

# **The Invention of Tradition of Folk Festivals in the Context of Urban Revitalization: A Case Study of the Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang China**

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## **Abstract**

"Luoyang Peony is peerless in the world". Modern Luoyang people have "invented" the regional unique peony festival ceremony and 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 region. In this study, qualitative research methods are used and the representative Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang is taken as a case study. The objectives of this study are: (1) to study the process of formation, development, restoration and invention of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival using the theory of "Invention of Tradition"; (2) to study the promotion of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival to the urban renaissance of Luoyang using the theory of "Urban Revitalization".

The literature method, general interview method and participant observation method were used to obtain research information. Research findings: (1) The Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival is not a fresh invention, but a tradition invented under the inheritance of the Luoyang peony culture; (2) In contemporary times, the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival continues to form new inventions that continue to be inherited, and the Festival promotes the development of the city of Luoyang in terms of the economy, culture, and urban environment.

**Keywords:** Urban folk festivals; Invention of tradition; Urban revitalization; The Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, China

## **Introduction**

Peony is a kind of precious flower unique to China. It is graceful, elegant, beautiful, and fragrant, and a symbol of the prosperity and happiness of the Chinese nation. Located in the west of Henan Province, China, Luoyang has more than 5,000 years of civilization history, more than 4,000 years of urban history, and more than 1,500 years of capital establishment. It is one of the first batches of famous historical and cultural cities in China and has a profound historical and cultural heritage (Yuan & Wan, 2002). Luoyang is one of the birthplaces of wild peonies in China, and its climate and soil conditions are very suitable for the growth of peonies. Since ancient times, there has been a folk proverb "To plant good peonies, you must use Luoyang soil". In addition, Luoyang people continue to explore peony cultivation techniques. Currently, there are more than 1,380 varieties of peonies in Luoyang, making Luoyang a resource repository of precious peony varieties. The geography, society, history of Luoyang, and local people's peony cultivation wisdom have made peonies a success, and peony has also become famous in the city of Luoyang, which is known as "the Millennium Imperial Capital and Peony City" (Figure 1).

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**Figure 1** Peony of Luoyang, China  
Source: Photographed by author, 2023

In the past, with the increasing variety of peony varieties in Luoyang and the continuous expansion of cultivation scope, the custom of peony appreciation gradually rose in Luoyang. In addition to appreciating the static beauty of peonies, people have stronger emotions toward the peony. Luoyang people continue to "personify" and "deify" peonies with the help of literature, painting, sculpture, and other media, so peonies have become the "love flower" symbolizing a happy life, the "hero flower" for loyalty and bravery, and the "hermaphrodite flower" for female reproduction, the "flower of wealth" for national prosperity in the hearts of Luoyang people (Lei, 2008). Peony culture has become an important part of traditional culture in Luoyang and a condensation and symbol of the excellent spiritual qualities of the Luoyang people, inspiring people to be enterprising and constantly striving for self-improvement.

At present, the impact of economic globalization and the rapid urbanization process continues are constantly dissolve local characteristics and impact the local economy, and local areas are always in the process of constant communication, integration, and reconstruction. As a result, the Luoyang Municipal Government attaches great importance to the important value of local cultural elements and attempts to achieve urban revitalization by using peony cultural tradition in Luoyang in order to promote the development of local industries. Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in *The Invention of Tradition* that the so-called "tradition" is invented, which must imply a connection with the past and form a new tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2004). Appreciating peonies is a traditional custom of Luoyang people, and it has a history of 40 years since Luoyang government began to hold the Luoyang Peony Festival in 1983. However, it is not a newly invented thing, but an "invented tradition" under the vast Luoyang peony culture inheritance.

Although "Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, China" contains the above extremely important academic perspectives, previous research on the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang mainly focused on basic data collection of the festival, functional analysis of the festival, and tourism development of the festival. This paper is a supplement to the basic data of festival research, and can also be used as an important knowledge base for the current research of culture-led urban revitalization strategies.

## Research Objectives

This paper uses the two academic concepts of "invention of tradition" and "urban revitalization" to achieve two main research objectives.

