

Investigation and Value Interpretation of the Red Army Long March Transit Site in Xi'an Region

Yufan Fei¹, Rui Li²

^{1,2} School of Historical Culture and Tourism, Xi'an University, Xi'an 710065 China

ABSTRACT

Xi'an is an important region for the Red Fourth Army and the Red 25th Army to pass through during the Long March. In 2018, Xi'an University of Arts and Sciences conducted a centralized survey in Lantian, Chang'an, Yiyi, Zhouzhi and other places, visited 30 villages and towns, recorded 30 sites, and interviewed 42 people. The relevant sites are linearly distributed along mountain passages and traditional villages, covering various types such as military operations, camping, conference propaganda, mass support, and commemorative exhibitions, and have important historical, cultural, educational, and social values. This article systematically explains the distribution patterns, types, composition, and preservation status of archaeological sites, and proposes suggestions for protection and utilization such as improving resource lists, strengthening historical verification, promoting digital archiving, and constructing route-based displays.

Keywords: Xi'an region, Red Army's Long March, Site investigation, Revolutionary cultural relics, Value interpretation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Red Army's Long March is a great feat in the history of the Chinese revolution, and the sites along its route are the most historically significant and spiritually inspiring resource types in the revolutionary cultural relic system. From the perspective of cultural heritage studies, the Long March site belongs to a typical linear heritage, "distributed linearly in geographical space and possessing specific historical, cultural, or scientific value". Its "powerful linking ability integrates dispersed cultural heritage and surrounding resources, achieving overall protection and utilization".[1] Shaanxi Province holds a special position in the history of the Chinese revolution. Huang Zhenping pointed out that Shaanxi was an important destination area for the Red Army's Long March and a key location for the establishment of the Shaanxi Gansu Ningxia base by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.[2] The Xi'an region is located in the central part of the Guanzhong Plain, adjacent to the Qinling Mountains to the south, and has been a military stronghold since ancient times. The historical relics left by revolutionary armed forces such as the

Fourth Red Army and the 25th Red Army here are the key basis for understanding the process of the Long March history unfolding on the southern edge of Guanzhong.

However, the historical information of the Long March sites in Xi'an has long been scattered in party history documents, local chronicles, and oral memories, lacking systematic integration; The preservation status of some sites has changed; The inheritors of oral history are getting older, and their related memories are facing the risk of loss. Based on this, in 2018, the School of Historical Culture and Tourism of Xi'an University organized the "Red Tour" Long March Site Research and Practice Team to conduct concentrated field investigations in the Red Army's Long March transit areas of Lantian, Chang'an, Huiyi, Zhouzhi, etc. This article takes the survey data as the core, combined with party history literature and relevant research results, to systematically sort out and interpret the basic situation and multidimensional value of the Red Army's Long March transit sites in Xi'an region.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INVESTIGATION IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 The Historical Context of the Red Army's Long March into the Xi'an Region

The historical connection between the Xi'an region and the Long March of the Red Army mainly involves two main forces, the Fourth Red Army and the 25th Red Army. The Fourth Red Army left the Hubei-Henan-Anhui-Jiangsu regions at the end of 1932 to implement a strategic shift, entering the southern edge of Guanzhong through western Henan and southern Shaanxi, leaving traces of activity in areas such as Huyi and Zhouzhi.[3]

The influence of the Red 25th Army is even more profound. On November 16, 1934, the Long March departed from Hejiachong, Luoshan County, Henan Province, and entered southern Shaanxi on December 4.[4] The Communist Party of China's Hubei-Henan-Anhui Provincial Committee chose to establish a base area on the border between Henan and Shaanxi because "the enemy's rule in this area is weak, the people live in poverty, and class contradictions are sharp; the mountains and valleys are deep, the forests are dense, and it is easy to move around".[5] After six months of struggle, the Red 25th Army established four revolutionary bases in Lantian, Zhashui, Zhen'an and other areas, and the revolutionary bases in Hubei, Henan and Shaanxi were initially formed.

