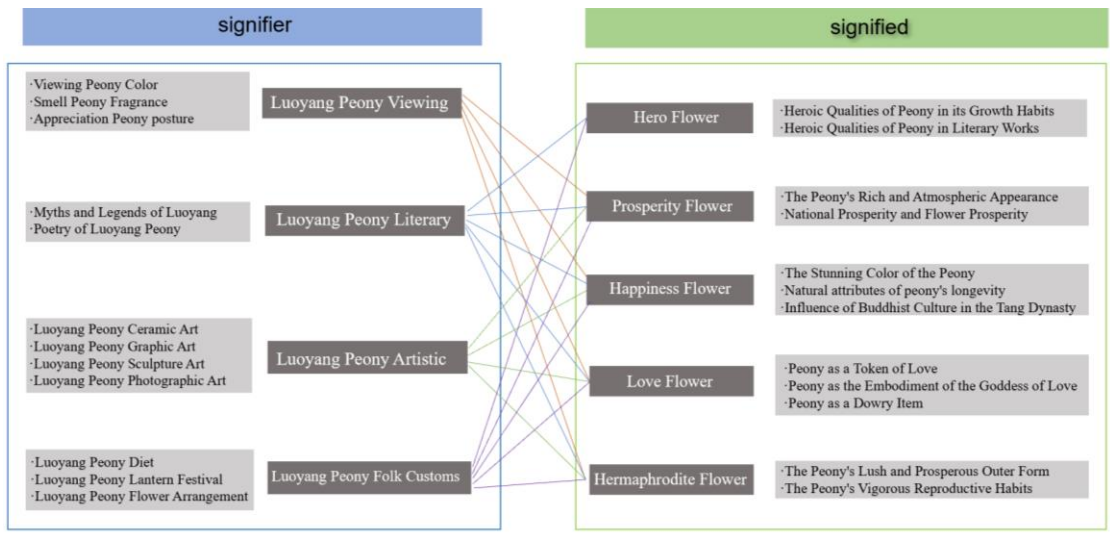


Figure 42 Schematic diagram of peony signifier and signified  
 Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

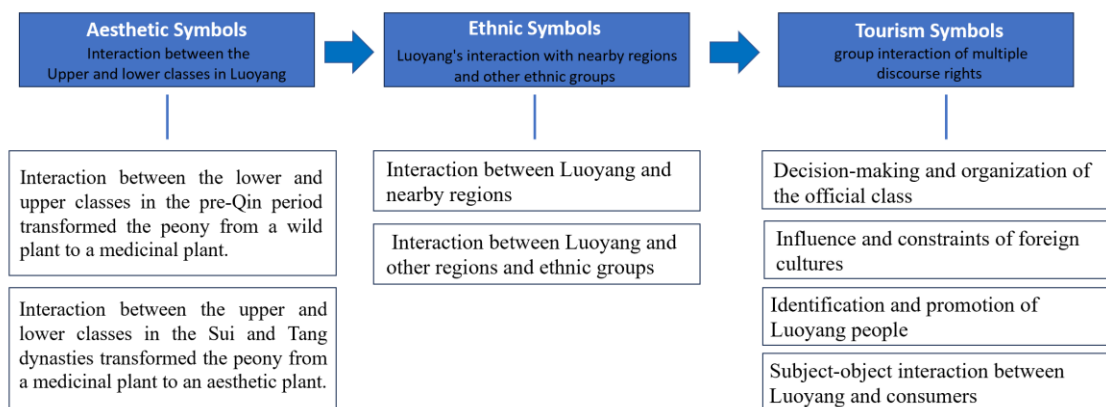


Figure 43 Peony Culture in Luoyang under the Dimension of Symbolic Interaction  
 Source: Produced by researcher, 2023



## Conclude

Combining the growth habit of the peony and the personification and deification of the peony in Chinese literature and artworks, the peony has been given the folk hero image of bravery, loyalty, and atmosphere, which has inspired the Chinese people to forge ahead and strive. Combining the biological attributes of the peony's large and colorful flowers and the folk people's expectations for a better life, the peony is full of images of wealth, good fortune, health, longevity, and joyful, happy life, reflecting the Chinese nation's inherent dislike of war and love of peace. In the image of beautiful love, the people express the most beautiful feelings in their hearts with the help of the peony's beautiful face, which is the cohesion and sublimation of the natural beauty of the peony. The peony is dense and luxuriant, and the peony has a strong character, this is the cohesion and sublimation of the natural beauty of the peony. With its lush and flourishing external form and its exuberant reproductive habits, the peony has gradually evolved into a symbol of fertility and endless life through folk activities.

Symbolic interaction is a process of decoding through people's mutual understanding of the meaning of symbols. From the interaction of the lower classes in the pre-Qin period to the interaction of the lower classes in the Sui and Tang dynasties, which led to the peony's transformation from a medicinal plant to an aesthetic plant, and to the formation of aesthetic symbols of the peony culture through the interaction of the lower and higher classes of Luoyang. The aesthetic symbols of peony culture were formed through the interaction between Luoyang's upper and lower levels. The influence of peony culture was expanding, and the interaction between Luoyang and its neighboring regions and other areas and nationalities made the peony culture of Luoyang a symbol of the Chinese nation. Later, due to the decision-making and organization of the official and elite classes, the influence and constraints of foreign cultures, the recognition and promotion of the people of Luoyang, and the subject-object interaction between Luoyang and consumers, Luoyang peony culture has become a tourism symbol promoting the revival of the city's identity through the vehicle of Luoyang peony cultural festivals.

## CHAPTER IV.

### **‘The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China’: Invention of Tradition in the Context of Self-Identity Revitalization**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, through the combination of field interviews and historical documents, we explore in depth how traditions are invented and changed step by step. First of all, the development of the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is divided into three historical stages, from traditional folk flower-appreciation customs to local-level festivals to provincial-level festivals, and now to international-level festivals, this “invention of traditions” and the re-creation of festivals not only help to reshape the traditional customs and cultural space of the local communities but also become an essential symbol for maintaining the historical memory and cultural identity of Luoyang people.

Secondly, the structural and functional analysis of the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the significance of modern peony culture as cultural capital are analyzed, revealing that tradition is not an existing product but a process. This process undergoes inheritance and change, and the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been inherited in the invention process, and new inventions formed will continue to be inherited. The invention is for the better transmission of tradition, and only by combining the two can traditional culture endure.

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## 1. Explanation of the relevant concepts

### 1.1 Conceptual Interpretation of “Tradition”

Before explaining the theory of the “invention of tradition,” we must first understand what “tradition” is. Just as the opposite of life is death, tradition is often regarded as the opposite of innovation. Tradition is a qualitative term used to define human development experience. *The Dictionary of Philosophy* explains tradition as the stability of the psychological basis of the social psyche and social individuals under certain socio-historical conditions and that the strength of social individuals has a much more significant effect on social culture than the stability of society as a whole (Shils, E., 1981).

In discussing tradition, Alice Horner’s doctoral dissertation, *The Assumption of Tradition*, makes four points to help us better understand tradition. First, she argues that tradition is the process of passing on from generation to generation and passing on something, a custom, or a thought over time. Secondly, tradition is often regarded as the antithesis of modernity, but it is very much loved by modernity. Tradition is a product of ancient times, but it is constantly being created in the present society, and tradition is both a new phenomenon created in history and quickly regarded as outdated or timeless. Thirdly, when historical conditions change, traditions tend to change with them. Traditions inevitably undergo a continuous process of integration, and when traditions merge with modernity, the old and the new watch to clash, and thus, change occurs. Traditional consciousness is created by people aware of the historical conditions of change. Fourthly, she argued that tradition could be seen as a “treasure trove” full of treasures, a force to be harnessed, a source of historically shaped identities, and a source of security, specialness, or difference, but that it needs to be recognized that not all of what is in this “treasure trove” may be considered valuable. (Tyne, 2006, p. 522-533).

Therefore, it can be said that tradition is the name given to the cultural characteristics that can be accepted and passed down to the people that need to continue to be passed down, thought about, preserved, and not lost, so that what is not accepted or has been popular for a short period cannot be called a tradition. Tradition is not the antithesis of modernity, perhaps it is one of the key sources of its strength,

richness, and meaning in life (Graburn, 2008, p.6-11). But if we consider it from another angle, is it still a tradition if the festival itself has been handed down and the rituals or activities in the festival are changing all the time? Furthermore, if change has become a tradition that has been passed down for decades and will continue to be passed down, can this be called a changing tradition? Professor Zhang Liwen said in his Introduction to Tradition that although the definition of “tradition” is not as unclear as the definition of “culture”, the interpretation of "tradition" is still afraid of chaos (Zhang, 1989, p. 30). Many scholars at home and abroad have studied the definition of “tradition” from various levels, and there are many ways to explain it, which are worth our consideration.

## 1.2 Conceptual Interpretation of “Invention of Tradition”

The theory of “The Invention of Tradition” was put forward by British anthropologist Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) in 1974 in the collection of essays entitled *The Invention of Tradition*, in which the author reveals to us informative materials and vivid narratives that tradition is not something unchanging handed down from ancient times, but a living creation of contemporary people, those long-lasting traditions that affect our daily lives have only a concise history, we have always been living creations of modern people; and those traditions that affect our daily lives have only a brief history (Hobsbawm E., & Ranger, T., 2012). This theory has gradually attracted much attention from Western scholars since its introduction and has become one of the essential theoretical paradigms in the constructivist thinking that emerged in the 1980s.

E. Hobsbawm further summarizes this as the “invention of tradition,” arguing that those traditions that appear or claim to be ancient tend to be of relatively recent origin and to have been invented. In the context of the emergence and establishment of traditions, two types of traditions that may be created are identified: those that have been invented, constructed, and formalized and those that have been designed, built, and standardized, and those that have been established in a short, identifiable period. The other is a tradition that emerges in an unrecognizable way and is rapidly established in a quick, identifiable period (possibly only a few years), noting that where traditions are invented, it is often not because the old ways are no longer valid

or existent, but because they are deliberately no longer used or adapted, and that the traditions of the past are often not invented, constructed and formalized, or adapted (Hobsbawm E., & Ranger, T.,2012) .

The essence of the “invention of tradition” is using old materials to construct a new form that achieves considerable novelty by presenting a ritualized or formalized process linked to the past. It means that invented traditions usually have a set of practices controlled by publicly or privately accepted rules, have a ritual or symbolic character, attempt to inculcate specific values and norms of behavior through repetition, and necessarily imply continuity with the past (Bharucha, R., 1989). The traditional past usually borrows rituals, symbols, moral teachings, practices, myths, habits, etc., from the treasure trove of established traditions to face the continuous innovations and changes in the world. When society is in a period of rapid transformation, and the old traditions as the supply side cannot meet the needs of the current demand side, the invention of tradition will appear more frequently (Rigsby, B., 2006, p.28).

As a constructive and adaptive strategy, the “invention of tradition” is essential in developing society and culture. When people claim that a certain kind of knowledge is traditional, they not only mean that it is a collective knowledge and a cultural classic of the group but also the basis for establishing the group’s physical identity and a cultural model of individual behavior. At the same time, it is the basis for establishing the group’s physical identity and the cultural pattern of personal behavior. Tradition, as an essential mode of integrating daily life in a society, serves to keep the society in order and to give it its essence. However, it also differentiates it and its culture from other institutions and cultures (Rigsby, B., 2006, p. 30).

The above summarizes the definition, causes, and significance of “traditional inventions.” The “invention of tradition” is an adaptive strategy to cope with social change in old forms by artificially constructing a connection with the tradition of history. The purpose of inventing tradition is to build the boundary between “self” and “other” and to integrate the richness of society and culture. Tradition must be confronted and cannot be escaped; it is the past in which people live. It cannot be denied that the necessity of history makes what is taken as a tradition. However, it is urgent to choose between traditions because, in the chain of past, present, and future

life, people's thinking and actions must be carried out in the present in the face of the future while loaded with history.

## **2. “The Luoyang Peony Festival” as a Local Festival (1983-1990)**

### **2.1 Preparations for the “Luoyang Peony Festival”**

#### **2.1.1 Government Bill on “The Luoyang Peony Festival”**

On September 10, 1982, the People's Government of Luoyang City, to respond to public opinion, promoted the development of tourism in Luoyang, revitalized the glory of the “Luoyang Peony Festival,” and took advantage of the cultural tradition of the peony, conducted a thematic study on organizing the Peony Flower Festival in Luoyang. On September 21, 1982, the 14th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Seventh People's Congress of Luoyang City approved the motion proposed by the People's Government of Luoyang City, which considered that the peony of Luoyang City had a long history, was famous for its flowers, and had long been known as the “Flower Capital of Luoyang City.” It set April 15-25 every year as the period of the “Luoyang Peony Flower Festival.” It set up the “Luoyang Peony Flower Festival Command Department,” headed by the then Vice Mayor of Luoyang City, who was in charge of cultural work and was the commander. This decision of far-reaching historical significance, which can be called a great feat in the history of China's floral events, was of positive significance to the development of all undertakings in Luoyang, the construction of socialist spiritual civilization, and the opening up of a new situation in the construction of socialist modernization, and from then on, it sounded the prelude to the prosperity of the peony culture and the revitalization of the economic development of Luoyang.

#### **2.1.2 Formulation of the emblem of ‘The Luoyang Peony Festival’**

The design and production of the emblem of the Peony Festival became an indispensable part of the successive Luoyang Peony Festivals as the symbol was designed and produced to refer to the things and to connect the things with the destination so that the symbol became a symbolic and symbolic thing of the destination, which could enhance the image and appeal of the destination. The emblems of the eight Luoyang Peony Flower Festivals from 1983 to 1990 were

solicited by the Organizing Committee of the Flower Festivals from people from all walks of life. Every year, many designers, painters, government officials, enterprise staff, and peony enthusiasts from Luoyang and its surrounding areas actively participated in submitting the emblems. Then, the evaluation committee organized the experts to evaluate and compare the designs among the participating works. After that, the jury contains relevant experts to assess all the participating works, and the winning one will be the emblem of the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival.

During this period, the people of Luoyang took an active part in constructing the Peony Festival. The emblems designed were novel and chic, full of a sense of the times, highlighting the regional characteristics of Luoyang and the theme of the Peony Festival and reflecting the characteristics of the city and the unity and upward spirit of the people of Luoyang. For example, the emblem of the 1st Luoyang Peony Festival 1983 was a budding peony bud, with the blooming peony and the word “Luoyang” in the center, encircling and reflecting each other. The theme of this year’s emblem is a small quantity of red amid ten thousand green bushes and peonies blooming in the greening advanced city. The first Peony Flower Festival was a new starting point, and everyone had the most affection for the emblem of that year.

The 4th Luoyang Peony Flower Festival in 1986 was based on the emblem theme: Luoyang as an ancient capital, industrial city, peony city, and greening advanced city. The design of the emblem as a whole was in the shape of a diamond, with a ring in the middle formed by two semicircles above and below, the top of which was in the shape of a city wall, representing the ancient capital of Luoyang in the 13th Dynasty; the bottom of which was in the shape of a gear, meaning that Luoyang was an industrial city; the peony flower was surrounded by the middle, and the whole pattern was very harmonious (Figure 44).

The emblem of the 5th Luoyang Peony Festival in 1987 shows the Luoyang Palace Lantern, an intangible cultural heritage of Luoyang, with peonies in full bloom in the lantern, and the pinyin of the Peony Festival “MUDANHUAHUI” in the next step. This year’s emblem theme is the Luoyang Flower Festival and Lantern Festival.

The emblem of the Sixth Luoyang Peony Festival in 1988 is in the shape of a lantern, with the first pinyin letters “H, H” of the word “Flower Festival” arranged in perspective, and in the center is a red peony in full bloom, with the words “6” and

“Luoyang” above and below it. The emblem implies that the six Flower and Lantern Festivals will welcome the guests.



*Figure 44 Logo of Luoyang Peony Festival 1983-1990*  
 Source: Provided by Luoyang Peony Festival Office, 2022

### 2.1.3 “The Peony Festival Project” before the “Luoyang Peony Festival”

The researcher interviewed the staff of the Luoyang Local History Office, and learned that the initial intention of the Luoyang Municipal Government to hold the Peony Flower Festival was three-fold: firstly, through the Flower Festival, it could make the hardware and software of the peony tourism; secondly, it was to make the urban sanitation and greening work better. At that time, raising chickens in Luoyang city was widespread, with chicken coops in each family yard and mosquitoes and flies swarming. Garbage and sewage flowed everywhere in some places, so the sanitary condition of the city had to be improved. The third aspect was that it was possible to make friends and expand the business opportunities. Therefore, the Luoyang Municipal Government has prioritized beautifying the cityscape, traffic management, social security, logistic supply, and other flower Festival enhancement services in Luoyang City before holding the yearly Peony Festival. This series of enhancement projects is called the “Flower Festival Project,” that is to say, to rectify the cityscape, complete the construction of several municipal facilities, and enhance the quality of the Peony Festival services.

Beautifies the cityscape. Before each Peony Festival, Luoyang City would renovate and build several tourist attractions and commercial, cultural, and sports facilities. At that time, it created and renovated peony ornamental attractions such as

Wang Cheng Park, Peony Park, and Xi Yuan Park. It constantly renovated, built, and expanded flower beds, ponds, and belts. The vigorous development of ground peonies and potted peonies has dramatically improved the greening appearance of Luoyang and given it a new look.

Regarding traffic management. From 1983 to 1991, Luoyang expanded and reconstructed more than 20 roads, primarily to address the problem of crowdedness during the flower festival. Many main lanes were expanded and rebuilt. In terms of traffic order, the public security, traffic, and urban management departments worked closely together, strengthened day and night patrols, and earnestly corrected the violation of rules and regulations to ensure the smoothness of roads. At the same time, peonies and peonies were also put into great demand, so that the overall appearance was greatly improved. Meanwhile, during the Peony Festival, more and more people come and go, and it takes work to go in and out. To solve the problem of people traveling, Luoyang Municipal Government has applied for the opening of the departing buses from Luoyang to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other places.

Social security. To purify the social security environment, the civil festivals department has taken in and repatriated the idle people who live on the streets and banned the fortune-tellers on the roads. Public security police, joint defense members, and security cadres seriously rectify the law and order of the attractions area, strengthen the security precautions, the unexpected, vicious cases for timely handling, from the heavy and fast crime-fighting, make every effort to do an excellent job of security, to ensure that tourists' personal and property safety, for the flower Festival to create a better law and order environment.

Logistics supply. The city's logistics departments strive to create the best reception conditions and provide multi-functional services. Power supply departments to find ways to do an excellent job in the deployment of electricity to ensure that the flower show, the light will be the power supply. The business sector actively organizes all kinds of exhibitions and trade Festivals and actively manages the supply of goods to meet the needs of the flower show, and at the same time carries out the department store, catering, and other "service street" activities for tourists to carry out high-quality service; railway stations, bus stations, civil aviation, and other transport departments to ensure the safety of guests and tourists. To ensure the safe

transportation of guests and tourists, meteorological departments provide thematic weather forecasts, greatly facilitating the organization and arrangement of the activities of the flower show.

At this stage, everyone in Luoyang, from top to bottom, actively participated in constructing the Luoyang Peony Festival. These initiatives ensured the smooth holding of the various flower Festivals, promoted the hardware and software construction of the peony tourism industry, enhanced the city's influence and the general public's happiness, and were highly praised by people from all walks of life.

## **2.2 Activities of the “Luoyang Peony Festival”**

### **2.2.1 Peony Viewing Activities**

The opening ceremony of the first Luoyang Peony Festival was held in Wang Cheng Park in 1983, with government leaders announcing the opening and some folk performances, which were on a smaller scale (Figure 45). After that, the flower-appreciation activities were officially kicked off. Wang Cheng Park, Peony Park, and Xi Yuan Park have become the main places where Chinese and foreign tourists gather to enjoy the flowers. Wang Cheng Park invited visitors to name more than 40 new varieties of peonies cultivated during the Flower Show, and many visitors savored them and wrote poetic flower names on the naming table. The first flower show received 2.5 million visitors from 7 countries and regions and 22 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of China. Nearly 200,000 peonies of 180 varieties were exhibited. According to the recollections of Luoyang citizens, the public's enthusiasm for the Peony Flower Festival was incomparably high, and after the end of the flower viewing, the park staff picked up a bucketful of shoes alone ... From the recollections of these scenes, it can be seen that, due to the peony viewing custom of Luoyang people all along, the public's participation in the Peony Flower Festival from the first edition was extremely high.



*Figure 45 Opening Ceremony of the First Luoyang Peony Festival*  
 Source: Provided by Luoyang Convention and Exhibition Office, 2022

After the success of the first Peony Flower Festival, the government took the second Luoyang Peony Flower Festival in 1984 as an essential event and made a lot of publicity and preparations, the scale of which was more significant than that of the first Flower Festival. According to statistics, the Flower Festival received more than 3 million visitors from 28 provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions, and 15 countries and regions, and more than 200,000 peonies of 213 varieties were exhibited. This year, there were so many tourists that all the major hotels were full, and many tourists did not have a place to stay and even slept directly at the station or on the street, which prompted the acceleration of the “Flower Show Project”.

In 1985, the Third Luoyang Peony Festival received 2.5 million Chinese and foreign tourists from 29 provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions, and 16 countries and regions. Ichi Matsumoto, Mayor of Okayama City, and Toshihiko Okamoto, Vice Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan, who are friendly cities with Luoyang City, participated in the Peony Flower Festival. The Prime Minister of Belgium, Mr. Martens, and so on, came to Luoyang to visit the peonies successively.

During the Fourth Peony Flower Festival 1986, hundreds of thousands of peonies were so colorful that more than 3 million Chinese and foreign tourists were welcomed to enjoy the flowers, breaking the highest record of all the flower festivals. Mayor Takagi Hiroshi of Kagawa City in Japan and overseas guests from the United States and Belgium visited peonies in Luoyang.

In 1987, the Fifth Peony Festival was opened in front of the newly completed "Hetu Luoshu Monument" in Wang Cheng Park, the Luoyang Ancient Tomb Museum

was opened, and the airport in the northern suburb of Luoyang was opened for the first time. Since then, Luoyang has had another window to meet friends with flowers. During the flower festival, more than 3 million domestic tourists and more than 5,000 foreign tourists came to enjoy the flowers and lanterns.

1988, the Sixth Peony Flower Festival opened before the newly completed Wang Cheng Park, with more than 2.5 million peonies and more than 300 varieties. According to statistics, during the 10-day flower period, there were more than 3.2 million Chinese and foreign tourists from the United States, Japan, Britain, the Soviet Union, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and more than 20 provinces and cities in China, once again exceeding the number of previous sessions (Figure 46).



*Figure 46 Opening of the Sixth Luoyang Peony Festival*  
Source: Photographed by Luoyang Daily on April 19, 1985

The Seventh Luoyang Peony Festival in 1989 strengthened the planting and management of peonies so that peonies of various colors were opened on time during the Festival, and more than 3 million Chinese and foreign tourists enjoyed the peonies; all walks of life in the city upgraded the quality of their services to show a brand-new mental outlook, provided convenience for tourists, and offered them a quiet environment for enjoying the flowers, which embodied the atmosphere of "grandeur, warmth, civilization and thriftiness" and won the praise of Chinese and foreign tourists. The atmosphere of "grand, warm, civilized, thrifty and simple" won the praise of Chinese and foreign tourists.

The Eighth Luoyang Peony Festival in 1990 coincided with the Third China City Flower Exhibition, which was held in Luoyang simultaneously. Famous flowers from nearly 60 cities gathered here, providing the tourists an excellent opportunity to enjoy each town's favorite flowers and adding a new luster to the Peony Festival. More than

2 million visitors were received during the Flower Show, and more than 1,800 from 20 countries and regions, such as North Korea, Cambodia, the USSR, the United States, Japan, Thailand, France, Italy, India, Finland, and so on (Figure 47).



*Figure 47 Japanese and American Visitors at the 1990 Peony Festival in Luoyang*  
Source: Luoyang Daily ([www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn))

### 2.2.2 Folk Culture Activities

Culture is the deep-rooted factor that attracts tourists and is one of the most essential features of the Luoyang Peony Festival. To enhance the festive atmosphere of the festival, make the Luoyang Peony Festival embody the features of grandness, warmth, sound, and color, avoid tediousness and boringness, and create exciting or frenzied tourist festivals and events, the organizing department of the Municipal Festival invests a great deal of workforce and financial resources every year to convene people from all walks of life.

**Literary and artistic performances:** In the first three years of the Luoyang Peony Festival, the Municipal Performance Company and major theaters would organize singing and dancing troupes, opera troupes, and acrobatic troupes to come to Luoyang to perform for the tourists, but all of them were relatively simple and traditional, for example, the beautiful performances of the eleven professional acrobatic troupes, qigong troupes, and flying car troupes of the Wang Cheng Park in 1985, and the ancient palace music played by the palace band of 1987 at the Wang Cheng Park, which all left a deep impression on the audience. The Peony Flower Festival has wildly succeeded in the past few years. As the influence of the Peony Festival expanded, famous singers, movie stars, and opera masters began to perform in Luoyang. The Eighth Peony Festival in 1990, the 60th anniversary of Ma Jinfeng, a famous Yu Opera performer, was even more praised by people from all walks of life.

**Peony Poetry, Painting, and Calligraphy Exhibition.** During the first Peony

Flower Festival in 1983, the Henan Branch of the Chinese Writers' Association and Luoyang Literature Federation organized a Peony Poetry Meeting in which more than 40 famous poets from all over the country, such as Guo Feng, Liu Shahe, Gong Liu, Zeng Zhuo, Niu Han, and the chairman of the Literature Federation, Yu Heding, participated, which was of significant influence at that time. Various forms of Peony Painting Exhibitions, Peony Photography Exhibition, Chinese Philatelic Exhibitions, Chinese Painting Exhibition, Peony Art Porcelain Exhibition, Peony Paper-cutting Exhibition, and other activities were held during the Peony Festival in the following sessions. They all add color to the cultural activities of the Flower Festival with their novel forms and chic features.

**Luoyang Peony Lantern Festival.** Continuing the custom of enjoying flowers by day and watching lanterns by night from ancient times, the Peony Lantern Festival was held at the same time as the yearly Peony Flower Festival. The first and second Luoyang Peony Lantern Festivals were on a smaller scale, but the enthusiasm of the people was not small, and the colorful lanterns of the Eighth Flower Festival increased to 632 sets in 1990. These lanterns were primarily based on peony myths and stories, peony literary allusions, Luoyang folk legends, and Luoyang scenic spots and monuments, with strong local characteristics, which attracted many tourists to stop and watch them, and since then, enjoying peonies in the daytime and watching lanterns in the evening have become one of the significant features of the Peony Flower Show (Figure 48).



*Figure 48 2nd Luoyang Peony Festival Light Show*  
Source: Luoyang Daily ([www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn))

**Peony Flower Arrangement and Flower Exhibition.** Since 1983, bonsai masterpieces of exquisite and rich flower arrangement art, lifelike root carving art, stone carving, and jade carving masterpieces have been exhibited in significant peony

ornamental parks for tourists. The Third China City Flower Exhibition jointly sponsored by China Flower Association and Luoyang Municipal People's Government from 15th to 25th April 1990 was held in Xi Yuan Park. 55 cities participated in the exhibition, and more than 2,000 pots of various kinds of flowers were displayed, and peonies in the Peony Exhibition Hall were in full bloom.

Conferences and academic exchanges. During the Flower Show, some large-scale conferences were held in Luoyang. During the first Flower Show alone, there was the first long-distance running competition for the elderly, the first annual meeting and academic report organized by the Chinese Numismatic Society, and the Chinese Local History Planning Conference. Since then, the Third Contemporary Poetry Symposium of China and the Fourth National Seminar on Famous Historical and Cultural Cities have been held one after another in Luoyang, adding a solid cultural atmosphere to the Peony Festival.

### 2.2.3 Economic and Trade Activities

During the Peony Festival, domestic and foreign people flow together, which is an excellent time to drive the economy of the festival. The first two Peony Festivals put forward the slogan "promoting Luoyang, making friends, exchanging information, and revitalizing the economy." Commercial enterprises used the festivals to invite representatives of suppliers to visit their homes to enjoy the flowers and strive for sourcing plans for some urgently needed commodities so that the economy of the commercial sector could develop. However, the opportunities for industrial enterprises were relatively small, and the economic development was not noticeable. In the third Peony Festival in 1985, based on summarizing the experience of the previous two Festivals, the Luoyang government put forward the slogan of revitalizing Luoyang's economy, strengthening technical exchanges, opening up information channels, and expanding foreign exchanges. It held the first Sino-foreign Economic and Technical Festival. At the meeting, more than 160 guests from Japan, France, other countries, regions, and domestic towns and provinces signed 86 agreements and contracts on mineral deposit development, joint ventures, transfer of technological achievements, etc., which positively revitalized Luoyang's economy.

The first economic and technological Festival won the flag for the future; Luoyang better sings the economic and trade drama laid a good foundation. After that,

the Sino-foreign Economic Festival was held every year during the Flower Festival. Luoyang City had more and more cooperation projects with domestic and foreign countries, the scale of which was getting bigger and bigger, and the cooperation fields were gradually expanding (Table 11). For example, at the economic and trade Festival during the Sixth Peony Festival, merchants from the United States, Britain, Japan, and other countries, overseas Chinese, compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, leaders from more than 20 provinces and cities in China and people from the economic and technical sessions brought all kinds of information and projects while enjoying the flowers. They made exchanges on the city's economic development strategy, cooperation in production, joint ventures in sales and marketing, management of enterprises, export of labor services, technical training, and so on, and signed several contracts. I signed several agreements, and the current flower festival capital financing, technology trade, material exchanges, and other economic activities amounted to more than RMB 1.2 billion in turnovers, a record-high flower festival.

*Table 11 Statistics on the number of visitors and total economic situation of the Luoyang Peony Festival, 1983-1990*

Source: Henan Provincial People's Government Portal ([www.henan.gov.cn](http://www.henan.gov.cn))

Session	Time	Number of tourists/million	Tourism revenue/billion dollars
1	April 15-April 25, 1983	250	0.58
2	April 15-April 25, 1984	300	0.04
3	April 15-April 25, 1985	228	3.36
4	April 15-April 25, 1986	300	2.48
5	April 15-April 25, 1987	300	9.06
6	April 15-April 25, 1988	320	12.96
7	April 15-April 25, 1989	300	5.57
8	April 15-April 25, 1990	200	7.16

## 2.3 Impact of “The Luoyang Peony Festival” during this period on Luoyang

### 2.3.1 Positive Impacts of Holding the Luoyang Peony Festival in this Period

#### (1) Revival and Inheritance of Luoyang Peony Cultural Traditions.

At this stage, the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival is the beginning of the government-driven restoration and inheritance of the traditional customs related to the Luoyang peony culture. In addition to the opening ceremony and the flower-viewing activities centered in several parks, the traditional customs such as peony poems, peony lanterns, peony paintings, peony folklore Festivals, and so on were also active,

and the content of the performance of the activities was the revitalization and inheritance of the traditions of the Luoyang peony culture.