1. To Study the formation, development, restoration, inheritance and invention changes of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, an "invented tradition" process;
2. To Study how actors create urban events by organizing the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, form a city business card with a unique label, and achieve Luoyang urban identity construction and cultural revitalization.

## Literature Review

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 industry 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 aspects of historical development, cultural connotation construction, festival cultural space, development countermeasures and suggestions. For example, Zhang Nan 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 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 and academic circles have begun to study it from diversified perspectives such as festival marketing strategies, festival branding, tourist loyalty, festivals, and urban economic benefits. For example, Zhang Xiaomei started from 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 studying 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 "urban renewal". In the following, this paper will try to explore the new research model of urban festivals from the perspective that urban festivals are endowed with new era connotation and reborn through continuous innovation, thus enhancing local cultural self-confidence and promoting regional economic and social sustainable development.

## Research Methodology

This article uses qualitative research methods. The main area of the study is Luoyang City, Henan Province and its surrounding counties and districts. These places are the venue for the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and the core areas for the origin, development and spread of Luoyang peony culture. Research data mainly comes from the following three aspects:

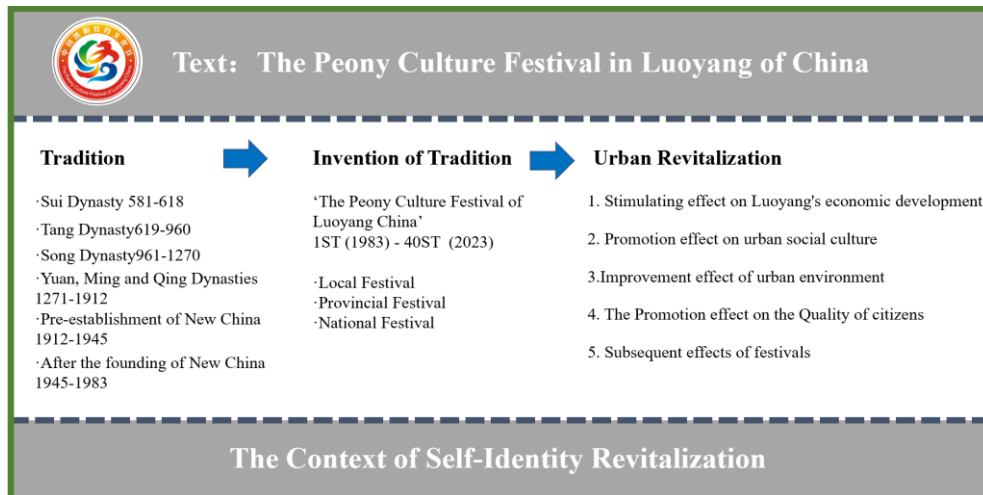
General interview method. Field survey data from the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival, held from April 5 to May 5, 2023. Luoyang Wangcheng Park, Luoyang Sui and Tang Dynasty Ruins Park, Luoyang Xiyuan Park, and Luoyang "National Garden" Park are important areas for visitors to enjoy peonies, interact with the festival, spread peony culture, and trade in peony economy during the festival. The researcher interviewed the staff of the festival organizing committee, scenic spot staff, local people in Luoyang, foreign tourists, peony culture research scholars, peony farmers, etc. in these areas through the general interview method to collect the information related to the Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang and to understand the changes of the festival activities in Luoyang Peony Culture Festival. In order to protect the interviewees' identities, the comments on the result part of the paper have been anonymized.

Participant observation method. The participant-observation method was adopted to participate in and record the peony cultural festival's garden viewing, festival performances, cultural and sports activities, and economic and trade exchanges. At the same time, we went to Pingle Village in Mengjin County, Luoyang City, which is called "the first village of peony painting in China" and has a profound peony cultural heritage, which is conducive to a comprehensive understanding of the development of peony culture and the development of the peony culture industry in Luoyang City.