During the second anti encirclement campaign, the Red 25th Army "went north to Zhongnan Mountain and threatened Xi'an", extending its activities to the areas of Chang'an and Huyi. On the evening of July 15, 1935, the Communist Party of China's Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Provincial Committee held an emergency meeting at Fengyukou in Chang'an County, deciding to march westward and northward to welcome the Party Central Committee.[6] The Fengyukou Conference was a strategic turning point in the Long March of the Red 25th Army, and its site is one of the most important revolutionary historical sites in the Xi'an region.

2.2 Purpose, Scope, and Methods of Investigation

The theme of this survey is "Promoting the Spirit of the Long March and Inheriting the Red

Gene", with four main objectives: The first is to understand the resource data of the Red Army's Long March transit sites in Xi'an, and to clarify their quantity, type, distribution, and preservation status; The second is to verify the historical background, spatial location, and event associations of the site through literature review, field investigations, and oral interviews; The third is to evaluate the current status of the site itself and its surrounding environment, and understand its protection, management, and utilization; The fourth is to propose to provide reference for site identification, directory construction, and exhibition interpretation based on the investigation and evaluation, targeted protection and utilization suggestions.

This survey mainly covers Lantian County, Chang'an District, Huyi District, and Zhouzhi County in Xi'an City, with a focus on the sites, old sites, memorial sites, and related historical spaces formed by revolutionary armed activities such as the Fourth Red Army, the 25th Red Army, and the 74th Red Division. The research of scholars such as Sun Yu shows that "the red cultural heritage space along the Long March of the Red 25th Army mainly includes the old sites of important revolutionary institutions, important conference sites, important revolutionary activity sites, important revolutionary event sites, and other red heritage spaces".^[1] This survey refers to this framework in the classification of site types, and combines historical reality to divide the survey objects into five types: military action sites, camping sites, conference and propaganda sites, mass support sites, and memorial and exhibition facilities. The investigation team visited 30 villages and towns, investigated 30 related sites, and interviewed 42 local officials, villagers, elderly people, cultural security personnel, and party history informants.

This survey adopts a combination of literature review, field investigation, GPS positioning, photographic records, oral history interviews, and mutual verification of data. The authors conduct preliminary research on party history documents, local chronicles, and historical materials to form a preliminary clue table. From July 15th to 26th, 2018, a centralized on-site investigation was conducted to observe and record the morphology, preservation status, and surrounding environment of the site; GPS positioning and photographic recording of sites with clear locations; Adhere to the principle of multi-source mutual verification to collect oral history, compare and verify the oral

content with literature records, place name evolution, and on-site remains.

3. INVESTIGATION RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE SITES' CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Number and Spatial Distribution of Archaeological Sites

This survey confirmed and recorded 30 sites related to the Red Army's Long March transit in the Xi'an region. From the perspective of spatial distribution, the sites are mainly concentrated in the northern foothills of the Qinling Mountains, mountain terraces, river valley channels, and traditional villages and towns, showing a linear distribution along the ancient road, mountain villages, and transportation nodes. Sun Yu and others confirmed through their research that "Shangluo, Xi'an, and its surrounding districts and counties form the most central gathering area",^[1] and Xi'an is one of the areas with the highest density of heritage distribution in the Henan-Shaanxi-Gansu section of the Red 25th Army.

From the distribution of districts and counties, there are 10 sites in Lantian County, mainly concentrated in Gepai Town, Jiu Jianfang Town, and Houzhen, which highly overlap with the core area of the Hubei Henan Shaanxi Revolutionary Base; There are 10 archaeological sites in Chang'an District, distributed along the Yukou Road and mountain settlements; There are four sites in Fuyi District, many of which are related to the transit activities of the Fourth Red Army; There are six archaeological sites in Zhouzhi County, mainly consisting of mountain pass passages and villages in front of mountains.