(2) Hardware and software of window industries in Luoyang have been greatly improved.

In the early stages of the Peony Festival, Luoyang's tourism infrastructure was almost zero. To hold the Peony Festival and improve the reception capacity of the city, the government launched a series of "Flower Festival Projects" every year, summarizing experience, improving management measures, building additional infrastructure, and paying close attention to the quality of services, which resulted in the improvement of the urban outlook, road traffic, accommodation and catering, social security, and the level of management and service of the flower Festival, such as the supply of services.

(3) The economic value of the Luoyang Peony Festival began to come to the fore.

Culture on the stage and economy on the stage were the innovations and inventions of the Luoyang Peony Festival in this period. With the development of China's era and the change in social and economic structure, the people of Luoyang saw the potential of developing tourism. The festival's organizers gradually paid attention to its economic value and began to hold economic and trade Festivals from the Third Luoyang Peony Festival up to this point. Financial trade Festivals were organized from the third session of the Luoyang Peony Festival. Since then, the Luoyang Peony Festival has begun to have the functions of inheriting the peony culture, driving economic development, upgrading the construction of urban hardware and facilities, and improving people's lives.

### 2.3.2 Shortcomings of the Luoyang Peony Festival during this period

Government's "package" project and low market activity. From 1983 to 1990 was the initial stage of the contemporary Peony Festival, hosted by the People's Government of Luoyang City and led by the municipal government office. Every aspect of the Peony Festival, from the process of flower appreciation, festival layout, ticket income, investment attraction, organization of meetings, and cultural and entertainment activities, was invested by the government, planned by the government, organized by the government, and worried by the government. The government

operated with full powers, resulting in insufficient coordination and many specific arrangements. In the particular arrangements, many things need to be corrected; a single source of funding and lack of funds also led to the high festival grade, which undoubtedly caused the local government in Luoyang to increase the burden, which is small.

In the planned economic system, the income generated by the festival is almost zero. Taking the Luoyang Peony Lantern Show held in the past years as an example, the peony lantern shows during the Peony Flower Festival between 1983 and 1988 were free to watch for five years, and from 1989 onwards, the Luoyang government considered that the Peony Lantern Show would no longer be free to be exhibited on the streets, but would be entered into parks, and implemented the ticket system, but as soon as the show was executed, there were a lot of arguments and accusations. It was necessary to stop it to ease the public opinion. Other activities held during the Peony Festival and the Peony Lantern Festival were the same, which could be seen in the planned economy system at that time, the lack of economic awareness of the managers to generate income, the impact of the mass resistance, the Peony Flower Festival could not make ends meet, and the government's financial burden was enormous (Table 12).

*Table 12 Status of Peony Lantern Exhibitions in Luoyang, 1983-1990*  
Source: Luoyang City Records

Session	Exhibit Time	Exhibit days	Number of Exhibitors	Exhibition Location	fares
1	April 14-April 17, 1983	4	380	Around the City Hall	Free
2	April 14-April 22, 1984	9	427	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
3	April 14-April 25, 1985	12	370	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
4	April 14-April 24, 1986	11	538	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
5	April 14-April 25, 1987	12	547	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
6	April 14-April 25, 1988	12	548	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
7	April 14-April 25, 1989	12	504	Both sides of Luoyang Government Road	Free
8	April 14-May 5, 1990	12	632	Peony Park (park in Luoyang)	No Free

Single content of festival activities, imperfect infrastructure, and influence limited to local and neighboring areas of Luoyang. The Luoyang Peony Festival is

highly comprehensive, short in time but large in scale. The infrastructure of the Luoyang Peony Festival was zero in the early stage of the event. However, the city has been speeding up the implementation of the “Flower Festival Project,” the hardware and software conditions supporting the event have not yet reached the standard, the reception capacity is limited, and there are many loopholes in the event’s management. There are few reception beds, poor conditions, and even fewer beds in star-rated hotels, so many tourists do not have a place to spend the night in Luoyang, and the supply of goods in restaurants and stores cannot keep up with the situation.

As a tourism festival themed on the local specialty peony, the Peony Flower Festival in Luoyang, with the Peony Viewing Tour Program as its core, relies on the reputation of Luoyang Peony as the best in the world to attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. Although Luoyang peonies were famous for being the best in the world, at that time, they did not conform to this title in terms of quantity and variety. The development of peonies in Luoyang was still insufficient in terms of varieties, number of plants, and viewing spots. At that time, there were only two or three parks for tourists to come to Luoyang to enjoy peonies, and the planting area was limited, so there was still a big gap between the current situation of peonies and the expectations of tourists in flower viewing.

Flower-viewing and traditional peony folk activities were the main activities during the flower show. Due to the lack of experience in organizing festivals, there were only a handful of activities in the short period of 10 days, which were not only fewer in number but also simple in form, with only operas, comedies, small-scale songs, and dances, etc., which were limited in content and made it difficult to form the climax of the flower show. These are some areas for improvement in the initial stage of the Luoyang Peony Festival, in which the Peony Festival’s influence is small and limited to the local and the neighboring regions of Luoyang.

### **3. “The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province” as a Provincial Festival (1991-2010)**

#### **3.1 Expanding Influence of “The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province”**

3.1.1 “The Luoyang Peony Festival” became a provincial-level festival in Henan

Province

In the early 1990s, some problems and difficulties emerged in China's economy and society, and the rapid rise in prices affected the living standard of urban residents, resulting in a sudden loss of the people's spending power and a continuous decline in the number of participants in the Luoyang Peony Festival. To adapt to the change in the social environment, the Luoyang government led the people to "recreate" the Peony Festival.

After the Peony Festival was held nine times, the influence of the Luoyang Peony Festival on the outside world was expanding, and its role in promoting the reform and opening up of the province, especially in attracting investments and tourism, was becoming more and more significant. All these drew the attention of the Party Committee and the Provincial Government of Henan Province, and they foresaw the great potential of developing the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang. The then Henan Provincial Party Committee and Provincial Government of Henan Province, Mr. Li Changchun, pointed out, "We should further organize the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival, which will provide a stage for the opening up of the province to the outside world. In April 1991, the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival was renamed "Luoyang Peony Flower Festival of Henan Province" and hosted by Henan Provincial Government, and Luoyang City set up the Office of Luoyang Peony Flower Festival, which was especially responsible for the preparatory work of the festival in Luoyang, thus forming a new pattern of Luoyang sets the stage and the whole province sings the opera. The Luoyang Peony Flower Festival has become an essential festival in Henan Province and a window and platform for the opening up of the whole province. It has become a crucial festival in Henan Province and a critical window and platform for the province to open up to the outside world.

3.1.2 Changes in the emblem of "The Luoyang Peony Festival" during this period

The collection of emblems for the 9th to 12th "Luoyang Peony Festival" in Henan Province was the same as that of the emblems of local-level festivals in the previous period, in which the official release of the design requirements, active participation of the public in submitting the emblems, and selection of the emblems by experts were organized to determine the design proposals. The emblems of these

festivals were of different shapes, mainly composed of peony flowers and Luoyang characters, with far-reaching meanings, which not only improved the cultural content and taste of the festivals but also raised the popularity of Luoyang to a certain extent.

The peony flower on the 13th emblem symbolizes that Luoyang is the hometown of peonies, which bloom yearly. In contrast, the sphere underneath represents the earth, and the combination of the top and bottom of the emblem means Luoyang Peony is the best in the world. The symbol of the emblem is that the Peony Festival is not only for Luoyang but also for the whole world, and Luoyang is going to the world. After the 13th emblem was designed, everyone agreed that the symbol had a clear theme, bright colors, and rich meanings. At that time, the public thought that the emblem was changing every year, which was not conducive to the dissemination of culture and tourism promotion in Luoyang, so the leaders concerned set it down, saying that it would not be designed every year in the future. It was not until 2008, when the 26th Luoyang Peony Festival was held that the tradition of collecting emblems from the whole country resumed (Figure 49).



*Figure 49 Logo of the 9th - 13th Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan Province*  
Source: Photographed by researcher, 2022

In 2008, the Luoyang government once again resumed collecting the emblem of the Peony Festival from the public, and this time, the collection also included the mascot of the Peony Festival and the theme phrase. Nearly three months after the collection activity, 65 mascot works, 285 emblems, and 8,700 theme phrases were received. The emblems were finalized after nationwide collection, public voting, and expert selection. The pattern of the 26th emblem integrates the blooming peony, the “King of Flowers,” with the phoenix, the “King of Birds,” which spreads out its wings

and soars, implying that the Luoyang peony is rich, optimistic, and graceful. The lines composed of pink, red, blue, yellow, and green are like flying ribbons, highlighting the grand, warm, and joyful atmosphere of the Luoyang Peony Festival, expressing the concept of the festival of using flowers as a medium to make friends and promote the comprehensive development of economy and society and the direction of the festival towards internationalization, and demonstrating the vitality of the harmonious development of Luoyang.

The name of the mascot is “Peony Fairy,” which takes the image of a peony cartoon character as its basic shape, and the primary color is Luoyang red, which is lively, cute, joyful, and encouraging, and is full of infectious solid force and affinity. The mascot, “Peony Fairy,” is full of bright smiles, brisk steps, and enthusiastic arms, warmly welcoming guests worldwide to Luoyang to enjoy the flowers, travel, and sightseeing (Figure 50).



*Figure 50 Emblem and Mascot of the 26th Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province*  
Source: Baidu Pictures

The emblems during the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival were all designed and produced by the people with the participation of the people, and this collection activity was carried out 15 times. In the beginning, the emblems had simple patterns. After that, the emblems gradually improved in aesthetics, sense of design, and connotation, and the graphic symbols representing Luoyang’s peony culture were the people’s blessings and hopes for the Peony Flower Festival. They all embodied the characteristics of Luoyang as a thousand-year ancient capital and the city of peonies, as well as reflecting the upwardly-moving urban outlook of the town, and they had colorful and aesthetic values.

3.1.3 “The Luoyang Peony Festival” as a national intangible cultural heritage item.

UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in October 2003, and in 2006, the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists was announced, and the declaration mechanism of intangible cultural heritage was increasingly improved. In 2008, the “Luoyang Peony Festival” was successfully selected as one of the Second Batch of Representative Items of National Intangible Cultural Heritage, categorized as Folklore.

Intangible cultural heritage does not come out of nowhere. However, it is derived from the mode of production and way of life of the people in a region. It survives in the people’s daily lives in a living state, and the mode of production and way of life are the basis for the survival of intangible cultural heritage. The Luoyang Peony Festival is a patterned living culture created, enjoyed, and inherited by the people of Luoyang in their production and living activities to develop local vitality continuously. It has four external characteristics of intangible culture, namely, historicity, locality, inheritance, and variability. Although other regions in China also hold peony festivals, none have such a deep historical background, solid cultural connotation, and superb radiating ability as the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival.

## **3.2 Development and Changes to the Subjects and Activities of “The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province”**

### **3.2.1 More Diversified Peony Viewing Forms**

After being held nine times as a local-level festival, the Luoyang Peony Festival was upgraded to a provincial-level festival. How to avoid the aesthetic fatigue of similar flowers every year and arouse people’s enthusiasm for the Peony Festival became a new topic, combined with the problems and experiences of previous festivals. Considering the issues and experiences exposed in the last flower Festivals, the Luoyang government actively adjusted the strategies for organizing the festivals.

(1) Introducing peony varieties, expanding the planting area, and improving visitors’ experience of peony viewing. Since April 1992, Heze City in Shandong Province, China, also started to hold the Heze Peony Festival. He has paid more attention to large-scale peony planting from the beginning, and every year, the festival

attracts tourists with its unique peony industry characteristics. In contrast, Luoyang peonies lagged behind Heze in quantity and variety then. To change this situation, Luoyang peony researchers adopted artificial hybridization, natural hybridization, preferential selection, grafting, division, and other methods to cultivate new varieties, and at the same time, vigorously introduced late-blooming varieties from Japan, the United States, France, etc. Through the efforts made in this period, the varieties of peonies in Luoyang have reached 1,011, and the number of peonies has reached more than 23 million, greatly enriching the diversities of peony enjoyment for tourists.

At the same time, Luoyang City has made efforts to expand the planting area of peonies, forming a 100-mu Luoyang Peony Garden on Mang Mountain, a 50-mu peony base in the Garden Institute, and a 100-mu Peony Garden, which is linked with scenic spots such as the Wang Cheng Park, the Peony Park and other downtown spots such as Luoyang City's street flower beds and green belts, thus creating the conditions to meet the needs of more domestic and foreign tourists to enjoy the peonies.

(2) Controlling peonies' flowering period and prolonging peony flower shows' duration. The natural flowering period of peonies is usually in the middle or late April, which is only about ten days, and it has been said that raising flowers for a year is not as easy as watching them for ten days. Due to the short flowering period of the peony, it has long been a bottleneck restricting the development of peony festivals in Luoyang. To prolong the flowering period, Luoyang peony researchers have successfully mastered the two techniques of "Facilitated Cultivation" and "Delayed Cultivation" to control the flowering period of peonies, which can overcome the problem of the short flowering period of peonies to a certain extent.

Meanwhile, to alleviate the problem of misalignment between the flowering period of peonies and the Peony Festival due to high or low temperatures, the peony gardens took technical measures such as building sunshades or heat preservation sheds, sprinkler irrigation, utilizing chemicals and biological regulators to control the flowering period randomly. For example, when the Peony Festival was about to be opened in 1998, the blooming period was expected to be delayed later than the previous sessions due to the low temperature. Hence, the forestry department took measures such as erecting plastic trellises, placing electric heaters, setting up shade nets, etc., which ensured that most tourists could have flowers to look at on the day of

the Peony Festival.

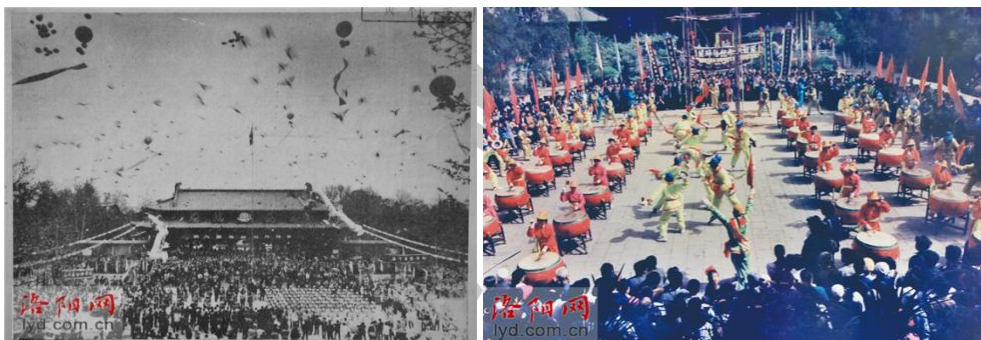
(3) Expanding the peony industry and increasing tourism income. In addition, Luoyang City also actively developed peony-related crafts and souvenirs during this period and encouraged the relevant parties to take advantage of the differentiated market demand to build multi-species and multi-price tourist products, such as peony cosmetics, peony tea, fresh-cut flowers, potted flowers, and nutritious flowers, etc. This increased the tourism economic income and the number of visitors. This not only increases the financial income from tourism but also improves and accelerates the spreading of the image of the Luoyang Peony Festival.

### 3.2.2 Improvement in the taste of cultural activities

Cultural activities are indispensable contents and items in tourism festivals, and they are also the primary means to improve the affinity and attraction of the festivals. In its dissemination, it is often fused with local history, culture, and national characteristics, thus presenting the situation of both inheritance and development. At this stage, Luoyang centered on Luoyang Peony Culture and continued to carry out traditional cultural activities such as flower viewing, lantern watching, painting, and poem writing so that the Luoyang Peony Culture would continue to develop and flourish. At the same time, according to the changes in the mainstream social culture, many modern cultural activities in various forms were created to comprehensively display the deep cultural deposits and elegant humanistic spirit of the ancient capital so that the Flower Festival embodied the characteristics of grandeur.

The 9th Luoyang Peony Festival in 1991 was the most enormous scale of cultural activities since the Peony Festival was held. At the opening ceremony of the Flower Festival, songs, dances, and operas of peony culture were performed, with famous singers Li Lingyu and Tu Honggang taking part in the performance; a large-scale parade was held for the first time, with a 60-member ceremonial modeling squad, four lion dancers, 400 people dancing in a lion dance, 400 people singing and gongs and drums, 300 motorcycles, 15 colorful cars and 2,000 peace doves released attracting tens of thousands of spectators; Mr. Chen Fuli, one of the ten best photographers in the world, came to Luoyang to take pictures of peony. The 1st Luoyang Folk Culture Temple Festival, which aimed to display folk customs and styles, showed visitors the unique peony culture of Luoyang, the He Luo stunts, and

some of the endangered folk arts (Figure 51).



*Figure 51 Opening Ceremony of the 9th Peony Festival*

Source: Luoyang.com ([www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn))

In 1992, Luoyang took the occasion of the ten-year celebration of the Peony Festival to hold a grand celebration of the festival, in which several hundred folk performing artists performed dragon dances, lion dances, rows of drums, etc., which had a significant social impact, and this became the beginning of the large-scale performances organized by Luoyang City before the Peony Festival every year. This practice was followed in the following two sessions, which was a turning point for the Peony Festival's cultural activities to reach a new level.

The 13th Peony Flower Festival was held against the background of the nationwide selection of the National Flower, and the implementation of the opening-up-led strategy of Henan Province, and the cultural activities of the festival were even more abundant and spectacular to attract more tourists. On the opening day of the Flower Show, "The Spring Peony City" street-stepping procession composed of more than 7,000 people and 40 colorful vehicles stretched for several kilometers, with a large number of people and a spectacular momentum. The large-scale celebratory cultural and artistic evening, *Ode to the Peony*, was the climax of the Flower Show, and the evening party carried the message of "promote peony and compete for the evaluation of the national flower. The "Miss Peony" contest 1993 has a place in many people's memories because it was the first regional beauty contest held in Luoyang (Figure 52). The 1993 "Miss Peony" pageant has a place in the memory of many people because it was the first regional beauty contest held in Luoyang, which was avant-garde and fashionable at that time and caused a sensation in the city.



*Figure 52 13th Peony Festival Folklore Activities*

Source: Luoyang.com ([www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn))

The cultural activities of the 16th Peony Festival showed a higher artistic grade than the previous ones. The opening ceremony of the Peony Postal Exhibition, the Peony Book Market and the celebratory fireworks, the Peony Flower Arrangement Competition, and the Peony Cultural Activities Week in the Mass Square are both short and simple, yet excellent and enthusiastic, which appropriately create a warm. The Flower Festival's cultural and artistic square activity, composed of music, folk art, and national art, was the first program of the session. It was appreciated by the public and the public alike, with solid entertainment, attracting the masses to participate actively (Figure 53). 17th Session of the Flower Festival of the Session in 1999, which gathered various stars of our country's pop music world, the large-scale concert of *Starlight Bright Peony City* was held at the Stadium of Xi Gong District, which was a great success. The Opening Ceremony and Celebration Party were broadcast on the Internet for the first time.



*Figure 53 16th Peony Festival Folklore Activities*

Source: Luoyang.com ([www.lyd.com.cn](http://www.lyd.com.cn))

The Peony Flower Festival was held one after another in this way, and the influx of many tourists significantly impacted Luoyang's life. In contrast to the increasing

number of tourists, the enthusiasm of the local people of Luoyang to participate in the Peony Flower Festival declined. The crowded roads and inconvenient traveling caused the people of Luoyang to alienate themselves from the Peony Festival gradually. Some began to feel that the Peony Festival was a tourism festival for foreign tourists, which was also a common phenomenon that appeared when all kinds of festivals in China's tourism market gradually became active. As the base of peony watchers grew, the Luoyang Municipal Government decided to change its concept so that the Peony Festival could better integrate with the folklore of the people of Luoyang. Thus, at the 25th Peony Festival in 2007, the government led the people to hold a parade of "ten thousand people dancing with dragons" (Figure 54).



*Figure 54 25th Luoyang Peony Festival, Ten Thousand People Performances*  
Source: Provided by Luoyang Convention and Exhibition Office

In 2008, when Beijing hosted the Olympic Games and the whole country celebrated, the theme of the flower Festival was determined as "Peony Blooming to Welcome the Olympic Games", was planned to create a world Guinness record for 1,000 people to paint 1,000 meters of peony paintings, which was given to the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games; at the same time, the Divine Peony Garden became the first potted flower production base of the Olympic Games in Beijing; The large-scale dance poem *He Luo Wind* was performed for 15 times in the Opera House of the new district, and a total of 38 activities were planned and arranged in 3 categories, including large-scale publicity activities, economic, trade and scientific and technological investment activities, flower-appreciation and tourism activities, and mass revelry series of activities, etc.; and the Miss Tourism of the World Parade, the Mayors' Forum of the World Tourism Cities, the Luoyang Branch

of the Domestic Tourism Trade Festival, the Branch of the 18th National Book Festival, the Asian Taekwondo Championship, the Universal Carnival, etc. were held. It reflected the continuous upgrading of Luoyang's status and laid a good foundation for attracting future overseas tourists and business people.

The most eye-catching feature of the 27th Luoyang Peony Festival in 2009 was that the World Postal Exhibition was held in Luoyang simultaneously, which met the festival in the home of peonies after a 10-year absence from China. This flower festival was a sensation, and leaders such as Vice President Xi Jinping and Zhang Dejiang came to visit Luoyang together (Figure 55).



*Figure 55 China 2009 World Philatelic Exhibition and the 27th Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan Province*

Source: Provided by Luoyang Convention and Exhibition Office

### 3.2.3 Market-oriented Operation of Peony Festival

The opening ceremony of the 9th Luoyang Peony Festival was held in Wang Cheng Park. This year's Peony Festival received 2 million Chinese and foreign tourists, including 4,130 overseas tourists, and the turnover of economic and trade activities amounted to 1.043 billion yuan. Representatives of 17 cities and municipalities in the province and more than 200 overseas businessmen participated in the Luoyang Economic and Technical Festival. This Peony Festival started to "set the stage" in Luoyang City and "sing" in the whole of Henan Province, and the effect of the Luoyang Peony Festival began to radiate to the entire Henan Province.

During the 11th Peony Festival in 1993, leaders of various countries also came to Luoyang to enjoy the flowers one after another. This year's Peony Festival received 1.5 million tourists, including 6,050 tourists from abroad, and the turnover of economic and trade activities amounted to 31.138 billion yuan. The amount of foreign investment was 2.772 billion yuan. Luoyang became a national hotspot and

continuously established its open city image.

In 1996, the 14th Luoyang Peony Festival received more than 900,000 Chinese and foreign tourists, and the turnover of all kinds of economic and trade activities amounted to RMB 2,161.2 billion, of which the amount of foreign investment was 58.345 million dollars. This year, the government no longer invested money in the festival. The organizers of the Peony Festival started to invite bids from significant enterprises, and the loans of the enterprises could be repaid in the second year with ticket income. From this year onwards, the peony festivals shifted from government-organized to market-economy-controlled, significantly promoting enthusiasm.

In 1999, the 17 Peony Festivals received nearly 2 million Chinese and foreign tourists, and the turnover of all kinds of economic and trade activities amounted to 2.154 billion yuan. Since the beginning of this session, even the celebration party of the Peony Festival was no longer organized by the government but undertaken by the enterprises, which were fully marketized, and the operation of peony festivals began to take a benign development track from then on.

Starting from 2000, no matter critical political talks or cultural performances, they all gathered here during the Peony Festival; in 2004, it was hard to find stalls in industrial exhibitions and sales Festivals, and the cultural and tourist activities were colorful; the 27th Peony Festival and the World Postal Exhibition 2009 of China were colorful and climaxed, forming a solid effect of gathering customers at home and abroad, attracting exhibitors and government officials from 84 countries, and also attracting tourists from all over the world. Attracted tourists from all over the world, and the 7-day exhibition attracted 350,000 Chinese and foreign visitors (Table 13).

*Table 13 Statistics on the number of visitors and total economic situation of the Luoyang Peony Festival, 1991-2010*

Source: Henan Provincial People's Government Portal ([www.henan.gov.cn](http://www.henan.gov.cn))

Session	Time	Number of tourists/million	Tourism revenue/billion dollars
9	April 15- April 28, 1991	200	10.4324
10	April 15- April 25, 1992	160	14.65
11	April 15- April 25, 1993	150	11.76
12	April 15- April 25, 1994	140	15.117
13	April 15- April 25, 1995	130	10.59
14	April 15- April 25, 1996	90	21.612
15	April 15- April 25, 1997	170	9.78
16	April 15- April 25, 1998	190	39

17	April 15- April 25, 1999	200	21.54
18	April 15- April 25, 2000	200	17.6
19	April 15- April 25, 2001	180	20.5
20	April 15- April 25, 2002	219	64
21	April 15- April 25, 2003	77	20
22	April 15- April 25, 2004	241	9.36
23	April 8-May 8, 2005	688	25.19
24	April 10-May 10, 2006	938	36.38
25	April 1-May 10, 2007	1281	49.08
26	April 1-May 10, 2008	1438	59
27	April 9-May 10, 2009	1513	74
28	April 1-May 5, 2010	1622	80.06

During this period, the Peony Festival went from a “government-run” to a “market-oriented operation,” generating substantial economic benefits, which mainly came from tourists’ income and economic trade activities:

(1) The organization of cultural activities using the ticket system, implementing the “Festival to raise the festival.”

In Luoyang City, the cultural activities held during the Flower Festival economic reform, the government began to withdraw from the flower appropriate control and follow the market economy to deploy the market. With time, people’s concepts also began to break free from the burden of history, and more and more citizens from the practice of running the flower Festival according to the laws of the commodity economy to promote the entire city of Luoyang construction and economic development brought about by the enormous role.

The Lantern Festival, organized by the market, is a gradual market reform of the economic system of cultural activities during this period. Starting from 1992, the festival’s organizing committee stipulates that no matter who goes to the park to see the lights, all tickets are to see the lights. 1993, the eleventh flower Festival, the city, according to the development of the situation, the light show again arranged in the park, will be entirely pushed into the market, the exhibitors have a share of the revenue from the tickets, but also through the colorful lights advertisement to expand the income. Later, the city lantern exhibition office tried to organize the outreach of colored lanterns, and the economic return gradually improved. 1996 Peony Lantern Festival, the municipal government no longer invested money. Still, the Lantern Exhibition office first took a loan from the government to prepare for the event. One year later, the Lantern Exhibition office returned the loan as scheduled based on the income from the tickets and outreach and had a small surplus.

The organizing committee of the Flower Festival advocated the principle of “who invests, who benefits, all parties sponsor, and raise the Festival with the Festival” and mobilized more units to undertake cultural activities. 1999, several companies in Luoyang City took advantage of the business opportunities of the Peony Festival to hold a large-scale commercial concert named *Starry Peony City*, which caused a significant vibration in Luoyang, and the sensational effect of the evening show did not come from Luoyang City. The stunning impact of this evening party did not come from the dedication of Liu Huan, Tian Zhen, and other stars. Still, the new mode of “the Flower Festival takes the stage, and the enterprises make money” became an essential symbol of the Flower Festival going to the market and a model of successful market-oriented operation.

(2) The administrative-led approach has been changed to a market-led one in preparing economic and trade activities.

In the new period, along with the gradual establishment of the market economy system, government departments at all levels began to change the practice of singing “one-man show” in the Peony Festival, encouraging and guiding enterprises to establish market consciousness and boldly go out through the platform of the Peony Festival. In the former economic and trade activities, the Luoyang government assigned enterprises to exhibit and sell their commodities administratively. At that time, large and medium-sized state-run enterprises, which were still operating in the planned economy system, did not feel how much interest the Flower Festival had in them, and more of them complained bitterly about the increase in tax revenue for organizing the Flower Festival.

Affected by this, Luoyang Copper Processing Factory, as the “copper boss” of copper processing in Luoyang, took the initiative to “appear on the stage” at the Peony Festival in 1992 and sang two beautiful shows in a row, one of which was to use flowers as a medium to invite more than 150 businessmen in China to Luoyang to enjoy flowers and talk business. First, the flower as a medium invited more than 150 domestic merchants to Luoyang, a flower appreciation business, seven days after signing the supply contract of 2300 tons. The second is cooperating with Australian business people to build a joint venture copper processing plant. In the original, copper exports accounted for 80% of the country based on the expansion of exports,

and then a new window was opened. The lucrative returns obtained by the Luoyang Copper Processing Plant increased the enthusiasm of some small and medium-sized enterprises in Luoyang City. More and more units and enterprises took the initiative to join the Peony Flower Festival and gained considerable economic and social benefits.

### **3.3 Impact of “The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province” during this period on Luoyang**

3.3.1 Positive Impacts of Holding the Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan Province during this Period.

(1) The peony industry was constantly upgraded, and the scale of the flower festival was constantly increased.

First, in terms of peony cultivation. There has been a shift from small-scale plantings in botanical gardens in the past to large-scale plantings in urban areas. The total area of peony cultivation in Luoyang has reached more than 150,000 mu. There are more than 160 large-scale peony production bases, such as peony catalytic flower bases, pot-raising peony bases, peony grafting seedling breeding bases, oil peony bases, fresh-cut flower production bases, and so on, which form a pattern of coordinated development of the industrial chain of cultivation, ornamental, processing, and sales, with the horticultural level and the level of service constantly improving.

Secondly, in terms of peony viewing. Historically, peony viewing was limited to Wang Cheng Park and Peony Park. Still, at this stage, 12 peony gardens have been built in urban Luoyang, including the China National Garden, The Botanical Garden of Sui and Tang Dynasty City Ruins, The International Peony Garden, The National Peony Garden, and two alpine peony gardens in Ji Guan Cave and Bai Yun Mountain, with an area of 5,000 mu of ornamental peony planting.

