ENHANCING THE INTERPRETATION OF SITES ON THE SILK ROADS:

A STUDY OF SHAANXI PROVINCE

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Abstract

As the initial section of the Silk Roads, Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, being inscribed as World Heritage in 2014, the interpretation issue of its associated properties has been more and more pressing because of the predictable growing number of tourists both domestic and overseas. Since the future visitors are not likely to travel the entirety of the extremely broad roads network, it is of great importance that a given site conveys the connection between the individual sites and the larger routes network, helping audiences construct a deeper understanding of the invaluable Silk Roads heritage. However, it is observed that some obvious deficiencies do exist in the current interpretive scheme so that the underlying connections can not be perceived by visitors completely and effectively.

Recognizing these issues, the intent of this thesis is to analyze the existing problems thoroughly and find out the possible interventions to enhance the interpretation of relevant sites on the Silk Roads. In light of the large scale of the Silk Roads, the research mainly focuses on its eastern starting points, Shaanxi Province (the ancient Chang'an City and its surrounding area) and its seven inscribed properties, which include two sites of ancient palace, four religious sites, and one tomb. Through documentation and assessment, their current conditions of interpretation are investigated and discussed. In addition, the three case studies of different categories are selected; surveys and interviews were conducted for further data collection. Based on the results of field research, a synthesized analysis of Shaanxi Silk Roads sites is generated and a regional interpretation framework is developed. To better illustrate the feasible interventions for each site, the specific proposals for the three case studies are presented and elaborated in detail to be served as references for other sites on the Silk Roads.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Cultural route is a relatively new concept in the domain of natural and cultural heritage. It refers to a route arisen from movements of different groups of people, which not only promoted common prosperity in many aspects but also formed a shared historical identity among various civilizations. Since it was identified as one of the four specific types of cultural and natural properties in the *Operational Guideline for the Implement of the World Heritage Convention* in 2005, this emerging concept increasingly came to the international arena of heritage preservation, bringing us a variety of opportunities as well as raising many pressing issues.

As one of the most extensive transnational cultural routes, the Silk Road has a long, dynamic, and complex history with abundant heritage resources, nourishing many civilizations and shaping today's world to a great extent. In 2014, its initial section, Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, was the first Silk Roads serial property to be successfully inscribed as the World Heritage. Because of the great impact of World Heritage, it is predictable that the publicity of the associated sites will increase, and they will attract much more tourists both domestic and overseas. However, although interpretation has long been regarded as an essential part of heritage management and preservation, as well as tourism development, it is observed the interpretation of associated sites along the Silk Roads has received little attention from both authorities and professionals in China. Deficiencies are quite evident: on the one hand, there is no centralized interpretation plan or guidelines like the centralized management plan produced by the governmental departments of cultural heritage; on the other hand, the current on-site interpretation of individual properties does not convey the perceived connections between the sites and the broader routes completely and effectively.

Given the vast expanse of the Silk Roads, it is unlikely that future visitors will have the opportunity or the desire to travel the entirety of the routes. Also, the ancient routes network is not active nowadays, and most sections are invisible because of the urbanization. Therefore, the values and implications of the Silk Roads are heavily embodied in its various associated properties. For these reasons, it is all the more important that a given site manages to express a sense of the whole thing, which would assist in revealing a more in-depth understanding of the individual sites, clarifying the significance and meaning of the great routes network, and provoking people to discover other relevant sites and further explore the invaluable Silk Roads heritage.

The intent of this research is to explore the issue of interpreting the Silk Roads-related heritage properties from a perspective of cultural routes, connecting the individual sites to the roads network through the appropriate, effective, and efficient on-site interpretation. However, the Silk Road is a transcontinent routes network consisting of a series of branches in different directions, coupled with many relevant heritage resources, both natural and cultural, tangible and intangible. In light of the extremely large scale of the whole Silk Roads, this thesis mainly focuses on Shaanxi Province, specifically, the ancient Chang'an City and its surrounding area, which was the eastern starting point of the Silk Roads in Central China. The important position of this region, as well as its plentiful historical resources, exemplifies a representative parcel along the vast routes network. It has the most inscribed sites among all provinces in China, including two archaeological sites of ancient palace, four Buddhist sites, and one tomb which is tied closely to a decisive figure of pioneering the Silk Roads.

With the study focus, this thesis attempts to examine the current condition of the on-site interpretation of the the seven inscribed sites in Shaanxi, figure out the existing problems as well as the opportunities and potential benefits, and more importantly, to put forward recommendations and feasible proposals to strengthen the connections between the individual sites and the rest of the routes. It is believed that through appropriate interventions, visitors' understanding of the Silk Roads heritage would be broadened, their interest of exploring the whole routes would be increased, different groups of stakeholders would be engaged, and sustainable tourism development would be promoted.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the research question, the thesis is undertaken through a range of methodologies, including a literature review, field research, surveys of visitors, and interviews with professionals.

To construct a theoretical background of relevant domains, the research starts with a literature review. It includes historical documents, scholarly texts, international charters, and experts meeting reports on the topics of cultural routes, heritage interpretation, and the Silk Roads, especially Shaanxi Province and its associated properties. At the end of this chapter, some words are said to discuss the current gaps in literature as well as the potential challenges in practice.

A series of following chapters focus on the seven inscribed Silk Roads sites in Shaanxi Province. Their current interpretation condition is firstly investigated through documentation and evaluation of each site thoroughly. Based on the results of field research, three sites are chosen as case studies for further data collection and more in-depth analysis. Surveys and interviews are conducted to examine the basic demographics of visitors, their reception, the difficulties the staff encountered, and the opportunities in the present context. Using three case studies of different categories, the thesis strives to derive a synthesized analysis of Shaanxi Silk Roads sites and develop an overall regional interpretation framework. Aiming to strengthening the perceived connection between the sites and the broader routes network, it is hoped that through the three case studies as representative examples, the proposals could provide generic models which can be applied or consulted to similar heritage sites on the Silk Roads.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The primary aim of this chapter is to review the literature on cultural routes, heritage interpretation, and the Silk Roads, constructing a conceptual background of the relevant domains and laying a theoretical foundation to integrate them as a whole. The emergence and development of the concept of cultural routes is first introduced; its definition, characteristics, and implications are also revealed. In addition, the studies on route-based tourism are examined to unveil its possibilities and benefits, to which interpretation has the potential to contribute.