Literature method. Sourced from government documents and Internet system of research reports and related dissertation literature. Government documents are obtained mainly through Luoyang Peony Museum, Luoyang Museum and Luoyang Convention and Exhibition Center, from which the original documents, folk customs and academic research results of Luoyang Peony Culture and Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival are recorded, stored and displayed in physical form. The collection of literature in the Internet system is mainly through the NCKI database, and through the organization and analysis of the literature, it seeks for opinions, understanding and information related to the development history, cultural connotation, and activity content of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

During the process of data collection, in order to facilitate a more accurate retrospective analysis of the data, a large number of photographs and audio-visual materials were taken using cameras and video equipment, and a large number of audio interviews were collected using recording equipment with the consent of the interviewees. Eventually, the data were classified and organized through interpretation and content analysis, on the basis of which the findings were presented in the form of descriptive analysis.

## Research Framework



**Figure 2** Research framework diagram

Source: Produced by author, 2023

## Research Findings

### 1. Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the Context of Traditional Invention

#### 1.1 History and changes of Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang

People in Luoyang started planting peonies in the Sui Dynasty, flourished in the Tang Dynasty, and became world-famous in the Song Dynasty. It has a history of more than 1,600 years. To conduct an in-depth exploration of the Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, we should start with the historical origin of Luoyang and peony (Figure 3). Before the Sui Dynasty (before AD 581), wild peonies were used as medicinal materials, but few people appreciated and planted them. During the Sui Dynasty (AD 581-AD 618), Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty built "Xiyuan" in Luoyang, announcing to the world the supply of precious flowers and plants. Since then, peonies were cultivated artificially and entered the royal gardens for the first time. The planting of peonies in the imperial gardens of the Sui Dynasty gradually affected the officials and people below, and the atmosphere of appreciating peonies quickly developed and prospered.

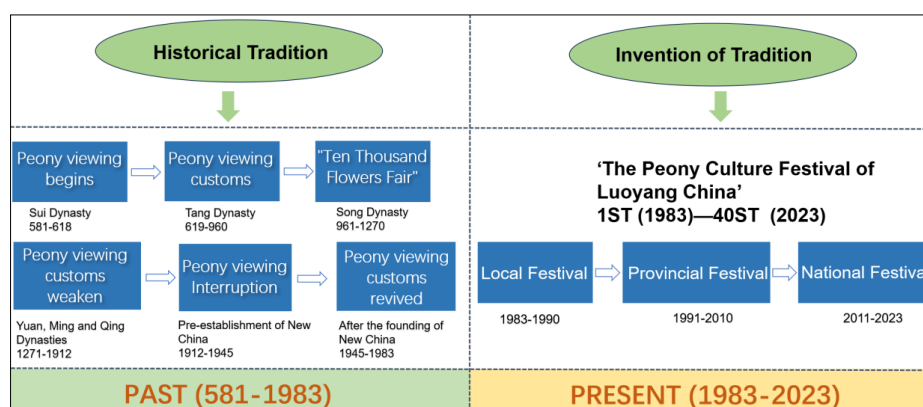
The Sui Dynasty only had a history of 27 years, and peonies could not be planted on a large scale in such a short period. Therefore, the first period of prosperity for peonies in the history of Luoyang was the Tang Dynasty which followed the Sui Dynasty. The Emperor Li of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-AD 907) was originally a high-ranking official in the Sui Dynasty, so the practice of planting peonies in the imperial garden was passed down. In particular, Empress Wu Zetian of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty was very fond of peonies and planted them all over Luoyang (Liu, 2000). At that time in Luoyang, everyone from the upper class to the lower class began to plant peonies, view peonies, chant peonies, paint peonies, and appreciate peonies... People continued to integrate their thoughts and feelings into peonies, and the peony culture in Luoyang has been fully developed. In particular, a large number of peony poems emerged in the Tang Dynasty. The peony poems of these

famous poets were widely disseminated, which further improved the influence of Luoyang Peony across the country.