Thirdly, in terms of peony scientific research. With the establishment of the National Peony Gene Bank, Peony Research Institute, Peony Biology Key Laboratory, Peony R&D and Promotion Center of China Flower Engineering Technology Center, and China Wild Peony Domestication and Breeding Base in Luoyang, Luoyang City has successfully applied for the registration of the “Geographical Indication of Luoyang Peony.” At the 7th Flower Expo in 2009,

Luoyang peonies won 166 awards; at the 2014 Qingdao World Horticultural Expo Fine Peony Competition, Luoyang peonies won 13 gold awards (out of a total of 18), 31 silver awards, 50 bronze awards, and one overall champion of peonies in the whole field.

Fourthly, in the development of peony culture. It has created a large number of peony dances and peony songs; Luoyang people love peonies and paint peonies, and peony painting has become a trend in Luoyang, and several nationally famous peony painters such as Wang Xiu and Wen Liuchuan have emerged. Pingle Village of Pingle Town, Meng Jin County, is known as “The first village of peony painting creation” and was awarded the honorary title of “Henan Characteristic Cultural Industry Village” by the Department of Culture of Henan Province, and was named “Hometown of Culture and Art” by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Civil; collect peony creative works for the society, and make use of good creative works to launch new cultural works continuously. It contains peony creative works from the society, uses good creative works, constantly establishes new cultural products, organizes cultural, scientific, and technological creative expositions, and displays and publicizes Luoyang’s characteristic artistic boutiques.

Fifth, the application of peony elements. The Peony Flower Capital Enhancement Project has been actively implemented, and the Peony Cultural Festival logo, theme slogan, and Peony Flower Capital logo have been widely solicited nationwide. The application of peony element symbols has been widely promoted. In March 2012, Luoyang City was named the “Peony Flower Capital of China” by the China Flower Association.

(2) Consciously introducing the market mechanism, the festival’s development has entered a virtuous circle.

During the period when the Luoyang Peony Festival was a provincial-level festival, Luoyang systematically summed up the results of holding the festival for many years and concluded that only by relying on the laws of the market and the economy and turning the Festival into an open flower golden could it have vitality, and then the market-oriented operation of the Peony Festival began to take steps of exploration. Consciously introducing the market mechanism in the way and method of organizing the festival was the most significant initiative in organizing the Peony

Flower Festival in this period, which not only made the development of the Peony Flower Festival enter the track of a benign circle but also laid the foundation for the enlargement and enhancement of the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival in the future.

(3) Expanding Influence from Localities to Henan Province and Neighboring Provincial Capitals.

With the rapid development of modern science and technology, there are more and more means of dissemination. In addition to traditional newspapers, magazines, radios, televisions, exhibitions, displays, and classroom teaching, modern means of dissemination, such as information networks and mobile electronic media, have become essential ways of disseminating intangible cultural heritage. During this period, the infrastructure of the Peony Festival tended to be perfected, people were more attracted to cultural tourism, and the influence of the Luoyang Peony Festival was rapidly extended to the whole province of Henan and the neighboring provinces.

3.3.2 Shortcomings of the Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan Province during this period.

(1) The participation of local people in Luoyang gradually decreased, and there needed to be more recognition of their own culture.

The government focuses more on economic benefits from the perspective of “economy,” ignoring the importance of the people and culture in the festival. For traditional folk festivals, after the social environment, activity content, and operation mode are fixed, the desire of local people and tourists to participate in them will gradually decrease, and aesthetic fatigue will occur. In particular, the younger generation of Luoyang people are generally less interested in traditional cultural expressions than in popular culture. Some need to understand why the Peony Festival was created in the first place, believing that it is just a tourism resource developed by Luoyang City every year to increase tourism income.

(2) Insufficient Cultural Connotation of Luoyang Peony Culture Tradition.

During this period, popular culture gradually began to dominate the mainstream of society, and the cultural activities of the Peony Festival followed the change of the mainstream culture and began to take peony cultural exhibitions, group star concerts, large-scale cultural performances, and undertaking national cultural exchange conferences as the forms of expression. This change satisfied not only the people’s

demand for diversified entertainment with a high degree of participation by the masses but also the government's demand for stimulating consumption, restoring the economy, and enhancing the festival's popularity. Of course, the injection and exploration of such popular cultural elements and forms may be a double-edged sword, which may bring alienating pollution to the traditional Luoyang Peony Festival and adverse effects on spreading the cultural connotation of the Luoyang Peony Festival.

#### **4. “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” as a National Festival (2011-2022)**

##### **4.1 From “The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province” to “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China”**

###### **4.1.1 “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” Selected as a National Festival**

In April 2010, after attending the opening ceremony of the 28th Luoyang Peony Festival, the prominent leaders of the Henan Provincial Party Committee fully affirmed and highly appraised the effectiveness of the work of the Luoyang Peony Festival and hoped that the Luoyang Peony Festival would have the participation of the Ministry of Culture and other relevant ministries of the country and that it would be co-hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the Henan Provincial Government. After careful consideration, the Luoyang government initiated the declaration of upgrading the Luoyang Peony Festival to a national-level festival. Luoyang City went all out to actively report to the Provincial Department of Culture and the Ministry of Culture and invited the leaders of the Ministry of Culture to come to Luoyang to research the upgrading work of the Peony Festival.

On August 18, 2010, the Ministry of Culture listened to the special report of the Department of Culture of Henan Province, Luoyang Municipal Party Committee, and Luoyang Municipal Government on the upgrading of the Peony Festival; on September 15, the critical leaders of the Department of Culture Industry of the Ministry of Culture and the famous experts' research group visited Luoyang to research the upgrading of the Peony Festival and put forward the guiding opinions.

On November 25, the General Office of the Ministry of Culture formally replied to the General Office of the Henan Provincial Government, agreeing to change the name of “Luoyang Peony Flower Festival” to “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” from 2011, which would be hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the Henan Provincial Government, and organized by the Department of Culture of Henan Province and the Luoyang Municipal Government. which was primarily responsible for the overall coordination of the festival, thus realizing the successful transformation of the local festivals to the national festivals. The management work of the celebration gradually moved towards the development path of institutionalization, and standardization.

#### 4.1.2 Symbolization of the logo of The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China

The logo is a cultural symbol in which symbols such as image, color, text, and layout design interact to produce synergy, participate in the overall construction of meaning, and reflect and reshape the facts of history, culture, and society. After a national call and expert evaluation, the "China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival" emblem was finalized in 2011. It is the most authoritative image symbol of the festival, the most valuable intangible asset in the festival system, and one of the most eye-catching thematic symbols (Figure 56).



*Figure 56 Logo of the Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China*  
Source: Baidu Pictures

Logo graphic. The overall outline of the logo is round, which is considered by Chinese people to have the meaning of completeness, thoroughness, perfection, etc. Luoyang, China, as the ancient capital of China, should take the vital responsibility of promoting traditional Chinese culture. The logo takes the Chinese character “洛”

fused with “文” as the core of the leading design and outlines elements such as the blossoming peony, the flying dragon, and the waves of the Yellow River. Symbolizes the prosperous development of the Luoyang Peony Festival and highlights the long history, rich culture, and distinctive regional characteristics of Luoyang, the host city of the event, and the whole emblem prototype is lively and profound.

Logo colors. The circle’s color around the logo is a monochrome gradation of highly saturated red, orange, and yellow, which conveys passion, festivity, solemnity, joy, and atmosphere. The Chinese character “洛,” fused with “文,” is transformed into the peony, and the gradient blue part symbolizes the waves of the Yellow River, showing the splendid and colorful landscape of the River Luo. The red soaring dragon symbolizes the development and strength of the Chinese nation, and the red color, known as the Chinese color, adds a sense of dynamism and meaning of upward movement, ascension, and brightness, which is in line with the image of Luoyang. The overall color of the logo is bright and expresses the intense feelings of sincerity, enthusiasm, and upward mobility of the people of Luoyang.

Logo fonts. The Peony Culture Festival logo has the Chinese characters “中国洛阳牡丹文化节” and the English letters “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” arranged in an orderly manner above and below the logo, respectively. The bold Chinese characters are slightly larger than the English letters. The image and language symbols are complementary, greatly enhancing the expressive power and achieving the ideal promotion and publicity effect.

## **4.2 Overview of the Development of “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China”**

### **4.2.1 2011-2014 The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China**

The 29th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival 2011 was held for the first time after the festival was upgraded to a national level, with the theme of “Luoyang Peony, Fortune World.” Centering on the theme of a famous historical and cultural city and peony city, the festival fully demonstrated the long-lasting and splendid culture of the Central Plains and unique peony culture through the collection of various elements, showing the historical style and bright new appearance. To show the historical style

and bright new appearance of the thousand-year-old imperial capital and peony city, 24 significant activities such as economy and trade, culture, sports, and tourism have been carefully planned. During the Peony Cultural Festival, the town received 17.717 million tourists, with a total tourism income of 8.673 billion yuan (Figure 57).



*Figure 57 29th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: He Luo Image (<https://www.horou.com>)

The 30th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 2012 took the theme of “Luoyang Peony, Wealthy World” as its central theme. It focused on the human being, the peony as a medium, culture, and soul, expanding exchanges and cooperation and promoting scientific development. The festival received 19.65 million visitors, with a total tourism revenue of 10.515 billion yuan.

The 31st China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival theme was “Meeting the Thousand-Year-Old Imperial Capital, Sharing National Colors and Heavenly Fragrance.” The opening ceremony was held at the Luoyang Opera House. The most distinctive feature of this year’s festival was the closer integration of peony festivals with culture, business exhibitions, sports, agriculture, and other industries, and the tourism market continued to boom. Eighteen million six hundred ninety-nine thousand five hundred tourists were received this year, with a total tourism revenue of 11.22 billion yuan (Figure 58).



*Figure 58 Opening Ceremony of the 30th and 31st Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
 Source: He Luo Image (<https://www.horou.com>)

The 32nd China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival theme was “Meet in the Imperial Capital of the Millennium, Share the National Colors and Fragrance of Heaven.” This year’s Peony Cultural Festival aimed to create “China’s most internationally influential cultural festival brand.” This year’s Peony Cultural Festival showed many highlights: flower-appreciation tours, cultural tours, and ecological tours were all hot; rich cultural, economic, and trade, performing arts, and sports activities were held in turn, producing a solid customer gathering effect and boosting the comprehensive consumption of tourism; the counties around Luoyang launched various preferential policies, and the flow of tourists increased significantly compared with previous years, thus achieving economic benefits. This year, 19,705,600 tourists were received, with a total tourism revenue of 15.293 billion yuan.

#### 4.2.2 2015-2019 The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China

The 33rd Peony Cultural Festival was held under the theme of "Meeting the Thousand-Year-Old Imperial Capital, Sharing National Colors and Heavenly Fragrance." The opening ceremony was held at the Luoyang Opera House. With the theme of combining the Silk Road and Luoyang cultural elements, this year’s Peony Cultural Festival focused on the planning of the 33rd China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Investment and Trade Festival, the 2015 China Luoyang (International) Cultural, Scientific, and Technological Creative Design Exhibition and other 11 main activities, and the 2015 China Association of Agricultural Industrialization Famous and Excellent Products Expo and other 23 unique activities, which involved the appreciation of flowers, culture, tourism, and sports, economic and trade exhibitions and other fields, economic and trade exhibitions, and other fields (Figure 59).



*Figure 59 Opening Ceremony of the 32nd and 33rd  
Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: He Luo Image (<https://www.horou.com>)

The 34th Peony Cultural Festival was held under the theme of “National Colors and Fragrance, World Blooming,” with the opening ceremony at the Ding Ding Gate Square of Sui and Tang dynasties Luoyang City. Adhering to the principle of promoting the construction of the festival, promoting the management of the festival, benefiting the people and enhancing the overall situation, actively integrating into the national strategy of “One Belt and One Road,” combining with the construction of a modern public cultural service system, perfecting the mechanism of organizing festivals and lengthening the industrial chain of celebrations. This year, a total of 11 main activities and 27 special activities were held, covering a wide range of fields such as flower-appreciation tourism, cultural activities, economic and trade exhibitions, and so on. Luoyang City received 23.532 million tourists, with a total tourism income of 19.767 billion yuan.

The 35th Peony Cultural Festival, with the theme of “Meeting the Imperial Capital of the Thousand Years, Sharing the National Colors and Fragrance of Heaven,” held its opening ceremony at the Luoyang Sports Center Square. It is worth mentioning that Chen Dong, an astronaut of Shenzhou XI<sup>28</sup>, who was born and grew up in Luoyang, appeared at the opening ceremony and brought a special gift, a video of greetings recorded in the space capsule, to send his best wishes to his hometown and his folks. During the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang received 24,939,600 visitors, with a total tourism income of 22.35 billion yuan (Figure 60).

<sup>28</sup> Chen Dong, a native of Luoyang, flew the Shenzhou-11 mission from October 17 to November 18, 2016, and it was a complete success. Received honorary titles such as China’s “Heroic Astronaut” and “Model of the Times”.



*Figure 60 Opening Ceremony of the 34th and 35th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: He Luo Image ([Https://www.horou.com](https://www.horou.com))

The 36th Peony Cultural Festival has opened at the Dingding Gate<sup>29</sup> Ruins Square of the Sui and Tang dynasties in Luoyang City. With the theme of “Blossoming in a New Era, start a New Journey,” the festival thoroughly explored cultural connotations, highlighted the cultural characteristics of peonies, and meticulously planned a series of colorful and brilliant activities, striving to present an exquisite cultural, tourism, economic and trade feast for guests at home and abroad. During the festival, 26.4731 million tourists were received, and the total income from tourism amounted to 24.196 billion yuan.

The opening ceremony of the 37th Peony Cultural Festival was held at Dingding Gate Ruins Square. With the theme of “National Colors and Fragrance, Dedication to the Birthday of China,” the festival arranged a series of festive and enthusiastic activities such as cultural exchanges, flower-appreciation tours, economic and trade exhibitions, etc., to comprehensively display the new achievements of the reform, construction, and development of Luoyang, Henan Province and to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the contemporary China warmly. During this year’s Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang received 29,171,500 tourists, with a total tourism income of 27.428 billion yuan (Figure 61).

<sup>29</sup> Dingding Gate, a world cultural heritage, was built in the first year of Daye in the Sui Dynasty (605). Dingding Gate was the south gate of Guocheng outside Luoyang City in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.



*Figure 61 Opening Ceremony of the 36th and 37th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: He Luo Image ([Https://www.horou.com](https://www.horou.com))

#### 4.2.3 2020-2022 The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China

2020 is destined to be an extraordinary year, as the prevention and control of the new Crown Pneumonia epidemic has achieved significant results at a stage, and Luoyang peonies are once again about to blossom in the warmth of spring. The 38th Peony Cultural Festival in 2020 was opened in the cloud using 24-hour online live broadcasting (Figure 62). The festival's theme was "Peony Love, Soul of Yellow River". During the festival, the large-scale online live broadcasting activity of "Peony Appreciation in the Cloud, Bloom on the Screen" was organized through "Live Webcast, Live TV Broadcast, Network Interaction," more than 20 websites and platforms such as People's Daily Online, Xinhua Daily Online, Tencent and Jitterbug were united to comprehensively display peony art, peony culture, peony industry, and other contents. It was broadcast on a rolling basis for more than a month, using big data and Online presentation to comprehensively show the contents of peony art, peony culture, and peony industry, striving to organize the Peony Cultural Festival in the period of fighting against the epidemic, to organize a unique online Peony Cultural Festival and to organize a never-ending Peony Cultural Festival (Figure 63).

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Figure 62 Opening Ceremony of the 38th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival  
Source: He Luo Image (<https://www.horou.com>)



Figure 63 “Enjoy Peonies in the Cloud, Bloom on the Screen” Online Live Event  
Source: Baidu Pictures

The opening ceremony of the 39th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was held at the North Square of Yingtian Gate<sup>30</sup> of Sui and Tang dynasties Luoyang City. The year 2021 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Party, the junction of the “13th Five-Year Plan” and the “14th Five-Year Plan”, as well as the starting year of Luoyang’s high-quality construction of a modernized metropolitan area and the

<sup>30</sup> Yingtian gate, the main south gate of Ziwei City, Luoyang City and Gongcheng in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, was built in the first year of Daye in the Sui Dynasty (605). It is the highest-standard city gate in ancient China.

construction of a modernized and influential city. At this milestone point in history, the Peony Cultural Festival, by the overall requirements of “to the festival to promote the construction, to the festival to promote the management, to the festival promotion, benefit the people to benefit the people, comprehensive enhancement” of the purpose of the festival, carefully planned four plates of 20 significant activities. During the festival, the city received 30.4843 million tourists and a total tourism revenue of 27.819 billion yuan (Figure 64).



*Figure 64 39th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Folklore Activities*  
Source: Dahe.com

The Peony Flower Festival and Peony Cultural Festival have been held for 39 consecutive sessions without stopping. Still, due to the impact of the Xin Guan epidemic, the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which was to be held in 2022, was suspended for one year. On March 28, 2022, the Standing Committee of Luoyang Municipal Party Committee convened a meeting, which pointed out that due to the problematic situation of epidemic prevention and control, the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival would be postponed to 2023. The organization of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in this period not only effectively activated and repaired some traditional cultural expressions, which showed the value of traditional cultural events through “recreation” year after year but also brought substantial economic benefits to Luoyang.

*Table 14 Statistics on the number of visitors and total economic situation of the Luoyang Peony Festival, 2011-2021*

Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Session	Time	Number of tourists/million	Tourism revenue/billion dollars
29	April 1-May 10, 2011	1770.17	86.73

30	April 5-May 5, 2012	1965	105.15
31	April 5-May 5, 2013	1869.95	112.2
32	April 5-May 5, 2014	1970	152.93
33	April 5-May 5, 2015	2174	178.45
34	April 5-May 5, 2016	2350.32	197.67
35	April 5 May 5, 2017	2493.96	223.5
36	April 5-May 5, 2018	2647.31	241.96
37	April 5-May 5, 2019	2917.15	274.28
38	April 5-May 5, 2020	/	/
39	April 5-May 5, 2021	3048.43	278.19

### 4.3 Development characteristics of “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” in this period

#### 4.3.1 Peony culture leads the festival is more distinctive

Classic activities inherited from previous Peony Festivals, such as Peony Garden Tour and Flower Appreciation Series, Peony Lantern Festival, Peony Culture and Folklore Temple Festival, Luoyang Peony Paintings Exhibition, World National Flower Photography Exhibition, Peony Flower Arrangement Flower Art Exhibition, etc., are still retained at this stage as traditional classic programs. However, at the same time, according to the trend of the times, combined with the preferences of young people, and with the help of new technological means, some new activities with high cultural taste, diversified contents, and increased interactivity were organized, such as the First 3D Peony Culture and Art Exhibition held in the Botanical Garden of Sui & Tang Dynasty City Ruins at the 35th Peony Cultural Festival. The Aerospace Peony Science and Technology Exhibition, which attracted many citizens and tourists, gained great popularity and was widely praised by the tourists. The live-action show *Wu Ze Tian* combined technological innovation with the traditional culture of Luoyang, utilized 3D light projection, standard art display, and other means, and combined experience and interaction so that tourists felt that there were themes and surprises everywhere and that the experience was touching.

Especially in the 38th and 39th Peony Cultural Festivals, which were affected by the epidemic, the 24-hour large-scale online live broadcasting activity of “online Peony Appreciation, Blooming Screen” comprehensively showed the peony culture, peony industry, and Luoyang’s cityscape through the Internet, attracting 81.62 million clicks. Nearly one million netizens left comments and interactions. With peony culture as the core, the successive Luoyang Peony Cultural Festivals have launched

several high-quality new industry activities through innovative forms of expression, which are exceptionally popular and have become the must-see programs for tourists during the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festivals.

#### 4.3.2 Economic and Trade Activities Highlighting Effectiveness

During this period, various kinds of provincial, national, and world-class economic and trade, convention and exhibition exchanges, achievement sharing, talent exchange forums, sports competitions, and other modern activities were held during the festivals. On the one hand, it significantly promoted economic and trade exchanges and cooperation, and at the same time, it immensely helped to enhance the popularity of Luoyang city.

For example, the Forbes Central Plains Economic Zone Investment and Development Forum was successfully held during the 29th Peony Cultural Festival, in which representatives of famous domestic and foreign Fortune 500 enterprises and investment organizations, economists, cultural scholars, and other people gathered in Luoyang to carry out in-depth exchanges and give impetus to the construction of Luoyang and the Central Plains Economic Zone.

The 36th Peony Cultural Festival organized activities such as “Belt and Road City Industry Integration Forum and Peony Cultural Festival Investment and Trade Festival,” “Global Cross-border Industry Integration Summit,” “Luoyang (International) Robotics and Intelligent Equipment Exhibition” and so on.

The second China-Central and Eastern European Countries Cultural Heritage Forum" was held during the 37th Peony Cultural Festival, in which guests from 16 Central and Eastern European countries had in-depth exchanges around the theme of “Cultural Heritage and Urban Development.” “Guests from 16 countries in Central and Eastern Europe had in-depth exchanges around the theme of Cultural Heritage and Urban Development” and made suggestions on Luoyang’s cultural heritage protection and urban development. The 13th China Henan International Investment and Trade Festival set up a branch in Luoyang, and experts and scholars put forward their insightful views on high-tech and emerging industries. The “Peony Promise, Global Industry Integration Forum,” the International Peony Industry Expo, and the 2019 “One Belt, One Road” Luoyang Travelers’ Conference have also attracted talents, projects, capital, technology, information, and other elements to converge in

Luoyang.

The 38th Peony Cultural Festival, with the idea of comprehensively launching online and continuing preparations offline as appropriate, shifted cultural activities from offline to online and combined online and offline economic and trade investment, such as the International Peony Industry Expo, Robotics and Intelligent Equipment Exhibition, etc., to realize that the impact of the momentum will not be reduced. The effect of the scale will not be diminished.

#### 4.3.3 New forms of products have risen to prominence

The tourism industry of the Luoyang Peony Festival continued to flourish, which powerfully drove the development of local culture, commerce, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transportation and logistics, and other related industries, and realized shared prosperity, and the driving effect of tourism as a leading tertiary industry was manifested to the fullest extent. During the peak period of the Peony Culture Festival, all the major hotels and guesthouses in the urban area were fully occupied, and the occupancy rate of the guest rooms and the average price of the rooms reached a new record high. In addition to the original flower-appreciation tours, new forms of tourism, such as historical and cultural tours, ecological tours, and rural tours, gradually appeared.

The historical, cultural, and ecological scenic spots in Luoyang and the neighboring regions were favored during the Peony Festival. Historical humanistic and ecological vacation tours in Luoyang City continued to be hot. They maintained a sound momentum of tourism reception, and the historical and cultural scenic spots, such as Longmen Grottoes, Baima Temple, Guan Lin, and the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City National Historic Site Park, were filled with tourists. More and more tourists visit Luoyang during the annual Peony Cultural Festival. To ease the pressure on the city, Luoyang develops cultural festivals to drive the development of the surrounding areas, and emerging tourism products such as Luoyang picking tours, health tours, and wilderness adventure tours have attracted many tourists, prolonged tourists' stay and powerfully boosted the comprehensive consumption of tourism. At the same time, county tourism ushered in new development; Luoyang, under the jurisdiction of Luan Chuan, Song Xian, Xinan, Luo Ning, Meng Jin, Ru Yang, and other counties of the tourism market, is also hot. Peony Culture Festival tourism's

radiation-driven role is significant.

#### 4.3.4 “The Peony Festival Project” benefited the people more practically.

During the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang continues to implement preferential policies on flower appreciation to enhance the high degree of mass participation. In the beginning, the policies were for the disabled, unemployed, sanitation workers, low-income earners, and other complex groups, and advanced groups such as the model workers at or above the municipal level, the 38 Red Flags Wielders, and the excellent teachers are exempted from the ticket for flower-appreciation. Except for holidays, all residents under the jurisdiction of Luoyang City can enjoy a preferential ticket price of 10 yuan per person in the city’s public peony plantations by presenting valid documents such as ID cards, household registration books, and temporary residence permits.

However, starting from the 33rd Peony Cultural Festival, the tourism benefits have forced the industry to upgrade. Resisting many pressures, Luoyang City has launched several initiatives to benefit the people, such as unrestricted annual tickets for tourism, no charges for some parks, and control of the rate of increase for catering and accommodation, etc. At the same time as benefiting the people, this is also a successful pushback. Scenic spots, parks, tourism industry units to innovate the development of ideas and concepts, and actively develop all kinds of new tourism products, and further improve the tourism facilities, improve service quality, and promote tourism in Luoyang City, from the “ticket economy” to the “regional tourism” change. The Luoyang government introduced policies to benefit the people, such as no charge for parks and a controlled increase in catering and accommodation, which enhanced the people’s sense of happiness. It made the Peony Cultural Festival a real people festival and people’s event, which comprehensively shaped the new image of Luoyang and further enhanced the brand of China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and was widely praised by the general public and tourists.

#### 4.3.5 Influence significantly improved

Docking with "Internet+". From the 33rd Peony Culture Festival, the successful mode of "Internet+" was promoted. With the Internet technology power of China Information Technology Co., Ltd, the scenes of each activity of the Peony Culture Festival will be broadcast in real-time to the new media machines in airports, high-

speed railway stations, railway stations, long-distance bus stations, hotels, and shopping districts, adding the Internet genes to the traditional festivals.

Tourist sources tend to be diversified. First, there are more high-speed trains and flights tourists. Tourists from Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Changsha, Beijing, Wuhan, and other cities along the high-speed rail line have come to Luoyang by high-speed rail, and during the peak hours of tourism, buses and tourist coaches at Luoyang Longmen Station are full. Secondly, there are many tourists from outside the province. Short- and medium-distance tourists from Shanghai, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Shandong, Hebei, Hubei, Beijing, etc., continue to surge, and long-distance tourists from Northeast China, Northwest China, Pearl River Delta, etc., have increased significantly. Thirdly, there are more self-driving and self-help tourists, and casual tourists, especially self-driving travelers, have become the mainstream tourism market. The city tourism department's sample survey shows that the source market of Luoyang tourists continues to expand, and tourism influence and radiation have increased significantly.

## **5. From custom to festival: invention in the context of the self-identity revival**

### **5.1 Changes in the festival organizers' rights**

The proper organizer of this long-standing event in Luoyang has changed three times, from the local "Luoyang Peony Festival" to the provincial "Henan Province Luoyang Peony Festival" to the national "China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival." The management of the Luoyang festival progressively progressed toward the development path of institutionalization, standardization, and scintillation as the organizers' requirements grew more and more stringent (Table 15).

Stage I. The early stage of the Luoyang Peony Festival (1983-1990) was hosted by the People's Government of Luoyang City, with the Office of the Municipal Government taking the lead.

Stage II. As the Luoyang Peony Festival continued to expand its influence on the outside world, its role in promoting the reform and opening up of the province, especially in attracting investment and tourism, became increasingly significant. In April 1991, the Luoyang Peony Festival was renamed the Henan Province Luoyang Peony Festival, hosted by the provincial government, and the Office of One Meeting

and Two Festivals was set up in Luoyang. Later, it was changed to the Luoyang Peony Festival Organizing Committee, under which the Flower Festival Office served as the official standing organization for preparing the Luoyang Peony Festival every year. Every year, the Peony Festival Office issues documents in advance, puts forward the general plan of the Peony Festival, makes the tasks clear, and requires the units of counties and districts to organize the event separately. The municipal treasury paid all the financial expenses, thus forming a set of government-underwritten planning and organizing methods.

Stage III. In 2011, Henan Luoyang Peony Festival was renamed China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which was hosted by the Ministry of Culture and the government of Henan Province and organized by the Department of Culture of Henan Province and the Luoyang Municipal Government. At the same time, the Organizing Committee of China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was formed with the participation of the Ministry of Culture, Henan Provincial Government, and Luoyang Municipal Government. The Executive Committee of the Festival was created in Luoyang accordingly, which consisted of the Office, Main Activity Group, Flower Appreciation, and Horticulture Group, Publicity and Reporting Group, Economy and Trade Promotion Group, Tourism Promotion Group, City Construction Group, Safety and Security Group, and Cityscape Group. City Appearance Group, Safety and Security Group, Reception and Service Group, and Efficiency Supervision Group are specially responsible for the overall coordination of the Peony Cultural Festival and have established a series of regularized preparatory work systems.

*Table 15 Changes in the rights of festival organizers of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*

Source: production by researcher

Time	Session	Organizer	Grade
1983-1990	1st - 8th	Hosted by the People's Government of Luoyang and organized by the Flower Festival Office of the municipal government	Municipal level
1991-2001	9th - 20th	Sponsored by the People's Government of Henan Province and organized by the Flower Festival Office of the municipal government	Provincial level
2002-2023	21st - 40th	Hosted by the Ministry of Culture of China and the Henan Provincial Government, organized by the Department of Culture of Henan Province and the Luoyang Municipal Government, and organized by the Executive Committee of the Peony Cultural Festival set up by Luoyang City.	National level

## 5.2 Series operation of festival content

### 5.2.1 Adjustment of Festival Time

The average blossoming period of peonies is in spring, and it is said that peonies can be seen during the three dynasties of the rainy season, which is a relatively short period (usually 7-15 days). With the development of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the period of the festival has been gradually prolonged by controlling the flowering period artificially, expanding the planting area and introducing varieties of peonies to realize the opening of peonies within the city, and the period of the festival has been gradually prolonged.

From the 1st session in 1983 to the 19th session in 2001, it was held from April 15 to 25 every year, and the peony festival lasted ten days. From the 20th session in 2002 to the 22nd session in 2004, it was held from April 10 to 25 every year, and the peony festival lasted fifteen days. From the 23rd to the 40th session in 2005-2023, the peony festival will be held annually from early April to early May. The peony festival period will be adjusted to about one month, organically combined with the “May Day” long vacation, forming the Golden Month of Tourism with Luoyang’s characteristics.

Under average and stable temperatures, the first flowering period of most varieties of Luoyang peonies is April 14, the blooming period is April 18, and the last is April 25. In addition, the Luoyang peony, under the environmental conditions of artificial cultivation, has the phenomenon of blossoming twice a year, i.e., blossoming for the second time in the fall and winter, and the blossoming period is mostly in the eighth, ninth, and tenth months of the Chinese lunar calendar or the month of Lunar New Year. This dramatically prolongs the flowering period of peonies and improves their ornamental value (Table 16).

