

# Study on Site Selection Characteristics of Folk Sacrificial Buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road

Xiaofang Bi<sup>1,a</sup>, Han Song<sup>1,b</sup>, Zhaokui Zhuang<sup>1,c,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Architectural and Artistic Design, Henan Polytechnic University, Jiaozuo, China

<sup>a</sup>bixiaofang@hpu.edu.cn, <sup>b</sup>3212785262@qq.com, <sup>c</sup>10460230009@hpu.edu.cn

\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** The Baixing Ancient Road is an important passage connecting Shanxi and Henan among the Eight Taihang Passages. A large number of folk sacrificial buildings are distributed along this route. Based on field investigation and spatial analysis, this study systematically reveals the site selection patterns and influencing factors. The results indicate that the site selection of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road can be classified into five typical types: village entrances and ends, village centers, village high points, road transition and turning nodes, and peripheral village areas. Their site selection is jointly influenced by geographical conditions, historical and cultural factors, and social factors. This study provides a reference value for the conservation and development of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road.

**Keywords:** Baixing Ancient Road; folk sacrificial buildings; site selection types

## 1. Introduction

Spanning from Henan to Shanxi and crossing the Taihang Mountains, a relatively stable system of eight transportation routes gradually took shape over a long historical period. These are known in academia as the “Eight Taihang Passages”. From south to north, they are the Zhiguan Passage, Taihang Passage, Baixing Passage, Fukou Passage, Jingxing Passage, Puyin Passage, Feihu Passage, and Jundu Passage. The Baixing Ancient Road, the third of the Eight Taihang Passages, is one of the key traffic arteries connecting southern Shanxi and northern Henan. Its unique geographical location and profound cultural heritage make it an important physical relic for studying ancient Chinese transportation, military affairs, and economy. As a historically significant thoroughfare, the Baixing Ancient Road has witnessed the exchange and integration between the Central Plains and the northern regions, carrying with it relevant historical, cultural, and clan social structural information.

Sacrificial behavior, as an important cultural phenomenon in human history, can be traced back to ancient times. It directly reflects people’s reverence and worship toward natural forces, ancestors, or deities. The unique regional environment of the Taihang Mountains has nurtured a distinctive folk culture, and the villages along the Baixing Ancient Road have developed their own distinct folk traditions and sacrificial customs. Among the early architectural remains in Shanxi Province, there are many indigenous sacrificial cultures, such as the worship of the King Ji, King Tang, King Guan, and the Two Immortals. Even ordinary nature worship, such as that of mountain gods or water gods, embodies a strong local attachment <sup>[1]</sup>. According to the objects of worship, these buildings can be divided into three types: altar buildings, temple-shrine buildings, and ancestral hall buildings.

Folk traditional beliefs differ from orthodox religions; they are unofficial, polytheistic worship spontaneously organized by the populace under the background of Chinese history and traditional culture. Folk traditional belief buildings are the physical places where such worship activities occur <sup>[2]</sup>. Folk sacrificial buildings are usually closely related to local beliefs, customs, and cultural traditions. Along the Baixing Ancient Road, the objects of worship in these folk sacrificial buildings exhibit strong local characteristics, leading to a diversity of such structures in the region. Through field investigation and screening based on sacrificial objects, it is found that almost all existing folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road belong to the category of temple-shrine buildings. Temples and shrines, as ritual and sacrificial structures, represent a unique phenomenon in Chinese history and culture, with a long-standing and profound origin. Such buildings are first and foremost embodiments of belief, ritual, and morality, and only secondarily serve practical functions. They have long transcended the concept of architecture as merely a container for daily life, becoming spatial

forms where heaven, earth, ghosts, gods, and humans coexist [3].