During the Song Dynasty (AD 961-AD 1127), Chinese society had been in a stable state for a long time. The commodity economy was developed, the scale of cities continued to expand, and the cultural life of citizens was rich, which promoted the improvement of peony cultivation technology and the expansion of cultivation scale. Peonies began to move out of royal gardens and enter into the homes of ordinary families, becoming a flower that everyone could appreciate. The development of peonies in Luoyang entered its heyday. During this period, a festive flower-appreciating custom activity - the "Ten Thousand Flowers Fair" appeared in Luoyang (Li, 1998). During the "Ten Thousand Flowers Fair", people appreciate peonies during the day and go to the flower market to buy peonies and watch the peony lantern display at night, which is the beginning of the custom of appreciating flowers and watching lanterns in contemporary Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang.

During the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties (AD 1271-AD 1912), political and economic status in Luoyang declined, peony customs tended to weaken, and the center of peony cultivation in China began to shift from Luoyang. In the early period of the New China (1913-1945 AD), Luoyang peony custom almost interrupted due to social unrest. After the founding of the New China (after 1945 AD), the society and politics were stable and the people lived and worked in peace and contentment. The Luoyang government began to delve into scientific research on peonies, introduced new varieties of peonies, expanded the planting area, and Luoyang peony cultural customs began to recover. It can be seen that the rise and fall of peonies is closely related to the rise and fall of countries and cities.

With the reform and opening up, the Luoyang government began to hold the first "Peony Flower Fair in Luoyang" in 1983. The Peony Fair was selected as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage Project (category: folk custom) in 2008. It was hosted by the Henan Provincial Government in 2001 and renamed "Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan". In 2011, it was upgraded to a national festival and renamed "Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, China", which is one of the "Four Famous Festivals in China".



**Figure 3** History and Changes of Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, China  
Source: Produced by author, 2023

## 1.2 Due to the requirement of time, peony cultural tradition in Luoyang was invented

### (1) The decisive effect of economic foundation

As a folk culture, festivals belong to the superstructure and are bound to be determined by the economic foundation, that is, what kind of economic foundation there is, what kind of cultural form is compatible with it, and the traditions that are compatible with it will be inherited, while those that cannot be adapted will slowly change or disappear (Rigsby, 2016). Determined by the national economic form in different periods, the Luoyang Peony Festival has gradually transformed from agricultural economic activities in ancient China to modern planned economic activities to modern market economic activities. It can be seen that the economic foundation connoted with the development of social productivity is the social background and the key internal cause that promotes the change of connotation and extension of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang. In the early 1980s, as local economic development became more vigorous, the Luoyang government noticed the strong symbiosis between tourism, culture, and festivals, brought together urban space and peony cultural resources and other elements at the fastest speed, and attracted people's attention using the "explosive" Peony Festival with numerous connotations and expressions such as entertainment, social interaction, sharing and revelry, hoping to provide Luoyang with an excellent opportunity to develop the market through mass gathering.

### (2) Decision-making and promotion by officials and elites

In 1959, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Luoyang and made work instructions: peonies should be vigorously planted in Luoyang City to promote the development of peonies. In 1960, Chairman Liu Shaoqi came to Luoyang for inspection work. He praised the cultivation of peonies as a "beautiful cause." Under the care of the leaders of the Party Central Committee, Luoyang Peony has been rapidly restored and developed. Another important turning point was that Zhao Puchu, the president of the Chinese Buddhist Association, visited Luoyang and wrote the inscription in Xiyuan Park in 1979: "Luoyang Peony is peerless in the world". Zhao Puchu's influence and inscription were very persuasive and greatly promoted the holding of the Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang. In 1979, the Peony History Society was established in Luoyang. Researchers found that Luoyang Peony had a great influence in ancient China. Luoyang cultural people proposed to hold a peony festival to recreate the historical spectacle of peony viewing in Luoyang (Zhang, 2007). The officials and national elites play the role of the national mainstream discourse and usually have the right to speak. Affected by the decision-making and organizational factors of the officials and elites in Luoyang, the city of Luoyang is quietly changing because of Peony.

