

# Adaptive Development of Cultural Heritage in the Process of Urbanization: A Case Study of Cultural Heritage Site Parks

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**Abstract:** *With the acceleration of urbanization and the increasing scarcity of land resources, how to protect and utilize large-scale cultural heritage sites during urban spatial expansion has become an urgent problem to be solved. Taking cultural heritage site parks as the entry point, this study proposes a strategy of "adaptive development under the premise of protection," aiming to reconcile the conflicts between urban development and heritage conservation through functional reconstruction. The study shows that traditional static conservation models tend to lead to problems such as economic lag in heritage areas, weak awareness of residents in heritage protection, and homogenization of urban landscapes. In contrast, heritage site parks, by integrating archaeological, educational, and recreational functions, can not only alleviate land use conflicts but also activate the social value of cultural heritage. Taking the Xi'an Daming Palace National Archaeological Site Park as an example, its "site itself + modern display" model transforms Tang Dynasty palace ruins into a public space integrating cultural relic protection, science popularization experiences, and cultural tourism and leisure, verifying the feasibility of adaptive development. However, the current construction of heritage site parks still faces challenges such as excessive landscape intervention, shortage of operational funds, and singular display methods. This study provides a theoretical framework and practical paradigm for resolving the binary opposition between urbanization and heritage conservation, which is of great significance for enhancing urban cultural resilience.*

**Keywords:** *Urbanization; Cultural Heritage Protection; Heritage Site Parks*

## 1. Introduction

In the process of urbanisation, along with large-scale continuous urban construction and urban transformation, land resources are becoming increasingly scarce. How to correctly treat, effectively protect and utilise cultural heritage sites that cover a large area in the city has become a serious issue in front of city managers and builders. This paper points out that the adaptive of cultural heritage sites should be carried out under the premise of protection, to make them meet the needs of modern society, and to reconcile the contradictions between urban development and the protection of cultural heritage sites.

## 2. The Conflict Between Urbanization And Heritage Site Protection

At present, China's cities are in a period of rapid spatial expansion, for the denser distribution of heritage sites in the city, urban spatial development and heritage protection of the contradiction the escalation of the day[1]. Due to the limitation of heritage protection, the socio-economic development of the urban villages in the heritage area obviously lags behind that of other neighbouring areas, and the withered urban villages in the heritage area are in stark contrast to the rapid expansion of the urban space, and the whole heritage area is in a paradoxical state of backwardness and modernity. The urbanisation process is accompanied by the construction of a large number of infrastructures in the surrounding areas, which can be fatal to the various surface architectural heritages and subterranean artefacts, including the ancient city heritage sites, and can be devastating once the route is determined to pass through the sites[2]. The number of city streets with similar faces is increasing, and urban character space is still becoming a scarce commodity in urban construction[1]. Heritage sites, as cultural carriers that carry a lot of historical information, have the potential to be created into urban spaces with historical characteristics and become the best elements of urban spatial characteristics. Under China's traditional static heritage protection policy, the regional development planning of

heritage sites lags behind the development needs of the residents, which seriously undermines the residents' motivation for heritage protection, and then evolves into antagonism towards the heritage protection policy. At the same time, the residents' strong demand for development and the psychological gap have led to the construction behaviour of the village and town collectives or individual residents, and this spontaneous action, which lacks technical guidance and policy support, not only destroys the site, but also creates chaos and disorder in the overall environment of the site[1]. This development status quo of the site area is contrary to the concept of clean and orderly environment construction in the city, which constitutes the environmental and spatial contradiction between the site area and the urban area. The shift from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors has caused a large number of peasants to change their status and concentrate in large and medium-sized cities and has led to the rapid urbanisation of some villages and towns, driving up the value of land in nearby villages and towns[2]. With the Government out of control or inactive, the construction of farm buildings has become a side route for some peasants to get rich by taking advantage of the demolition and relocation of their homes; they build houses in all the places they can occupy, and the houses turn from one story to two or three, and their foundations can easily destroy the heritage sites of the old towns[2].

Many of China's heritage sites are rammed earth foundations left behind after the destruction of civil engineering buildings, especially large palaces and urban sites, which, when combined with their inter-site environments, cover a considerable amount of land[3]. With the continuous expansion of urban construction, these sites continue to enter the vision of urban construction and development. By adopting the new form of 'heritage site + park', heritage protection and urban construction can be combined to address the need for urban green space in urban construction, fundamentally alleviating the contradiction between heritage protection and urban construction, and achieving the need for effective protection.