## 2. Study Area and Subjects

### 2.1. Study Area

The Baixing Ancient Road is located at the southern tip of the Taihang Mountains, winding through the towering peaks and rugged terrain of the range. Spanning multiple dynasties, including the Spring and Autumn, Warring States, Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, it long served as a vital transportation link between the Central Plains and the southeastern Shanxi region, playing a key role in military endeavors, trade, and cultural exchange. The origins of the Baixing Ancient Road can be traced back to the Yin-Shang period [4]. After King Pangeng moved the Shang capital to Yin (present-day Anyang, Henan Province) at the foot of the Taihang Mountains, transportation routes naturally formed, connecting various regions to the capital [5]. The road derives its name from the fact that it passed by the ancient Bailu Mountain, hence "Baixing" [6]. This road is not only a scenic attraction within the Taihang range but also a significant carrier of ancient Chinese history and culture. The Baixing Ancient Road starts at the southern end in Baobi, Huixian City, Henan Province, passes through Mengmen Pass, and then runs through Changshandi, Shuangdi, and other places in Lingchuan, Shanxi Province [7]. Today, a section of the Baixing Ancient Road is preserved in the Shilihe Grand Canyon at Magedang, Lingchuan, known as the "Overhanging Sky Ancient Road" and the "Seventy-Two Turns." It is the longest and most well-preserved stretch of the ancient "Tea-Horse Road" among the Eight Taihang Passages.

The Baixing Ancient Road includes not only its main route but also an important tributary known as the Qingkou Ancient Road [8]. The main route and its tributary together total approximately 250 kilometers. The main route of the Baixing Ancient Road starts at Baobi, Huixian City, Henan Province, and passes through Lingchuan, Gaoping, Zhangzi, and Changzhi in Shanxi Province before reaching Huguan, Shanxi. The Qingkou Ancient Road faces the Baixing Ancient Road across the Yuhe River. Starting from Tiejianzhuang, Xiuwu County, Henan Province, and following the western side of the Qingkou River northwards, the Qingkou Ancient Road passes through Xinglongzhang and Yidoushui Village, eventually rejoining the main route of the Baixing Ancient Road at Lucheng Town (Figure. 1).

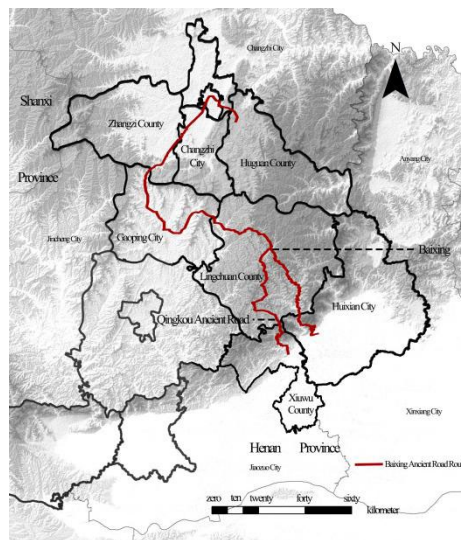


Figure 1. Baixing Route.

### 2.2. Research Object

The folk sacrificial buildings distributed along the Baixing Ancient Road were primarily constructed through spontaneous fundraising by local residents. Although their architectural scale and form cannot be compared with those of Buddhist or Taoist temples and monasteries built under official patronage, their wide distribution and considerable number constitute an important part of the vernacular architectural landscape in this region. Such buildings are commonly found in villages and towns along the route, reflecting the deep roots and sustained vitality of folk beliefs in local society.

To systematically grasp the site selection characteristics of the folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road, this study selected the main route of the Baixing Ancient Road and its important tributary, the Qingkou Ancient Road, as the primary survey area, and conducted systematic field investigation and documentation of the villages along the route. With the established route as the core, the survey extended outward for a radius of 10 kilometers. During the screening process, shrines and temples with weak functional connections to the ancient road's transportation role were excluded to ensure the coherence of the research objects' historical context and spatial logic. Within this scope, the study focused on folk sacrificial buildings of research value along the route, identifying 38 relatively well-preserved or representative examples. Among them, the most representative are the Cuifu Jun Temple in Beijie Village, the Quanshen Temple in Tianzhuang Village, the Erlang Temple in Wangbao Village, and the Yaowang Temple in Hanfang Village, all of which are Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level.