### (3) The influence and restriction of foreign culture

In 1981, Luoyang established a friendly city with Okayama, Japan. Through this exchange, Luoyang people learned that Japan holds a Cherry Blossom Festival that has excellent economic and social benefits every year. Luoyang people began to think about the potential value of peonies around them. In 1964, it began to hold the "Zigong Lantern Festival" in Chongqing, China, which was very famous in China at that time, attracting tourists from all over the country to watch it and bringing huge economic benefits to Chongqing. In addition, in the early 1980s, there was a craze for selecting "city flowers" all over the world. Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Kunming successively selected their city flowers. Okayama in Japan, Tours in France, etc. that have established friendly relations with Luoyang City also have their city flowers, which seem like a city card for a time, highlighting the unique charm of a city. Luoyang has had the custom of holding peony events since ancient

times, and the deep influence of foreign culture has accelerated the breeding of the contemporary Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang.

#### (4) Recognition and promotion of Luoyang people

Peony is large in shape and beautiful in color, with high aesthetic value, and is endowed with rich cultural implications by the Luoyang people. The flowers contain culture and embody the moral character and character of the Luoyang people, which gives people the courage to overcome difficulties, and peony has long been a part of daily life in Luoyang. In the context of economic globalization, places often lose their unique significance and become places that have stripped away their cultural significance and served the economy. Standardization and commercialization have weakened the characteristics and diversity of regional culture, and the urban crisis of convergence has emerged (Yang, 2021). Luoyang Peony Festival was greatly promoted by locals who feared collective amnesia, and new immigrants who experienced anxiety as they assimilated into the local culture. The people are not only the inheritors of traditions but also the creators and enjoyers of inventions. If Luoyang peony culture is the blood and DNA of the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang people are the skeletal support of the Peony Cultural Festival.

1.3 "Traditions" are reinventions that conform to the development requirements of the times

Why was tradition invented? This question includes two aspects: One is why tradition was invented. This is the motivation and reason for seeking changes in the Peony Cultural Festival; the other is how was the tradition invented. This is the specific process of seeking changes in the Peony Cultural Festival (Graburn, 2008). From the 1st "Luoyang Peony Festival" in 1983 to the 40th "Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, China" in 2023, the Luoyang peony cultural tradition has the following inventions:

#### (1) Extend the festival holding time

The normal flowering period of peony is relatively short (usually 7-15 days). Luoyang people gradually extended the festival time of peony by artificially controlling the flowering period, expanding the planting area, and introducing foreign varieties and other peony cultivation wisdom. The initial duration of the Peony Culture Festival was 10 days, which was later adjusted to 15 days, and then extended to one month. Combined with the May Day holiday, it formed the characteristic "Golden Month of Peony Tourism" in Luoyang (Table 1).

**Table1** Time Changes of Luoyang Peony Festival Source: Produced by author, 2023

Year	Session	Date of holding	Number of days
1983-2001	1st-19th Session	April 15 - April 25	10
2002-2004	The 20th-22nd session	April 10 - April 25	15
2005-2023	The 23rd-40th Session	April 5 - May 5	30



(2) Expand the radiation scope of festivals

Peony is widely planted in Luoyang, and there are more than 20 large-scale peony ornamental gardens in modern Luoyang City (Table 2). Peony planting in Luoyang has evolved from royal gardens to private gardens, paid gardens, open gardens, and then to public courtyards and city streets. Peony appreciation has gradually spread from the royal household to royal aristocrats, elites, and ordinary people. Luoyang has gradually become a veritable "Peony Plaza".

**Table2** Summary Table of Peony Planting Areas in Luoyang Source: Produced by author, 2023

Year of construction	Name of Peony Garden	Attribute
587-1127	Xiyuan Peony Garden and Peony Garden in White Horse Temple	Royal
619-1912	Pingquan Villa, Guiren Garden, Wuqiao Villa, and Peony Garden in Linfang Hall Wei's Peony Garden, Tianwangyuan Garden, Li Shilang's Guiren Garden, etc.	Private
1955-2002	Luoyang Wangcheng Park, Luoyang National Peony Garden, Luoyang Shenzhou Peony Garden, Luoyang Peony Garden, Luoyang National Garden, etc.	Charge
1956-2018	Xiyuan Park, Luoyang International Peony Garden, Chinese National Garden, Xiaolangdi Peony Garden, Jiguandong Peony Garden, Baiyun Mountain Peony Garden, etc.	Open

(3) Enhance the level of the festival and its objectives

Luoyang Peony Festival has experienced three leap-forward developments, from a local-level festival to a provincial-level festival and then to a national-level festival, with the influence of radiating the world, and festival management has gradually become institutionalized, standardized and scientific.