The concept of heritage interpretation is investigated through the presentation of its different definitions and the discussion of the evolving philosophy. Also, the key principles put forward by scholars are summarized and compared, which could be an essential reference for interpreting the specific cases.

Since the Silk Road is an extremely broad term, its history and geographical identification is briefly introduced. More attention is paid to the first inscribed section, Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, and its starting point, Shaanxi Province, which is the focus in this thesis. The overall significance of this region and the general description of each inscribed site are stated. At the end of this chapter, the current theoretical gaps as well as the practical challenges of interpreting Silk Roads properties in Shaanxi are discussed.

2.1 CULTURAL ROUTES

2.1.1 Emergency and Development of the Concept

The term "Cultural Routes" was first launched in Europe. In 1987, the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes was certified as a cultural route of the Council of Europe.[1] The idea for the program initially aimed

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[1] Council of Europe, "Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe," accessed December 2, 2017. http://culture-routes.net/cultural-routes.

at encouraging more awareness of the European cultural area and its common heritage.[2] However, since this pilgrim's route was successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993, cultural routes, as a special type of cultural heritage, increasingly came into the scholars' view around the world.

In November 1994, a meeting held in Madrid brought experts together to explore the issue of "cultural routes." In the report submitted to UNESCO, the concept of cultural routes was recognized from four aspects: it is based on the dynamic of movement and the idea of exchange; the sum of the whole elements make the route gain its significance; the dialogue between different regions is essential; it is multi-dimensional that various elements could develop from the primitive function.[3] In the meeting, the experts also suggested the inclusion of heritage routes within the UNESCO world heritage framework.[4]

Although UNESCO started programs to preserve the Silk Roads in 1988, it was not until 2005 that UNESCO added heritage routes as one of the four specific types of cultural and natural properties in the *Operational Guideline for the Implement of the World Heritage Convention*.[5] The concept, definition, and inscription criteria of heritage routes in this document heavily relied on the work of Madrid meeting. However, UNESCO's inclusion demonstrates cultural routes, as a new category of heritage, has gained more attention and became a growing global issue.

In 2008, the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS ratified the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes. On the basis of previous works, this charter further clarified the defining elements of cultural routes, the indicators and process of identification, the criteria of authenticity and integrity, and the methodology for research, assessment, conservation, and management.[6] Through this document, the fundamental issues have been elucidated; however, considering the complexity of cultural routes, more in-depth studies and worldwide practices are needed to explore and elaborate specific aspects of this overarching concept.

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[2] UNWTO, *Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries* (Madrid: UNWTO,2015), 46.
[3] UNESCO, "Routes As Part of Our Cultural Heritage, Report on The Meeting of Experts," World Heritage Committee, Madrid, 1994.
[4] Ibid.
[5] UNESCO, *Operational Guideline for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: World Heritage Center, 2008), 83.
[6] ICOMOS, The ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, 2008.

2.1.2 Definition and Implication

The definition of a cultural routes is ever evolving. The report on Madrid meeting first proposed: "A heritage route is composed of tangible elements of which the cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrate the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time."[7] It is noted that this definition stresses dynamics as an essential characteristic, and it only focuses on tangible elements.

Building upon the definition put forward in Madrid meeting, a more complete one was proposed by CIIC in the ICOMOS Charter:

> A route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality to serve a specific and well-determined purpose, which must fulfill the following conditions:
> a) It must arise from and reflect interactive movements of people as well as multi-dimensional, continuous, and reciprocal exchange of goods, countries, regions or continents over significant periods of time;
> b) It must have thereby promoted a cross-fertilization of the affected cultures in space and time, as reflected both in their tangible and intangible heritage;
> c) It must have integrated into a dynamic system the historic relations and cultural properties associated with its existence.[8]

Five factors as defining elements are further discussed: context (natural and/or cultural), content (tangible heritage assets as well as intangible elements), cross-cultural significance as a whole (overall value and identity), dynamic character, and setting (geographical, territorial, environmental, and historical).[9] This comprehensive definition laid a theoretical foundation for identification, assessment, protection, and management of cultural routes.

Unlike ICOMOS, the Council of Europe identifies cultural routes as "cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation projects aiming at the development and promotion of an itinerary or a series of

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[7] UNESCO, "Routes As Part of Our Cultural Heritage," 1994.
[8] ICOMOS, The ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, 2008.
[9] Ibid.

itineraries based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values."[10] CoE emphasizes the educational and touristic value of cultural routes and recognizes that cultural routes may not be physically delimited routes of historical remains but rather thematic connections shared among different sites. Similar idea could be found in another publication of CoE: "The word route is to be understood not only in the restricted sense of physical pathways; it is used in a more conceptual and general sense, meaning a network of sites or geographical areas sharing a theme, taking different forms according to the identity of each site or area."[11]

To further clarify this concept, some comparative studies were carried out by scholars. It is argued that in comparison to greenway, liner monument, or heritage corridor, cultural routes is an idea stemmed from movement and communication; it more focuses on common historical identities and various dialogues among different peoples rather than physical traces; its structural configuration is more diverse, but its identification is strict.[12] In general, the term "cultural routes" contains multiple implications:

Scale. The scales of different cultural routes are various; they could be local, national, regional, or transnational. It is noteworthy that transnational ones are usually extremely rich and extensive, serving as vehicles to connect people in different regions and bridge their cultures. The examples include the Andean Road System, which goes across six Latin American countries, and the Transromanica Network, which involves nine European countries.