These buildings exhibit a significant linear distribution pattern along the ancient road, generally forming a belt-shaped distribution area connecting Baobi Town, Huixian City, Henan Province, to Huguan County, Shanxi Province. This area historically functioned not only as an important trade corridor but also as a strategic military passage. Therefore, the distribution of these folk sacrificial buildings can be seen as a material manifestation of the commercial and military cultural belt of Baixing in the realm of religious material culture. Among the extant structures, examples dating back to the Song Dynasty indicate that the folk sacrificial tradition in this region has a long history.

### **3. Site Selection Types of Folk Sacrificial Buildings**

Based on field investigation results of villages along the Baixing Ancient Road, and drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives such as traditional Chinese feng shui concepts, vernacular social order logic, and practical functional needs, this study systematically analyzes the spatial layout relationship between the folk sacrificial buildings along the route and their host villages. These buildings are not randomly scattered but exhibit clear and regular site selection characteristics. Each type reflects specific cultural meanings, social functions, and environmental adaptation strategies. By analyzing the spatial layout of folk sacrificial buildings and their relationship with the villages along the Baixing Ancient Road, the site selections are classified into five types: village entrances and ends, village centers, village high points, road transition and turning nodes, and peripheral village areas.

#### **3.1. Village Entrances and Ends**

The placement of folk sacrificial buildings at boundary locations such as village entrances and ends along the traditional settlements of the Baixing Ancient Road constitutes a spatial practice shaped by the interplay of specific geographical environments, social structures, and cultural concepts. This site selection pattern not only reflects local people's understanding and adaptation to the natural environment but also embodies multiple needs for spiritual defense, territorial identification, and social integration within the village spatial order. Consequently, these buildings play a crucial role in the village, bearing both symbolic significance and practical functions.

First, from the perspectives of natural adaptation and feng shui concepts, village entrances and ends are regarded as the "qi outlets" where the village exchanges natural energy with the outside world. In traditional feng shui theory, the gathering and dispersal of qi affect the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of the human settlement. As key nodes where qi enters and leaves, village entrances and exits require artificial construction to guide and protect the flow. Establishing sacrificial buildings at these points is believed to "conceal wind and gather qi," thereby conceptually safeguarding the village's safety and well-being. Particularly because the Baixing Ancient Road winds through the complex and precipitous terrain of the Taihang Mountains, villages are mostly built following the mountain contours, often situated near hazardous areas. Facing realistic risks such as geological disasters or wild animal attacks, sacrificial buildings at boundary locations are endowed with a symbolic function of transforming natural threats. They turn concrete natural risks into supernatural entities that can be appeased and controlled through sacrificial rituals, thus constructing a psychological "spiritual barrier" that alleviates the latent anxieties of mountain life.

Second, in terms of social order and cultural identity construction, sacrificial buildings at village entrances and ends serve as physical landmarks that clearly demarcate the boundary between the village interior and exterior. These buildings often function as ritual nodes for the transition between inside and outside. Villagers, when coming and going, frequently perform simple salutations or silent

prayers, thereby reinforcing boundary awareness and cultural identity through daily routines. Moreover, these gate-located temples often undertake collective ritual functions such as welcoming guests, sending off travelers, and praying for blessings, becoming ceremonial places for the village's interaction with the outside world, further consolidating their spatial role as symbols of collective identity.

Furthermore, from the perspective of practical function and spatial utilization, village entrances and ends are necessary passageways for villagers entering or leaving the settlement, where pedestrian traffic is relatively concentrated. Establishing sacrificial buildings at these locations facilitates daily worship for villagers and also provides a temporary rest stop and a prayer site for safe journeys for passing travelers. In front of some larger temples, small plazas or resting platforms may form, which during specific periods such as temple fairs or festivals can even develop into temporary sites for material exchange or information sharing, endowing boundary spaces with flexible public functions.