Stage 1.0: Traditional folk festivals. The first "Luoyang Peony Fair" from 1983 to the 8th in 1990 was hosted by the Luoyang Municipal Government and was a local-level festival. Its objective is to make friends with flowers, promote Luoyang and develop the economy. It is a traditional folk festival based on peony culture and folk activities such as peony and lantern viewing.

Stage 2.0: Modern characteristic festivals. The 9th "Luoyang Peony Festival in Henan" from 1991 to the 20th in 2001 was promoted to a provincial festival and sponsored by the Henan Provincial Government. The objective of the festival is to "set up a stage for flower fairs and perform economic, trade, tourism and opera", with a focus on enhancing urban economic growth. It is a comprehensive modern folk festival mainly consisting of exhibitions, cultural and sports activities, and economic and trade exchanges.

Stage 3.0: Special brand festival. The 21st Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang, China from 2002 to the 40th in 2023 was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and the Henan Provincial Government and was upgraded to a national festival. The objective of the festival is to "put people first, take peony as the medium, culture as the soul, expand exchanges and cooperation, and promote scientific development", with a focus on the spiritual and cultural needs of the people. It integrates many cultural, artistic, commercial and other related content and activity sections to explore the characteristic brand festival mode.

(4) Enrich the content of festival activities

The Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang is a folk festival that evolved from the custom of flower appreciation. The festival has no fixed rituals and processes and is somewhat arbitrary. However, during the festival every year, the organizers will hold various large-scale activities to create a grand, warm, and carnival atmosphere(Figure 4). In the early stages of the festival, the activities mainly included flower viewing, lantern viewing, and sightseeing. The number of activities was limited and the form was single, making it difficult to create a climax to the Flower Fair. Since the third session of the China-Foreign Economic and Technological Fair, the economic value of the festival has become prominent. After being hosted by the Henan Provincial Government, the content of the activities has become more colorful, mainly including folk activities, economic and trade activities, cultural and sports activities, and tourism activities, which is convenient for participation in the activity form. After 2010, under the guidance and leadership of the Ministry of Culture, the festival activities were divided into main activities and special activities, focusing on in-depth exploration of Luoyang's history and peony cultural connotations. During this period, modern activities such as high-level economic and trade, exhibition exchanges, achievement sharing, talent exchange forums, and sports competitions were held, highlighting the entertainment, branding, and international significance of festivals.