*Table 16 Time Changes of Luoyang Peony Festival*

Source: Produced by author, 2023

Year	Session	Date of holding	Number of days
1983-2001	1st-19th	April 15 - April 25	10
2002-2004	The 20th-22nd	April 10 - April 25	15
2005-2023	The 23rd-40th	April 5 - May 5	30

### 5.2.2 Changes in the geographical location and environment

Peony planting in Luoyang has a long history and is widely distributed. From the Sui and Tang Dynasties to the Northern Song Dynasty, peonies were mostly planted in imperial gardens, palace gardens, temples, folk gardens, etc., which mainly planted ornamental flowers and trees, such as Xi Yuan Peony Garden in the Sui Dynasty, Ping Quan Villa in the Tang Dynasty, Guiren Garden, etc. In the Northern Song Dynasty, during this period, peony planting was most prosperous in Fu Zheng Park. During the Republic of China, there was a Library Garden, a Wu Garden, and a Cathedral Garden. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the planting distribution of peonies in Luoyang was mainly concentrated in Wang Cheng Park, Xi Yuan Park, Peony Park, etc. In addition, state-owned, collective, and individual production gardens and gardens in the suburbs, and experimental gardens for peony scientific research have also become the distribution areas for peony planting. At the same time, peonies are also planted all over the streets, offices, and courtyards of the city, making Luoyang gradually become a veritable “Peony City.”

From the geographical location of peony planting, it can be seen that peony planting went from royal gardens to private gardens, open gardens to people’s courtyards and city streets, and peony viewing gradually went from the royal family to royalty and nobility, and from the literati to the ordinary people. In modern Luoyang, there are more than ten peony ornamental gardens on a large scale, each with its own characteristics, and many of them have formed a comprehensive tourism source with peony viewing as the theme, integrating peony culture, sightseeing and recreational areas, and peony industrial parks, which attracts a large number of tourists (Table 17).

*Table 17 Summary Table of Peony Planting Areas in Luoyang*

Source: Produced by author, 2023

Year of construction	Name of Peony Garden	Attribute
587-1127	Xi Yuan Peony Garden and Peony Garden in White Horse Temple	Royal
619-1912	Ping Quan Villa, Guiren Garden, Wu Qiao Villa, and Peony Garden in Lin Fang Hall	Private

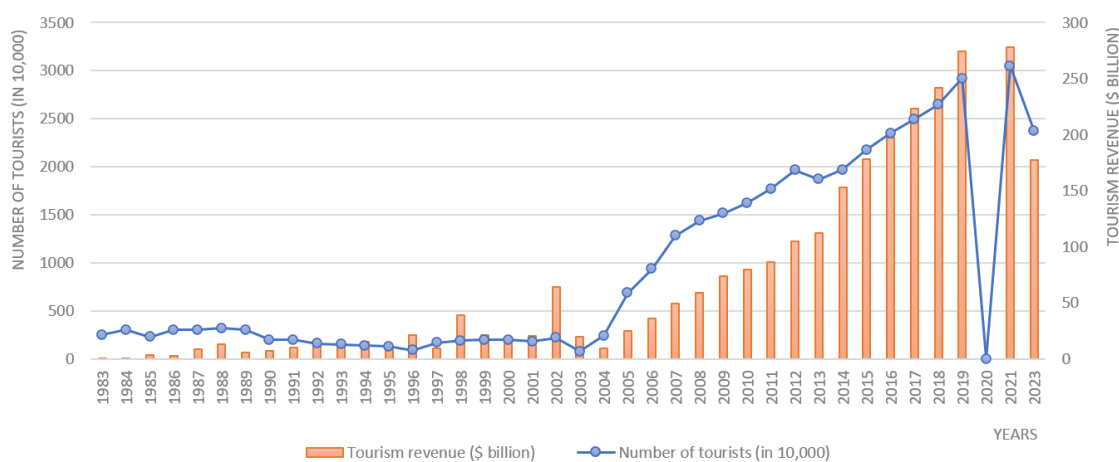
	Wei's Peony Garden, Li Shilang's Guiren Garden, etc.	
1955-2002	Luoyang Wang Cheng Park, Luoyang National Peony Garden, Luoyang Shenzhou Peony Garden, Luoyang Peony Garden, Luoyang National Garden, etc.	Charge
1956-2018	Xi Yuan Park, Luoyang International Peony Garden, Chinese National Garden, Ji Guan Cave Peony Garden, Bai Yun Mountain Peony Garden, etc.	Open

### 5.2.3 Increasing scale of festival reception

According to the statistics of relevant departments, the ratio of the relationship between modern urban festivals and social economy is 1:9; that is, for every yuan of income from festivals, 9 yuan of linkage value will be brought to social-related industries (Zhang, 2016). Peony cultural festivals have strongly driven the development of related sectors such as culture, commerce, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transportation, logistics, and other associated industries in Luoyang and the surrounding areas to achieve shared prosperity. Based on the data report released by the Luoyang government website after the closing of each year's festival, the author compiled the number of tourists and the total tourism revenue of Luoyang City during the festival period from 1983 to 2023 and plotted the trend. Except for 2003, which was affected by SARS, and 2020 and 2022, which were affected by COVID-19, the number of tourists and the total tourism revenue increased continuously during the 40 years (Figure 65).

Between 1983 and 2004, the Peony Festival was hosted by the Luoyang City and Henan Province governments. The degree of market-oriented operation and publicity could have been higher, as seen in Figure 65. The number of visitors was maintained at 2 million people, and the total income from tourism was around 1-2 billion yuan, both relatively stable. After 2005, the operation mode of the festival was changed to "government-led, enterprise-financed, community participation," the market-oriented operation became increasingly mature, with a surge in the number of visitors and a continuous increase in tourism revenue. By 2023, the festival will have received 23.6905 million visitors, and the total tourism income will be 17.713 billion yuan. The total number of visitors to the Peony Cultural Festival reached 352.28 million, and the total income from tourism reached 250.2 billion yuan, which makes us realize that the peony festival breaks the boundaries between culture and economy and drives

the economic growth of the whole city.



*Figure 65 Statistics of the Number of Visitors and Total Tourism Revenue of Previous Peony Cultural Festivals in Luoyang*  
Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

### 5.3 Festival Branding Development

#### 5.3.1 Increasingly rich types of festival activities

Over the past 30 years, continuous exploration has made the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival richer and more attractive. At the early stage of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the activities mainly focused on flower and lantern viewing, tourism, and sightseeing activities, and the Sino-foreign Economic and Technical Festival was held for the first time from the third session, with 86 agreements and contracts signed. After being hosted by the provincial government, with the increasing number of economic and trade, cultural and sports activities, the activities of Peony Festival mainly include four categories: large-scale activities, economic and trade activities, cultural and sports activities, and tourism activities, which are more colorful in content and more convenient for the masses to participate in, thus forming a new mode of "flower Festival on the stage, economic, trade and tourism; government on the stage, enterprises on the stage; Luoyang on the stage, and the whole province on the stage." After 2010, under the careful guidance and help of the Ministry of Culture, the activities of the Peony Cultural Festival were divided into two categories, namely, main activities and special activities, focusing on digging deep into the connotation of Luoyang's history and peony culture, and cooperating with the Ministry of Culture,

Peony and Paeony Branch of China Flower Association, China Photographers' Association, China National Academy of Painting, etc., the festival successfully organized the Chinese Special Cultural Festival, which was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, the Peony Association of China, and the China National Academy of Painting. Jointly with the Ministry of Culture, it has successfully organized influential activities such as the Forum on the Development of Cultural Cities with Chinese Characteristics, the China Luoyang International Peony Summit Forum, the National Photography Exhibition of Peony Flower City of the Thousand-Year Imperial Capital, and the National Peony Painting Exhibition of Farmers, etc., which have made the Peony Cultural Festival more prominent in terms of its ornamental, entertaining and international nature.

Contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is an innovative initiative of Luoyang to use flowers to transform historical, peony, and tourism resources into festivals and events. It is a successful practice of Luoyang to give full play to its advantages, changing its advantages in location, culture, and tourism into economic benefits of the festivals, and it has come out with a successful road to develop the economy of the festivals. It is necessary to explore and fully improve traditional city festivals, design and create new modern city festivals, and form various thematic city festival series and networks. It can be said that the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has now started its characteristics and style, with festivals complementing each other, coordinating with each other, with coherence and consistency, with more prominent and distinctive city themes, forming a harmonious and unified city image, with strong influence and popularity both at home and abroad, and presenting a vigorous vitality and sustainable development.

### 5.3.2 Increasing publicity for the festival

In recent years, Luoyang has made full use of the mainstream media and emerging media tools, constantly innovated publicity methods, intensified publicity efforts, increased the attention of all sectors of the society to the Peony Cultural Festival, and effectively enhanced the publicity effect of the festival in Luoyang.

First, the scope of publicity has been expanding. The local news media of Luoyang City in the past have carried out various forms of provincial publicity for China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which has gradually changed to inviting

Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, China Central Television (CCTV), Wen Wei Po of Hong Kong, Phoenix Chinese Channel, Oriental TV Channel of the Americas and other famous Chinese and foreign media to carry out all-round domestic and foreign synchronized publicity for Luoyang and the Festival, which has resulted in the broader dissemination of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Secondly, the way of publicizing has been improving.

Secondly, the way publicity is used has been constantly improved. Every year, Luoyang City starts to publicize the festival on traditional media platforms such as TV, radio, and newspapers before the festival is held. With the development of the network and the innovation of new media technology, Luoyang City keeps up with the times. It opens up publicity channels on new media platforms such as microblogging, WeChat, Jitterbug, and Shutterbug. In addition to online media publicity, Luoyang City also attaches great importance to the offline publicity of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Before the festival starts every year, Luoyang City creates the atmosphere of the peony culture festival in the city, with peonies on traffic signals, peony railings, bus stop billboards, and internal and external decorations of buses. At the same time, Luoyang City has also promoted publicity advertisements for the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival nationwide.

Thirdly, the content of publicity has been constantly innovated. The festival's publicity has gradually changed from pure to comprehensive city publicity that integrates city image, festival activities, cultural and tourism resources, and investment environment. In recent years, Luoyang has filmed the city image propaganda film *Luoyang*, the TV art film *Chinese Peony*, and cooperated with CCTV to film the TV art film *Peony Love* and large-scale documentaries *Luoyang in Heaven and Earth*, *The Thousand-Year Imperial Capital*, etc. It actively organized the "Media Focus on Luoyang" large-scale photographic interviews, inviting central media such as Xinhua News Agency, China News Agency, People's Daily, Guang Ming Daily, China Youth Daily, etc., as well as presidents, editors-in-chief, directors, and photojournalists of more than ten provincial and municipal news media, to conduct centralized interviews, focus interviews in small teams, photographic exhibitions, interactive exchanges with local photographers, and so on. Luoyang was publicized by point-by-point and line-by-line. Publicity activities such as "Thousands of Posts on

Peony” and “My Story with Peony” were carried out, and the online Peony Cultural Festival was actively organized. Netizens were scheduled to participate in the festival’s photography and online writing competitions.

As the Peony Cultural Festival continues to increase its influence on the outside world, the impact of Luoyang peonies is also growing. Peonies were chosen as ceremonial flowers during major national events such as the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of New China, the Shanghai World Expo and the APEC meeting, and various video propaganda using peony patterns and pigmentation.

### 5.3.3 Increasingly elevated objectives of the festival

With the continuous development and growth of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, its purpose and goal of organizing the festival have been adjusted according to the changes in national policies, the level of local economic development, and the needs of people’s life and production, and it has kept abreast of the times. From the early stage of “using flowers as a medium, making friends, spreading the word about Luoyang, and developing the economy” to the subsequent stage of “flower show, economic and trade tourism, government stage, enterprise stage, Luoyang stage, and the whole province stage,” and then to “people-oriented, peony as a medium, and culture as a soul, expanding exchanges and cooperation, and promoting scientific development.” The Peony Cultural Festival’s goal has been constantly upgraded, and it has gone through three stages, from the peony event, the people’s festival, to the new world of industry. The upgrading of the festival’s goal reflects the advancement of the Luoyang people’s ideology and the severe and pragmatic attitude of their work.

The first one belongs to the stage of the traditional folk festival. Based on the Luoyang peony cultural tradition, the Luoyang Peony Flower Festival was held with the primary purpose of publicizing Luoyang, making friends, and enhancing the popularity of the festival.

The second one belongs to the stage of modern specialty festivals. Oriented by the economic development of Luoyang, the festival was purposely organized to create characteristic festivals and brand industries involving culture and art, trade and tourism, and comprehensive sectors to make the Peony Flower Festival a platform for attracting investment, talent, exhibitions, tours and travels in Luoyang.

The third one belongs to the stage of characteristic brand festivals. The purpose of organizing the festival gradually changed into a festival for the general public and tourists, which was closely connected with the people. After 2000, under the wave of the Internet, Luoyang Peony Festival integrated many cultural, artistic, commercial, and other related contents and activity plates, empowered the regional brand, created a business card for the city, and developed a characteristic self-made and innovative festival mode (Table 18).

*Table 18 Characteristics of the three stages of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: Produced by researcher, 2023

Developmental Stage	1.0 Traditional Folklore Festival	2.0 Modern Specialty Festival	3.0 Featured Brand Festival
Festival Name	Luoyang Peony Festival	Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province	The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang, China
Festival Sessions	1983, 1st - 1990, 8th	1991, 9st - 2001, 20th	2002, 21st - 2023, 40th
Festival time	April 15-April 25, Ten days total	April 10-April 25, 15 days total	April 5 - May 5, 30 days total
Festival Levels	Organized by the Luoyang government; The local-level festival	Organized by the Henan Provincial Government; The provincial-level festival	Jointly organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Henan Provincial Government; The national-level festival
Festival Objectives	Use flowers as a medium to make friends, publicize Luoyang, and develop the economy.	The Flower Festival is a stage for the development of the economy, trade, and tourism.	People-oriented, peony as a medium, culture as a soul, expanding exchanges and cooperation, promoting scientific development.
Characteristics of activities	With a restricted number of events and a single form, folkloric activities, including flower and lantern viewing, tourism, and sightseeing, are planned to support Luoyang peony culture.	More colorful activities fall into four categories: folk, economic and trade, cultural and sports, and tourist. There is a strong level of public participation, and the festival's financial worth is becoming apparent.	Activities fall into two groups: primary events and unique activities. The festival's entertainment, branding, and internationality gained prominence during this time, focusing on the excavation of Luoyang's history and the cultural connotations of peonies.

## Conclude

To cope with the influence of globalization and international, national, and local competition, the government of Luoyang started to hold the “Luoyang Peony Flower Festival” in 1983, it was renamed “Henan Province Luoyang Peony Festival” in 1991. It was renamed “China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival” in 2011. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has a development history of 40 years up to now. Still, it is not a freshly invented thing but a tradition developed under the heritage of the vast Luoyang Peony Culture. Nowadays, the Peony Cultural Festival is a large-scale comprehensive economic and cultural festival with peony culture as the carrier and festival performances, cultural and sports activities, and financial and trade exchanges as the main contents. It can be seen that individuals first drive the invention of tradition, then the collective, and finally the government’s behavior, which will stereotype this invention into a tradition within a certain period, which is the process of tradition being invented.

Folk festivals in different historical contexts have been in a state of mobility and pluralism and have become a cultural practice integrating sensibility and rationality in the construction of space, value, discourse, and other directions. The revival and reconstruction of tradition is, in fact, a complex historical process of interaction and collaboration among various factors such as state power, folk elites, and people’s life dynamics. People used traditional symbols to prove the legitimacy of certain behaviors, so they used them to satisfy specific needs in their daily lives, and the acquisition of such satisfaction was a social and cultural re-invention of traditional symbols, a re-invention of history. On the one hand, the modern development of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival maintains its traditional values. On the other hand, it is also changing with the development of society. The Peony Cultural Festival aims to become a cultural festival brand of China’s Most Internationally Influential and a festival of the people, and it is a re-creation of the peony ornamental customs of Luoyang and the peony festivals of history. It is a re-creation of Luoyang peony viewing customs and historical peony festivals.

## CHAPTER V.

### Unit Analysis of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

#### Introduction

The 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival will be held from 1 April to 5 May 2023, which is a large-scale peony festival revival campaign by the Luoyang government after the end of the COVID-19 prevention and control policy. With the theme of “Blooming Luoyang, Youthful Debut”, the festival was held according to the concept of “subversive creativity, immersive experience, youthful consumption, and mobile communication”. The time and space of this year's festival are the best conditions for in-depth contact with the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Using the concepts of symbolic interaction and the invention of traditions as a guide, we will gain a deeper understanding of the activities and cultural connotations of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, thus verifying that the people of Luoyang are using peony cultural symbols and peony festival symbols to interact with the local people and other regions and to achieve the revival of the city's identity.

Firstly, through the field study and visual experience of various festival activities, we gained an in-depth understanding of the background of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the festival overview. Secondly, Through the analysis of interactive initiators, interactive contents, interactive media, and interactive receivers, we to study the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival under the dimension of symbolic interaction. Thirdly, through comparison with the previous Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, we could identify the innovations of this year's festival. Finally, discovered problems from the holding of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and put forward suggestions for improvement.

## 1. Overview of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

### 1.1 Background of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

From 2020 to 2022, due to the influence of COVID-19, most large-scale and aggregated festivals nationwide have been suspended. The 40th Peony Cultural Festival, which was to be held in 2022, was suspended due to the impact of COVID-19, and the Standing Committee of Luoyang Municipal Party Committee held a meeting on March 28, 2022, which pointed out that the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was postponed to 2023 due to the problematic situation of epidemic prevention and control. The physical space, social interaction, economic consumption, and customary rituals on which the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival relies have all been affected to varying degrees by the isolation of COVID-19.

By the beginning of 2023, the spread of the national indigenous epidemic had mainly been interrupted, and economic and social order had been accelerated and restored. As a result, we are witnessing the current resurgence of urban cultural tourism and the proliferation of various types of festivals. In the post-pandemic era, people are more eager to break away from their daily enclosed spaces, people's assessment of the economics and risks of long-distance travel is rising, and their needs are decreasing, and local festivals have become a more convenient option when people are eager to release their stress and get out of the house. Soviet thinker Bakhtin famously theorized that the carnival was an alienation from the humdrum of life, empowering people to overcome their fears, cathartic, subversive, popular, anti-normative, and vibrant (Bakhtin, M. 2013). Festivals have thus become a cathartic and provocative event and a commonly sought-after social experience. The demand for festivals has become more generalized. As long as there is a festival that offers outdoor activities, a pleasurable atmosphere in a public space, and a social experience, people will probably go to it.

COVID-19 has pressed the “pause button” and “delay button” for the whole society, which is a difficulty and a challenge, as well as an opportunity and a turnaround, and the epidemic makes us calm down and think. Although the normalization of COVID-19 prevention and control has suspended the old festivals, it

has also created a new form of online festivals while breaking the daily routine. Survey data from the Tourism Research Center of China Social Sciences shows that 48% of the respondents think online festivals are equally attractive (Ma, 2006, pp. 522-533). The possibility of continued evolution and creation of festival culture in the post-COVID-19 COVID-19 provides an opportunity for festival development and reflection.

The 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is organized by the People's Government of Henan Province and undertaken by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Henan Province and the People's Government of Luoyang City. The festival will be held from April 8 to April 23, 2023, and the flower-viewing period will be from April 1 to May 5, 2023, with the theme of "Blooming Luoyang, Youthful Debut", and follows the concept of "subversive creativity, immersive experience, youthful consumption, and mobile communication."

During the Peony Cultural Festival, ten entertainment and interactive events were organized. Including the opening ceremony of the festival, 2023 Peony Mirage City Night, the Third World Study Tourism Conference, Sui & Tang Dynasty Luoyang City, National Wind Crossing Festival, and Citywide Script Killing, City Script Kill entertainment and interaction. To expand the festival to new forms and scenes and release the comprehensive driving effect of the festival, the counties and districts, functional departments, enterprises, and institutions will also hold 40 colorful linkage activities. The content attributes of the activities are divided into ten youth fashion series activities, nine outdoor leisure series activities, nine cultural tourism consumption series activities, and 12 cultural exchange series activities. Various cultural and tourism programs are brilliantly staged in Luoyang, creating a brand-new viewing and touring experience for tourists. Luoyang received 23.6905 million visitors during this year's festival, with a total tourism revenue of 17.713 billion yuan (Henan et al.'s Government, 2023).

## **1.2 Activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival**

### **1.2.1 main activities**

- (1) Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony of the 40th China Luoyang

Peony Cultural Festival.

The Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony was held on the evening of April 1, 2023, at the North Square of Ying Tian Gate. On the night of the launching ceremony, the 3D light projection at the North Square of Ying Tian Gate Square utilized visually stunning modern sound, light, and other technological means, integrating music, film, architecture, and historical elements, bringing an audio-visual feast to the audience. Accompanied by the sound of drums, thousands of spectators dressed in Chinese costumes performed the “Forked hand salute,”<sup>31</sup> sending a warm invitation to guests at home and abroad. The main stage and four sub-stages, namely Culture, Youth, National Style, and City, were set up, with rap, street dance, pop singing, opera, national style song and dance, and non-heritage folklore performances, ranging from the gorgeous court style of the Sui and Tang dynasties to the fashionable cyberpunk style, which showed off the heritage and vitality of Luoyang (Figure 66).



*Figure 66 Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival*  
Source: Luoyang Net

## (2) Peony Float Parade Carnival

The “Peony Float Parade Carnival” will be held on the evening of April 1 and 2, 2023, in the central city of Luoyang and its characteristic neighborhoods, with 20 floats and three parade squares (Figure 67). The 20 floats were designed and produced based on the five Luoyang city culture representatives, namely, “Yellow River Culture,” “Sui and Tang Dynasties,” “Feni Mountain and Water,” “National Flower Peony” and “Industrial Heritage.” The parade is composed of three squares: “Sui and Tang in Bloom,” “Peony of National Colors,” and “Future Me,” with 40 people in

<sup>31</sup> Forked hand salute, a traditional Chinese form of salute.

each square. The “Sui and Tang in Bloom” square will show the historical figures of Luoyang in the Sui and Tang dynasties in the form of NPC<sup>32</sup>, and the actors will bring drums to welcome the guests and perform Tang-style songs and dances to show the elegance of Sui and Tang in the heyday of the Tang Dynasty. The “Peony of National Colors” parade will feature actors dressed as peonies and current fashionable flowers, creating a colorful parade with exceptional dress-up looks. The "Future Me" parade demonstrated the vitality and fashion of youthful Luoyang through various styles such as cyberpunk, light, shadow technology, young fashion and play, and flash mob performances. The parade highlights “audience interaction and national carnival” so that more citizens and tourists can participate in the activities to create a wonderful national carnival feast.



*Figure 67 20 Floats in the Parade*  
Source: Luoyang Culture and Tourism Group website

However, after the rehearsal of the float parade on March 29, 2023, the event was opposed by the people of Luoyang, who voiced their opinions through major social networking sites and government message websites, strongly requesting the government to cancel the float parade. The following are the messages the researcher had read on the “Voice of the People” website of the Luoyang Municipal Government.

Netizen LYD-m23 message: *float size, scale, and aesthetic grade are low shocking, its level is similar to the township social fire, completely unable to match*

<sup>32</sup> The concept of NPC first came from the video game, the full name is non-player character, meaning not manipulated by the real player game character, can be in the game to promote the plot, provide services, etc. But in the script to kill the different NPC is usually played by real people to interact with the player to assist the player to promote the development of the story or to provide relevant tasks. However, in scripted kills it is different, scripted kills in the NPC are generally played by real people, by them to interact with the player, assist the player to promote the development of the story or provide relevant tasks.

with the Luoyang city image. If the float parade is on the night of April 1 or 2 of these vehicles, it is strongly recommended that the event be canceled. Not only do these laborers disturb people's livelihood, but also so ugly, seriously affecting the image of the city of Luoyang activities. (Source: <https://people.lyd.com.cn>)

Netizen 1311703 Message: *I first saw our Luoyang Peony Festival float and thought it was a snack cart pushed by vendors; this float, no need for outsiders to laugh at us; their people want to laugh at themselves; I hope that the relevant departments to pay attention!* (Source: <https://people.lyd.com.cn>)

March 30, the Luoyang government website replied: *Dear netizen, hello! Your suggestion has been received. We reported to the relevant leaders and the organizers of the Municipal Bureau to study the problems reflected by the masses of the float parade, and the event was finally presented with the flower-appreciation launching ceremony at Ying Tian Square. Thank you for your attention and support to the Peony Cultural Festival activities, and I wish you a happy life!* (Source: <https://people.lyd.com.cn>) Eventually, the peony float parade was canceled under the masses' resistance.

### (3) Opening Ceremony of the Festival “2023 Peony Mirage Night”

The Opening Ceremony of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was held at the “Peony Pavilion Scenic Spot”<sup>33</sup> on April 8, and the evening party was staged online and offline simultaneously (Figure 68). The opening ceremony started with a grand *Lantern Hanging Ceremony* performed by 160 actors and actresses. The large-scale group dance *National Colors and Fragrance of Heaven* led the audience to feel the charm of the peony city, and the scenario performance *Poetry and Book of Luoyang* perfectly demonstrated Luoyang's long history of poetic culture and the family and national sentiments embedded in it. The famous Peking Opera artists Yu Kui Zhi and Li Sheng Su sang *Ode to the Peony*, and the singer Sa Dingding<sup>34</sup> composed and sang *Searching for Luoyang 2023*. The whole evening party integrates peony songs, dances, operas, scenario performances, poems and paintings, and other performance forms and cultural elements and digitally presents the performance

<sup>33</sup> Peony Pavilion Scenic Spot, located in Luoyang City, Henan Province, was built in November 2019, covering an area of 73 acres, including Peony Museum, Peony Garden, various immersive experience projects, etc. It is a comprehensive cultural and tourism scenic spot integrating collection and research, digital display, education and research, culture, tourism and leisure.

<sup>34</sup> Sa Dingding, China's most famous female singer.

program with the help of virtual reality, VR, XR, and other modern technologies. It allows the audience to experience the unique charm of immersive cultural tourism, reflecting Luoyang’s artistic, youthful, and fashionable style.



*Figure 68 Opening Ceremony of “2023 Peony Mirage Night”*  
Source: Luoyang Net

(4) “Forty Years of Blossoming, Luoyang is Youthful” Immersive Flower Appreciation Series Activities.

The Peony Tour and Viewing Activity was held simultaneously online and offline. More than 20 offline peony viewing gardens, including Shenzhou Peony Garden, Wang Cheng Park, China National Garden, National Peony Garden, International Peony Garden, Luoyang Peony Garden, Luoyang National Garden, etc., displayed a total of 670 varieties of peonies in Luoyang, with the city’s peony cultivation area reaching 77,000 mu. Due to the high average temperature in Luoyang this year, the peony flowers opened earlier, with the early-blooming peonies blooming around April 13, the mid-blooming peonies around April 16, and the late-blooming peonies around April 21 (Figure 69).

At the same time, during the event, Luoyang will select peony viewing areas suitable for peony viewing in Wang Cheng Park, the Botanical Garden of Sui & Tang Dynasty City Ruins, etc., and set up a thematic network aggregation platform, which will provide 24-hour live real-time flower viewing experience in the form of video and live broadcasting through TV, aggregation page, Jitterbug, and other platforms, to allow guests from home and abroad to take a stroll on the sea of flowers and have a full view of the excellent spring scenery of Luoyang in the space of their cellular phones.



Figure 69 Peony Viewing Garden of the 40th Peony Cultural Festival  
Source: Luoyang Tourism Website

#### (5) The Third World Study Tourism Conference

With the deepening integration of culture and tourism, studying tourism has become a new choice for people to increase their knowledge and broaden their horizons. It is an essential area for the development of culture and tourism. The 2023 World Study Tourism Conference was held in Luoyang, Henan Province, from April 2 to 4, with more than 200 experts, scholars, and industry insiders from domestic and foreign study bases, educational institutions, and travel agencies gathering in Luoyang (Figure 70). Through the “opening ceremony + main forum, sub-forum + Tian Jie<sup>35</sup> study carnival + study tour” form, participants immersive experience Luoyang study new products, feel Henan study innovative development concept, study tourism innovation and development advice, help Henan study speed up and build a unique spectrum of study industry development.

<sup>35</sup> Tian Jie, the central axis street of Luoyang City in the Sui and Tang Dynasties. On May 26, 2020, the Tian Jie project was opened to the public. The restored Tian Jie is composed of historical elements such as imperial roads, vehicle roads, tree-lined avenues, square gates, square walls, and ecological water channels. The layout is rigorous, simple and elegant.



*Figure 70 2023 World Research and Tourism Congress Forum Event*  
Source: River Network (<https://tour.dahe.cn/2023/04-04/1214769.html>)

(6) Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City, National Style Crossing Festival

From April 17th to May 3rd, the “Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City, National Wind Crossing Festival” is a large-scale immersive offline “crossing” activity brilliantly staged in Luoyang’s Jiu Zhou Pond scenic spot<sup>36</sup>. The event perfectly combines the beauty of the national style and fashion with the characteristic landscape of Jiu Zhou Pond and the cultural heritage of the Sui and Tang dynasties. The “Jiu Zhou Welcome Ceremony,” “Theatrical Story of the Tang Dynasty,” and “The Painting of the Practice” will bring you to feel the charm of history and culture. Each frame is a historical reappearance of the labor culture of the Tang Dynasty, which will show the public the history of the Sui and Tang Dynasty city of Luoyang. *Hu Ji Music and Dance* allowed you to feel the exotic flavor and experience the different feelings brought by Hu music. *Rainbow and Feather Garments Dance*<sup>37</sup>, *Hu Xuan Dance* magnificent atmosphere, beautiful and romantic ancient dance, all-weather, multi-scene, multi-form staged one after another live old costume performance (Figure 71).

<sup>36</sup> Jiu Zhou Pond was built in the Sui Dynasty. It was a royal garden during the Wu Zetian era. It was also the main space for leisure and entertainment in the harem during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. It was an important part of the Luoyang Palace City (Ziwei City) in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

<sup>37</sup> Rainbow and Feather Garments Dance, the court music and dance of the Tang Dynasty in China is a shining pearl in the history of Chinese music and dance.



Figure 71 The immersive Crossing festival site

Source: [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_22787773](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_22787773)

#### (7) Citywide Scripted Entertainment

“Scripted Entertainment”<sup>38</sup> is a precious cultural output channel due to its immersive experience and solid social attributes, and it has a vast market and a large audience. From April 8 to 16, initiated by the Luoyang Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, and Tourism, the Bureau united with vital scenic spots, commercial streets, peony gardens, and museums to launch a total of 17 live-scene script kills such as *God has wonderful things*, seven immersive experience projects such as *Supreme Dragon Gate* and 16 desktop script kills, bringing immersive cultural and tourism experiences to tourists (Figure 72).

Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City to the heavenly Hall as the stage, so that tourists travel through the Sui and Tang Dynasty experience brainstorming. Longmen Grottoes elaborate *Xiangshan secret* script entertainment so that tourists have an immersive experience of Longmen's millennium legend. Luoyang City Museum, with the help of digital technology, integrates script games so that cultural relics “live” up. (Figure 73) Let more young people into the history of Luoyang, realize the depth of interaction between tourists and scenic spots, realize the transformation from sightseeing tours to an immersive experience, and help Luoyang to build a national immersive cultural tourism destination and “script entertainment capital.”

<sup>38</sup> Scripted Entertainment is a game in which players experience the nature of reasoning, and is an entertainment program that combines the attributes of knowledge, psychological gaming, and strong social attributes.



Figure 72 Scripted Entertainment Program of Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City  
Source: Luoyang Tourism ([hct.henan.gov.cn](http://hct.henan.gov.cn))

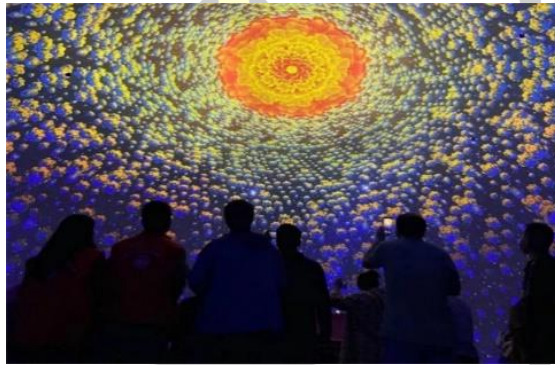


Figure 73 Longmen Grottoes Immersive Experience Program  
Source: Photographed by researcher, 2023

(8) “Wonderful Night at the Museum” sleepover program

The Wonderful Night at the Museum activity is jointly launched by Luoyang Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau and Luoyang Gu Du Study Tour Development Co. From April 7 to May 2, it will be held successively in Luoyang Ancient Tomb Museum, Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal Culture Museum, Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital, Luoyang Museum, which are four museums after the night closure. Luoyang Ancient Tomb Museum *Ancient Tomb Mystery*, the gameplay is immersive theater and traditional Chinese games. The gameplay of Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal Culture Museum *Canal Mystery* is immersive theater and multi-character commerce trading. Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital *Summer Capital Fantasy* plays an immersive theater and study theme course. Luoyang Museum’s *Mystery Guest*, *Cultural Relics Guardian Program* plays cultural relics, anthropomorphic acting, and a scripted reasoning game. The story of more than 100 pieces of cultural

relics is told through four time-traveling performances, leading the audience to an immersive experience of Luoyang’s rich history and culture.

#### (9) 2023 Electric Sugar Park Music Festival

As an essential carrier of trendy culture, music festivals always bring their flow, music as a chain has become a new way to attract and gather youth in Luoyang City. The 2023 Electric Sugar Park Music Festival was held for three consecutive days from April 29th to May 1st at Dingding Gate Sky Street Park in Luolong District (Figure 74). The festival invited nearly 20 groups of domestically famous singers and bands to bring live performances of different music genres such as hip-hop rap, pop music, folk rock, etc., presenting an audio-visual feast. The event attracted more than 30,000 people to share the music feast. The music festival is a new form and concept of trendy culture and tourism. It is an innovative presentation of the Peony Culture Festival’s activity content to the development of Luoyang’s culture and tourism, contributing to the enhancement of Luoyang’s urban influence, the enhancement of tourists’ and citizens’ sense of experience, and the stimulation of new consumption of culture and tourism.



*Figure 74 2023 Electric Sugar Park Music Festival Site*  
Source: Luoyang. Com (<https://news.lyd.com.cn/system.shtml>)

#### (10) “8 p.m. enjoy the city of Luoyang” consumer promotion activities

Luoyang City to create a new scene of fashion consumption, show the new brand of culture and tourism night tour and cultivate new hotspots of night culture and tourism consumption as the focus (Figure 75). This activity adopts the mode of “1+N”, linking all counties and districts, centering on the theme of “Ancient Capital Night Eight Points,” enriching the night tour, night performance, night food, night

stay, and other consumption patterns. The “Taste of the Ancient Capital” featured neighborhood food activities, the “Enjoy Luoyang” featured park performing arts activities, and the “Hi-Buy Luoyang” featured superstore shopping activities, including cultural and creative bazaars, food enjoyment, non-heritage performances, street art, and other activities, aiming further to stimulate the demand for cultural and tourism consumption and prosper the night-time cultural and tourism market (Luoyang Daily, 2023) ( Table19).



Figure 75 “8 p.m. in the ancient capital” promotion

Source: Photographed by researcher, 2023

Table 19 List of main activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival

Source: produced by researcher, 2023

	Activity	time	Place	organizer
1	Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival	April 1 at 20:00	Ying Tian Gate North Square	Luoyang Municipal People’s Government
2	Peony float parade carnival	The evening of April 1/2	Characteristic neighborhoods in the central city	Luoyang Municipal People’s Government
3	Opening Ceremony of the Festival “2023 Peony Mirage Night”	April 8, 20:00-21:00	Peony Pavilion	Luoyang Municipal People’s Government
4	“Forty Years of Blossoming, Luoyang is Youthful” Immersive Flower Appreciation Series Activities	April 1 - May 5	Peony ornamental gardens, street parks, county peony industrial parks, and alpine peony ornamental gardens	Municipal Urban Management Bureau, Municipal Forestry Bureau, counties and districts
5	The Third World Study Tourism Conference	April 2-4	Molybdenum Lihao International Hotel, Tian Jie, etc.	Henan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, Luoyang Municipal People’s Government, World Study and Tourism Organization
6	Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City, National Style Crossing Festival	April 8-16	Jiu Zhou Pond	Luoyang Cultural Tourism Group, Beijing iQiyi Technology Co., Ltd.
7	Citywide Scripted Entertainment	April 8-16	Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City National Heritage Park, some museums, scenic spots and cultural tourism	Municipal Culture, Broadcasting and Tourism Bureau, Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau, Municipal Urban Management Bureau,

			blocks	Municipal Forestry Bureau, people's governments of various cities and districts, Municipal Cultural Tourism Group, etc.
8	“Wonderful Night at the Museum” sleepover program	April 8 to May 5	Erlitou Xiadu Ruins Museum, Luoyang Museum, Luoyang Tomb Museum, Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal Culture Museum	Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau
9	2023 Electric Sugar Park Music Festival	April 29th to May 1st	sky Street	Luoyang Cultural Tourism Group, Luoyang Electric Sugar Communication Co., Ltd., Luoyang Radio and Television Station
10	“8 p.m. enjoy the city of Luoyang” consumer promotion activities	April 1 to May 5	Characteristic neighborhoods in the central city	Municipal Commerce Bureau, Municipal Culture, Broadcasting and Tourism Bureau

## 1.2.2 linked activities

### (1) Youth Fashion Series

Chinese dress cultural show. The people's governments of Luoyang Old Town and Xi Gong District launched activities such as “Dreaming of Sui and Tang Dynasty in Luoyang” and “Free Admission to the Park in Chinese Costume” in Luo Yi Old Town<sup>39</sup> and Shang Yang Palace Cultural Industrial Park<sup>40</sup>. Visitors dressed in Chinese dress, hand-waving fans, and groups of Chinese dress girls and boys traveled through the ancient streets and lanes among the peony bushes, which became one of the brightest landscapes in Luoyang this year. Luo Yi Ancient City Scenic Spot has become the most popular and famous hanbok place on Jittery Voice, Weibo, and other platforms, with the topic of “Always come to Luoyang to wear hanbok” having a total play volume of over 20.74 million, and the topic of “Dreaming of the thousand-year divine capital in one day” having a total play volume of over 19.97 million. The subject of “To see the beauty of the Tang Dynasty, you have to count the number of Luoyang” has been played more than 170 million times.

Music Events. The People's Government of Xi Gong District organized the “Peony Fragrance, National Music Elegance” Folk Music Concert. Luoyang Culture and Tourism Group and Luoyang Liyue Culture Company organized the “2023 Wang

<sup>39</sup> Luo Yi Old Town, located in the old town of Luoyang City, Henan Province, it is an ancient historical and cultural city based on the architectural styles of the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, Qing, and Republic of China periods, integrating culture, tourism, commerce, leisure, and vacation.

<sup>40</sup> Shang Yang Palace Cultural Industrial Park, Xi Gong District Scenic Area, Luoyang City, Henan Province.

Feng Unfollow Tour Luoyang Station” in New District Stadium. Yi Bin District Management Committee and Luoyang Radio and Television Station organized the 12th City Singer Competition, “Music, Technology People.” The Propaganda Department of the Old Town Committee and the Culture and Tourism Bureau of the Old Town District organized the “Youthful Old Town, Sound for You” Street Concert. Enhance the experience of tourists and citizens and deepen the interaction and connection between the festival and the people.

Cultural, scientific, and technological performances. The People’s Government of Luo Long District and the Zheng Da Cultural Exchange Center organized the “Zheng Da Art, Shen Du National Color Exhibition Season.” The Shenzhou Peony Park ranked the first Shenzhou Peony cultural performance in Luoyang. The People’s Government of Jian Xi District held the "Fantasy Universe Immersion in New Technology" gaming park experience activity. Various cultural and technological exhibitions and performances took Luoyang peony culture and Luoyang history and traditions as their contents. They came into the people’s lives in innovative forms, deepening the cultural identity and local cohesion of the young generation of Luoyang people (Table 20).

*Table 20 List of linkage activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival- Youth Fashion Series*

Source: produced by researcher, 2023

Series	Activity	time	Place	Organizer
Youth Fashion Series	1 “Dream of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, All in Luoyi” Hanfu Culture Show	April 1 - May 5	Luoyi ancient city	Old City People’s Government
	2 Tang Dynasty Clothes Art Festival	April 1 - May 10	Shangyang Palace Cultural Industrial Park	Xigong District People’s Government
	3 Zhengda Art, Shendu National Color Exhibition Season	April 1 - May 5	Zhengda Cultural Exchange Center	Luolong District People’s Government, Zhengda Cultural Exchange Center
	4 “Dream Metaverse Immersed in New Technology” E-Sports Park Experience Event	April 8-9	SOREAL 5G+XR E-Sports Park	Jianxi District People’s Government
	5 Luoyang’s first “Shenzhou Peony” cultural exhibition	April 10 - May 5	China Peony Garden	"The Fragrance of Peonies and the Elegant Rhythm of Chinese Music" Folk Music Concert
	6 “The Fragrance of Peonies and the Elegant Rhythm of Chinese	April 14-16	Xigong Street	Xigong District People’s Government

	Music” Folk Music Concert			
7	2023 Wang Feng unfollow tour concert Luoyang stop	April 15	New District Stadium	Luoyang Cultural Tourism Group, Luoyang Liyue Culture Company
8	“Friendly Luoyang Chao Wu Jianxi” First Street Dance Fashion Art Festival	April 15-30	Peony Square Sunken Plaza, Guangzhou Market Pedestrian Street	Communist Youth League Luoyang Municipal Committee, Jianxi District People’s Government
9	The 12th Luoyang City Singer Competition “Music, Technology Person.”	April - early May	Yibin District	Yibin District Management Committee, Luoyang Radio and Television Station
10	“Youth Old Town, Music for You” Street Concert	April - May	Luoyi Ancient City, Lijing Gate, North Street, and other points	Propaganda Department of the Old Town District Committee, Old Town Culture and Tourism Bureau

## (2) Outdoor Recreation Series

Luoyang and its counties and districts have created outdoor leisure activities based on local natural characteristics to promote local tourism. The Propaganda Department of Luoyang Municipal Party Committee, the Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Sports and Tourism, and the People’s Government of Luo Long District organized the “Book-scented Luoyang, Traveling with Books.” Luoyang Forestry Bureau and Henan Provincial Tourism Association Caravan Camping Branch collected “Peony Flower, Mobile Hotel, 2023 Peony Caravan Camping Activity” in the National Peony Garden. Youth Fashion Promotion Association of Henan Province and Yi Bin District organized “Yishui Qingfeng,” a new outdoor series of activities. Song County People’s Government organized the “Lake and Mountain Sanctuary, Flowering Light Song” series of activities with the help of Lu Hun Lake National Wetland Park and Hu Shan Sanctuary Road, unique tourist attractions in the area. The People’s Government of Luo Ning, with the help of Jiaoyao mountain tourist attractions, organized “Luo Ning Second Flower Sea and outdoor sports activities.” The People’s Government of Yichuan County organized the “Song Style and Ancient Rhythm”, exploration Tour in Long Feng Mountain Ancient Town. The People’s Government of Ru Yang County organized the “Ru Yang County First Qianping Longhu Camping Culture Season” in Buhe Village, Shangdian Town. The People’s Government of Xinan County held the “Yellow River Sky Road, Xinan Lan” Sixth Cycling Invitational Tournament along the yellow ecological corridor road section in Cangtou Township (Table 21).

*Table 21 List of linkage activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival- Outdoor Recreation Series*

Source: produced by researcher, 2023

Series	Activity	time	Place	Organizer
				Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department, Municipal Bureau of Culture, Broadcasting and Tourism, Luolong District People's Government
1	Scholarly Luoyang, Travel with books	April 1 - May 5	Luoyang City	
2	"Hushan Sanctuary Flowers and Light Song" series of activities	April 1 - 26	Luhun Lake National Wetland Park, Hushan Sanctuary Road	Song County People's Government
3	Luoning's second flower sea and outdoor sports event	April 2 - May 5	XiongYao mountain	Luoning County People's Government
4	Peony Flower Mobile Hotel, 2023 Peony RV Campground Activities	April 5-25	National Peony Garden	Municipal Forestry Bureau, Henan Tourism Association RV Camping Branch
Outdoor Recreation Series	Tianjie, the ideal life of young people in Luoyang	April 7-16	Inside Mingjiaofang, Dingdingmen section of Tianjie	Luoyang Cultural Tourism Group
6	"Song Style and Ancient Rhythm" Exploring Journey to Longfeng Mountain	April 8-23	Longfengshan Ancient Town	Yichuan County People's Government
7	Ruyang County's First Qianping Longhu Camping Cultural Season	April 25th - May 10th	Buhe Village, Shangdian Town	Ruyang County People's Government
8	"Yishui Qingfeng" new outdoor series of activities	April - May	Yishui Amusement Park Qiushi Section and Yibin District Large Sports Park	Henan Youth Fashion Promotion Association, Yibin District
9	"Yellow River Sky Road Xin'anlan" 6th Cycling Invitational Competition	April - May	Cangtou Town	Xin'an County People's Government

### (3) Culture and Tourism Consumption Series Activities

China Ornamental Stone Association, Luoyang City Administration, Luo Long District People's Government, etc. jointly organized the "31st Luoyang International Stone Appreciation Culture and Art Exhibition and Trade Festival". The Publicity Department of the Luoyang Municipal Party Committee, the Yizhou District Government, and the Lao Cheng District Government jointly organized the "Silk Road Memory, Taste Xinjiang" Food Week. The People's Government of Chan Shui He District and Central Plains Mei Gu (Luoyang) Science and Technology Industry

Co., Ltd. organized the “Central Plains Beauty, Oriental Rhythm” Central Plains Beauty Season in the landmarks of Zhengzhou City and Luoyang City. The People’s Government of Ru Yang County organized the “Ru Yang Fruit Sweet Potato and Shiitake Mushroom Brand Launching Activity.” The People’s Government of Xinan County organized “The 13th Cherry Culture Festival of Luoyang Xinan”. Ru Yang County People’s Government organized the “21st Henan Ru Yang Azalea Festival”. Luan Chuan County People’s Government organized the “Spring Dyeing Mountain and Sea, Hua Shang Bloom, Xian Shan Flower Season.” The People’s Government of Meng Jin District organized the “Tide Play Youth, come to Meng Jin to Play, 2023 Culture and Tourism Creator Carnival”. With the gathering effect of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang, enterprises and institutions, county, and district governments gave full play to their industrial characteristics and organized trade Festivals, food weeks, cultural festivals, and other activities to drive industrial development and promote regional economic development (Table 22).

*Table 22 List of linkage activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival- Culture and Tourism Consumption Series Activities*

Source: produced by researcher, 2023

Series	Activity	time	Place	Organizer
Culture and Tourism Consumption Series Activities	1 Central Plains Beauty Oriental Charm Zhongyuan Skin Beauty Season	Mid-March to late April	Landmark buildings in Zhengzhou and Luoyang	Xianhe District People’s Government, Zhongyuan Meigu (Luoyang) Technology Industry Co., Ltd.
	2 The 31st International Stone Appreciation Culture and Art Exhibition and Trade Festival in Luoyang	April 1-10	Luoyang Strange Stone Antique Culture City	China Ornamental Stone Association, Municipal Urban Management Bureau, Luolong District People’s Government
	3 2023 Yiyang Earth Art Festival	April 1 to May 5	Wang Mang’s Princess Plum Grove, Shangguan Taoyuan Town, Zhaolaotun Rosemary Garden	Yiyang County People’s Government
	4 Trendy Youth, Come and Play in Mengjin - 2023 Cultural Tourism Maker Carnival.	April 1 to May 5	Mengjin District	Mengjin District People’s Government
	5 Spring dyes the mountains and seas, and flowers bloom - Festival Mountain Flower Season.	April 1 to May 31	Laojun Mountain Scenic Area	Luanchuan County People’s Government
	6 Ruyang Fruit Sweet Potato and Shiitake Mushroom Brand Launch Event	April 9	Luobao Media Building	Ruyang County People’s Government

7	“Silk Road Memory, Taste of Xinjiang” Food Week	mid-April	Luoyi Ancient City South Square	Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department, Yizhou District Committee, Yizhou District Government, Laocheng District Committee, Laocheng District Government
8	The 21st Henan Ruyang Rhododendron Festival	April 22 to May 10	Ruyang County Xitaishan Scenic Area	Ruyang County People’s Government
9	The 13th Luoyang Xin’an Cherry Culture Festival	April 25 to May 30	Cherry Valley, Wutou Town, Xin’an County	Xin’an County People’s Government

#### (4) Cultural Exchange Series

Folklore exhibition and performance activities. The Propaganda Department of Luoyang Municipal Party Committee, the Municipal Federation of Literature and Culture, Luoyang Daily Newspaper, etc. jointly organized a series of activities called “40 Years of Me and the Flower Festival”, and people from all walks of life in Luoyang published their own stories about the Peony Cultural Festival on the platform of “Stories of Me and the Flower Festival” on the Luoyang website. Luoyang Municipal Bureau of Culture, Broadcasting, and Tourism organized the “He Luo Song” Square Culture Monthly Activity at Wang Cheng Square. People’s Government of Chan He District and He Luo Culture and Ecology Protection and Development Center held the “He Luo Flying Flowers, Zhu Cherry Aloe” Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition.

Peony Art Exhibition. The Luoyang Cultural Relics Bureau organized “Heavenly Fragrance as Embroidery, Peony Art Exhibition of Wang Embroidery” in the Luoyang Museum. Luoyang Artists Association, Luoyang Art Museum, and Luoyang Painting Academy organized “Luoyang Painting Style, National Invitation Exhibition of Chinese Peony Painting”. The Publicity Department of the Luoyang Municipal Party Committee and the Publicity Department of the Dongguan Municipal Party Committee organized the “Luoyang-Dongguan Art Works Exchange Exhibition” at the Luoyang Art Museum. As well as the “Tong Da Cup” National Peasant Painting Competition, “Zhao: Wu Zetian and Her Era” Exhibition, and “Wang Duo Cup” Calligraphy Competition (Table 23).

*Table 23 List of linkage activities of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival- Cultural Exchange Series*

Source: produced by researcher, 2023

Series	Activity	time	Place	Organizer
Cultural Exchange Series	1 “My 40 Years with Peony Festival” series of activities	March 15 to April 15	Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital	Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department, Municipal Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Luoyang Daily, Luoyang Radio and Television Station
	2 “He Luo Happy Song” Square Cultural Month Activity	April 10-23	Wang Cheng Square	Municipal Bureau of Culture, Broadcasting and Tourism
	3 Heavenly Fragrance Like Embroidery, Wangxiu Peony Art Exhibition	April 10 to May 5	Luoyang Museum	Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau
	4 Luoyang Painting Style, National Invitational Exhibition of Chinese Peonies	April 11-23	Luoyang Art Museum, second floor	Luoyang Artists Association, Luoyang Art Museum, Luoyang Painting Academy
	5 Luoyang, Dongguan Art Works Exchange Exhibition	April 11-23	Exhibition Hall 4, third floor, Luoyang Art Museum	Propaganda Department of Luoyang Municipal Party Committee, Propaganda Department of Dongguan Municipal Party Committee, Municipal Artists Association, Dongguan Municipal Artists Association
	6 “Heluo Feihua, Zhu Yinghui” Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition	mid-April	Grand Canal National Cultural Park, Luo Cheng Middle Street	Xianhe District People’s Government, Heluo Cultural Ecological Protection and Development Center
	7 “Rhythm of Yizhou, The Secret of Yu” Intangible Cultural Heritage Performance	mid-April	Luoyi ancient city	Old Town People’s Government, Yizhou District People’s Government
	8 “Luoyang Peony Presents to Heroes” interactive activity	mid-April		Luoyang Municipal Civilization Office, Luoyang Daily Newspaper Group
	9 “Tongda Cup” National Peasant Painting Creation Competition	mid-April	Luoyang Art Museum	Municipal Federation of Literary and Art Circles, Yanshi District People’s Government
	10 Shangyi Golden Ge - Panlong City Bronze Civilization Exhibition Activity	April to May		Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau
	11 “Wu Zetian and Her Era” Exhibition	April to May	Luoyang Museum	Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau
	12 “Wang Duo Cup” Calligraphy Competition	April to May	Mengjin District	Henan Calligraphers Association, Mengjin District People’s Government

## **2. The 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the context of symbolic interaction**

### **2.1 Interaction initiators: Regulating festival development and management**

Interaction involves four elements: the initiator, the content of the interaction, the medium, and the receiver. The initiator of interaction has a specific dominant power, is the encoder of cultural symbols, and can take the initiative to choose the object of interaction and determine the purpose of the interaction, in which the initiator of interaction mainly aims to provide information to others and then guide or influence their attitudes and behaviors towards themselves (Smelser, 1995). The 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is hosted by the People's Government of Henan Province and organized by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Henan Province and the People's Government of Luoyang City, which is based on the relevant knowledge of symbolic interaction theory to analyze the festival development and management behaviors of the interaction initiator.

#### **2.1.1 Upper, middle, and lower level linkages and increased interaction between counties, districts, and line ministries**

The 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival lasts 45 days and contains ten thematic and 30 joint activities. The long duration, large scale, and numerous festival activities require Luoyang's strata, counties, districts, and functional departments to understand the overall situation and take responsibility. This year's Peony Cultural Festival insists on the linkage of upper-level officials, middle-level elites, and lower-level people, the interaction between Luoyang Municipal Government and other county and district governments, the synergy of all functional departments, enterprises, and institutions, and the joint mobilization of significant mobilization.

To ensure the full implementation of all the work during the festival, the county and district government departments have established a working mechanism in which cadres and workers from all over the region participate together, integrating the strength of all fields and making precise efforts and focusing on scenic spots, travel agencies, hotels, farmhouses, and lodgings, etc., to ensure a safe and orderly tourism market during the festival. More than 360 volunteers were organized, and more than 140 international volunteer services were provided to provide warm tourist services.

All departments should strengthen the work of docking, close coordination, and cooperation to ensure that the program of activities, essential systems, and key initiatives are implemented as soon as possible. Better apply the modern way of more interaction and less administration, more market and less official, focusing on building a good image, creating a good product, implementing a good project, shaping a good brand, realizing a benefit, promoting a good development, and seeking a good effect, comprehensive mobilization, and the participation of all people.

Focusing on crucial festival nodes, significant activities, and critical projects, improving the division of responsibilities, the implementation of the ledger, assessment of the results, and other full-chain promotion of closed-loop, to list, ledger way, clearly responsible units, responsible persons, completion time frame, work standards, strengthen supervision and inspection, to ensure that the implementation of a robust and effective implementation.

2.1.2 Festival organizers create “situational definitions” to enhance “impression management.”

To attract more tourists and create a better image of the Luoyang Peony Festival, Luoyang localities have been carrying out “impression management” on tourist places, trying to leave a good impression on tourists. Therefore, the Luoyang government is trying to create the desired impression for the tourists by coordinating and improving the cityscape, municipal facilities, gardening, greening, etc., shaping the new image of Luoyang, and displaying the unique appearance of Luoyang, which is an interactive initiator creating the "scenario definition" for the others.

The "Flower Festival Project" is a tradition of the Luoyang Peony Festival, through which quality urban renewal of Luoyang is promoted. In recent years, Luoyang City has put forward the “351” work initiatives to improve the quality of the city, focusing on the three major goals of creating a platform-type innovation city, a national civilization model city, and a youth-friendly town, with the construction of transportation hubs, urban style enhancement projects, youth living and working in peace and happiness projects, community civilization creation projects, urban governance projects “five major projects” as a carrier. An old neighborhood transformed into an "elevator house" district, and young talent apartments arose. TV Tower and Xi Gong Stadium, as the core area of the city balcony project, quietly

started a new trend of fashion card places to build momentum. From oil, salt, soy, vinegar, and tea to clothing, food, housing, transportation, and entertainment, the construction of neighborhood centers, which provide complete services at residents' doorsteps, has taken off in full force. Accompanied by the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival's city improvement action, one project after another has been accelerated to promote the continuous improvement of urban functions and urban quality, allowing Luoyang to display the charm of the new era of "moving the capital in blossom" on the stage of the development of the new journey.

### 2.1.3 Organizers, people of Luoyang raise awareness of festival services

To get a good tourism image, Luoyang Peony Festival needs to show its tourism resources perfectly, such as formulating rules and regulations for its staff and guiding the neighboring residents in tourism industry services, to make the tourist place reach a harmonious and balanced state on the whole, have a good tourism image and attract more tourists. As Goffman's "Theory of Drama" says, each reception of an individual or group is like acting in a play, to show the best side of the stage to the tourists so that they come to enjoy themselves and return home to give a good evaluation of the tourism image of the tourist destination. Such a virtuous circle will promote the development of the tourist place and its tourism image.

The 40th Peony Cultural Festival is the first revitalization after the easing of epidemic prevention and control policy, and the people's expectations and enthusiasm for the festival are high; ensuring the safety of the festival and enhancing the image of festival tourism are the focuses of the festival. Government departments to do the best traffic flow, good window service, do bright main activities, focusing on famous tourist attractions, star tourist hotels, unique facilities and equipment, public cultural venues, business performances, script killing, an escape room, and other safety precautions focus on increasing supervision and inspection, in-depth investigation and rectification of safety risks and hidden dangers.

## 2.2 Interaction contents: the main form of trendy activities.

The interaction content refers to information and the festival symbols constituting elements of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Information is the concepts, imagery, and emotions that the initiator of the interaction tries to convey to

others. Nowadays, the festival industry is undergoing a profound change. From the supply side of the festival, from resource-based to product-based, and from the demand side, the demand of tourists has shifted from monotonous to personalized, diversified, and segmented. This year's Peony Culture Festival, after three years of precipitation and accumulation, the content of festival activities has undergone significant changes.

### 2.2.1 Peony traditional culture as the core

Wear Han Fu<sup>41</sup> to visit the garden and admire peonies. In this year's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the festival organizers innovated the form of peony viewing and led the visitors to wear Chinese dresses to view the peonies. As the ancient capital of China during the 13th Dynasty, viewing peonies in old Chinese dresses allowed visitors to feel the flavor and charm of the thousand-year-old capital of Luoyang while trekking in the green and enjoying the flowers. The Ancient City of Luo Yi, the Middle Street of Luoyang, and the peony parks organized several events such as "Divine Flower Dynasty, Luo Yi in Chinese Dress," "Dreaming of Sui and Tang Dynasty in Luo Yi" Hanbok Cultural Festival, and "Free Admission to the Park in Chinese Dress." Several Chinese dresses show theme activities. During the festival, the "Chinese dress economy" is hot out of the circle, attracting many youth groups. Luoyang continues to dominate the list of the most popular Hanbok hot card places. Mei Tuan data show that since April this year, Luoyang Hanbok experienced the number of merchants increased by 375%, the unit volume of the same period last year, and the number of the same period the previous year: 375%, single volume growth of 530%.

Peony Art Exhibitions. Peony art is an integral part of the peony culture in Luoyang. During this year's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, more than 30 peony art exhibitions were displayed at major attractions, such as "Zhao, Wu Zetian and Her Times" special exhibition held by Luoyang Museum, "Dongguan - Luoyang Art Works Exchange Exhibition" held by Luoyang Art Museum, and "China's First Peony King Competition" held by Luoyang Da Tang Flower Market. Through various kinds

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<sup>41</sup> Han Fu, also known as Chinese dress, is the traditional dress of the Chinese nation and a symbol of national spirit and civilization. Influenced by the Chinese system of dress and etiquette, the form of Hanbok also evolved in the change of dynasties, from the Yellow Emperor to the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, and finally died out in the Qing Dynasty as a result of shaving the hair and changing the clothes.

of peony art exhibitions, the peonies were displayed from multiple angles to enhance visitors' recognition of the peonies in Luoyang, and efforts were made to upgrade the single flower appreciation to multiple tourism experiences.

**Peony Folklore Activities.** During the festival, a series of colorful cultural and artistic programs were staged one after another to let the masses enjoy the cultural feast, aiming to display the achievements of the development of mass cultural activities and enrich the cultural life of the masses. The folklore activity of “He Luo Happy Song, Square Culture Month” is a critical mass cultural activity of the Peony Cultural Festival. About 1,200 actors and actresses participated in this activity, and the content of the performance involved operas, songs and dances, instrumental performances, musical performances, magic acrobatics, poetry recitations, modeling performances and so on, Poetry recitation, modeling, etc., each performance attracted an average audience of more than 2,000 people. The cultural performances for the benefit of the people, which are grounded and warm to the people's hearts, allow more cultural and artistic excellence to go to the masses and constantly enhance the masses' sense of cultural acquisition and happiness.