Therefore, the folk sacrificial buildings at the village entrances and ends along the Baixing Ancient Road are deeply rooted in local natural perceptions and belief systems. They constitute important cultural landscapes through which villages respond to mountain environments, integrate social relationships, and express spatial sovereignty. Their existence turns the physical boundary of the village into a spiritual boundary condensed with faith, memory, and social rules. For example, the Yan Emperor Temple in Xing Village is located at the southeast corner of the village (Figure 2). It is situated near the settlement, specifically at the village end where one leaves the village, with open surrounding grounds. Resting on a high platform, its location is conspicuous (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Location Diagram of the Yan Emperor Temple in Xing Village.



Figure 3. Yan Emperor Temple in Xing Village.

### 3.2 Village Center

Sacrificial buildings located in the village center are situated in the core area of the settlement, occupying a relatively important geographical position. They serve not only as a spiritual anchor for villagers' beliefs but also as significant venues for their daily activities. The establishment of folk sacrificial buildings in the village center first embodies the concretization of social power and the lineage system. These buildings function as a hub for village governance. Field investigations reveal that in some villages, the core place for handling public affairs is located immediately adjacent to the village's folk sacrificial building. Second, from the perspective of living needs and the gathering nature of public activities, village centers in mountainous areas are often sites with flat terrain and abundant water sources, facilitating the assembly of villagers. Building sacrificial buildings in the center allows them to integrate with daily activities. Moreover, the central location facilitates the organization of sacrificial rituals. For example, activities such as Spring Festival dragon dances and temple fair processions often start from the central temple and radiate outward to all directions of the village, maximizing participation.

Folk sacrificial buildings in the village center are not isolated spatial entities but an integration of natural geographical selection, social power construction, and cultural belief expression. Their positioning reinforces the orderliness of the village through spatial layout and sustains villagers' spiritual identification through belief practices, becoming a key node where the physical form and spiritual essence of traditional villages merge. The spatial pattern of a central sacrificial site represents the ancient people's concretization of the concept "central position as the most honorable," reflecting their pursuit of orthodoxy and authority in spatial order. This layout is not merely a geographical choice

but also a spatial projection of social structure and spiritual world, revealing the deep logic of village spatial organization and social operation. An example is the Dongyue Temple in Jidian Village, which is located in the village center (Figure. 4). The existing main hall and two side rooms are preserved in good condition. The surrounding area has now been converted for use as a kindergarten. The temple's stage has also been rebuilt, forming an open area between the stage and the main hall, which serves as a public space for daily village activities (Figure. 5).



Figure 4. Location Diagram of the Dongyue Temple in Jidian Village.



Figure 5. Dongyue Temple in Jidian Village.

### 3.3 Village High Points

In the spatial organization of mountainous villages along the Baixing Ancient Road, the site selection of folk sacrificial buildings is closely related not only to the village's plan layout but also profoundly constrained by complex topographical conditions. Mountain villages are mostly built along the contours of the mountains, adapting to the undulating terrain, resulting in a staggered spatial structure. The high points within the village, such as hilltops or elevated platforms, often serve as the preferred sites for sacrificial buildings. This type of site selection makes rational use of the terrain while embodying cultural symbolic meanings and social order logic, reflecting the intertwining of space, power, and belief.

From the perspectives of natural environment adaptation and feng shui concepts, the commanding heights carry the significance of commanding the overall situation and gathering the qi of mountains and rivers. Establishing a temple at such a location is believed to enhance the village's feng shui pattern, serving to "stabilize the mountain," and to protect the village through supernatural forces. Especially in the mountainous and perilous geographical environment along the Baixing Ancient Road, buildings located at high places objectively possess good visibility and defensibility, allowing a panoramic view of the entire village and surrounding paths. They thus serve both spiritual guardianship and practical lookout functions.