Movement, exchange, and dialogue. Cultural routes are outcomes of human movement and migration. Served for one or more certain purposes originally, a cultural route always develops, changes or expands constantly by generations over time. Hence, cultural routes is never a static concept; instead, it should be understood from a dynamic and progressive perspective.

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[10] Council of Europe. Resolution CM/Res (2015) 53: Establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, 2015.

[11] Berti, E. et al, *Cultural Routes management: from theory to practice* (Council of Europe, 2015), 14.

[12] Wei Li and Kongjian Yu, "New Development of World Heritage Preservation: Cultural Routes," *City Issues* 126, no.4 (2005): 11; Yi Liu, "Research on the Integrated Conservation of the Silk Road (Shaanxi Section) under the Vision of Intangible Culture," Doctor's dissertation, Xi`an University of Architecture and Technology, 2014, 26.

A whole. Under the umbrella of an cultural concept or a historical theme, the elements no matter cultural or natural, tangible or intangible, make up *a whole* altogether. Each element has a certain relevance to the route and contributes to its overall significance. Typically, the meaning of a cultural route is more comprehensive than the sum of each individual property's value.

Shared heritage and common responsibility. Cultural routes are links between different cultures to evoke collective memory, identify shared history, enhance mutual understanding, and further sustainable development. Considering the richness and complexity, the protection and management of cultural routes are usually challenging, calling for all stakeholders' engagement and effective cooperation between entities.

2.1.3 Route-based Heritage Tourism

Besides the basic framework set up by the organizations such as ICOMOS, UNESCO, and CoE, this emerging concept also attracts a variety of scholars' interests. Linking cultural routes to heritage tourism is one of the most studied fields. It has been examined from a multidimensional and multidisciplinary perspective, exploring more potentials of this special type of heritage tourism.

Lourens has argued the significance of developing route-based tourism and its potential benefits on social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects.[13] Briedenhann and Wickens pointed out that using an overall theme to connect different tourist destinations is an effective way to promote associated sites.[14] Major benefits that cultural routes tourism could bring were concluded by Meyer as the following aspects:

1. Attraction of new tourists and repeat visitors;
2. Diffusion of visitors and dispersion of income from tourism, hence more even

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[13] Marlien Louren, "Route tourism: a roadmap for successful destinations and local economic Development," *Development Southern Africa* 24 (2007): 477.

[14] Jenny Briedenhann and Eugenia Wickens, "Tourism routes as a tool for the economic development of rural areas—Vibrant hope or impossible dream?" *Tourism Management* 25 (2004): 72.

distribution of economic benefits;

3. Increase of length of stay and expenditure by tourists;

4. Bringing lesser known attractions into the tourism business/product;

5. Tying up several attractions that would independently not have the potential to entice visitors to spend time and money;

6. Enable a more integrated product development and marketing approach;

7. The achieved synergies promise greater pulling over;

8. Increase of the overall appeal of a destination;

9. Increase the sustainability of a tourism product;

10. Management of carrying capacity is facilitated due to dispersion of tourists;

11. Negative environmental impacts are reduced to dispersion of tourist. [15]

Obviously, to maximize these benefits, experiencing the whole route is highly encouraged. However, the scale of some routes is very large. For these cases, they are usually segmented into sub-networks and networks of sites having coherence.[16] The search of this common coherence and this continuity is very significant, which requires "the formation of co-operative networks" among different sites and regions.[17]

In addition to the perspective of spatial scale, route tourism has been analyzed from an experience perspective.[18] As Ryan argued, the traditional cognitive design of a site always considers tourists as "observers" and simple consumers.[19] Experiential tourism, on the contrary, is defined as "something extremely significant and unforgettable for the consumer immersed in the experience."[20] To facilitate the production of experience, Holbrook identified four components: experience, entertainment, exhibition, and evangelism.[21] It seeks a high level of engagement and absorption in the experience, which requires a greater role of intangible heritage and local people in tourism.[22] Considering the nature of cultural routes which emphasizes intangible heritage and dialogues, it has the potential to represent a new mode of

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[15] Dorothea Meyer, *Tourism Routes and Gateways: Key Issues for the Development of Tourism Routes and Gateways and Their Potential for Pro-Poor Tourism* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 14.

[16] Wided Majdoub, "Analyzing Cultural Routes from a Multidimensional Perspective," *Alma Tourism* 1, no. 2 (2010): 32.

[17] Meyer, *Tourism Routes and Gateways*, 14.

[18] Majdoub, "Analyzing Cultural Routes from a Multidimensional Perspective," 34.

[19] Chris Ryan, *The Tourist Experience* (Continuum, London, 2002), 61.

[20] Majdoub, "Analyzing Cultural Routes from a Multidimensional Perspective," 34.

[21] Morris Holbrook, "The Millennial Consumer in the Texts of our Times: Experience and Entertainment," Journal of Macro Marketing 20 (2000): 180.

[22] Ibid.

experiential tourism.

However, the planning and management process of cultural routes is comprehensive and complex. Lopez Fernandez put forward a set of elements which should be taken into account during the planning process, including justification, main goal and sub-goals, available assets and information, marketing, and design of the itinerary.[23] Built upon Fernandez's suggestion, in "Linking Destination Through Sustainable Cultural Routes," the authors regarded a cultural route as an "integrated tourism product" and specifically stressed three elements: collaboration among actors, accessibility, and monitoring.[24]

First, to ensure an effective cooperation, the following elements are widely considered as the essential ones: the common recognition of the strong interdependence among all local actors; a joint overall goal of all relevant destinations; the need for political bodies to support; the monitoring and feedback mechanism.[25] In addition, UNWTO put forward guidance on how to build and develop partnerships, which could apply to the case of cultural routes.[26]