China's Heritage Protection Law has imposed many restrictions on the production and lifestyles of the residents in the heritage protection areas, which has led to the obvious gap between the living standards of the residents inside and outside the heritage areas, resulting in the public's lack of understanding of the protection[3].

According to Chen, Yang and Zhao's study, the lower the quality-of-life satisfaction, the lower the identification of the residents with heritage protection, the lower the conservation knowledge, the less likely they are to compromise with heritage protection, and the lower their support for heritage protection[4]. The residents of the heritage area do not have a strong sense of identification with the heritage area and are resistant to heritage protection policies. Protection awareness and knowledge are weak, and the socio-economic costs and development opportunities sacrificed by the residents for heritage protection have not strengthened their protection awareness and knowledge[4]. Due to the protection of underground cultural relics, it is difficult to develop industrial and some high-yield peri-urban agricultural projects in the protected area, and the residents are mostly engaged in low-income planting activities. In recent years, some village and town cadres and the masses are not willing to be subjected to heritage protection policy, spontaneous construction of some village and town enterprises, residents of housing construction also appeared many illegal structures. The survey found that many residents showed envy of these unauthorised villages and towns, believing that heritage protection limits their better job opportunities and living conditions[4]. Recently, some of the residents of villages and towns occupied in the underground site on the willingness to relocate the visit also returned a lot of discordant views, which are a sign of the future of the site improvement work will face an extremely serious situation. Most of the residents in the heritage area do not want to change their normal behaviour of maximising profits because of the heritage protection; at the same time, the pressure of life also directly affects the attitude of the residents towards the heritage protection policy, and the lower the satisfaction level of the group, the stronger the demand for development, and the worse the sense of cooperation with the heritage protection, and the lower the support rate[4]. By adopting the form of heritage parks, and through reasonable planning and guidance, turning the heritage areas into cultural and leisure resorts, the structure of the residents in the heritage areas can be fundamentally changed, and the income of the residents in the heritage areas can be raised, thus stimulating the enthusiasm of the residents for heritage protection.

### **3. Case Study: the Daming Palace National Heritage Park**

Archaeological heritage park is one of the important methods of heritage protection. An archaeological heritage park is an urban public cultural space based on the protection and display of

archaeological sites and their environments, integrating education, scientific research, excursion, leisure and other functions, as well as a way of heritage protection, display and use of archaeological cultural heritage resources[5]. National archaeological heritage parks, on the other hand, refer to specific public spaces with important archaeological sites and their background environments as the main body, with functions such as scientific research, education, and recreation, and with national demonstrative significance in the heritage protection and display of archaeological sites[5].

The Daming Palace was built in the eighth year of Emperor Taizong Zhenguan of the Tang Dynasty, and is the centre of power of the empire carrying the 17 emperors of the Tang Dynasty[6]. It was once the largest brick and wooden palace in the world and was known as the 'Temple of the East', and is a model of oriental garden architecture. In 1961, the Daming Palace was listed as one of the first national key cultural relics protection units in China and was internationally recognised as a heritage protection project of great significance[6]. The existing site of the Daming Palace is located in the northwest corner of Xi'an City, north-south length of 2.5km, east-west width of 1.5km, covering an area of 3.2km<sup>2</sup>, across the Lianhu Lake, Weiyang and the new city of the three districts, has been surveyed more than 40 pavilions and palaces, and other sites. In 2007, a total investment of 12 billion RMB on the renovation of the Daming Palace, in 2010 was listed as China's first batch of national archaeological site park construction project list and opened to the public in the same year[7]. The park mainly contains four major theme areas, including the palace complex, cultural relics viewing area, leisure and play area and technology experience area, integrating the traditional display and modern technology and technical means, so that tourists can get a close understanding of the history and culture of the Tang Dynasty. The Daming Palace National Archaeological Site Park is an exemplary example of the bold exploration and practice of heritage protection and display in the new era and was inscribed on the World Cultural Heritage List in 2014 as a site of the Silk Road.