3.2 Composition of Site Types

The first type is the military action site, which has the largest number in this survey, including the Wengongling Battle Site, Jiu Jianfang Ambush Battle Site, Tuqiaogou Battle Site, Fengyukou Battle Site, Ludan Village Battle Site, Zhujiabao Village Battle Site, etc. These sites are mostly located in mountain valleys, road nodes, or around villages, and are historical relics of military conflicts between the Red Army and local armed forces, militias, and the Nationalist army during the Red Army's transition to war.

The second type is the camping sites, including the former site of the Red 25th Army headquarters

in Gepai Town, the former site of the Red 25th Army headquarters in Yinzhen, the former site of the Red Army stationed in Dongjiaojiang Village, the former site of the Red Army headquarters in Shangjianzi Village, the former site of the Red 25th Army headquarters in Dianzhen, and multiple collective camping sites. These types of sites often rely on residential buildings, ancestral halls, schools, or village public buildings, and have typical characteristics of temporary stationing and military civilian contact.

The third type is the conference propaganda site, which has the most prominent historical value, including the site of the expanded meeting of the Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Provincial Committee in Gepai Town, the site of the mass meeting in Yinzhen Town, the site of the Sanguan Temple meeting, the site of the Junzi Temple meeting in Mazhao Town, and the site of the Fengyukou meeting in Chang'an District. Among them, the Fengyukou Conference was the strategic starting point for the Red 25th Army's decision to march westward and northward, and had important historical significance for the Party. During the activities of the Red 25th Army in Shaanxi, propaganda work was always regarded as an important way of mobilizing the masses. "A large amount of propaganda work was carried out through posting notices, writing slogans, distributing flyers, etc. Every time there was a siege, letters were written to the village leader in advance to promote the party's anti-Japanese and national salvation proposition".^[4] The remains of the former site of the Yinzhen Mass Assembly are the spatial witnesses left by this historical activity in the Xi'an region.

The fourth type is mass support sites, including the former residence of the old Red Army in Huangjiayao and related rescue and guidance locations, reflecting the close interaction between the Red Army and local society. The Red 25th Army is known for its strict military discipline in the Shaanxi region, where "every time they arrive, they purchase the necessary food and forage... They always abide by the discipline of life and do not touch the people's every stitch or line".^[4] This tradition has left a deep impression in the memory of local people and continues to this day through oral communication.

The fifth type is commemorative and exhibition sites, including the Monument to the Soviet Government in Gepai Town, the Monument to the Revolutionary Martyrs in Baidaoyu, and the

Monument to the Red Army Headquarters in Jixian Town, which are important carriers for current red education and public exhibitions.

3.3 *Preservation Status and Current Status of Protection and Utilization*

From the perspective of preservation status, the sites can be roughly divided into four types: the first type is well preserved sites with a foundation for display and utilization, such as the former site of the Soviet government in Gepai Town and the former site of the Red 25th Army headquarters, which have formed a relatively complete space for displaying red education; The second type is sites that still exist but have average preservation conditions, with problems such as aging houses, inadequate maintenance, and complex property rights; The third type is the disappearance of the site itself but the location can be traced. The original remains no longer exist due to construction and renovation, but their location can still be confirmed through literature and oral records; The fourth type is sites with clues that need further verification, mainly based on oral data or scattered literature, and require further investigation.

Overall, there are the following problems with the Long March sites in Xi'an: the resources have not yet formed a unified, complete, and dynamically updated directory system; Some sites have lower levels of protection and unclear management responsibilities; There are significant differences in the display and utilization of important sites compared to general sites, with some locations lacking explanatory signs and protective facilities; Insufficient rescue and organization of oral history materials; There is a lack of overall route design between the archaeological sites.