The overall accessibility is also significant in the planning of a cultural route. Besides the tourism facilities, the level of accessibility is heavily depended on information, specifically, the information on how to reach every single site, how many sites are within one region, and both the conceptual inter-relevance and physical connection between them.[27] In addition to traditional approaches like signs, booklets, or maps, online platforms are usually recommended as a tool to aggregate information from different sources, ensuring an inclusive overview of a route and its associated assets for tourists.[28]

Last but not the least, monitoring and evaluation should be regarded as an integral part of the whole process of heritage management. A report conducted by CoE in 2011 put forward a set of key indicators

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[23] Giulio Pattanaro and Filippo Pistocchi, "Linking Destinations Through Sustainable Cultural Routes," *Emerging Issues in Management* 1 (2016): 85.
[24] Ibid., 86.
[25] Ibid.
[26] UNWTO, *Co-operation and Participation in Tourism- A Global Perspective*, 2015.
[27] Pattanaro and Pistocchi, "Linking Destinations Through Sustainable Cultural Routes," 87.
[28] Ibid.

to evaluate cultural routes from a perspective of socio-economic and environmental sustainability.[29] Bozic and Tomic devised a more elaborate Cultural Route Evaluation Model (CRME), which is based on two groups of values: the main values including scientific, route-specific, economic, and protection and conservation values, and secondly additional values.[30] The CRME could be used to assess a route's current condition as well as its potentials, helping it achieve the overall objectives.

2.2 HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

2.2.1 Defining Interpretation

In the domain of heritage preservation, "interpretation" was first emerged in the natural conservation field. It could be traced back to 1871, when John Muir first used the term and claimed "I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood."[31] Since then, the concept has been applied to cultural heritage preservation as well and examined by many professionals.

Tilden defined interpretation as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrated media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."[32] But he argued that this definition was only an objective one to be accepted widely; hence, following it he stressed two concepts for interpreters: the goal of interpretation is to unveil truths; meanwhile, it aims to evoke people's interest and enrich their mind.[33] In addition to Tilden's, which has been considered as a classic one, there are some definitions proposed by other scholars and institutions:

• "Interpretation is an attempt to create understandings." [34] (Alderson & Low, 1976)

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[29] Council of Europe, Resolution CM/Res (2015) 53: Establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, 2015.

[30] Sanja Bozic and Nemanja Tomic, "Developing the Cultural Route Evaluation Model (CREM) and its application on the Trail of Roman Emperors, Serbia," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 17 (2016): 28.

[31] Linnie Wolfe, *The Life of John Muir* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 144.

[32] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 8.

[33] Ibid.

[34] William Alderson and Shirley Low, *Interpretation of historic sites (*Nashville, KY: American

- "Interpretation is simply an approach to communication. Four qualities distinguish interpretation from other forms of information transfer and define the interpretive approach to communication: pleasurable, relevant, organized, has a theme."[35] (Sam Ham, 1992)

- "Interpretation is an informational and inspirational process designed to enhance understanding, appreciation, and protection of our cultural and natural legacy."[36] (Beck and Cable, 1998)

- "Interpretation is a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource."[37] (National Association for Interpretation)

- "A catalyst in creating an opportunity for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance inherent in the resource."[38] (NPS)

According to the quotes by these professionals, it is recognized that instead of a one-way approach which only presents the facts to visitors, heritage interpretation is regarded as a process to bridge objects and audiences, arousing their interests, expanding their preexisting knowledge, and creating their own understanding.

Another ambiguity should be clarified is the discrepancies between "presentation" and "interpretation." ICOMOS Charter defines the two terms respectively: presentation refers to a communication approach which conveys interpretive content through the arrangement of information, physical access, and technical means; interpretation, on the other hand, is the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural sites.[39] It can be argued that

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Association for State and Local History, 1976), 2.

[35] Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992), 3, 8.

[36] Larry Beck and Ted Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture* (Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1998), 1.

[37] National Association for Interpretation, "Mission, Vision, and Core Values,"accessed December 2, 2017. http://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/About/About_NAI/What_We_Believe/nai/_About/Mission_Vision_and_Core_Values.aspx?hkey=ef5896dc-53e4-4dbb-929e-96d45bdb1cc1

[38] United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, *Foundations competencies for All NPS Interpreters,* Interpretive Development Program, 2007, 5.

[39] ICOMOS, ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. Ratified by the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS, Quebec, Canada, October 4, 2008.

presentation is an integral part of interpretation. They have the same objectives, and they could not be separately in the interpretive practices.

Compared to the Western countries, China started developing heritage preservation as an individual discipline relatively late, and the emphasis is always placed upon the material and physical conservation, while the significance of interpretation is neglected. There is no theoretical definition of heritage interpretation rooted in the specific Chinese context; most researches and practices of presentation and interpretation in China are case-based, following the established western framework.[40] Therefore, in the following sections, the conceptual models and principles built upon the western perspectives is first examined, and then they will be related to the specific context in China and be applied to discuss the interpretive issues of the Silk Roads (Shaanxi Section).

2.2.2 Theoretical Models and Principles

The early development of heritage interpretation is deeply rooted in a specific context of the middle 19th century, when the Americans paid great attention to protect the national territory.[41] John Muir and Enos Mills were among the earliest naturalists and preservationists to conserve wilderness in the U.S. In their books and essays, thoughtful insights into nature guiding are presented. Since then, the philosophy of interpretation has evolved over time. The purpose of this section is to discuss a variety of conceptual models, frameworks, and principles chronologically.

Tilden's Six Principles. Freeman Tilden first conceptualized the role of interpreters and outlined a set of six enduring principles in 1957. He argued that interpreters had the responsibility to relate visitors' interests and experiences to the objects; an interpreter should present the whole picture and reveal the deeper meaning rather than providing fragmentary information; the objective of interpretation is provocation; also, it is suggested that interpreters should treat interpretation as a form of art and apply different

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[40] Lin Bu, "Research on the Presentation System of Cultural Heritage in China," Doctor's dissertation, Northwest University, 2012, 5.