The Archaeological Centre built within the Daming Palace National Heritage Park is a place to show the archaeological, conservation and restoration process of the Daming Palace using the original building. The Discovery Centre has set up a pottery exhibition area, a music experience area and a topiary experience area for public participation[7]. For example, in the music experience area, there are three kinds of musical instruments, bells, Bianzhong and qin, and the public can use the mallets next to the musical instruments to strike the instruments and experience the different sounds of them [8]. In the topiary experience area, the public can make their own topiary according to the teacher's instruction. In addition, many archaeological games are set up for the public to play in the exhibition hall of the Discovery Centre, such as simulated burial sites, simulated palace sites, archaeological exploration games, quizzes on the protection and restoration of cultural relics, and jigsaw puzzles on the knowledge of wadangs and banquets, and so on. Simulated burial and palace sites can be based on the game to understand the excavation process of the Tang Dynasty brick tombs and palace sites; archaeological exploration games are divided into single and two-player games, which enable the public to experience the fun of using modern high-tech means of archaeological exploration; cultural relics protection and restoration of knowledge Q&A is to learn about different types of cultural relics protection and restoration of knowledge; Wadang jigsaw puzzles are made by piecing together the broken Wadang, so that the public will notice the shapes of round and semi-circular Wadangs. The Tile Dang Puzzle Game is to make the public notice the circular curvature of round and semi-circular tile dangs and the characteristics of their decorations; the Banquet and Drinking Game is based on the template of a Tang Dynasty tomb mural unearthed in 1987 in Nanli Wang Village, Chang'an County, Shaanxi Province, so that the public can learn about the food, folklore, and furniture of the Tang Dynasty through playing this game. The exhibition hall of the Archaeological Discovery Centre also displays common objects that are closely related to people's lives, such as bronze mirrors, coins and costumes, showing the same objects in different periods, demonstrating the results of archaeological research through their development and evolution, and helping the public to understand the trajectory of the social life of human beings. The Archaeological Discovery Centre is home to a wide range of video materials and China's largest IMAX cinema, showing 3D films such as The Legend of Daming Palace, the global screen film One Flew Over the Daming Palace, and the well-filmed documentary Daming Palace for the visiting public to see [8]. The Archaeological Discovery Centre set up in Daming Palace Heritage Park not only allows the public to perceive archaeological information and understand ancient history and culture in close proximity while relaxing and recreating but also enables the public to pay more attention to heritage protection and provides certain assistance to the research of archaeological sites from different perspectives.

National archaeological heritage parks have become an increasing trend as a new approach to heritage protection, but the construction of archaeological heritage parks has many shortcomings from the point of view of previous construction of heritage parks.

Firstly, after the baptism of time, the heritage protection of the park should be the starting point for the continuation of its simple and authentic historical style. But some places for the consideration of landscape effect, make too much force, or a large number of mulches, or large-scale masonry to see the new, and even large-scale reconstruction, contrary to the authenticity and integrity of the principle. According to the third national cultural relics census incomplete statistics, 4,580 open displays of ancient sites due to irrational use of the destruction or threatened 780, accounting for 1 / 5[8]. For the open display of heritage ontology, although the site of the museum and the protection of the shed can withstand the direct sun and rain, and other natural erosion, but due to the change of the buried state, breaking the original preservation of the environment and stability of the heritage ontology often appear a lot of new problems[8]. Many new problems often arise for the site properly. In addition, the function of heritage museums and protection shelters is first and foremost to protect the safety of the heritage site, but some buildings over-emphasise image design, with excessive volume, heavy structures, and in some cases even huge steel facilities situated directly on the heritage site itself, causing direct damage to the site[8]. Problems with heritage protection museums and sheds are mainly of three kinds: firstly, the construction of museums and protection sheds in unsuitable site environments. Secondly, the appearance and scale of the building interfere too much with the landscape setting. Thirdly, there are flaws in the design and construction of the buildings, and the internal environment does not meet the technical needs of ontological protection.

Secondly, the operating conditions of the site parks are poor and the publicity is insufficient. At present, the existing heritage parks in China lack a certain degree of visibility after completion, mainly because of the insufficient publicity of the information of archaeological heritage parks, and some of them are known to almost no one except for archaeological practitioners, thus leading to a scarcity of visitors[8]. Many members of the public do not understand the specific content of the heritage park and the heritage site profile, the shape of the public visit group, not to mention the public can not produce a strong attraction, the chain reaction will not be able to make the heritage park to produce a certain degree of economic benefits. At present, some of the heritage parks are not even able to maintain a balance of income and expenditure, and it is difficult for them to operate their daily activities, instead, they need support from the government.