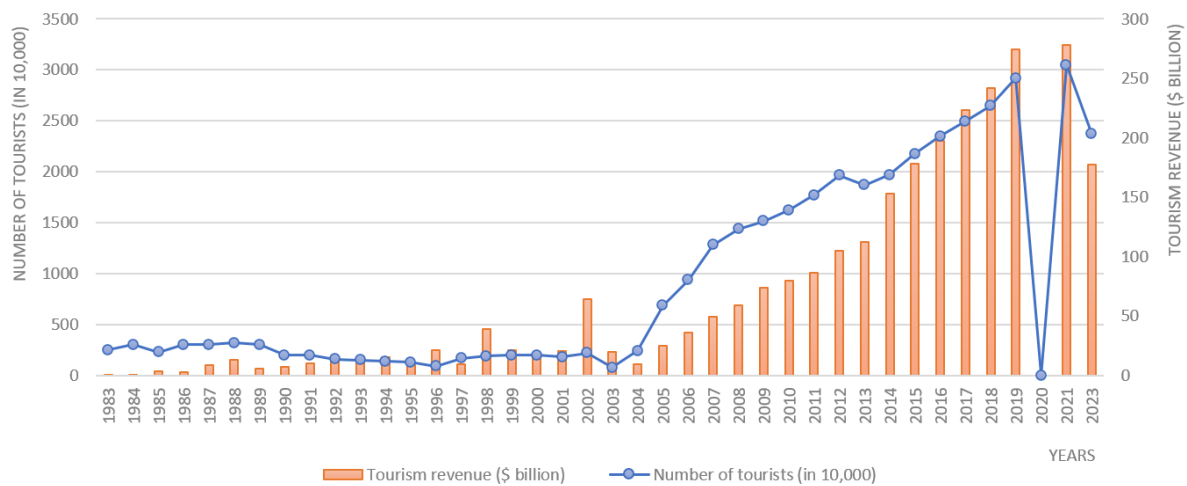


**Figure 4** Event Photos of the Peony Culture Festival in Luoyang, China  
Source: Luoyang Daily, 2022

## 2. Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang promotes the urban revitalization of Luoyang

### 2.1 Stimulating effect on Luoyang's economic development

According to statistics from relevant departments, the relation between modern urban festivals and social economy is 1:9, that is, every RMB1 Yuan of income from festival activities will bring RMB 9 Yuan of linkage value to related industries in society (Zhang, 2016). Peony Cultural Festival has effectively promoted the development of culture, commerce, accommodation, catering, entertainment, transportation, logistics and other related industries in Luoyang and surrounding areas, achieving common prosperity. Based on the data report released by the Luoyang Government Website after the closing of an annual festival, the author sorted out the number of tourists and total tourism revenue in Luoyang during the festival from 1983 to 2023 and drew a trend chart (Figure 5). Except for the impact of SARS in 2003 and COVID-19 in 2020 and 2022, the numbers of tourists and total tourism revenue have continued to increase over the past 40 years.



**Figure 5** Statistics of the Number of Visitors and Total Tourism Revenue of Previous Peony Cultural Festivals in Luoyang  
Source: Produced by author, 2023

From 1983 to 2004, the Peony Festival was hosted by Luoyang City and Henan Provincial Governments, and the market operation and publicity were not high. As can be seen from Table 3, the number of visitors remained at 2 million, and the total tourism revenue was about RMB 1-2 billion Yuan, both of which are relatively stable. After 2005, the operation mode of the festival was changed to "government-led, corporate financing, and community participation." Market-oriented operations have become increasingly mature, reception volume has surged, and tourism revenue has continued to increase. By 2023, the number of tourists reached 23.6905 million, and the total tourism revenue was RMB 17.713 billion Yuan. The total number of visitors to previous Peony Cultural Festivals reached 352.28 million, and the total tourism revenue reached RMB 250.2 billion Yuan, making us realize that the boundaries between culture and economy are broken through peony festivals, and the economic growth of the whole city has been driven.

## 2.2 Promotion effect on urban social culture

By holding the Peony Cultural Festival, Luoyang not only reaps economic effects, but also reaps other 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 is the abnormal episodes in daily life, but because of its sensational effect and carnival nature, it can easily arouse widespread participation and leave deep memories among people (Graburn, 1983). The holding of 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 the cohesion and identity of citizens.

## 2.3 Improvement effect of 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 "Flow Fair Project", and the continuous "Flow Fair 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, while 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 important role in promoting the entire urban civilization construction and the improvement of urban soft environment in Luoyang.

## 2.4 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 a large number of 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 in Luoyang, tourists from all over the world with different personal statuses, political systems, economic levels, religious beliefs, philosophical concepts and other backgrounds gather here, which improves the quantity and quality of urban talents. It promotes the cultivation of talents 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 special talents for festivals.

#### 2.5 Subsequent effects of festivals

The stimulating effect of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on Luoyang City is not limited to the immediate effect created at that time, but 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 a lot of information and tapped a lot of 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, but will penetrate into all areas of Luoyang society as an invisible and lasting force, and can be highlighted through the accumulation of time. Therefore, we cannot ignore the sustainable and subsequent effects of holding modern folk festivals.