[41] Marta Brunelli, "From *nature guiding* to *nature interpretation* in the United States (1872-1920)," *History of Education and Children's Literature* VIII, no. 1 (2013): 401.

approaches to different audiences.[42] Tilden's principles changed the profession greatly, and they have remained standards until today.

Two levels of Interpretation. Following Tilden's six principles, James Fitch discussed two distinct levels of interpretation in 1982. He argued that experts usually conduct the "professional level" of interpretation. They investigate all the existing evidence and then interpret monuments to visitors according to their own knowledge and understanding. On the contrary, the interpretation which is received by the public is considered as the "popular level."[43] Fitch suggested the most effective way to carry out the "popular level" interpretation was to recreate the historic scenes and to perform the activities accurately and realistically.[44] He believed the popularity of live demonstrations was evidence of its effectiveness; nonetheless, this form of interpretation has been disputed by many critics because it suggests to the viewers that they are actually seeing the past as it happened.

Re-creating or Re-constructing. Similar to Fitch's theory, David Uzzel proposed two types of interpretive methods, recreation and reconstruction, in 1994. Recreation is consumer-led; it is often conducted by costumed demonstrators to create a vivid atmosphere of the past.[45] Uzzel agreed with Fitch that this method was appealing to visitors, but he questioned its authenticity and objectivity.[46] On the contrary, reconstruction is more resource-led. Instead of treating history as a fixed system, it aims at connecting the past and present to get people immersed in the historic contexts and understand its dynamics.[47]

A Mindfulness Model of Interpretation. Building upon the concept of "mindfulness," which was put forward by Langer in the field of social cognition, Moscardo proposed a model of visitor behavior and cognition at built heritage sites.[48] (Figure 2.1) She assumed two sets of factors could influence visitors:

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[42] Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage*, 9.

[43] James Fitch, *Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 335.

[44] Ibid., 348.

[45] David Uzzel, "Heritage Interpretation in Britain Four Decades After Tilden," In *Manual of Heritage Management*, (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1994): 296.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 297.

[48] Ellen Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1989).

setting factors and visitor factors. As setting factors are usually under the direct control of site managers, she presented four principles to produce more mindful visitors. First, visitor should be given various types of interpretive media and information to ensure the diversity of their experience; second, visitors should be given control over their experience; the other two principles are very similar to Tilden's: one suggests the exhibition should be relevant to people's experiences, the other stresses the significance of encouraging people to learn and explore.[49]

SETTING FACTORS	VISITOR FACTORS	COGNITIVE STATE	CONSEQUENCES
1. Varied/Multisensory Media 2. Novelty/Conflict/Surprise 3. Use of questions 4. Visitor control/Interactive Exhibits 5. Dynamic exhibits 6. Physical/Cognitive Orientation 7. Topic/Content Area 8. Presence of guides	1. High Interest in Content 2. Low levels of fatigue 3. Educational Motive	MINDFUL	1. More Learning 2. High satisfaction 3. Greater understanding
1. Repetitive/Unisensory Media 2. Traditional Exhibits 3. No control/Interaction 4. Static Exhibits 5. Poor/No Orientation 6. No guides present	1. Low Interest in Content 2. High levels of Fatigue 3. Entertainment/Social Motive	MINDLESS	1. Little learning 2. Low Satisfaction 3. Little Understanding

Figure 2.1 Mindfulness model of visitor behavior and cognition at built heritage sites.

Fifteen Guiding Principles for the 21ˢᵗ Century. At the turn of the century, Beck and Cable claimed that because of the changing situation, it was necessary to update the standards of interpretation. Based on Tilden's six well-established principles, they added nine novel ones.   They revealed the significance of incorporating high technology into interpretive practices and unpacked a toolbox of available media, which were unimaginable in Tilden's era.[50] They mentioned the partnership and external supports in terms of political, economic, and administrative in current contexts.[51] Higher requirements for interpreters were proposed, including good communication skills and passions for both visitors and

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[49] Gianna Moscardo, "Mindful Visitors: Heritage and Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 23, no.2 (1996): 381.
[50] Beck and Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century*, 81.
[51] Ibid., 125.

resources.[52]

A Constructivist Approach. Copeland referred the concept of constructivism and defined it as a self-regulatory process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts through reflection upon our interactions with objects and ideas or discussion.[53] To clarify how a constructivist process differs from a positivist one, a comparison between the two types of information flow is presented. (Figure 2.2) A constructivist approach aims at empowering visitors to construct their own understanding and encouraging their enquiries. To facilitate this process, Copeland developed a set of supporting principles. Most strategies he proposed are congruent to the former ones; the last two, nevertheless, infuse some new ideas to the profession of interpretation. He argued one essential way to help with assimilation or accommodation of concept is through social discourse; in addition, the assessment is an integral part in the whole interpretive planning process.[54]
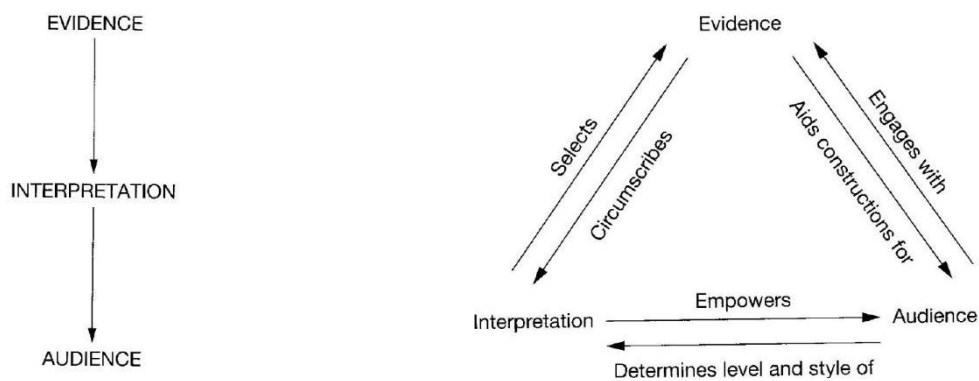
Figure 2.2 Comparison of information flow in a positivistic model and in a constructivist model.