Thirdly, there is a single display method in heritage parks. Currently, some of the site parks are only static displays, for some archaeological excavations of unearthed artefacts, such as building materials, living utensils, production tools, etc. to take the display is appropriate, but for some activities, smelting sites only to take this approach is not enough, too rigid and no fun, can not allow the public to have a more intuitive experience, let alone have a spiritual sense of pleasure. In addition, the majority of heritage protection parks only focus on the final display presented to the public, while the parts of the archaeological process that are difficult to protect as well as the protection technology used in the protection process are not explained to the public in detail, resulting in the public only watching the display, but do not understand the specific operational measures.

Fourthly, the management and operation expenses are huge. The huge operating expenses of archaeological site parks are obviously a huge obstacle to long-term sound operation. Despite the adoption of a variety of financing methods, such as increasing financial inputs, actively integrating the development of sites and neighbouring cities, introducing social capital and ticket revenues, most of the operating expenses of archaeological site parks are not optimistic. For example, the first batch of 12 national archaeological heritage parks received 65.625 million visitors during the evaluation period, of which 30.0488 million were paid visitors, accounting for only 45.79% of the total number of visitors[8]. Due to the public welfare attributes of the site parks, the admission fee income is relatively small. For example, the annual operating cost of the Daming Palace Heritage Park is as high as 150 million, while the income from the admission fee of the heritage park is about 10-20 million, and other operating income is about 30 million, and the shortfall is made up by Qujiang Group from other projects[8]. In addition, the park is often distributed within the scope of agricultural land, rural residential land, mountains, forests, rivers, large enterprises and institutions, etc., different land ownership and multiple management has also become a constraint to the creation and operation of the park. At present, the national level has not yet established laws and regulations on the construction and management of national archaeological site parks, and it is difficult to rely solely on the regulations of the cultural relics department for management and coordination.

#### 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the contradiction between urban construction and the protection of cultural heritage

sites is not irreconcilable. Cultural heritage sites, as the cultural carriers of human activities, ideologies and social relations at a particular stage of history, are the basis for witnessing the history of urban development, constituting the memory of the city, and perpetuating the city's cultural lineage. In the process of urbanisation, if we do not pay attention to the protection of cultural heritage sites and neglect the inheritance of urban culture, we may fall into a cultural crisis in the form of the disappearance of urban memory, the uniformity of urban appearance, the dislocation of urban construction and the disappearance of urban characteristics. Cultural heritage sites are by no means a burden to urban development, but may instead become the foundation for upgrading urban taste and highlighting urban characteristics. Therefore, it is possible to explore the construction of historic urban zones, setting up special historic zones for cultural heritage sites and their surroundings, and adopting the approach of developing new cities and protecting historic zones, so as to strike a balance between urban construction and the protection of cultural heritage sites.

As far as cultural heritage sites are concerned, protection does not mean isolating them, but rather passing them on, so that people from all generations can feel the value of cultural heritage sites and gain wisdom from them. Effective protection of cultural heritage sites will be better achieved by giving them new contemporary functions, promoting the fulfilment of their values and awakening people's awareness of their protection. A 'restrictive' protection that aims solely at preventing damage to cultural heritage sites is not only difficult to achieve a synergy between the economic and social development of the region where the heritage is located and its neighbours, but also difficult to stop the torrent of urbanisation. By exploring the concept of adaptive development and promoting the organic integration of cultural heritage site protection with the level of local economic and social development, the living standards of the public and urban masterplanning, the protection of cultural heritage sites is integrated into the economic and social development of the region, which further promotes the positive role of cultural heritage sites in enhancing the cultural heritage of the city, improving the humanistic environment and raising the visibility of the city.

During the implementation of the restricted protection phase of the Tang Daming Palace site, the living standards of the residents living on the site were significantly lower than those of the neighbouring areas, which objectively resulted in a lack of motivation on the part of the public to protect the cultural heritage site. In the future process of heritage protection and development, it is necessary to further improve the management system of compensation, participation and social supervision of the people involved in the protection and development of cultural heritage sites, to fully mobilise the people's enthusiasm to participate in the protection and development of heritage, so that the results of heritage protection and development can benefit the people, and to make cultural heritage sites become a real positive force to promote the economic and social development of the region.

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