#### 2.2.2 “Immersive” and “Interactive” Experiential Activities as the Main Content.

Immersive experience has the characteristics of virtuality, intelligence, interactivity, cross-over, systematization, platform, and deep integration of culture, science, technology, etc. It is a brand-new narrative way and a new wind mouth for developing the culture and tourism industry at the present stage. Festival organizers combine digital technology with venues, buildings, humanistic environments, etc., and actively use scientific and technological means to link and create peony festival resources, accelerating the transformation from the traditional to the immersive festival industry. Many immersive experiential activities and interactive performance programs of this year's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival attracted visitors from all directions.

During the festival, the “Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony,” “Night of Peony Illusion City,” and other primary activities integrated various performance forms and scientific and technological means to synchronize online and offline to create a visual feast. Wang Cheng Park, Sui, Tang Botanical Garden, Luoyang Da Tang Flower Market, and other scenic spots introduced VR experience projects and

organized more than 20 immersive flower-viewing activities. The “Wonderful Night of Museum” activity, in which visitors sleep in ancient tombs and search for treasures among cultural relics, is a new way to play the night stay in Luoyang. The Peony Museum is currently the only professional museum themed on peony culture in China, which adopts the exhibition means of combining physical exhibition with an interactive experience, traditional exhibition, and digital technology. It allows tourists to experience the charm of peony culture in an immersive way. It creates a brand-new tourism consumption experience for most tourists, especially the youth groups.

2.2.3 Create new scenarios for festival consumption and trigger consumption agglomeration effects.

A series of consumer promotion activities have been launched to boost growth in the consumer market. During the festival period, Luoyang continued to organize key business districts, pedestrian streets, etc., to carry out huge discounts and consumer coupons issued by the organization of the Luo Cheng Middle Street Food Festival, “bottom price to find a car”, car into the business district exhibition activities, thousands of enterprises and ten thousand products discount festival, famous products into the hotel and other activities in more than 20 games. In the old city cross street night market<sup>42</sup>, several specialty restaurants are in front of a long line. In the Guangzhou Market Walking Street<sup>43</sup>, “can shop, can buy, can play” activities attracted many young people to the card. In Xi Gong Street<sup>44</sup>, a large number of consumer crowds make shopkeepers overwhelmed. During the festival, around the food, shopping district, famous products, online consumption, bulk consumption, and five other significant areas, the launch of a series of activities to promote consumption and constantly enrich the market supply of consumption, the consumer market as a whole showed a hot trend. According to statistics, during the festival, only the May Day five-day holiday, five key monitoring retail enterprise sales totaled 204 million yuan,

<sup>42</sup> Old City Cross Street is located in the old city of Luoyang West Street and East Street of the octagonal building of the Golden Street, after the founding of the country, this place has become one of the important commercial areas of Luoyang City, and at the same time, this is the place where the Luoyang snacks are gathered, and in 2015, the night market of the Old City Cross Street in Luoyang was selected as one of the top ten food streets in the country.

<sup>43</sup> Guangzhou Market Pedestrian Street is a neighborhood within the Jian Xi District of Luoyang City, Henan Province, selected in 2023 for the third list of national tourism and leisure neighborhoods.

<sup>44</sup> Located in Xi Gong District of Luoyang City, Xi Gong Xiaojie has a history of hundreds of years, witnessing the commercial development of Xi Gong District and even Luoyang City, as well as the changes in Luoyang's food culture.

an increase of 23.45%.

Create a good night tourism atmosphere and vigorously develop the “night economy.”<sup>45</sup> During the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang city attractions and landmarks used lighting and other effects to create an excellent nighttime tourism atmosphere, which can be called the more exciting the night is. Night tours to Longmen Grottoes and Ying Tian gate attractions, such as the beautiful 3D light show, night tour programs, extension of the lighting time of Luo Yi Ancient City to 2:00 a.m., Peony Lantern Show, national nighttime cultural and tourism consumption cluster area in Chong Du ditch, and 5D light show at Swan Lake, all of which are linked together, will make the city of Luoyang a “city that never sleeps”. The Peony Cultural Festival will fully open the night tour mode and innovate the new mode of the festival. At the same time, it enriches nighttime culture and tourism consumption patterns, encourages nighttime culture and tourism consumption gathering areas to optimize product supply for young people, vigorously develops the night economy by organizing a series of activities such as the “Tian Jie, Luoyang Youth Ideal Life Festival,” and continues to polish the Ancient Capital Night Eight Points.

### **2.3 Interaction media: the interactive communication of network publicity.**

The medium of interaction refers to how information is conveyed, and different modes of interaction utilize various media. The human body organs mainly do face-to-face interaction to share information. This interaction can be a timely understanding of their own and other people’s state. The two sides are more likely to cause mutual emotional infection, so the interaction is more effective; non-face-to-face interaction mainly relies on the media of television, radio, newspapers, telephone, the Internet, and other media to transmit information.

In the pre-preparation stage of this Peony Cultural Festival, the organizer organized relevant departments to strengthen the pre-publicity work through the dual channels of publicity within the city and publicity outside the town, taking network publicity as the leading role, grasping new features such as “on-line communication,”

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<sup>45</sup> Night-time economy refers to the commercial business activities that take place from 6 p.m. of the same day to 6 a.m. of the next day, with residents, working people and tourists as the main consumers, focusing on cultural tourism, catering and leisure, shopping and fitness, and other service industries.

“flow economy,” “interactive communication” and so on. Key activities, travel tips, county highlights, etc., in advance release information, jitterbug number, video number, client and other live network, Wang Feng, Wang Yibo, Meng Meiqi and other Luoyang stars appearing endorsement, harvest a large number of hot searches.

This Peony Cultural Festival launched a special online promotion program “Go to Luoyang for Love in April”. It includes four special chapters: “Check in to the beautiful Luoyang”, “Experience the wonderful event”, “Strategy for endless adventures”, and “Indulge in the poetic landscape”, displaying Luoyang's unique beauty, folk food, He Luo history and humanistic temperament, and comprehensively displaying Luoyang's 5,000-year civilization The charm of history. As of the closing ceremony of the 40th Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, the topic “Go to Luoyang for Love in April” has been viewed 550 million times.

The online activities of the festival also set up a variety of interactive links, using wonderful and rich high-quality videos, columns, and highly interactive methods to display the “fun, good-looking, delicious and trendy” panoramic view of Luoyang, which not only brings the majority of netizens The immersive experience of appreciating peonies in the clouds and traveling in Luoyang allows more tourists at home and abroad to “walk in Luoyang and understand the history”. Moreover, through the artificial intelligence (AI) face-changing show function, netizens can upload their photos on the H5 page, using face fusion technology to generate natural and immersive pictures of Traveling in Luoyang. Netizens can also get lottery opportunities to win special cultural and creative products in Luoyang by leaving messages and forwarding page content.

#### **2.4 Interaction recipients: focus on attracting youth groups**

The interactive receiver is the person who receives the information, and they take the initiative to receive and process the data. The theme of this year’s Peony Cultural Festival is “Blossoming Luoyang-Youthfulness,” where “youthfulness” has two meanings, mainly referring to young and energetic young people, and the other is the middle-aged and old-aged groups recalling their youth, as well as the groups of

children and adolescents who are about to grow up to be young people in the future<sup>46</sup>. Everyone has an unforgettable youth; when a youth meets a peony, it will surely be the most memorable moment of this Peony Cultural Festival.

#### 2.4.1 Focus on Attracting Youth Groups

The youth group is becoming the leading consumer of the cultural tourism market. Tourism consumption has presented a new trend of youth, personalization, and diversification, aiming at the needs of young people, tapping into the fashionable cultural tourism elements, increasing the sense of experience, science, and technology, and understanding of interaction. As the consumption concept of the youth group is more personalized, showing interest priority, focus on experience, rational consumption, and other diversified characteristics, consumption for them is not only the satisfaction of demand but also the pursuit of a lifestyle. Their individual preferences, psychological factors, and consumption consciousness will influence the trend and trend of the consumption mode in this era, and their consumption mode and concept are synchronized with the development of the times, progress of the society, change of life, and evolution of the trend.

This year's Peony Cultural Festival has the theme of "Flowers Bloom in Luoyang and Youth Debuts". It mainly plans and organizes several special festival activities at a high level for young people, attracting a large number of young people to Luoyang to participate in the festival. According to statistics, more than 50% of the city's visitors to this Peony Cultural Festival are under the age of 35. Liu Yan, head of the Luoyang Tourism Industry and Education Alliance, believes that compared to the tourism products that were mainly sightseeing in the past, more and more young people are more willing to pay for high-quality experience products. Young people are concerned with "differentiation". The pursuit of "experience" has prompted the Peony Cultural Festival to use modern means to add weight to tradition, thereby empowering traditional festivals with differentiated characteristics and promoting traditional festivals to have exclusive positioning in the new era. Starting from the preferences of young people, using the content that young people are willing to listen to and the way they can understand, continue to penetrate the active daily scenes of young people,

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<sup>46</sup> China's official age classification standards: 0-14 years old, children and adolescents; 14-35 years old, young people; 35-65 years old, middle-aged people; and over 65 years old, elderly people.

and meet the holiday needs of young people from the material level to the spiritual level.

#### 2.4.2 Comprehensively taking into account the middle-aged and old-aged groups

During the 40th Peony Cultural Festival, the researcher was in Luoyang for a field investigation. In the significant peony parks, the researcher saw that the elderly groups in Luoyang were more able to participate in peony festivals spontaneously and actively than the young people. the researcher interviewed some of the local older adults who lived in Luoyang all year round.

M12, a resident of Luoyang, 65 years old, volunteered to hold a choral performance with his choir sisters at Wang Cheng Park during the Peony Cultural Festival to help the festival. This interviewer said: *Everyone has an unforgettable youth, even though our faces have traces of years crawling over them and our hair has footprints left by the years. However, at that moment, under the peony flowers, we are still the "brightest star"*.

M13 is a resident of Luoyang and is 63 years old. This interviewer said: *During the Peony Cultural Festival, I always go to the park to do sketching, firstly, to record the beauty of the peonies in full bloom, and secondly, to leave peony memories for tourists from the south to the north. When tourists ask me for peony works while painting, I gladly give them away.*

M14, a resident of Luoyang, is 70 years old. This interviewer said: *To raise peonies well, my wife and I buy all kinds of planting materials to learn and go to the peony planting bases nearby that grow peonies to learn. Cultivating peonies with care and treating them as more delicate than our children, the beautiful peonies have long become our life's trust.*

Because of their love for peonies, these senior citizens find their passion in their lives. They transmit the beauty of peonies with songs, record the beauty of peonies with paintbrushes, and guard the planting of peonies with their hearts. In this peony culture festival, they are all spreaders of peony culture, showing us a life more beautiful than flowers.

#### 2.4.3 Storage of follow-up youth groups

During the festival, the organizers and contractors also held many activities for young people to participate in so that Luoyang children could be infected with the

peony festival culture from their childhood and cultivate cultural identity and unforgettable collective memories of their childhood. For example, the “17th Ten Thousand Peony Painting with Small Hands” held during the festival was held in April in China National Garden, where nearly ten thousand children and parents from many schools in urban Luoyang and its counties sat together to paint the most beautiful peonies in Luoyang. Famous painters such as Wang Xiu, Hou Zhen, Jiang Xin, and Huang Shan also appeared at the activity site and seriously instructed the little painters to paint.

There are also various study and study activities organized for young people. A large number of study courses are developed based on Luoyang's natural science popularization, humanistic cultivation, labor education, red culture, and other themes, and high-quality study and study tourism products are launched, making the Luoyang study and study brand famous. When the researcher was conducting fieldwork in Meng Jin District, he saw that the Meng Jin Tang Tri-Color Glazed Ceramics production and production base was crowded with primary school students who came to study. In the Tang Tri-Color Glazed Ceramics Experience Hall, primary school students can not only appreciate the exquisite antique Tang Tri-Color Glazed Ceramics products but also learn about their firing process.

### **3. The 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Invention Theory**

#### **3.1 Peony Festival Combined with “The Han Fu Economy”**

Luoyang is the main birthplace of Chinese civilization and the Chinese nation and is the place of great integration of the Chinese nation, which provides rich cultural nourishment for the revival and development of Chinese dress. In addition, in recent years, Luoyang has been actively building a “Youth-friendly City,”<sup>47</sup> focusing on improving the quality of city functions and youth fit so that young people have more good experiences in Luoyang, providing much convenience for the majority of young people, convenient public transportation, colorful night economy, music

<sup>47</sup> “Youth-friendly cities”, also known as “youth-development cities”, refer to a mode of urban development in which the concept of prioritizing the development of young people is actively put into practice in the process of urban development, and a policy and social environment that meets young people's needs for diversified and multi-level development is created in an all-round way, so as to promote the mutual promotion and positive interaction between youth development and urban development.

festivals, etc., which are very in line with young people's consumer psychology and habits. It also makes this thousand-year-old city full of youthful vigor. The collision of ancient culture and modern civilization, the rich historical heritage, and various immersive experiences not only cater to the contemporary young people's pursuit of the national trend but also allow them to realize the identity of the Chinese people's culture in Luoyang.

This year's Peony Culture Festival emphasizes the return of traditional culture, making Chinese dress a window for people to show their cultural confidence. With the publicity effect of short videos, many tourists want to try Chinese dress. If Han Fu was only a popular artistic form in a niche circle before, it became a well-deserved protagonist in this Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. During the festival, tourists wearing Han Fu ride on the subway for free; major attractions wearing Han Fu tickets for free; stroll in the Sui and Tang Dynasty Luoyang City National Heritage Park, Luo Yi Ancient City, and other scenic spots; young people dressed in Han Fu in groups, becoming a new landscape of the ancient capital. "Come to Luoyang, how can you not wear Han Fu once," "Luoyang's Han Fu atmosphere is too good" ... this year, Luoyang's Han Fu-related network topics are frequently on the hot search, and the heat remains high. Mei Tuan<sup>48</sup> data shows that since April this year, the number of merchants in Luoyang providing Han Fu experience has increased by 375% compared to last year. Young people under 30 accounted for more than 60% of Han Fu consumers, and the "Han Fu economy"<sup>49</sup> has attracted and stimulated the city's tourism revenue of 17.7 billion yuan.

The researcher interviewed tourists in the field, Hangzhou, more than 40 years old Ms. Wang said: *I am so old, in other places wear Han Fu embarrassed, come to Luoyang feel very common, everyone so wears, come to Luoyang specifically to experience hanbok.*

Luo Yi Ancient City Scenic Area, a Han Fu experience museum Li boss said: *We have about 300 sets of clothing in the store, mainly Han Fu, covering the Tang style,*

<sup>48</sup> Mei Tuan, a group-buying website in Mainland China, owns Meituan.com, Mei Tuan Takeout, Mei Tuan Flash Sale, Mei Tuan Preferred, Volkswagen Dian Ping, Mei Tuan Bicycle and other Internet platforms, and its business involves various fields of food, clothing, housing and transportation, including catering, takeout, housekeeping, merchandise delivery, travel, lodging, tourism and other services.

<sup>49</sup> The "Han Fu Economy" refers to the Hanbok-centered industry, including Hanbok design, production, sales, leasing, portraits, experience halls and other aspects.

*Song system, Ming system, and other styles, to meet the needs of tourists, clothing, styling, filming, retouching, one-stop service has become many tourists to choose.*

With the Peony Cultural Festival career, Luoyang's "Han Fu industry" has been dramatically promoted, developing peripheral industries, including Han Fu rental, photo shooting, and second-hand trading. In addition, Han Fu experience halls, which include make-up and styling services and photography services, are also popular business models. There are more than 300 Han Fu experience stores around Luo Yi Old Town, many of which are converted into restaurants, tire stores, auto repair stores, etc. In June 2003, the China World Association for the Promotion of Ethnic Cultural Exchanges conferred the title of "Han Fu Cultural Capital of China" to the Old Town of Luoyang and the title of "Chinese Han Fu Culture Promotion Capital" to the Luo Yi Old Town.

### **3.2 Peony Festival Combined with "Scripted Entertainment"**

According to the data, the market size of China's scripted entertainment industry reached 11.74 billion yuan in 2020 and is expected to increase to 23.89 billion yuan by 2022. In the selection of offline trendy entertainment methods preferred by Chinese consumers in the first half of 2021, "Scripted Entertainment"<sup>50</sup> also ranked third with 36.1% of the votes, only after watching movies (38.3%) and sports and fitness (36.4%). In the script entertainment industry, the concept of "script+" is gradually formed, "script + museum," "script + scenic spot," "script + bookstore," "Script + Drama" and so on, with various forms and rich content. Luoyang is a city of deep cultural heritage, with a long history and cultural heritage and many well-known historical figures, allusions, and cultural landmarks. Luoyang's history has given inspiration to many scriptwriters. Nowadays, there are about 100,000 scripted entertainment players in the city, including 15,000 high-frequency players, and there are more than 30 scripted entertainment enterprises of various kinds in Luoyang, which have been at the forefront of the country in many aspects, such as scriptwriting, DM training, and store operation.

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<sup>50</sup> Scripted entertainment refers to cultural and entertainment activities carried out for the purpose of profit-making by operating units through on-site organization of consumers to play scripted roles or solve riddles of specific scenes.

During this year's Peony Cultural Festival, nearly 1,500 representatives of the national script industry were invited to gather in Luoyang, and investment docking activities were held in the Script Entertainment Industrial Park, with 30 enterprises signing a contract and 14 new enterprises adding intention. Breaking the old stereotypes of festival activities and innovating new ways of playing scripts, the "Citywide Script Killing" focused on linking up more than 40 immersive script entertainment projects to form a citywide panoramic marketing highlight, and the microblogging topic has been read up to 120 million times. Launched the nation's first history and humanities museum night program - Museum Wonderful Night, which was carried out in Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital, Luoyang Museum, Luoyang Ancient Tomb Museum, and Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal Culture Museum, and told the stories of more than 100 cultural relics through four time-traveling performances.

Some participants said that Script Kill + museum is a provocative, creative, innovative way to open the cultural relics, ancient and young, traditional and fashionable, in a new way of mingling and collision, so that the cultural relics live, enhance the audience's sense of experience and immersion, so that the immersive experience of the long history and culture of Luoyang and the charm of the city. Everyone in the immersive experience feels Luoyang's long history and culture and the city's charm. At the same time, Luoyang City, some museums, memorial halls, and other cultural venues, combined with the audience demand, continued to innovate cultural tourism product supply, the construction of new scenes, and implant new business forms for visitors to bring unique experiences. Many tourists also deliberately dressed in Chinese dress to the museum a "through the journey." He Xueping, Deputy Secretary General of the National Alliance of Cultural Science and Technology Innovation Service, believes the Peony Cultural Festival Luoyang is on fire worldwide, and the immersive experience is inseparable.

### 3.3 Peony Festival Combined with "Study Tourism"

Luoyang began the development of study tours<sup>51</sup> in 2018, actively carrying out

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<sup>51</sup> Study travel, in a broad sense, refers to the special travel of travelers to carry out research and inquiry learning in a foreign place out of the need for cultural curiosity. Research travel in the narrow sense generally refers to the

the construction of study camps and study bases, taking museums at all levels, tourist attractions, industrial science and technology parks, etc., as the primary basis, developing study courses, training study instructor teams, establishing management systems, making all-round breakthroughs in hardware and software and strictly checking and accepting the acceptance, and at present, the city has study camps that have been recognized by the national, provincial and municipal departments, At present, the city has 68 study camps and study bases recognized by federal, regional and municipal departments.

During the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the 3rd World Study Tourism Conference was held in Luoyang. As one of the festival's main activities, the conference set up study theme salons such as the Ancient Metropolis Study, Yellow River Study, and Camp Study, and made every effort to create a Henan study Luoyang model. During the festival, the Oriental Museum of the capital of the study camp launched "crazy primitive man," "Locomotive Creator Camp," "Cultural Relics in China," and other immersive study activities to meet the students' experiential and diversified needs, Luoyang ancient capitals study camp, the Yellow River study camp, the study camp, and other study themes, to create a model of Henan study Luoyang. The Luoyang Sui and Tang Dynasty Grand Canal Museum has gathered ancient capital culture, river culture, canal culture, peony culture, silk road culture, etc., to provide students with immersive study and interactive experience. The Luoyang Museum launched the "Immersive Live Theater Experience + Night Stay" activity, based on more than 30 pieces of cultural relics, combined with the design of research in the museum, play in the drama, providing parents and children, focus on participation, process, and experience.

#### 3.4 Peony Festival Combined with "wellness tourism"

Along with the aging of the population, sub-health, ecological environment, and other issues have been attached great importance to the social demand for recreation and rapid expansion of market consumption. People are generally no longer satisfied with sightseeing tours but pay more attention to physical and mental relaxation,

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definition in the norms for research travel services issued by China in December 2016, which is an educational tourism activity that takes primary and secondary school students as the main object, takes collective travel life as the carrier, takes the enhancement of the quality of students as the purpose of teaching, and relies on social resources such as tourist attractions to carry out experiential education and research learning.

coupled with the national level to promote the “Healthy China” strategy and the “Good Life” construction, integrating health, wellness, and leisure is increasingly popular<sup>52</sup>. With the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang has created more than ten outdoor leisure activities to promote the development of new forms of recreational tourism in Luoyang, which are mainly manifested in the following forms:

**Culture and health care.** In-depth excavation of Luoyang’s unique religion, folklore, history, and culture, combined with market demand and modern lifestyle, the use of creative means to create spiritual tourism products conducive to nourishing the heart so that tourists in the cultural experience at the same time, can cultivate the body, return to the heart, cultivate sentiment, such as relying on religious resources to create a cultural resort, depending on traditional Chinese culture, to make a base for national education experience.

**Vacation industry type.** Luoyang is rich in natural resources, including many mountainous areas, woodlands, wetlands, etc., for the development of recreation and tourism, providing a vast world. In recent years, Luoyang City and some of the surrounding counties have relied on good natural ecological resources. In addition to giving tourists a building ecology, good environment, food and health, and other characteristics, it offers a full range of recreation and health facilities and services. It provides people with meditation space and an environment to cultivate the body and mind in a quiet atmosphere. You can enjoy barbecuing and camping on the lawn with three or five friends, feel the field’s fun, and enjoy the stars in the tent with a gentle breeze. Luoyang Youth House RV Campground attracted many young people during this year’s Peony Cultural Festival.

**Sports type.** Relying on Luoyang’s unique terrain and resources, such as mountains, canyons, and bodies of water, it develops outdoor recreation and health products such as mountain sports, water sports, outdoor expansion, outdoor camping, outdoor sports, extreme sports, traditional sports, hiking, and adventure, etc. It promotes the in-depth fusion and development of such industries as sports, tourism, vacations, fitness, and events. In this Peony Cultural Festival, “desktop table tennis,” “mini outdoor basketball,” “outdoor yoga,” and other sports flash mobs appeared on

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<sup>52</sup> Wellness tourism, the sum of all tourism activities engaged in for the maintenance of the body or the improvement of one's health.

the scene, and professional coaches led visitors to feel the trend of sports and new outdoor experiences.

#### **4. Analysis of Problems of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival**

##### **4.1 Low Participation of Local People in Luoyang**

Most Luoyang people have a low level of overall understanding of the current Peony Culture Festival, and their experience is superficial, staying only concerned with large-scale activities such as the opening ceremony of the Peony Culture Festival, float parades, and peony viewing; on the contrary, the attractiveness of the Peony Culture Festival to foreign tourists is higher than that of the local people in Luoyang. Through the field interviews, it was realized that the reasons for the low participation of local people in the Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang are as follows:

First of all, due to the large number of tourists and traffic congestion during the festival, the people of Luoyang intentionally avoided the festival. In 2023, the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival had a total number of 23,690,500 tourists, while the total population of Luoyang was 6,962,300, of which 1,952,500 were from urban areas, which was analyzed that the number of tourists coming to Luoyang during the festival was 3.5 times that of the total population of Luoyang, and 12 times that of the total population of urban areas of Luoyang. The influx of foreign tourists into Luoyang will cause problems such as congestion in Luoyang's major peony parks, city squares, transportation roads, and rising prices.

Secondly, the park tickets block the enthusiasm of Luoyang people to participate in the festival. It is understood that during the festival period, all the major peony viewing parks in Luoyang, which are usually free, must charge extra admission fees. Foreign tourists do not hesitate to pay a high admission fee to enjoy the peonies in the parks and feel the culture of peonies. At the same time, the local people in Luoyang can usually see peonies on both sides of the streets, in the gardens of the neighborhoods, and even at their own homes, so very few of them are willing to spend money on buying tickets to enjoy the peonies in the parks again.

Finally, the lack of cultural identity has made the people of Luoyang less enthusiastic about peony festivals. Individuals' cultural behaviors are often governed

by cultural identity. When people believe that a culture has a significance of existence, and when this cultural identity becomes a kind of memory linked to their blood, they will try to find ways to pass on, preserve, and develop this culture. Only a few older peony workers in Luoyang love and understand peony culture. At the same time, the younger Luoyang people's interest in traditional cultural expressions is generally not as high as that in popular culture. In addition, some of them do not understand the culture of Luoyang peony culture and the cultural kernel of the Peony Cultural Festival and think that the Peony Cultural Festival is only a tourism resource developed by Luoyang City every year to increase tourism income.

#### **4.2 Insufficient inheritance of Luoyang peony cultural tradition**

According to Dr. Li Yuxin, the festival initially belongs to the category of folklore, produced by people of all races worldwide during their long-term production and life. It is usually a non-daily special event held annually, organized by a transparent institution, based on a distinctive theme. It includes various activities, such as culture, economics and trade, amusement, etc. It can be seen that the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival belongs to the category of folk culture. At the same time, the peony cultural tradition and spiritual kernel are always the soul of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

From the many folk activities of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, it was found that the novel and creative activities emphasized tourism and economic and trade values and that the peony cultural traditions were insufficiently inherited, with little artistic value, and failed to fully show the local cultural traditions and national emotions of Luoyang. However, if these are not taken away, the uniqueness of the local traditional culture will disappear, and not only will the enthusiasm of the local people to participate in the festival decline, but what the tourists will be brought to the festival is only a "tourism festival" that can be easily confused with other festivals and lacks a soul.

Peony Lantern Festival. The traditional program of the Peony Cultural Festival has been enjoying flowers and watching lanterns since the "Ten Thousand Flowers Festival" in the Song Dynasty. Although there are rich activities of enjoying flowers in each peony garden, the traditional activities of making lanterns and strolling in

lantern Festivals have gradually lost their original fun and traditional spirit of the festival under the ever-changing social environment. The actual fun and the traditional spirit of the festival have been lost. To this day, very few families make lanterns by themselves, and people choose to buy lanterns. Some even decide not to make or buy them, gradually leaving only the activity of going into the park to see the lantern show.

**Peony Food Customs.** People in Luoyang have used peony petals for frying, deep-frying, boiling, and steaming since ancient times, and these customs have continued to this day. However, except for “Peony Swallow Vegetables,” there are fewer and fewer peony food customs in the contemporary life of the people. Peony cakes and peony tea made of peony petals are famous nowadays, but peony cake is not as well known as Yunnan flower cake and other brands, and peony tea is even more expensive because of the complicated process, and few people buy it.

The custom of chanting and depicting peonies. The scenes of chanting and painting around peonies once recorded in historical documents are still visible in today’s peony cultural festivals. Still, the chants are mainly expressed in the peony poems organized by the Literature Federation, and the peony paintings are primarily in the exhibitions of paintings by famous peony masters. These activities intend to restore the traditional peony culture, but there are certain limitations in the audience groups. On the one hand, not all people have the ability to compose poems and paintings; on the other hand, not all interested people have the opportunity to participate in the activities, and the entry thresholds of the Poetry Clubs and Peony Painting Associations are high, making it difficult for the general public to join them.

#### **4.3 Lack of systematic and connectedness in activity planning**

There are many activities during the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, and many new projects are born every year, which aligns with the trend of the times and the law of tourism development. Still, the distribution of the activities is fragmented and lacks connectivity. For example, the Flower Appreciation Launching Ceremony of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 2023 was held at the Ying Tian Gate Ruins; the Opening Ceremony was held at the Peony Pavilion Museum; the Flower Appreciation Series of activities were distributed in more than 20 peony viewing gardens such as

city parks, peony industrial parks of various counties and districts and alpine peony parks, etc. Visitors could enjoy the flowers in the peony viewing gardens. At the same time, major scenic spots also had various kinds of live performances, operas, and demonstrations of non-heritage skills to drive the festival's atmosphere. Cultural activities are located in Luoyang's major museums, cultural halls, city libraries, city squares, and characteristic neighborhoods in the central city; consumer activities are located in Luoyang's major shopping centers, historic commercial districts, and especially to promote the enhancement of the "night-time economy," there are many newly built night market neighborhoods and parks, etc. Moreover, to encourage the development of neighboring counties, there are various kinds of live performances, opera performances, and non-heritage arts and crafts demonstrations. Parks, etc.; and to drive the economic development of the surrounding counties, the counties and districts simultaneously opened 30 colorful joint activities.

It can be seen that although the festival activities are rich, they are confined to various venues, and multiple venues lack relevance, especially for travelers who traveled to Luoyang for a short period and did not have enough time to experience them fully. After the opening ceremony launched the festival, the atmosphere of the festival in the whole city of Luoyang was dispersed and diluted in various scenic spots, and there was a lack of an activity that could link the scattered activities together and cohesively continue the atmosphere of the entire Peony Festival. During the 40th Peony Cultural Festival, the researcher went on a festival inspection tour. When planning the field trip route, the researcher checked the relevant websites and found that the introduction of the festival activities was scattered, lacked focus, and lacked content introduction. the researcher was very passive in choosing the content of the activities, so much so that the researcher had to go to many places every day for inspection during the field trip.

#### **4.4 Lack of awareness of festival branding**

The Peony Cultural Festival lacks a festival brand. "Wonderful Luoyang" (account subject: Luoyang City Internet Publicity Management Office), "Luoyang Network" (account subject: Luoyang Daily News). These official comprehensive web platforms only report on April's annual Peony Cultural Festival. The frequency of

dissemination is not high. The publicity content is mainly textual descriptions, lacking relevant picture materials. On only a few web pages, the logo of the Peony Festival is missing or confusing, and the introduction of the activities is empty, too simple in form, and low in attractiveness.

The city brand of Peony Capital is missing. As the peony capital of China, Luoyang, for the annual Peony Cultural Festival, the characteristics of the peony capital of Luoyang are reflected everywhere in public spaces such as bus stop kiosks, city publicity walls, street buildings, publicity posters, and so on. However, due to the bright and monotonous colors of the peonies and the exaggerated and decadent shapes, the public image of peonies is overly conservative, with a single element extracted from them. Even the direct use of a peony as a logo is widely used, and the effect needs to be more fashionable to meet contemporary aesthetic standards.