International Charter. Besides the principles and theoretical models proposed by scholars, ICOMOS also strives to promote the effective communication of the heritage sites.[55] The Ename Charter situates interpretation in a current context and addresses it from a broad global perspective. Interpretation is no longer only a medium to connect heritage and visitors. Instead, it is a tool to deal with many issues such

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52 Ibid., 155.

53 Tim Copeland, "Constructing Pasts: Interpreting the Historic Environment," in *Heritage Interpretation,* ed. Allison Hems and Marion Blockley, (London, New York: Routledge, 2006): 84.

54 Copeland, "Constructing Pasts," 92.

55 ICOMOS, ICOMOS Ename Charter, 2008.

as human rights or social justice, which requires accessibility, authenticity, inclusiveness, and sustainability of interpretation. The rationale for all the principles is a reflection of the noticeable transformation in heritage interpretation.[56]

So far, it is evident that the philosophy of interpretation is in a state of continuous evolution. Table 2.1 shows the key ideas with regard to the interpretive principles and the relevant statements put forward by different professionals. On the one hand, Tilden's six principles are always served as a cornerstone; on the other hand, the following scholars have infused new ideas into this field as well. The importance of modern technology, communication, collaboration, and assessment is revealed. Also, the engagement of "non-professionals," both visitors and locals, has been paid more attention. Instead of receiving the "second level" interpretation, visitors are encouraged to participate in the interpretive process and construct their own understandings; meanwhile, it is acknowledged that indigenous people and local communities could help form the meaning of a site, by which means interpretation could be more democratic. The constant evolution of interpretation reflects the shifting contexts of heritage preservation; the more inclusive and comprehensive philosophy demonstrates the complexity of this profession as well as the broadening of this domain.

Table 2.1. Key ideas of interpretive principles.

Keywords	Tilden 1957	Uzzel 1994	Moscardo 1996	Beck and Cable 1998	Tim Copeland 2006
Relevant to people's interests or experience	1.Relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor.	4.Strong human interest; 5.Interpretation should build on pre-existing knowledge.	3.Interpretation needs to make connections to the personal experiences of visitors.	1.Relate the subject to the lives of the people; 11.Interpretive writing should address what readers would like to know.	4.Interpretation mediates the historic environment for visitors;
Facts and information	2.Information is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information.	2.The need to know.		2.Goes beyond providing information; 9.The quantity and quality of info.	2.Sites are heavily on the use of evidence;

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[56] Neil Silberman, "The ICOMOS-Ename Charter Initiative: Rethinking the Role of Heritage Interpretation in the 21st Century," *The George Wright Forum* 23, no. 1 (2006): 33.

Story and artistic expression	3.Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts.			3.An interpretive presentation should be designed as a story.	
Education and provocation	4.The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.	7.Visitors should be encouraged to discover.	4.Interpretation needs to challenge visitors, to question and to encourage them to question.	4.The purpose is to inspire; 13.Interpretation should instill in people the ability and the desire to sense the beauty.	3.Visitors are viewed as thinkers; 5.Visitor exploration is highly valued.
A whole picture: theme and orientation	5.Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part.	1.The need for a clear concept; 11.Orientation; 12.A sequence of experience.	2.2Good physical orientation systems.	5.Interpretation should present a complete theme or thesis and address the whole person;	1.Present whole to part with emphasis on concepts of chronology, evidence, and interpretation.
Different audiences have different needs	6.Interpretation addressed to children t should follow a different approach.	4.Different interpretation for different audiences; 8.Hierarchies		6.Interpretation for children, teenagers, and seniors should follow different approaches	
Various techniques		13.A variety of interpretive techniques.	1.Visitors should be given a variety of their experiences.	8.Technology can reveal the world in exciting new ways.	
Interaction and communication			2.1 Interact with or participate in the interpretation.	10.Interpreters must be familiar with communication techniques.	6.Interpretation strategies are aimed to encourage discourse.
Pleasurable and enjoyment		9.A balance between consumer-led and resource-led.		7.Bring the past alive to make the present more enjoyable;	
Local people		10.Sympathetic to local people.			
Collaboration		14.Be opportunistic.		12.Attract support-financial, political, administrative.	
Assessment					7.Discover visitors' perspectives to improve interpretation.

2.3 THE SILK ROADS: SHAANXI PROVINCE

2.3.1 Overview: The Silk Roads Network

The term "Silk Road" was first coined by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877.[57] The collective name originally referred to the routes network linking Central China and Rome via Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe, along which silk was the most influential, though by no means the only, product traded. As the Silk Roads being investigated and more branches being explored by scholars, it becomes a broader concept which is defined as "the ancient trade route upon which goods and ideas were carried between the East and West."[58]

Though controversies exist, a general outline of the historical development of the Silk Roads has been widely accepted.[59] It is recognized that the first thriving stage of the routes is from the 2nd century BC to 2nd Century AD, when constant conflicts and integration took place between a variety of empires. It was Zhangqian's diplomatic trip to the West built a formal and durable connection between the Han Empire of China and the states in the Western Regions. After the emergence and early development, the route flourished from the 6th to 9th century during the Sui and Tang Dynasties of China, resulting in a stronger bond among diverse cultures. Later in the 13th century, the powerful Mongol Empire continued to facilitate commercial activities as well as cultural exchanges through the route. However, entering the 19th century, the decreasing needs of traditional eastern goods because of the Industrial Revolution, the policy of isolationism in China, along with the rise of the sea trade routes, led to the gradual decline of the overland Silk Routes.[60] During almost two millennia, not only goods but also cultures, religions, technologies, and arts were spread and exchanged through the Silk Roads. It has made unprecedented contributions to the common prosperity of various civilizations.