In terms of social order and power expression, a sacrificial building on a high point represents a vivid spatial narrative of power. Its high-elevated position is itself a material manifestation of hierarchy and authority. In traditional rural society, such buildings are often associated with high-ranking deities in the local belief system, enhancing the sublimity and deterrence of divine power through the elevation of space. Furthermore, these high-point sacrificial buildings play a role of visual dominance in the village landscape. Their architectural form often becomes the focal point of the village skyline, visible from various parts of the village, acting as a persistent marker of faith and a symbol of collective memory. During important seasonal festivals or sacrificial activities, the temple on the high ground becomes the visual and ritual center of the entire village, further consolidating its core position in the village's spiritual space.

Therefore, the folk sacrificial buildings on the high points of villages along the Baixing Ancient Road represent a comprehensive spatial practice integrating geographical adaptation, feng shui imagery, power expression, and ritual experience. Standing on the summits of mountain villages, they serve both as physical topographical markers and as symbolic representations of spiritual order, profoundly reflecting the wisdom and creativity of mountain villagers in organizing space under limited environmental conditions. An example is the terrain of Su Village, which generally slopes upward toward the southeast corner. The Tang Taizong Temple in Su Village is located on a sloping plot in the southeast corner of the village (Figure. 6), a position that offers a commanding view of the entire

village. The Tang Taizong Temple in Su Village is a single-courtyard compound, and the extant buildings are in the Qing Dynasty style (Figure. 7).



*Figure 6. Location Diagram of the Tang Taizong Temple in Su Village.*



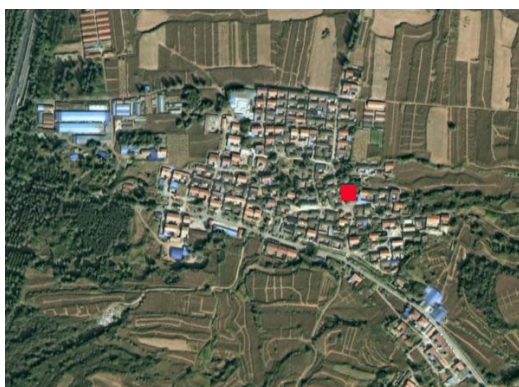
*Figure 7. Tang Taizong Temple in Su Village.*

### **3.4 Road Transition and Turning Nodes**

In the spatial structure of a village, the points where roads transition or turn include intersections and bends. These locations are not only key nodes for the convergence and divergence of traffic flows but also possess high public visibility.

From the perspective of spatial characteristics, road nodes have inherent public attributes and serve as centers for the gathering and dispersal of people. Villagers pass through these locations frequently in their daily production, life, and social interactions. This high pedestrian traffic makes sacrificial buildings built at these sites widely known and easily accessible, which facilitates the spread of religious activities and endows the buildings with outstanding spatial accessibility and social exposure. At the social functional level, nodal sacrificial buildings often transcend their role as mere places of worship, evolving into important nodes for public communication and information exchange within the village.

Sacrificial buildings at road transition and turning nodes, with their prominent nodal attributes, closely connect transportation functions, public life, and religious practices. They thus become an indispensable dimension for understanding the logic of village spatial organization and the spiritual map of local people. They are not only places where deities reside but also cultural landmarks and social vessels embedded in the paths of daily life. An example is the Yan Emperor Temple in Zhujiashan Village, which is located at a bend on the village's main road (Figure. 8). Situated at a crossroads, opposite the temple is a pavilion and a small square where people rest and gather (Figure. 9).



*Figure 8. Location Diagram of the Yan Emperor Temple in Zhujiashan Village.*



*Figure 9. Yan Emperor Temple in Zhujiashan Village.*

### 3.5 Peripheral Village Areas

Beyond the conventional sites within villages or at their boundaries, a certain number of folk sacrificial buildings are also located in areas relatively far from the villages along the Baixing Ancient Road. The site selection mechanism of this type reflects a more complex spatial logic, resulting from the interplay of natural ecological concepts, village functional zoning, and specific religious needs. It embodies the dialectical relationship between humans and nature, and between living space and spiritual realm, which is characterized by both separation and connection.