4. THE VALUE INTERPRETATION OF THE RED ARMY'S LONG MARCH TRANSIT SITE IN XI'AN REGION

First, it is its historical value. The Red Army's Long March transit site in Xi'an is important evidence of the Red Army's activities in the southern edge of Guanzhong and the northern foot of Qinling Mountains. From a historical perspective, the Red 25th Army successively completed a series of major historical actions in the Xi'an region, including entering southern Shaanxi, establishing revolutionary bases in Hubei, Henan, and Shaanxi,

breaking through the enemy's second "encirclement and suppression" campaign, threatening Xi'an by heading north to Zhongnan Mountain, and holding an emergency meeting at Fengyukou to decide to advance westward and northward. These actions formed the complete historical chain of the critical stage of the Long March from southern Shaanxi to northern Shaanxi. The "History of the 25th Army of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army" points out that the establishment of the revolutionary base areas in Hubei, Henan, and Shaanxi, as well as the victories in the two anti-encirclement campaigns, "have important strategic significance for the development and growth of the 25th Army, for cooperating with the main force of the Red Army to move north to Shaanxi and Gansu, and for creating the situation of the anti Japanese national united front in the northwest region".^[5] The relevant sites in the Xi'an region are the concrete, tangible, and verifiable spatial correspondences left by this historical process at the local level, and are an indispensable puzzle for a complete understanding of the Long March of the Red 25th Army.

Second, it is the value of cultural relics. The cultural value of revolutionary sites is not only reflected in the age and shape of the building itself, but also in the authenticity and spatial integrity of the historical events it carries. Among the relevant sites in the Xi'an region, the site of the expanded meeting of the Hubei Henan Shaanxi Provincial Committee in Gepai Town, the site of the Fengyukou Conference in Chang'an, and the site of the Red 25th Army Headquarters are all directly related to important historical events that can be traced and have high immovable cultural relic value. In addition, some sites still retain the spatial layout of traditional dwellings, temples, ancestral halls, or villages, which have both the material value of architectural heritage and should be considered as a whole in the protection plan.

Third, it is the educational value. The Red Army's Long March transit site is an important on-site teaching material for studying party history, revolutionary traditions, and patriotism. Compared with textual narration, ruins have more spatial intuitiveness and situational infectivity, which can enable visitors to understand the difficult environment of revolutionary struggle, ideal beliefs, and military civilian relations in real historical sites. Sun Wei also pointed out in his research that the historical experience of the Red 25th Army's Long March is "extremely precious, a vivid textbook for strengthening Party building in the new era, and a

spiritual driving force for building socialism with Chinese characteristics and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream, with significant contemporary value”.[4] Within the surveyed area, the historical narrative of the strict discipline of the Red Army and the military civilian water situation is relatively well preserved in local oral memory, and is an important resource for conducting vivid on-site education.

Fourth, it is social value. The Red Army's Long March transit site in Xi'an also has social value in serving local cultural construction, rural revitalization, and the development of red tourism. Related sites are mostly distributed in mountainous villages and traditional villages, closely connected to natural landscapes, folk culture, rural spaces, and local memories. By reasonable protection and moderate utilization, red cultural resources can be combined with rural public cultural services, study tours, ecotourism, and traditional village protection to form a red cultural route with local characteristics. At the same time, the protection and utilization of archaeological sites also help enhance the local people's awareness and pride in their local history, and promote community participation in cultural heritage preservation and cultural inheritance.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROTECTION AND UTILIZATION

5.1 *Establishing a Systematic Resource Directory and Digital Archives*

Based on the investigation results, 30 sites should be uniformly numbered, classified, registered, and dynamically managed, and standardized archives should be established that include textual descriptions, GPS coordinates, historical evolution, event explanations, video records, oral interview abstracts, and literature sources. Sites of significant value should be promoted to be included in the list of revolutionary cultural relics or the registration system for immovable cultural relics. People should make full use of digital technology for systematic photography collection, GIS annotation, and digital archiving, forming a retrievable, upgradable, and presentable site resource platform, and producing online exhibitions, digital maps, and thematic commentary content.