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[57] Tamara Chin, "The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877," *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 1 (Autumn 2013): 196.

[58] UNESCO, *Silk Roads: Initial Section of the Silk Roads, the Route network of Tian-shan Corridor,* World Heritage Convention, 973.

[59] Jing Feng and Ron van Oers, *UNESCO Missions to Chinese Section of the Silk Road* (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2004); UNESCO, *Silk Roads*; Tim William, *The Silk Roads: an ICOMOS Thematic Study* (ICOMOS, 2014); Irene Franck and David Brownstone, *The Silk Road: A History* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986).

[60] Jichun Yong, *History of the Silk Roads* (Xi'an: San qin Press, 2015), 313.

The Silk Roads is an extensive routes network incorporating more than one branches. Connecting eastern and western margins of Eurasian continent, the regions that lie within the current day countries of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; on the east the roads led to Korea and Japan; on the west it passed through West Asia, Europe and ended at Rome; on the south it reached India.[61] To illustrate its geographic territory, a number of maps were drawn by different scholars and institutions.[62] (Figure 2.3-2.5) However, the variations between these maps are obvious. On the one hand, they have distinct focuses in terms of historical periods or geographic scopes; on the other hand, the complexity and dynamics of the routes make it very hard to map a certain worldwide routes system. Therefore, compartmentalizing the overall routes network into a series of sub-sections to further each section's investigation, identification, and conservation is a feasible and reasonable strategy.
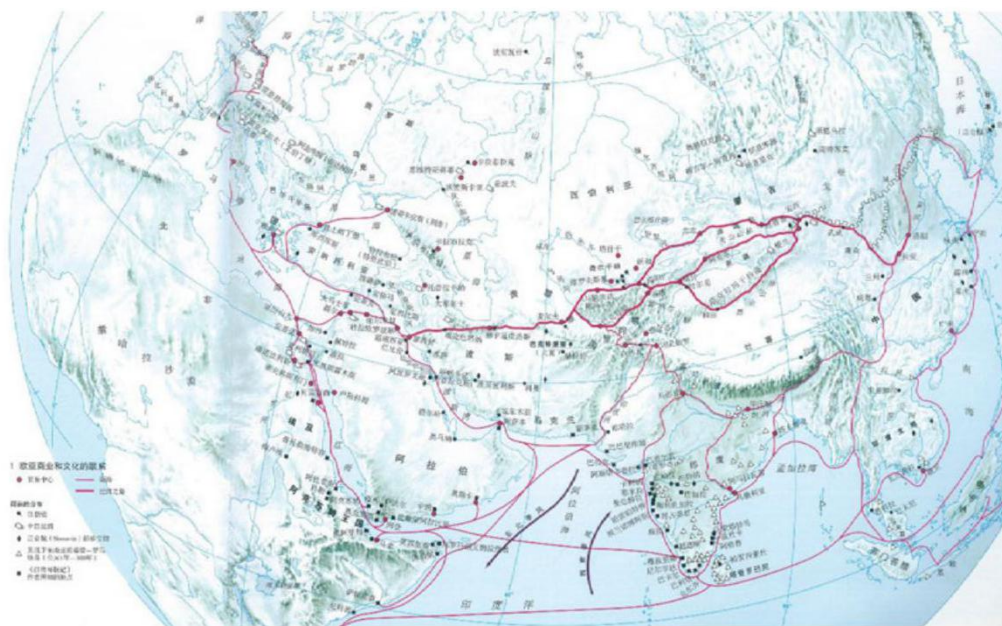
Figure 2.3 The Silk Routes network from the Times Atlas of World History.

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[61] UNESCO, The Great Silk Roads, accessed December 12, 2017.
https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/great-silk-roads
[62] William, *An ICOMOS Thematic Study*; Richard Overy, The Times Atlas of World History (Hope Publishing House and New Century Press, 2011); Digital Silk Road Project, accessed December 3, 2017. http://dsr.nii.ac.jp.

Figure 2.4 The vast geographical extent of the Silk Roads showing major routes (in red) and other significant routes (orange).

Figure 2.5 The great Silk Roads network from the Digital Silk Road Project.

2.3.2 Nomination: Strategy, Process, and Results

As early as late 1980s, UNESCO has paid attention to conserve the Silk Roads. Based on the strategy of "Ten Years of World Cultural Development," the initiative of "A Road of Dialogue: Research on the Integrity of the Silk Roads" was launche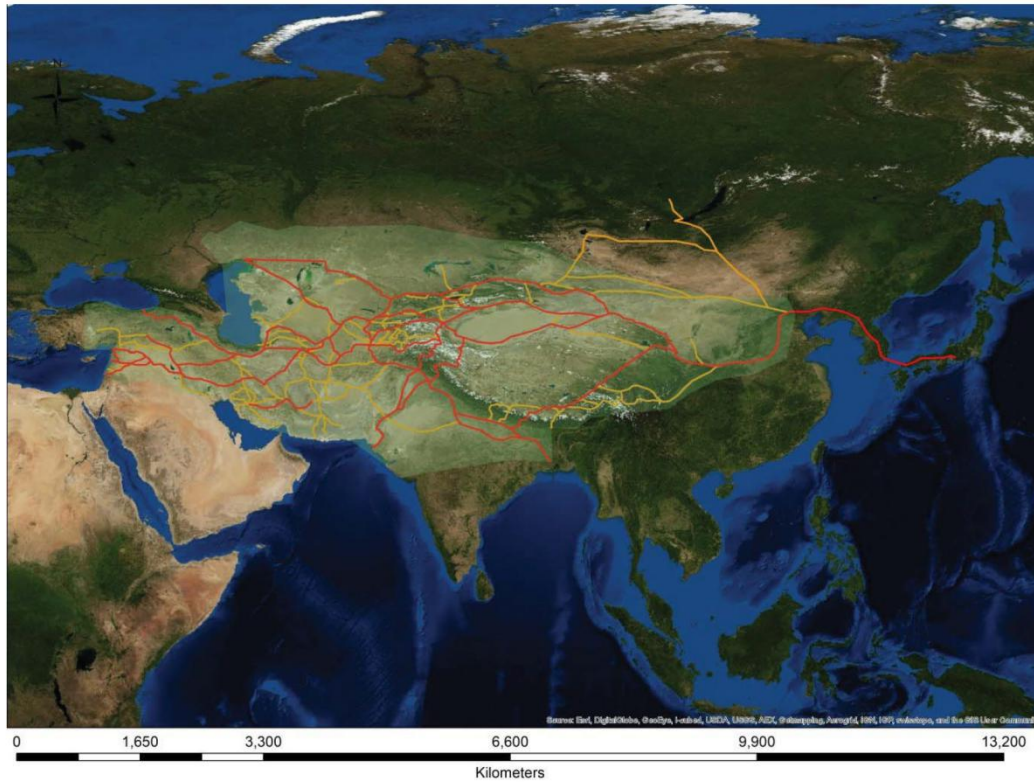d by UNESCO in 1988.[63] Five scientific expeditions of different sections of the routes network were conducted during 1990-1995, which served as a foundation for the preparation of World Heritage nomination.[64]