At the level of natural adaptation and ecological concepts, the siting of sacrificial buildings on the periphery of villages fully considers the local topography, mountain-water patterns, and seeks a harmonious coexistence with the surrounding natural environment. From the perspectives of village planning and functional layout, another reason for building sacrificial structures in remote peripheral areas is that temples often occupy a relatively large footprint; placing them outside the core residential zone ensures the relative concentration and integrity of village living space, does not disrupt villagers' normal life order, and makes the overall layout of the village more rational. Meanwhile, their location is usually connected to the village's main roads, facilitating quick access for villagers. An example is the Fuxi Temple in Zhongzhang Village, which is situated on the east side of the village, away from the settlement (Figure. 10). It sits on a raised platform, with a sloping path leading to the entrance gate. Detached from the village, the temple enjoys a quiet and serene environment (Figure. 11).



Figure 10. Location Diagram of the Fuxi Temple in Zhongzhang Village.



Figure 11. Fuxi Temple in Zhongzhang Village.

## 4. Factors Influencing the Site Selection of Folk Sacrificial Buildings

From the perspective of the inherent nature of architecture, no architectural form can be detached from its topographical and geomorphological environment, and its site selection is particularly closely related to geographical characteristics. Taking folk sacrificial buildings as the research object, this study notes that such structures are mostly distributed around villages, forming a close spatial relationship with human settlements. Therefore, the site selection and layout of folk sacrificial buildings are considerably influenced by the overall spatial planning of the village, demonstrating a high degree of consistency with the logic of village site selection. As important material carriers of regional culture and folk beliefs, the site selection of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road is influenced by multiple factors. Among them, geographical conditions, historical and cultural factors, and social factors are the main reasons affecting their site selection.

### 4.1 Geographical Factors

In the site selection of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road, the geographical environment is a core influencing factor. Particularly in the complex terrain crossing the Taihang Mountains, natural geographical conditions such as mountain ranges, water system distribution, and geomorphological features not only constrain the formation and development of villages but also profoundly shape the site selection logic and typological characteristics of folk sacrificial buildings.

First, mountainous topography directly affects the locational choice and functional orientation of these buildings. The Baixing Ancient Road winds through the Taihang Mountains, where the terrain is

highly undulating and interspersed with gullies. Against this geographical backdrop, folk sacrificial buildings often appear at nodes with special topographic significance. At mountain passes, which serve as traffic bottlenecks and geographical boundaries, mountain god temples or Guandi temples are frequently built, both to pray for safe passage and to symbolize the spiritual taming of natural obstacles. Second, water system distribution is another key geographical influencing factor. Along the Baixing Ancient Road, there are numerous springs, streams, and river valleys. Water resources were of vital importance for ancient transportation and agriculture. Therefore, at places with abundant water sources or swift currents, sacrificial buildings such as Dragon King temples or River God temples are often established, as seen in the River God Temple in Jiuwu Village. Moreover, in the agricultural period when people relied on nature, folk sacrificial buildings were mostly associated with prayers for favorable weather and protection from disasters. This is precisely what can be observed in the worship of nature deities along the Baixing Ancient Road.

Furthermore, the geographical environment also influences the spatial accessibility and ritual behavior associated with folk sacrificial buildings. Temples located at dangerous mountain passes or remote hilltops often require traversing a challenging path to reach them. This spatial isolation and the process of climbing are themselves endowed with ritual meanings of purification and devotion. In contrast, sacrificial sites located at easily accessible places such as riverbanks or village entrances tend to focus more on daily worship and immediate prayers, reflecting the influence of geographical conditions on the frequency of sacrifices and the intensity of rituals.