The regional public brand needs to be included. In addition to creating a unified brand image of “China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival” and “Luoyang Peony Flower Capital,” all kinds of main activities during the festival also need to create a regional public brand and develop technical standards and behavioral standards to regulate the market. For example, the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival achieved good economic and social benefits, especially the “Han Fu Economy,” recently making Luoyang one of the most popular cities for Internet celebrities to check-in. However, due to the rapid development of the Han Fu economy, many problems soon appeared: Han Fu forms of controversy, plagiarism, and cottage. The head of the brand premium, product quality control, and industrial distribution center intensified the competition and Han Fu make-up safety issues. Therefore, there is a need to change the status quo of good and bad Hanbok business people by creating a regional public brand of Han Fu and promoting the formation of a regional industrial chain brand and a complete industrial ecosystem.

#### **4.5 Insufficient international communication**

Although the Peony Cultural Festival has been held 40 times, and the grade of the festival is getting higher and higher from the municipal level to the provincial level to the national level, Luoyang does not have a particular organization for the exhibition to this day. The preparation of the Peony Culture Festival is led by the

Luoyang government every year, which organizes the temporary formation of a preparatory committee by the Luoyang Municipal Party Committee Office, Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department, Municipal Party Committee Office, Municipal Culture, Radio and Television Bureau, Urban Management Bureau, Forestry Bureau, Cultural Relics Bureau, etc. This is a sound system that can gather the strengths of all parties to hold the festival with all their strengths. Still, the committee members change every year due to the temporary nature of the preparatory committee and their lack of professionalism in planning festivals. Moreover, they are unable to form professional considerations and plans for the development of the Peony Culture Festival and the relationship between the festival and the city development, which makes the preparations for the Peony Culture Festival in the preceding and following years unable to be smoothly connected, with new and old problems constantly arising, and brings much inconvenience to the evaluation and summarization of the Peony Culture Festival. Government personnel are non-professional festival personnel, which leads to issues such as a lack of understanding of the operation mechanism of the festival industry, deviation in the management and coordination of the festival, and difficulty in innovating the contents of the festival.

The lack of professionalism of the festival organizers and the attractiveness of the activities can be seen from the fact that some 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival activities were boycotted and canceled by the public, and the public's participation was low. For example, one of the theme activities of the festival, "Peony Float Parade Carnival," after rehearsal the night before the festival, the float was not of high aesthetic grade, and was criticized by the public for being too simple, and was eventually forced to be canceled, making it the biggest mistake in the planning of the activities of this year's Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which was partly attributed to the fact that the COVID-19 had just ended. There was limited time for the festival preparation. On the one hand, the preparation time for the festival was little. On the other hand, the biggest problem lay in the contradiction between the people's growing material and cultural needs and the backward social production, which could be seen in the lack of professionalism in the festival's planning.

#### 4.6 Insufficient international dissemination

Traditional Chinese festivals are integral to China's outstanding traditional culture and essential to national and cultural identity. Recording, inheriting, protecting, and publicizing Chinese traditional festival culture can not only enhance the cohesion of the Chinese nation but also promote the continuation of the national civilization lineage and promote the shaping of China's national image and international communication. However, we should be sober to see that although the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been upgraded to a national festival and is one of the "Four Great Festivals of China," its international influence is relatively small, and the influence of global communication is insufficient.

The 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has gained significant attention through interactive communication on the Internet. However, the richness of topics and the continuity of themes are insufficient, and few explosive points capture the hotspots keenly and follow up quickly to form a continuum; the use of connotative dissemination to promote lasting attraction is inadequate, and most of the related short videos and topics stay in areas such as "dressing up in Chinese costumes," "tips for playing," "peony viewing," and so on. There are few means to stimulate the participation and expression of tourists and citizens, and a favorable atmosphere of universal marketing has yet to be formed.

Due to the cold environment of international tourism in the post-COVID-19 era, the opportunities for foreign people to come to China to experience the festival culture in person have been significantly reduced, and the international influence of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been limited. Overseas communication of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival still needs to improve with inadequate conceptual recognition, visual recognition, and communication behavioral recognition systems. There is no visual recognition symbol system with cultural landmarks like "Chinese Spring Festival", "Oktoberfest" and "Rio de Janeiro Carnival" in the overseas visual recognition system of Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, and the revitalization mode of peony culture IP has not yet been formed.

## 5. “The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China” development suggestions

### 5.1 Stimulate people’s cultural identity and improve participation

Suppose there needs to be more participation from the people of Luoyang. In that case, it will not only affect the quality and social influence of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, but more importantly, it will not be able to realize the festival’s purpose, which is “Culture for the People, Culture for the Benefit of the People.”

Adjustment of government policies to enhance participants’ festival experience. Recently, the government has gradually realized the importance of people’s participation as the main inheritance body. It has changed its concept to make the Peony Culture Festival a people’s festival so that culture holders can return to the position of “parties” from “bystanders.” The government can take the following measures: abolish the restriction of motor vehicles, control the increase in the price of food and lodging, subsidize cultural consumption, and implement preferential policies during the Peony Cultural Festival. For example, residents of Luoyang can follow the relevant regulations and go to fixed parks at fixed times with their ID cards for free admission to enjoy the flowers. Residents of Luoyang can visit any park with their annual travel passes. The Luoyang government openly solicits from the society the festival emblem, mascot, and original peony songs of the Peony Cultural Festival, etc. It formulates corresponding incentives to attract more people to participate in it. Add more special production, participation, and interactive activities, such as making peony lanterns, Chinese dress experience, parade of folk activities, etc., to attract Luoyang people to participate in the activities and enhance the feeling of participation and expertise. There are also activities such as “My Story with Peony Online Essay Competition,” “Let Me Take Peony Photography and Short Video Competition,” or “Designing Clothing, Accessories and Daily Goods with Peony Legends and Historical Figures,” which centers on the relationship between the people and peony, “Peony Element Design Competition,” “Peony Cultural Creation Competition” which combines peony elements with cultural creativity, and so on, to make it easier for the public to participate and interact with the peony culture.

Aggregate social forces and make joint efforts to create a festival atmosphere. The dominant force of the government plays a vital role in the festival’s resource

input, activities, venue construction, non-genetic inheritance, cultural dissemination, etc., which can promote the promotion and revival of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival in a short period. For the festival to be inherited and stimulate the people's participation to the greatest extent, it is also necessary to give full play to the power of all sectors of society. Gradually transition from government-led to government-guided, create a cooperation platform, aggregate the strength of families, schools, experts, communities, civil organizations, social institutions, merchants and the media, etc., to promote the festival, combine the festival culture with the family culture, community culture, local culture and commercial culture, re-form intergenerational inheritance chains in the family, create festivals with unique characteristics in the community and localities, and promote the culture with the help of commercial activities and media publicity.

Educational enlightenment to realize conscious inheritance. Schools should be an essential part of festival culture inheritance, combining aesthetic education, non-heritage education, local culture education, etc. Starting from early childhood education, festival culture should be integrated into the whole process of education, and students should be allowed to physically experience the festival culture, such as handmade crafts, cultural and artistic performances, study activities, etc., to strengthen the memory of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, and to enhance the love for and recognition of the traditional festival culture in the stage of education and growth. To strengthen the memory of the Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, enhance the love and recognition of conventional festival culture in the stage of education and development, and realize the self-enlightenment and conscious recognition of festival culture.

## **5.2 Do an excellent job of peony culture inheritance and protection**

Insist on protection first and strengthen the primary responsibility for protection. General Secretary Xi Jinping said at the Symposium on Cultural Heritage and Development in 2023 that historical and cultural heritage is a precious, non-renewable, and irreplaceable resource, and protection should always be put in the first place. Luoyang city has accelerated the legislation on Luoyang peony and established rules and regulations around the protection of resources, brand protection, industrial

support, scientific research support, and cultural inheritance of peonies to provide a rule of law guarantee for the protection of the cultural brand of Luoyang peony. More than 30 years ago, some civil organizations in Luoyang spontaneously collected peony varieties remaining after the Cultural Revolution and formed a historical society to study the history of Luoyang peony, which contributed a lot to the revival of the contemporary Peony Cultural Festival. In recent years, academics have been gradually conducting research on the Luoyang peony and the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, strengthening academic and cultural exchanges, such as organizing the Peony Cultural Forum and cooperating horizontally with other major peony cultivation centers, to bring into full play the role of academics in protecting the peonies and providing theoretical support for the formulation of the development plan and the implementation of the measures. The role of academia in peony conservation will be brought into full play to provide theoretical support for formulating development plans and implementing measures.

Revitalize and utilize the traditional cultural expressions to keep pace with the times. The social environment is constantly developing, and people's production and living styles are also changing. Inheriting the traditional cultural expressions in peony culture is not just imitating history. Still, we can try to activate, retell, and reproduce the traditional culture through the novel thinking and creativity of the conventional peony culture to make the traditional culture of peony "come alive." For example, the "national tide" culture generated by integrating the traditional culture into the popular fashion of the youth is an important manifestation of the "living up" of the traditional culture, which is formed by the traditional culture's initiative to incorporate the new contents and conditions to seek for its development. To "Han Fu economy," "recreation tourism," "script entertainment," and other new forms, new modes, and new ways to revitalize traditional cultural resources to attract people's attention.

With the development of the TV culture industry, more and more cities have begun to expand their publicity by taking local history and culture as the starting point, with the help of TV dramas and cultural variety shows that are both cultural and entertaining. The municipal government of Luoyang can cooperate with local TV stations and some film and TV production enterprises to create TV dramas and variety shows to display peony in an all-round and multi-angle way, hoping that this popular

and exciting form of cultural dissemination can make more people understand and love peony culture, history and development of the festival so that more people will recognize Luoyang peony and the festival, understand the culture and history of peony, fall in love with peony and have a good time in the festival.

### **5.3 Integrate various excellent festival resources to achieve resource-sharing**

To solve the problems of urban transportation, environment, and price rise caused by the holding of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang City, it is necessary to establish a sense of cooperation so that many cultural projects in the Luoyang area can be united to form the overall competitiveness of the region. To this end, three breakthroughs should be realized in the development idea of the future Peony Culture Festival:

First, there was a breakthrough from traditional attractions to emerging attractions. Whether it is a place to enjoy flowers or visit, the public has severe inertia, and the attention has been focused on the inherent traditional attractions. In the future, the focus of publicity, support, and development should be shifted from conventional attractions to emerging attractions, which can reduce the pressure on traditional attractions and, at the same time, expand the Luoyang tourism market.

Second, there was a breakthrough from tourist attractions to the cultural and exposition system. Ancient soup and food culture, ceramic culture represented by Tang Three Colors, grotto culture represented by Longmen Grottoes, as well as philosophical and religious cultures born from thousands of years of civilization evolution, etc., which are inextricably linked with the peony culture of Luoyang, provide the conditions for the extension of the Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang, China, gradually to a richer cultural connotation, such as the old city of the Han Dynasty and Wei Dynasty, the cultural heritage sites of the Ming Tang Ruins and cultural and exposition venues such as Luoyang Museum and Tianzi Driving Sixth Museum.

Third, there was a breakthrough from urban Luoyang to the surrounding suburbs. The natural environment in Luan Chuan, Song County, and other areas is beautiful. It can provide tourists with "recreational tourism." there are many people who are still willing to attend the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang under the jurisdiction of the

county, so the government needs to improve the surrounding county tourism service resources, enhance the development potential of Luoyang surrounding counties and the appreciation of space.

#### **5.4 Set up specialized festival agencies and cultivate professional talents**

Setting up a specialized convention and exhibition management agency to mobilize enthusiasm for the development of the industry. Many developed countries have set up specialized exhibition management institutions. Germany is the world's top exhibition powerhouse, and the highest association of its exhibition industry is the German Trade Festival and Exhibition Industry Union (AUMA), the only central exhibition management institution in Germany. It implements unified and authoritative management for the exhibition industry in Germany. France's exhibition management organization is mainly the French Association of Expositions, Festivals, and Conventions. Singapore Tourism Board under the jurisdiction of the Exhibition and Convention Department. In China, Hong Kong, which has a higher level of exhibition industry development, has set up the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. However, Luoyang has no specialized exhibition organization of the above kind. Under the condition of a market economy, effective organization and coordination through the exhibition industry association will not only help the government to concentrate its efforts to do an excellent job in coordinating and supervising the work but also help to mobilize the enthusiasm of the industry's development.

Create high-quality professional management and service teams. In our country, the exhibition industry is booming today; high-quality exhibition talents are pretty scarce, and so is the exhibition industry in Luoyang, which is in urgent need of vigorously cultivating a group of professional skills for planning performance ticketing, conference services, choreography, exhibition, and other aspects. Therefore, the universities in Luoyang should take the initiative to take up the responsibility of cultivating conference and exhibition talents, set up relevant majors related to conference and exhibition, deepen the research of conference and exhibition discipline system, and at the same time, take the initiative to run schools jointly with enterprises, and integrate theory and practice. With specialized conference and

exhibition management institutions and professional conference and exhibition talents, both should fully play their professional roles in all kinds of large and small meetings and exhibitions in Luoyang City to maintain the vitality of the conference and exhibition industry in Luoyang City.

### **5.5 Improve the brand image recognition construction of festivals**

The brand is a cultural output with continuous influence. Therefore, the city festival brand is a kind of brand impression that can produce constant attraction and distinctive image appeal in the audience market, which needs to have complete brand composition elements, including image recognition, brand connotation, brand core value, brand communication, and so on. Brand image recognition refers to the whole recognition system, including MI, BI, and VI. The brand image recognition of the festival includes a festival brand name, slogan, song, mascot, emblem, festival brochure, festival gift packaging, and so on. These bearers are the most intuitive way to spread the festival brand.

MI (concept identification) is the soul and power of the tourism festival brand image, the purpose of which is to put forward the concept of the tourism festival brand, reflecting the most representative of its brand characteristics and values; it is also the lifeblood of the festival founders in the management and operation of the festival should always run through the future development of the festival brand and guide the phases of the development of the festival brand, so in the refinement of the concept, we should emphasize the uniqueness, ahead of the cohesion, orientation.

BI (Behavioral Identification) is a relatively dynamic identification of the tourism festival brand; on the one hand, it formulates the rules and regulations of tourism festival operation, organization and management, operation mechanism, code of conduct, relevant laws and regulations, which provides a guarantee for the implementation of the behavioral identification of tourism festivals, and at the same time, guided by the concept of the festival brand, under the guidance of the laws and regulations, the planners and tourism participants are carrying out the practice of the activity, to show the charm of the outside of the brand of the tourism festival to attract the tourists to visit.

VI (Visual Identity), the visual identity system is the most intuitive part of the

tourists and the part of the tourism festival brand that can be most intuitively shown to the tourists. VI is the external form of the tourism festival brand, which can attract the tourists' eyeballs in the shortest event and deepen the impression of the festival brand. It includes a tourism festival city, logo, emblem, mascot, badge, slogan, etc. Importantly, festival planners should flexibly apply the elements of the VI system to urban public spaces, parks, bus stops, building exteriors, magazines, and public transportation.

To create a Peony Cultural Festival brand, we should improve the MI, BI, and VI construction of brand image recognition, unify the cultural festival logo, establish an online official platform for systematic introduction and publicity, and set up unified cultural festival logos at various scenic spots, or with cultural festival unification. The service points with signs can improve the confusion and blindness of visitors and improve the image and publicity effect of urban festival management. Use publicity points or unified signs to provide convenient services. For example, through mobile phone scanning, you can quickly learn the time, content, and location of various activities during the cultural festival, making it easier for visitors to arrange their travel plans.

### **5.6 Increase publicity and enhance influence at domestic and international**

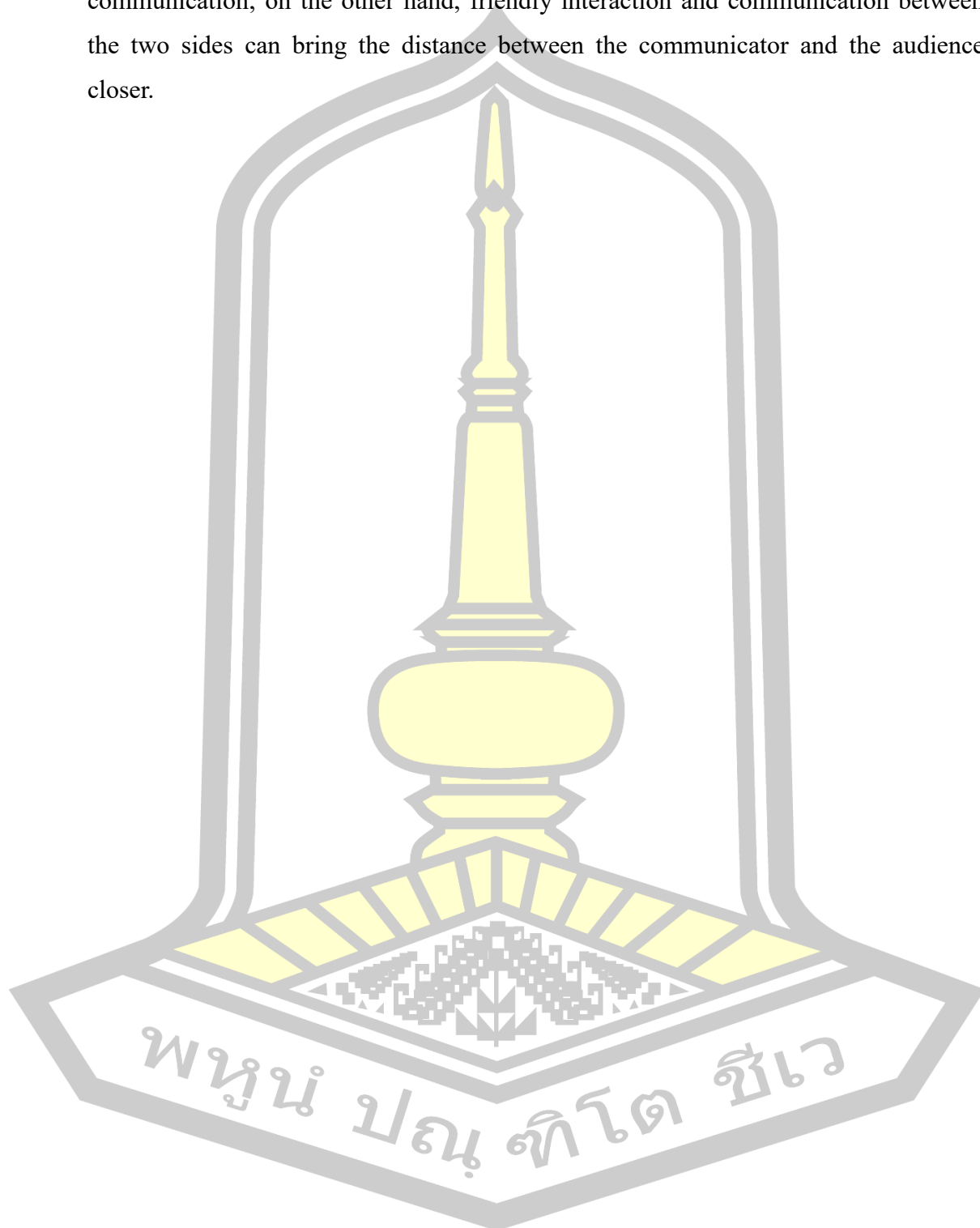
Multi-body synergy and all-around efforts. To improve the influence and dissemination effect of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, it is necessary to have the joint efforts of the government, media, and the public. The government should integrate the cultural and tourism resources of Luoyang City, create official accounts on various media platforms, continuously release information about the Festival and peony culture, and do an excellent job in operation and maintenance of the websites and accounts. Traditional media should improve the quality of information related to the Festival, not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of optimizing the content, to strengthen the memory of the Festival in the public's cognition; and new media should play the role of gatekeeper and ensure the public's understanding of the Festival. Although the annual China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival only lasts about a month, the government and the people put a whole year's effort behind the scenes for the festival's success.

Cultivate tourism anchors for live promotion. The normalization of epidemic prevention and control has made it difficult to travel, restricting the offline dissemination of the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. With the rise of live broadcasting, the tourism industry has also begun to get involved in live broadcasting. The China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival 2020-2022 launched an online live broadcasting campaign with rich and diverse content covering peonies, humanities, natural scenery, local cuisine, and tourist attractions in Luoyang, which achieved good results. To do an excellent job in the online live broadcasting activity of China Luoyang Peony Culture Festival, it is necessary to train a group of perfect tourism anchors first. You can select some tour guides with good images, good temperaments, and rich experience in explaining and provide them with live broadcasting training. At the same time, the choice of live broadcast form and picture should be in line with the habits of the public to draw the distance between the public and the audience and let the public feel the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and understand the culture of Luoyang peony in the live broadcasting room.

Deepen cooperation with social media platforms, constantly plan and launch hot short videos and hot topics, respond to hot topics and hot events promptly, realize secondary dissemination, especially with more in-depth works to achieve connotative dissemination, and set off a more lasting public opinion fervor. Adopting the forms of short video competitions, live PK, super talk interaction, etc., we encourage and guide local netizens, tourists, and citizens to participate widely and create self-content production from multiple perspectives and levels, forming a solid atmosphere of universal promotion and endorsement for Luoyang.

Pay attention to audience feedback and optimize communication content. Feedback from the audience directly or indirectly reflects the audience's emotional attitude and acceptance of the communication content. Through the audience's feedback, the communicator can understand the audience's attitude towards the content and demand timely adjustments to the content and the communication form, optimize the communication content, and improve the effect of communication. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the audience's feedback in the operation of the account and promptly reply. On the one hand, the audience will be seen and responded to increase the enthusiasm of sharing and interaction, and then attract more

audiences to participate in the interaction, effectively expanding the influence of communication; on the other hand, friendly interaction and communication between the two sides can bring the distance between the communicator and the audience closer.



## Conclude

Guided by the theory of symbolic interaction, analyze the extended components of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which mainly consists of 10 main activities and 30 linkage activities, and gain an in-depth understanding of the activities and cultural connotations of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, to validate that the people of Luoyang make use of the peony cultural symbols and the symbols of the peony festivals to interact with the local people and other regions, and to realize the revival of the city's identity.

The traditional invention theory is used as a guide to analyze the invention theory of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, where the interactive initiator, interactive content, interactive medium, and interactive receiver have all developed and changed. After that, the analysis of the industrialization process and market situation of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the benefits it has brought to the local community of Luoyang in terms of economy, culture, and environment concludes that the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has brought the local community of Luoyang intuitively economic income generation, the growth of GDP and employment, and foreign exchange earnings, and has made a significant contribution to the excavation of the local culture, marketing of the local image, cultivation of the cultural sentiments of the residents, and the transformation of the environment.

It puts forward the development suggestions that the China Peony Culture Festival should start to focus on the inheritance and protection of peony intangible cultural heritage in the future competitive development, stimulate the people's "cultural identity" and improve the participation, do an excellent job in the inheritance and protection of peony culture and enhance the city's soft power of culture; integrate all kinds of excellent festival resources to realize resource sharing; set up specialized festival agencies and cultivate professionals; improve the construction of the festival's brand image recognition; and increase the publicity to enhance the influence of the festival both at home and abroad.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Research Summary, Discussion, and Recommendation

#### 1. Research Summary

With the in-depth development of China's reform and opening up and the flourishing of tourism, many places have organized various forms of tourism festivals. These tourism festivals are mostly local attractions, specialties, folklore, and folklore named by tasting the flavor of the products, viewing the scenic spots, appreciating the local flavor, cultural stage, and economic opera to attract foreign investment, open up the market, to maximize the advantages of the local economy, to achieve the comprehensive benefits of tourism, culture, business, and trade to promote each other. The holding of these cultural and tourism festivals reflects, on the one hand, the gradual enhancement of the people's concept of commodity economy and the consciousness of reform and opening up; on the other hand, it also reflects that people are consciously combining the construction of socialist material civilization and spiritual civilization effectively based on inheriting and carrying forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

Apart from Luoyang, there are other areas in China where peony cultivation is more concentrated, such as Heze, Linxia, Pengzhou, Bozhou, etc. Luoyang is not the only region in China where peony cultural festivals are held. Apart from the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the Heze International Peony Tourism Festival and the Peng Zhou Peony Festival are larger-scale festivals. The most important reason why China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival can occupy a place among the tourism festivals organized with peony as the carrier is that China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is based on the culture of Luoyang peony, which has been gradually developed from the historical flower-appreciation activities and has been continuously inherited and interpreted in the new historical period, to make China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival have both cultural and economic values, and to differentiate itself from other competing brands, and other competing brands.

This paper belongs to the primary research category, using qualitative research methods, mainly collecting three types of information: (1) Research reports and related thesis literature from government documents and Internet systems. By ordering, organizing, and analyzing the literature, researcher seek relevant views, understanding, and information about the development history, cultural connotation, and content of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival activities. (2) The researcher went to different geographic spaces, including Luoyang Peony Museum, Luoyang Folklore Museum, Historical Museum of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, and Peony Non-heritage Cultural Exhibition, to obtain a large amount of first-hand information. (3) Sourced from the field survey data during the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival held from April 5 to May 5, 2023. The general interview method was used in the field survey, and the informants included the staff of the festival organizing committee, the staff of scenic spots, the local people of Luoyang, foreign tourists, peony culture research scholars, peony farmers, and so on. The participant-observation method was adopted to participate in and record the garden viewing, festival performances, cultural and sports activities, and economic and trade exchanges of the Peony Cultural Festival. Finally, under the support of relevant theories such as “symbolic interaction” and “invention of tradition,” the data were classified and organized through interpretation and content analysis, and the research results were presented in the form of descriptive analysis on this basis. The main work is as follows:

- (1) To study the history and development of Luoyang peony culture.

No culture can be generated without the natural environment, and culture is a product of society, and its generation mechanism is rooted in the social environment. Firstly, the causes of the rise of peony culture in Luoyang are studied by analyzing Luoyang’s geographical and social environments and the local people’s wisdom regarding peony cultivation. Secondly, the peony in Luoyang emerged in the Sui Dynasty, developed in the Tang Dynasty, and flourished in the Sui Dynasty. After the Yuan Dynasty, the position of Luoyang as a peony cultivation center began to weaken, and after the founding of New China, Luoyang started to make great efforts to revive the tradition of peony culture. By analyzing the cultivation of peonies in Luoyang in different historical periods and the peony ornamental customs of the people of Luoyang, we examined the historical origins of the formation of the Contemporary

Luoyang Peony Culture Festival from the history of the development of the peony culture in Luoyang. It is concluded that Luoyang's geography, society, and local wisdom have made the peony a success, and the peony has also made the city famous, known as the imperial capital of a thousand years and the city of peonies. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is a product of the modernization and development of Luoyang culture.

(2) To study the components and meaning changes of Luoyang peony cultural symbols in the dimension of symbolic interaction among individuals, groups, and societies to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural traditions of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

In the past, with the increasing variety of peony species in Luoyang and the expansion of the cultivation range, the peony ornamental custom gradually emerged in Luoyang, and people planted peonies, enjoyed peonies, tasted peonies, sang about peonies, and painted peonies. Peonies were continuously integrated into the culture and life of the Luoyang people and the people's thoughts and feelings; thus, a peony-related cultural phenomenon and peony-centered cultural system, namely, the peony culture of Luoyang, were formed. The symbolic elements of Luoyang peony culture include Luoyang peony viewing customs, peony literature, peony art, and various kinds of peony folk customs. With the help of literature, paintings, sculptures, and other carriers, Luoyang people constantly "personify" and "deify" the peony, and the peony has become a "love flower," symbolizing a happy life, a "hero flower" symbolizing loyalty and bravery in the hearts of Luoyang people. The peony has become the "love flower," representing a happy life; the "hero flower," symbolizing loyalty and bravery; the "gender flower," symbolizing female reproduction; the "wealth flower," symbolizing national prosperity; and the "happiness flower," representing people's well-being. The process of derivation of Luoyang peony cultural symbols is influenced by history and tradition, and through the interaction of Luoyang people, they have continuously evolved and become an essential part of Luoyang traditional culture. It has become a crucial part of the conventional culture of Luoyang. It has become a condensation and symbol of the Luoyang people's fine spiritual qualities, inspiring them to be enterprising and self-improve.

People in Luoyang interact with other individuals, groups, and societies through

peonies and peony cultural symbols. Different groups decode and understand different meanings of Luoyang peony culture, and the peony cultural symbols change from aesthetic symbols to national symbols and then to tourism symbols represented by the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to form people's overall impression of peony cultural symbols. It can be seen that the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is the result of the continuous interaction of the Luoyang people with the help of Luoyang peony cultural symbols.

(3) Study of the "The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China" from 1983 to 2022 from the traditional dimension of invention.

Nowadays, the impact of economic globalization and the rapid urbanization process constantly dissolve the local characteristics and impact the local economy. The place is always in the process of constant communication, integration, and reconstruction. As a result, the Luoyang municipal government, to promote the development of local industries and pay attention to the critical value of local cultural elements, attempts to utilize the tradition of Luoyang peony culture to realize the city's cultural renaissance. The Luoyang government started to organize the Luoyang Peony Festival in 1983, which has a history of development of 40 years. Still, it is not a newly invented thing but an invented tradition under the inheritance of the vast Luoyang peony culture.

First, analyze the three histories of the modern development of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. The Peony Flower Festival was selected as a national intangible cultural heritage project in 2008 and has been hosted by the Henan Provincial Government since 2001. It was renamed "The Luoyang Peony Festival of Henan Province" and upgraded to a national festival in 2011, renamed "The Peony Culture Festival of Luoyang China," which is one of the "Four Famous Festivals of China." From a municipal festival to a provincial festival to a national festival, Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is constantly developing and expanding. Secondly, analyze why the tradition was invented. Including the decisive role of the economic foundation, the decision-making and promotion of the official and elite classes, the influence and constraints of foreign cultures, and the recognition and promotion of the people of Luoyang, seek the motives and reasons for the changes of the Peony Culture Festival. Finally, analyze how the tradition was invented. The invention of the Peony

Culture Festival mainly focuses on three aspects, namely, the change of the rights of festival organizers, the series operation of festival contents, and the branding development of the festival, seeking the specific process of changes in the Peony Culture Festival.