5.2 *Strengthening Authenticity Verification and Graded Protection*

For sites with inconsistent literature records and oral differences, professional personnel in fields such as party history, cultural heritage, local chronicles, and historical geography should be organized to conduct specialized research. It is necessary to carry out rescue collection of oral history as soon as possible, form audio, video, and written data archives, and verify them with literature and on-site remains. For well preserved and valuable sites, protection areas should be delineated, protection signs and explanatory boards should be set up, and management responsibility units should be clearly defined; Salvage repairs on old sites with safety hazards can be carried out in the building itself; Commemorative signs can be set up for sites where the original entity has disappeared but the location can be traced; Excessive packaging and inaccurate interpretation of clues that have yet to be verified should be avoided.

5.3 *Building a Streamlined Display System and Community Participation*

Based on the Red Army's marching path, mountainous transportation nodes, and important historical events, several themed exhibition routes are constructed: the "Hubei-Henan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base Area" themed route with Lantian Gepai as the core, connecting the former sites of the Soviet government, the military headquarters, the expanded provincial committee meeting, and the Wengongling battle site, etc.; The theme route of "Decision making and Marching of the Red 25th Army's Western Expedition" with Chang'an Yinzen and Fengyukou as the core; The theme route of "Red Army's Entry into Qinling Mountains and Mass Support" centered on the relevant sites of Fuyi and Zhouzhi. Village committees, schools, grassroots party organizations, and local residents should be encouraged to participate in site maintenance, explanation, and cultural activities, cultivate local red culture interpreters, and organize oral stories from villagers. In the process of utilization, it is necessary to adhere to authenticity, solemnity, and moderation, and avoid excessive commercialization, landscaping, and entertainment.

6. CONCLUSION

The Red Army's Long March Transit Site in Xi'an is an important spatial relic of the Long March history in the southern edge of Guanzhong and the northern foot of Qinling Mountains. It is an indispensable witness to the complete understanding of the Long March process of the 25th Red Army and the unfolding of the Long March in Shaanxi. It is also an important component of Xi'an's revolutionary cultural relics resource system. The "Red Journey" Long March Transit Site Research and Practice Team in Xi'an has preliminarily identified the quantity, types, distribution, and preservation status of 30 related sites in Lantian, Chang'an, Huiyuan, Zhouzhi, and other places through literature review, field investigation, GPS positioning, photography collection, oral history interviews, and data verification, filling the gap in existing systematic investigation records.

The survey shows that the relevant sites in Xi'an have significant multidimensional values in history, cultural relics, education, and society, among which the Lantian Gepai Site Group and the Chang'an Fengyukou Conference Site are particularly typical. At the same time, there are still urgent practical problems that need to be improved in the protection and management, exhibition and utilization, and oral history rescue of the site. The systematicity and integrity of the protection work need to be further strengthened. In the future, there is a must to continue to deepen historical research and thematic studies, improve site lists and digital archives, promote the protection and restoration of key sites, and include scattered single site sites in the overall route display framework, so that these historical spaces carrying revolutionary memories can truly become important resources for inheriting the spirit of the Long March, promoting red culture, and serving the sustainable development of local society.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sun Yu, Feng Hui, Space Layout and Development Paths of the Red Revolutionary Cultural Heritage Point of Red 25th Army Long March of Henan-Shaanxi-Gansu Section [J]. Areal Research and Development, 2025, 44(1): 100-106.
- [2] Huang Zhenping, On Shaanxi and the Long March of the Red Army [J]. Journal of Socialist Theory Guide, 2006,(11): 67-68.
- [3] Editorial Committee of the History of the Fourth Front Army of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, History of the Fourth Front Army of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army [M]. Beijing: PLA Press, 1989.
- [4] Sun Wei, The Contribution and Historical Experience of the Long March of the 25th Red Army [J]. Academic Journal of Zhongzhou, 2021(6): 8-13.
- [5] Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army 25th Army War History Compilation and Review Committee, Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army 25th Army War History [M]. Beijing: PLA Press, 1990.
- [6] The Party History Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Red Army Long March Documentary Series, Red 25th Army Volume [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2016.