#### **4.2 Historical and Cultural Factors**

Historical and cultural factors play a crucial and profound role in shaping the emergence and distribution of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road. These factors include both the direct impetus provided by major local historical events leading to the creation of ritual spaces, as well as the enduring influence of folklore and belief narratives on the typology and distribution of these buildings. Together, they constitute the layered chronology and rich network of meaning behind these structures.

First, major historical events often serve as the direct catalyst for the emergence of specific sacrificial buildings, endowing them with functions of collective memory and historical admonition that transcend ordinary folk beliefs. A case in point is the Skull Temple in Gukou Village. In 723 CE (the 11th year of the Kaiyuan Era), Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, during an inspection tour to Gaoping, was deeply distressed by the sight of skeletal remains strewn across the fields. He then ordered the local authorities of Gaoping City to build a temple to commemorate the spirits of those who had fallen in war. After the temple was completed, "the largest among the skeletal remains was selected" to be deified as the "Skull King," and the temple was named accordingly. This temple is the only one in China dedicated to worshiping warriors killed in battle. During the Ming Dynasty, the statues were recast to depict Zhao Kuo and his wife, and hence it is also known as the King Zhao Temple.

Furthermore, folklore and belief in local deities are core cultural forces shaping the typology and distribution pattern of sacrificial buildings. The proliferation of the Two Immortals temples along the Baixing route is a case in point. The cult of these two deified sisters originated in the southeastern Shanxi region, representing a distinctly local form of religious devotion. The distribution of temples dedicated to their cult not only reflects the extent of their influence but is also often correlated with historical migration patterns of clans and the activities of trading guilds in the villages along the route. The density of their temples and the boundaries of their cultic activity provide a tangible expression of how a folk narrative was transmitted and received.

In conclusion, historical and cultural factors are not a static backdrop. They actively participate in the creation, evolution, and ongoing interpretation of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road. The variations in their site-selection types, therefore, serve as a key entry point for understanding the local historical development, the spiritual life of the people, and its interaction with the cultural landscape along this ancient thoroughfare.

#### **4.3 Social Factors**

Social factors play a fundamental role in the formation, site selection, distribution, and functional expression of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road. These factors are closely related to the daily life, production, and social organization of local people, reflecting the concrete

interactions between humans and the environment, individuals and groups, and practical needs versus spiritual aspirations in traditional society.

First, population distribution and settlement size are basic social factors affecting the density and types of sacrificial buildings. Along the Baixing Ancient Road, larger market towns or villages located at transport nodes, due to higher population density, finer division of labor, and more frequent external exchanges, tend to require and support multiple types of sacrificial buildings. For instance, a single town may simultaneously have a Guandi Temple, a Wenchang Pavilion, and trade guild temples, forming a functionally complementary system of religious services. An example is Beijie Village in Gaoping City, which is a relatively large area with a sizable permanent population and heavy daily foot traffic, thus serving as a bustling activity hub. Here, the large scale Cuifu Jun Temple and a Guandi Temple coexist. In contrast, remote or smaller mountain villages, with limited resources and population, can often sustain only one core sacrificial site, where the deity's functions tend to become comprehensive, with a single god assuming multiple roles to address diverse basic needs. This distributional difference directly reflects the realistic matching logic between religious supply and the scale and resource capacity of villages and towns.

Second, economic patterns and livelihood modes directly shape the selection of core sacrificial objects and site selection types. The Baixing Ancient Road, as a historically important trade corridor, had its economic life closely tied to long distance transport and commodity transshipment. Therefore, Guan Yu, as a martial deity capable of protecting travelers and their goods, and as a god of wealth symbolizing integrity and prosperity, perfectly matched the dual core concerns of merchants, armed escorts, porters, and other mobile workers. The location of his temples often served the spatial nodes of economic activity. Meanwhile, villages along the route that relied mainly on mountain agriculture generally placed greater emphasis on sacrificial buildings directly related to agricultural production and natural disaster prevention; the cycle of sacrificial activities was closely synchronized with the agricultural calendar, reflecting the embeddedness of religious practice in the production cycle.