Revealing that tradition is not an established product but a process that undergoes inheritance and change, the contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is precisely in the invention of the continual inheritance, and the formation of new inventions will continue to be inherited. The invention is for the better inheritance of tradition, and only combining the two can make the traditional culture endure. This kind of "invention of tradition" and festival reconstruction not only helps to reshape the traditional customs and cultural space of the local community and make it an important symbol to maintain the historical memory and cultural identity of the Luoyang people but also becomes an essential means to market the city's culture, to develop its economy, to emphasize its personality, and to build up its own identity.

(4) The research and analysis unit "The 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in 2023".

The time and space of this festival are the best conditions for in-depth contact with the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. Using the conceptual guidance of symbolic interaction and the invention of tradition, we will gain a deeper understanding of the activities and cultural connotations of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival as a means of verifying that the people of Luoyang are utilizing peony cultural symbols and peony festival symbols to interact with the local populace and to interact with other regions to realize the revival of the city's identity.

Firstly, guided by the theory of symbolic interaction, we analyze the extended components of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, which mainly consists of 10 main activities and 30 linkage activities, and gain an in-depth understanding of the activities and cultural connotations of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, to validate that the people of Luoyang make use of the peony cultural symbols and the symbols of the peony festivals to interact with the local people and other regions, and to realize the revival of the city's identity. Secondly, the traditional invention theory is used as a guide to analyze the invention theory of the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, where the interactive initiator, interactive content, interactive medium, and

interactive receiver have all developed and changed. After that, the analysis of the industrialization process and market situation of the 40th China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the benefits it has brought to the local community of Luoyang in terms of economy, culture, and environment concludes that the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has brought the local community of Luoyang intuitively economic income generation, the growth of GDP and employment, and foreign exchange earnings, and has made a significant contribution to the excavation of the local culture, marketing of the local image, cultivation of the cultural sentiments of the residents, and the transformation of the environment. The brand effect of the festival is among the best among the domestic festival brands, which is worth emulating by the festival brands in the early stage of development in China. Finally, it puts forward the development suggestions that the China Peony Culture Festival should start to focus on the inheritance and protection of peony intangible cultural heritage in the future competitive development, stimulate the people's "cultural identity" and improve the participation, do an excellent job in the inheritance and protection of peony culture and enhance the city's soft power of culture; integrate all kinds of excellent festival resources to realize resource sharing; set up specialized festival agencies and cultivate professionals; improve the construction of the festival's brand image recognition; and increase the publicity to enhance the influence of the festival both at home and abroad.

## **2. Research Discussion**

### **2.1 About China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.**

According to incomplete statistics, after 1980, there were more than 12,000 tourism festivals held one after another all over China. However, the number of tourism festivals that could be continuously held and flourished was very few, and most of them were suspended or canceled after a few sessions for various reasons. From 1983 to now, the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been successfully held 40 times. Unlike many tourist festivals and events around the country that are slowly disappearing, Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is becoming more and more distinctive and attractive to tourists and has evolved from a simple flower-viewing activity to a large-scale comprehensive cultural activity integrating flower-viewing,

lantern-viewing, sight-seeing and tourism, economy and trade, foreign exchanges, and cultural and sports activities, and has become a large-scale comprehensive cultural activity that has evolved from a smaller scale local tourism festivals into the ranks of the four major national tourism festivals, showing a strong vitality, at home and abroad has had a far-reaching impact.

The research on “The Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, China” is divided into three stages: the first stage was before 2001, during which the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang was in its initial stage, and there were few related studies, mainly the reports of some periodicals and newspapers on the peony industry and the holding of peony festivals in Luoyang. The second stage was from 2002 to 2010, when China attached importance to the construction of the cultural sector, and the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang was in a stage of rapid development. Scholars began to study the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang from the perspective of historical development, cultural connotation construction, festival cultural space, development countermeasures, and suggestions. For example, Zhang Nan (2008) studied the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang from the perspective of historical development and discussed the reference role of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang in organizing tourism festivals in other places; Bai Zhilun (2011) sorted out the evolution of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage and proposed development strategies for Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang. The third stage is from 2011 to the present. The Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang has gradually developed and matured. Academic circles have begun to study it from diversified perspectives, such as festival marketing strategies, branding, tourist loyalty, festivals, and urban economic benefits. For example, Zhang Xiaomei (2018) started the research on the impact of folk festivals on the local economy, culture, city brand, and ecological environment and affirmed the role of festivals in promoting urban development.

In summary, it can be seen that although there are achievements in studying the development overview of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang from the perspectives of history, sociology, and folklore, and related achievements in learning the brand building of Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang from the perspective of urban development, there are few studies in exploring the impact of Peony Culture

Festival in Luoyang, an invented tradition, on the urban development of Luoyang from the perspective of Self-Identity Revitalization. In the following, this paper will explore the new research model of urban festivals from the perspective that urban festivals are endowed with new-era connotations and reborn through continuous innovation, thus enhancing local cultural self-confidence and promoting regional economic and socially sustainable development.

## 2.2 Luoyang Peony Culture in the Dimension of Symbolic Interaction.

Flower culture is an integral part of traditional Chinese culture. Studying flower and plant culture has recently become a hot research topic. China has established such relevant societies and associations as the Ethnobotanical Society and the Chinese Flower Culture Research Society and has organized such academic forums as the International Symposium on Chinese Flower Culture and the Forest Culture Symposium, which have extensively promoted the research and development of Chinese flower culture.

Among the studies on peony culture, some scholars summarize the natural attributes of peony, such as the cultivation of varieties and growth habits. For example, Chen Pingping explores the origin, evolution, and classification of peonies from the perspective of biology and ancient books (Chen, 2010). Some scholars have studied peony from the aspects of peony literature, famous paintings, and operas, covering a wide range of topics. For example, Li Xiaoyun and Hui Fuping have sorted out and interpreted peony cultivation, the course of peony appreciation, peony literature, and peony art in Chinese history (Li & Hui, 2018). Comprehensively, many books and literature show that the current research on peonies is not only drilling and exploring the natural properties and scientific and technological cultivation of peonies but also thinking and summarizing the history, culture, and economic value of peonies and their development is characterized by diversification, multiple perspectives, and interconnections.

This paper analyzes the expression and cultural connotation of peony culture from the theory of symbolic interaction. Founded by American sociologist Mead and formally proposed by his student Brummer in 1937, the symbolic interaction theory focuses on the interaction between people. The theoretical application of symbolic interaction theory has been fruitful and widely used in interpersonal communication,

school education, media communication, psychological counseling, and other fields. Up to now, there is a limited amount of literature exploring the issues related to national cultural symbols and folk festivals based on the theory of symbolic interaction in the academic world. American sociologists Howard S. Becker and Michal M. McCall have elaborated on the role and significance of symbolic interactionism from historical, religious, and philosophical perspectives (Howard & Michal, 1990). Scholars Zhang Ji and Xu Honggang have studied the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of Chinese culture by both the subject and the guest in the process of interaction from a microscopic perspective (Zhang & Xu, 2019). According to Pierce, human thinking is a community behavior, and human beings cannot think outside of the group. Hence, the derivation process of all symbols carries the influence of history and tradition and is a continuous evolution. At the same time, due to the dynamism, openness, and continuity of the ideological process of Luoyang peony cultural symbols, the symbol of peony has gone through various metamorphoses and metaphors. It has advanced interactively from layer to layer.

It is widely recognized by semioticians that the world is made up of symbols, that everything and every event is made up of symbols, and that the meaning of each symbol is integrated to form the overall sense of the event. Similarly, festivals are made up of many symbols, which write the logic and rules of the festival's speech, and the festival's way of speaking tells participants the meaning of what the festival is trying to convey. Using the concept of symbolic interaction, we study the process by which the peony flower has been given meaning and used by people from the origin of the peony to the present day and the interaction between the peony and the peony culture of Luoyang people to form the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

### 2.3 China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the Dimension of Traditional Invention.

According to Eric Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition*, a tradition emerges quickly and is accepted by the public. The other is one whose beginning is an invention, i.e., the tradition itself is an invention. His main pointed: Tradition itself is constantly being invented and constructed. In the process of continuity over the generations, the organizers, time, space, cultural activities, and so on of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival are all in continuous invention and construction. The

fundamental intention of the festival has been changed from the folk flower-appreciation custom to the political need. The economic function of the modern Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been increasing under the intervention of the government power.

Instead of analyzing the significance of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in restoring traditions, it is better to explore what constitutes the tradition of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and how it was formed. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has become a tradition of creative invention, and the important thing for the sustainable development of contemporary festivals is to pass on the invented tradition. The study of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival should not only focus on the content of the festival but also on the time and space in which the festival took place, as well as the invention in the process of determining the formation of the festival, especially the inheritance, and invention in the festival. The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has become an intangible national cultural heritage. The protection and inheritance of the festival should start from the external form, but it should go beyond the form. We should study who inherits and invents the tradition and how the tradition is disseminated to deeply understand the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, whose cultural expressions are changing, but what remains unchanged is the people's continuous cognition of the traditional culture.

The idea of the invention of tradition reflects a philosophical problem of time, in which the past, the present, and the future are linked by the concept of tradition, which can exist in the past, in the present, and in the future. Therefore, we should cherish the traditions invented at present because the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has been held for forty years. During these forty years, many rituals have been invented and inherited since then and will continue to be inherited in the future, so joyous invention serves the traditions. It can make the traditions everlasting and ever-new.

#### 2.4 Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival Promotes Luoyang's Urban Revival

Different from the previous general analysis of the primary data and functions of folk festivals, this paper takes the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival as a case study and conducts exploratory research on the path of folk festivals to realize the sustainable development of the city through the theories of "the invention of

traditions” and “the renaissance of cultural identity.” Exploratory study. It expands the theoretical basis of the categorized research in these two fields, and the systematic and comprehensive investigation can make the results of this study fill the gaps in this specific academic field. The study finds that the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival mainly reflects the pulling effect on the economic development of Luoyang, as well as the promotion effect on the social culture of the city.

The pulling effect on Luoyang’s economic development. Prof. Huang Xiang (2018) has put forward the multiplier effect of tourism on the city’s economic growth. The so-called multiplier effect refers to the fact that the inflow of tourism spending into the place where it is held will produce a more significant economic impact because the correlation between the industries, known as the multiplier effect of tourism and the festivals, can make a multiplier effect. The Peony Cultural Festival has strongly driven the development of culture, commerce, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transportation, logistics, and other related industries in Luoyang and the surrounding areas, realizing shared prosperity. During the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, the scenic spots of Longmen Grottoes and Baima Temple in Luoyang, as well as the scenic spots of Zhengzhou, Luan Chuan, etc. in the neighboring counties and cities of Luoyang, saw a significant increase in the number of tourists during the festival, the occupancy rate of major hotels in the Luoyang city area was up to 80%, and the Chinese and foreign tourists received by significant travel agencies increased by 45% compared with the same period. The business people’s business turnover during the festival in Luoyang City increased by 35% compared with the weekdays, and the turnover in the shopping malls of Luoyang City directly increased by 30%. The turnover of shopping malls in Luoyang has reached its peak season, with an increase of 20% compared with the daily turnover.

Promotion effect on urban social culture. By holding the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang reaps economic and intangible effects, such as social and cultural effects (Hunter, 2016). Guided by peony culture, the Luoyang government has deeply explored, sorted out, and restored various cultural resources in Luoyang, including nature, history, folk customs, and economy, which promoted the diversified development of local culture, laid the foundation for Luoyang’s urban culture, and significantly improved Increase the popularity and reputation of the place. Folk

festivals are abnormal episodes in daily life, but because of their sensational effect and carnival nature, they can easily arouse widespread participation and leave deep memories among people (Graburn, 1983). Holding the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang has gained the understanding and support of the Luoyang people. Through the peony festival, participants can interact with the past, evoke people's dusty cultural memories, and form new collective memories; it allows participants to interact with the present, which improves citizens' quality and enhances their cohesion and identity.

Improvement effect of the urban environment. Improvement of urban "hard environment". To improve the city appearance of Luoyang and turn the festival into a people's festival, the Luoyang government will carry out urban beautification, traffic management, social security, logistics supply, and other improvement service projects before the Peony Cultural Festival is held every year. This series of urban construction projects is called the "Flower Festival Project," and the continuous Flow Festival Project has accelerated the pace of the construction of Luoyang's urban infrastructure, enhanced the quality of urban service, and improved the urban service function (Yang, 2021). Improvement of the urban "soft environment." As the level of the Peony Cultural Festival has increased, the Luoyang government has implemented policies to benefit the people, such as free admission to tourist attractions and strict control of the price increase of catering and accommodation, which has forced tourism enterprises to develop development concepts and improve service quality, further enhancing the sense of gain and happiness of the masses. Especially during the festival, high-level academic exchange conferences and professional forums are held to activate the urban cultural atmosphere and create a festive academic atmosphere. At the same time, well-known domestic and foreign experts and scholars in related fields can be hired to bring new urban renewal to urban construction, which will play an essential role in promoting the entire urban civilization construction and improving the urban soft environment in Luoyang.

The Promotion effect on the Quality of citizens. The content of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang is characterized by artistry, culture, science, and technology. With the spread of the activity content, people will be exposed to many new things and advanced ideas. People will enhance their horizons through the cultural atmosphere and cultivate their sentiments through artistic appreciation, which will gradually encourage them to abandon outdated concepts, backward consciousness, and inappropriate behaviors and pursue scientific and technological progress, innovation, unity, and cooperation. With the improvement of the influence of Luoyang, tourists from all over the world with different personal statuses, political systems, economic levels, religious beliefs, philosophical concepts, and other backgrounds gather here, improving the quantity and quality of urban talents. It promotes the cultivation of skills in conference management, reception services, security, and other aspects, and some outstanding talents automatically and spontaneously improve their literacy in language and international knowledge to become unique talents for festivals.

Subsequent effects of festivals. The stimulating effect of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on Luoyang City is not limited to the immediate impact created at that time. However, it is all-round and continuous, with alternate amplification and overall improvement (Zhang, 2006). By holding the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, the people of Luoyang have mastered much information and tapped many business opportunities; for the city of Luoyang, it has improved the local infrastructure, optimized the social environment, created a good investment environment, and created a group of potential investors. These subsequent effects cannot be immediately apparent. However, they will penetrate all areas of Luoyang society as an invisible and lasting force and can be highlighted through time accumulation. Therefore, we cannot ignore the sustainable and subsequent effects of holding modern folk festivals.

### **3. Research recommendation**

#### **3.1 Suggestions for utilization of research results**

This study uses the basic theories and methods of “symbolic interaction” and

“invention of tradition” to construct a research system on a specific folk festival event - the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. The combination of the two provides a new approach to the study of folk festivals. On the one hand, it enriches and expands the specific application fields of the academic theory of symbolic interaction and traditional invention; on the other hand, it also deepens the theoretical research on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, a folk festival with Chinese characteristics. Supplement to basic information. This study can also serve as an important knowledge base for current research on urban revitalization strategies led by festival culture.

### 3.2 Suggestions for the next research

The first is the lack of theoretical excavation and understanding. Because most of the studies on symbolic interaction theory and traditional invention theory are in foreign language literature and works, their limitations in theoretical comprehension and observation of festival phenomena may not be accurate enough in applying and grasping the use of symbolic interaction theory and traditional invention theory in folklore festivals. There may be controversy in the degree of in-depth application of the specific application and interpretation and deduction of the interpretations. Therefore, the subsequent research needs to further optimize and improve the theoretical analysis framework of urban folk festivals based on an in-depth understanding of academic theories.

The second is the limitation of fieldwork. According to the author's statistics, the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was held for 45 days, with more than 45 activity locations, including seven city districts: Old Town, Xi Gong District, Chan He District, Jian Xi District, Yanshi District, Meng Jin District, and Luo Long District. And seven counties: Xinan County, Luan Chuan County, Song County, Ru Yang County, Yi Yang County, Luo Ning County, and Yichuan County. The number of festivals reached 210, and it was difficult for the author to do comprehensive and in-depth fieldwork due to the impact of time, workforce, and funding. There is still a lot of expandable research space in this study, and the subsequent team-based fieldwork will be the author's focus to consider.

Finally, there is a lack of attention to multiple subjects. The participating subjects of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival involve various subjects such as government,

enterprises, media, tourists, residents, etc. The article pays more attention to the two subjects of organizers and tourists. In contrast, the other subjects are less involved and are not divided into organizers and tourists in a more detailed way. In the future, more festival subjects can be focused on, and information on different subjects can be collected, especially the collection and analysis of photo information.

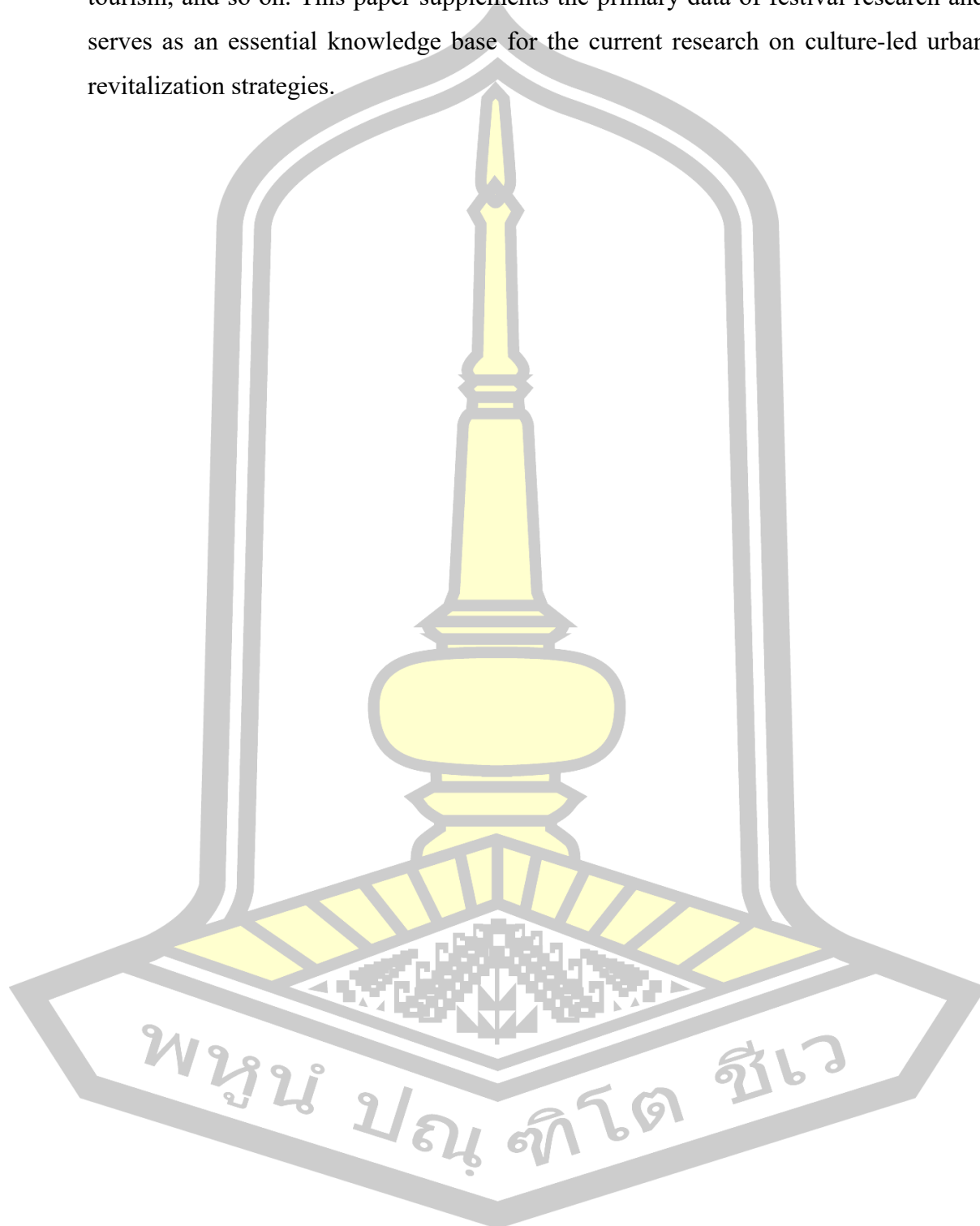
#### **4. Research Findings**

##### **4.1 Theory and Method Findings**

Constructing a research system on a specific tourism festival, the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, with the fundamental theories and methods of symbolic interaction and traditional invention, is the most significant innovation of this paper. The combination of the two provides a new perspective for the study of urban folklore festivals. On the one hand, it enriches and expands the specific application areas of the invented academic theories of symbolic interaction and tradition. On the other hand, it deepens the theoretical study of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, a folk festival with Chinese characteristics.

According to the peony cultural tradition with symbolic significance in the region, modern Luoyang people have "invented" region-specific peony festival ceremonies and peony festival culture, which contain rich and diversified meanings, and thus have become the cultural access for people to know the region, especially under the influence of globalization and the pressure of national and local competition. In particular, under the impact of the wave of globalization and the pressure of federal and regional competition, festivals have been gradually symbolized and become an essential means for cities to market their cultures, highlight their personalities, and build their identities. The analysis of the formation, development, restoration, inheritance, and invention of the invented tradition of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival aims to explore how actors can organize the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to create a city event, form a city business card with unique labels, and realize the construction of urban identity and cultural renaissance in Luoyang. Although the China Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival contains the abovementioned critical academic points, previous studies on the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival have mainly focused on the collection of primary data on the

festival, the analysis of the festival's functions, and the development of the festival's tourism, and so on. This paper supplements the primary data of festival research and serves as an essential knowledge base for the current research on culture-led urban revitalization strategies.



#### 4.2 Innovations in Viewpoint

Under the guidance of symbolic interaction theory and traditional invention theory and method, this paper has many innovations in viewpoints, mainly in:

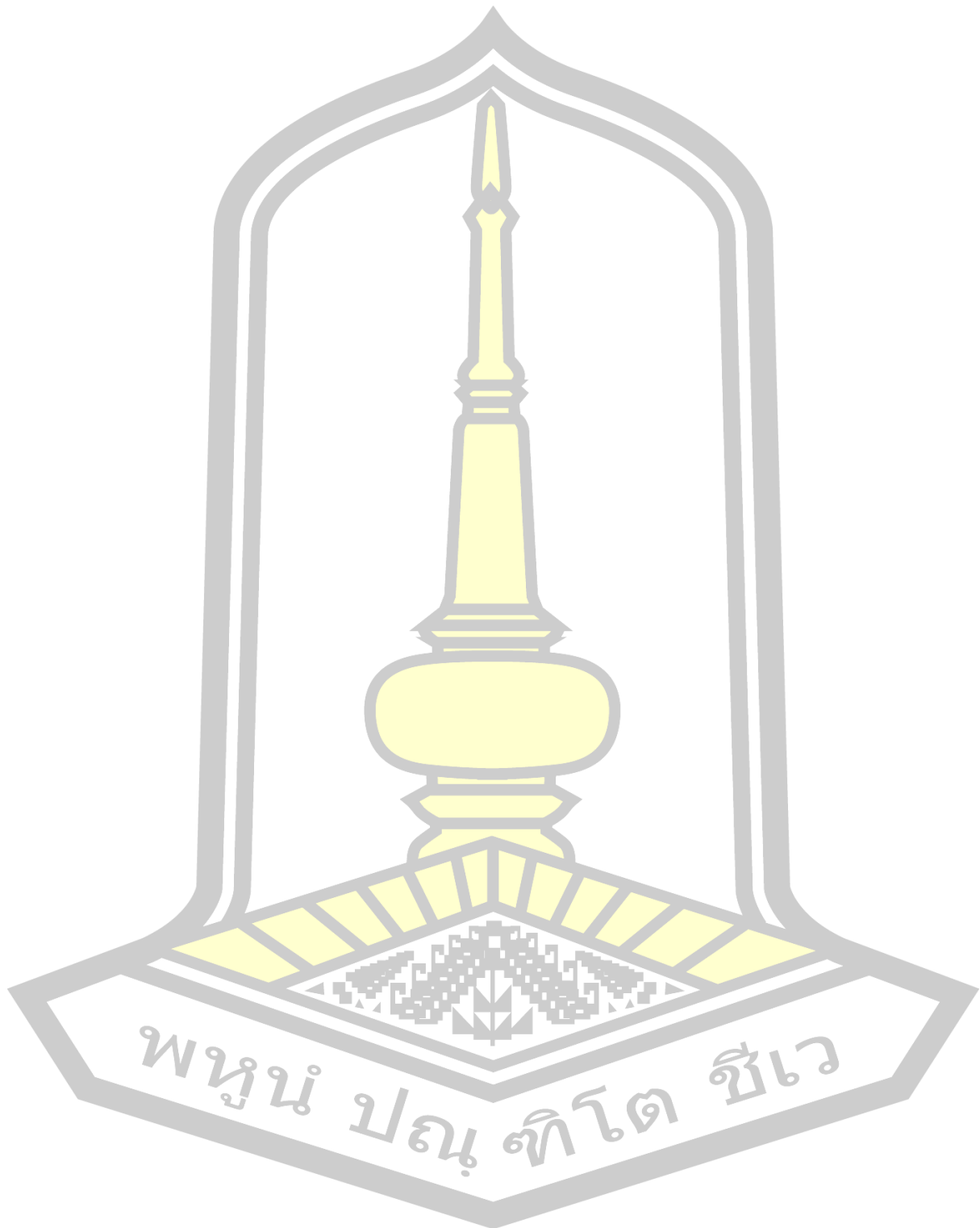
Firstly, there is festival culture in every region of the world, and festival culture in the different areas shows different development trajectories and manifestations originating from the regions' different natural geographic, political, cultural, and economic environments.

Secondly, festivals are composed of many cultural symbols, which contain rich and diversified meaning connotations, exploring the cultural carriers of festivals under the dimension of interaction between individuals, groups, and societies and peony cultural symbols, and finding new paths of research relationship between festivals and cities from the cultural connotations of festivals.

Thirdly, from the process of formation, development, restoration of inheritance, and invention of the invented tradition of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, three stages of festival development are summarized, with stage 1.0 being the traditional folklore festival, stage 2.0 being the modern featured festival, and stage 3.0 being the featured brand festival. It is proposed that valuable traditions are constantly given meanings, and traditions are all inventions in line with the requirements of the times. Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is improving and is widely recognized at home and abroad due to its cultural, historical, and socio-economic values.

Fourthly, the origin and development of festivals is a process of gradual formation and subtle and slow penetration into social life. How do actors gradually form a city business card with a unique label by organizing urban folk festivals? Festivals contribute to the construction of urban identity and cultural renaissance, including the pulling effect of economic development, the promotion of urban society and culture, the improvement of the urban environment, the enhancement of the quality of citizens, as well as an all-around, continuous, alternately amplified, and overall enhancement of the subsequent effects.

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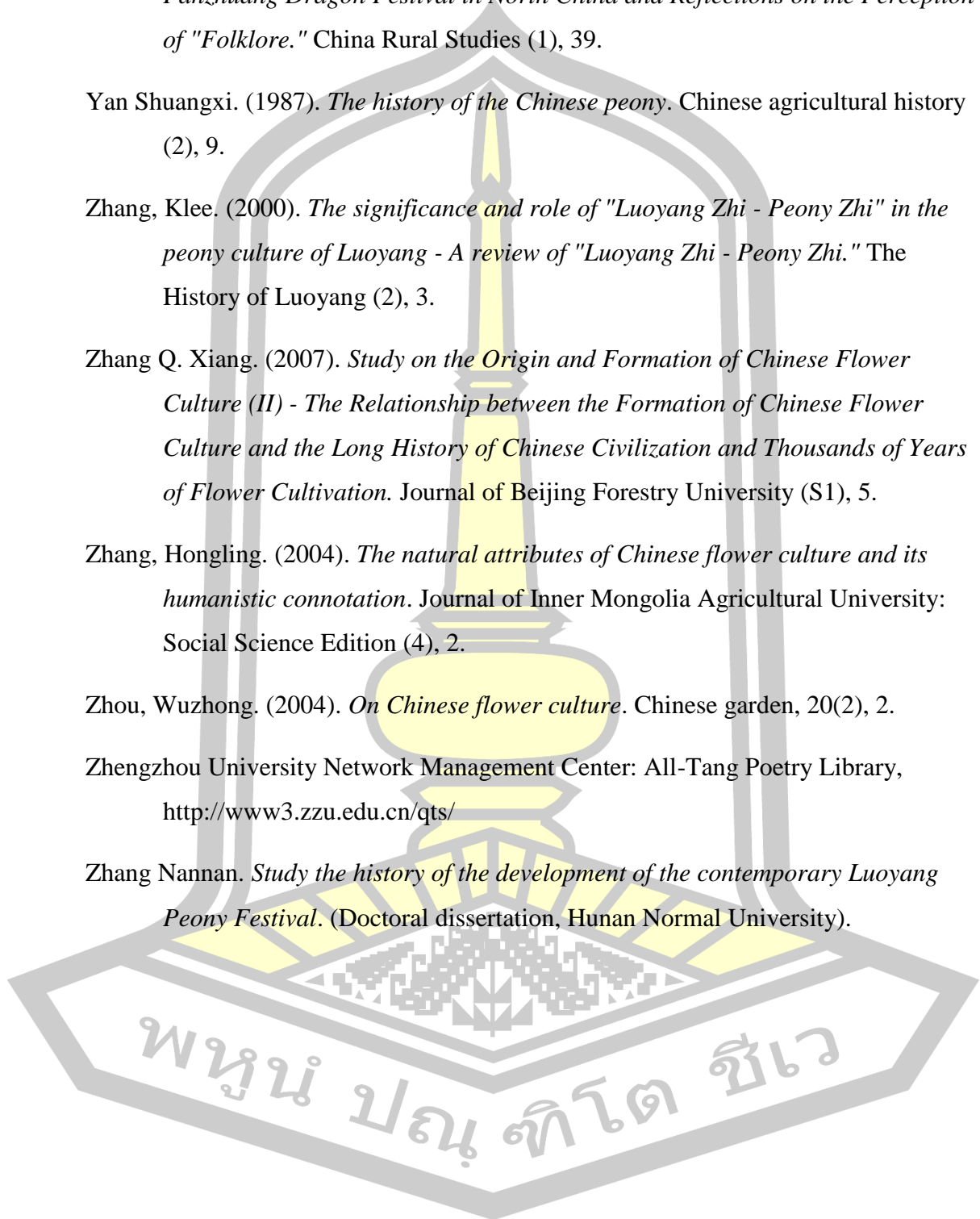
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