### Conclusion

The research demonstrates that under the background of high urbanization, local government, cultural elite, and people in Luoyang used the distinctive regional, original, and practical Luoyang peony cultural tradition to reconstruct the Chinese Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival. The inheritance of this culture and the invention of festivals not only helped to improve the local identity and community cohesion of Luoyang people and promote the construction of urban culture, but also became an important platform for Luoyang's foreign exchanges and integration and a new path to promote urban economic development and realize urban renewal and cultural identity revitalization.

Different from the general analysis of the basic data and functions of folk festivals in the past, this paper takes Peony Cultural Festival in Luoyang as a case study and makes an exploratory study on the path of folk festivals to achieve urban sustainable development through the theory of "invention of tradition" and "urban revitalization". By this way, it expands the theoretical basis for classification research in these two fields, and a systematic and comprehensive investigation can enable the results of this study to fill the gap in this specific academic field and provide a research theoretical model for similar festivals.

### Discussion

Taking the representative Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in China as a case study, this study explores in depth how the "invented tradition" of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was invented and changed, with the aim of deepening the understanding of the value of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival in the local society and historical time and space from the perspective of the cultural connotations of the Festival, so as to further enhance the understanding of the promotion of the urban renaissance of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

The study found that the development of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival has gone through three stages, from traditional folkloric flower-appreciation customs to local-level festivals to provincial-level festivals to the current international-level festivals, which is an "invention" of Luoyang's peony cultural traditions. This view is in line with Bai Zhilun (2018), who argues that the Luoyang people's custom of peony viewing has been passed down from generation to generation, and that the peony festivals that have developed as a result are an

important part of the folklore activities of the Luoyang people. With the development of the times and cultural changes, the peony-focused flower fairs have gradually evolved into a new folklore centered on peony culture, the "Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival".

The invention of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Tradition is in line with the requirements of the development of the times. Nowadays, the people of Luoyang are constantly enriching the development connotation of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival by prolonging the holding time of the festival, expanding the scope of the festival's radiance, upgrading the level of the festival and its objectives, and enriching the contents of the festival activities. Zhao Xiangyu (2014) analyzed the case of "Tujia Hand Pendulum Dance" and believed that the modern hand pendulum dance is an invented tradition, which is constructed on the basis of the traditional hand pendulum dance for recent purposes. In recent years, the Modern Hand Pendulum Dance has been introduced in various Tujia regions for the purpose of rebuilding Tujia culture and has been widely inherited. This view of Zhao Xiangyu has similarities with the view put forward by the researcher.

The contemporary Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival promotes the urban revitalization of Luoyang. Not only does it help 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 Luoyang people, but it also becomes an important means for the city to market its culture, develop its economy, highlight its personality, and build its self-identity. This view is consistent with Zhang Xiaomei's (2006) view that modern urban festivals have a pulling effect on urban development, of course, there are both positive and negative effects, but government organizers and local people should work together to transform the negative effects into positive ones.

## Recommendations

Limitations of fieldwork and research suggestions. According to the author's statistics, the 40th Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival was held for 45 days, with more than 45 event locations, including 7 city districts: the old city district, Xigong district, Chanshui River Hui minority district, Jianxi district, Yanshi district, Mengjin district, and Luolong district. And 7 counties: Xin'an County, Luanchuan County, Song County, Ruyang County, Yiyang County, Luoning County, Yichuan County. The number of festivals reached 210, and it was difficult for the author to do both comprehensive and in-depth fieldwork due to the impact of time, manpower, and funding. There is still a lot of expandable research space in this study, and the next team-based fieldwork will be the author's focus to consider.

Lack of focus on diverse populations and samples.. The participating subjects of Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival involve the government, enterprises, media, tourists, residents and other subjects. The article pays more attention to the two subjects of organizers and tourists, while the other subjects are less involved and are not divided into organizers and tourists in a more detailed way. Consider focusing on more participating subjects of the festival, and carry out interdisciplinary cooperation among culture, folklore, and tourism, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural connotation of the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival.

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