Third, the needs of social structure and the lineage system gave rise to specific types of sacrificial buildings and sustained their continuous operation. In traditional patriarchal society, the continuity and prosperity of the lineage were of paramount concern. This was rooted in the fact that, under conditions of limited productivity, the family served as the core unit of production and daily life; population growth played a key role in resisting disasters and maintaining a stable livelihood. In folk belief, people were accustomed to praying to deities in charge of fertility for offspring. The prevalence of such temples in villages was thus deeply bound up with the contemporary custom of seeking progeny.

Finally, the practical needs of public life and social governance endowed folk sacrificial buildings with composite functions that transcend purely religious ones. Many temples located in village centers or near squares serve as public spaces for villagers to socialize and discuss local affairs in ordinary times, and during festivals they become venues for temple fairs, theatrical performances, and material exchange, taking on functions of cultural entertainment and village economy. This multiple practical function, where the temple is also a place of public assembly, is an important realistic basis for their long term survival in rural society.

## 5. Conclusion

Through a systematic analysis of the site selection types and their influencing factors concerning folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road, this study draws the following conclusions.

First, the folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road are closely integrated with the structure of the roadside villages. Their site selection can be classified into five typical types: village entrances and ends, village centers, village high points, road transition and turning nodes, and peripheral village areas. Each type exhibits significant differences in locational conditions, functional orientation, and cultural symbolic meanings.

Second, the factors influencing the site selection types of these folk sacrificial buildings mainly include three aspects. Geographical environment serves as the fundamental condition shaping their spatial pattern, determining the general orientation of building sites and their topographical adaptation. Historical and cultural factors, through major historical events, local legends, and the transmission of beliefs, endow the buildings with profound temporal layers and cultural connotations. Social factors are reflected in the direct impact of population distribution, economic patterns, social structure, and people's livelihood needs on building density, functional types, and state of preservation. These three

factors intertwine to constitute the diverse yet orderly spatial distribution pattern of folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road.

Folk sacrificial buildings along the Baixing Ancient Road are not isolated spaces of worship but material crystallizations of long-term interactions between humans and nature, history and reality, belief and daily life. Their site selection characteristics are not only a geographical representation of architectural heritage but also an important clue for understanding the cultural ecology, social structure, and spiritual landscape of the region, laying a spatial-cognitive foundation for further in-depth research on their architectural forms, ritual functions, and cultural values.

## References

- [1] Xue, L. (2008). *Analysis of the Architectural Structure of Ancestral Temples in Shanxi* [Master's thesis]. Taiyuan University of Technology.
- [2] Jing, X. (2010). *Analysis of the Regional Characteristics of Song and Jin Architecture in Southern Shanxi* [Master's thesis]. Taiyuan University of Technology.
- [3] Zhu, X. D., Zhao, Q., & Wang, C. E. (2012). *Folk Sacrificial Architecture in Shanxi during the Song and Jin Dynasties*. China Building Materials Press.
- [4] Rong, H. (2023). *Baixing: The Overhanging Sky Ancient Road in the Taihang Canyon*. *Literary and Historical Monthly*, (09), 47-51.
- [5] Zhang, Y. Z. (2018). *On the Historical Contribution of the Yigong Yishan Professional Team in Huixian*. *Journal of Henan Institute of Science and Technology*, 38(07), 9-13.
- [6] Chen, X. G. (2012). *The Original Era and Name of the Baixing Road in the Tang Dynasty*. *Chinese & Foreign Entrepreneurs*, (16), 172-173.
- [7] Liang, Y. Q. (2021). *The Baixing Ancient Road*. *China Highway*, (03), 68-69.
- [8] Kang, X. (2019). *A Study on the Spatial Form of Traditional Commercial and Post Towns along the Taihang Ancient Roads* [Master's thesis]. Shandong Jianzhu University.