Entering the new millennium, the nomination made some substantial progresses: in 2003 an action plan for the Serial Nomination of the Silk Roads in Central Asia and China was proposed by the World Heritage Periodic Reporting Exercise; In 2005 the participants in a sub-regional workshop organized by UNESCO agreed to prioritize the Serial Nomination of "Central Asia Silk Roads"; in 2006 China and five State Parties from Central Asia had started the preparation for the transnational World Cultural Heritage nomination; later, a coordination committee has been established, with its size from originally six to twelve members (countries such as Japan and India were added), and five conferences were held by the committee to discuss issues in relation to the nomination including the proposed strategy as well as the statement of OUV.[65]

In 2009, ICOMOS was commissioned by the World Heritage Center to carry out a thematic research on the Silk Roads. In 2011, *The Silk Roads: an ICOMOS Thematic Study* put forward a feasible and convincing strategy that "nominate Silk Roads sites as a collection of World Heritage serial properties, linked by a concept, instead of one single Serial World Heritage Property."[66] After tough negotiation and consultation, finally, China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan reached a consensus to make a joint nomination of the east section of the Silk Roads, which was identified as "Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor" and successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014. (Figure 2.6)

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[63] MIngkang Tong, "From Successful Nomination to Continued Conservation: Celebrating First Anniversary of Inscription of Silk Roads on World Heritage List," *World Heritage* 42 (May, 2015): 27.
[64] Ibid.
[65] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 429.
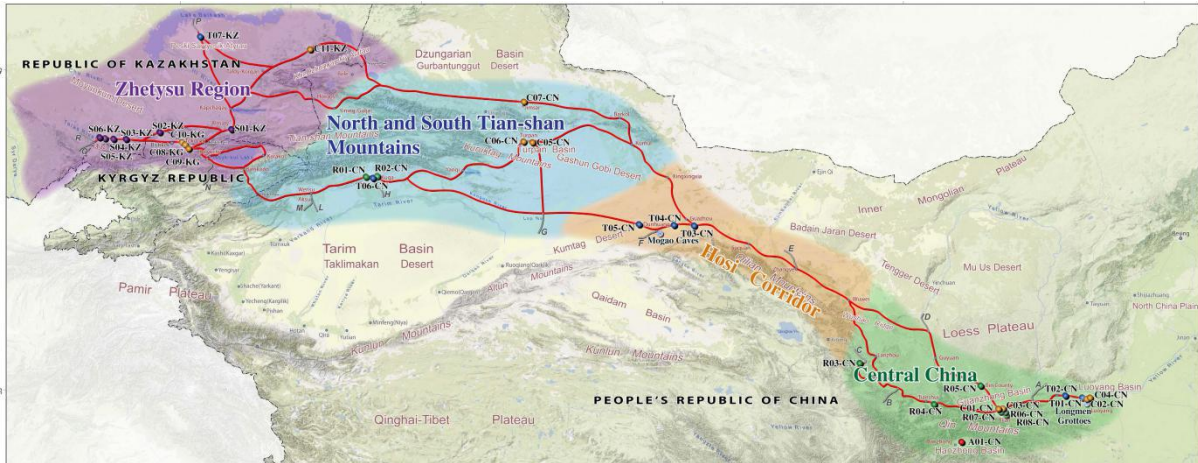[66] Williams, *An ICOMOS Thematic Study,* 3.

Figure 2.6 The geographical distribution of "Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor."

The serial heritage property is formed by thirty-three sites of five categories, including eleven central towns, seven trading settlements, six transportation and defense facilities, eight religious sites, and a tomb.[67] (Table 2.2) Nevertheless, it is important to note that the nomination of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor as well as the associated properties was a strategy for World Heritage listing. On the one hand, the thirty-three sites are recognized as representative ones along the initial section of the Silk Roads. On the other hand, they are not only tied closely to this given section; instead, they embody the OUV of the whole routes system and should be understood from a broader perspective.

Table 2.2 Nominated sites (C=central town, R=religious sites, S=trading settlements, D=transportation and defense facilities, T=tomb; CN=China, KG=Kyrgyzstan, KZ=Kazakhstan).

Category	Name of site	Category	Name of site	Category	Name of site
C01-CN	Site of Weiyang City	S01-KZ	Site of Talgar	D07-CN	Kizilgaha Beacon Tower
C02-CN	Site of Luoyang City	S02-KZ	Site of Aktobe	D08-KZ	Site of Karamergen
C03-CN	Site of Daming Palace	S03-KZ	Site of Kulan	R01-CN	Kizil Cave Temple
C04-CN	Site of Dingding Gate	S04-KZ	Site of Omek	R02-CN	Subash Buddhist Ruins
C05-CN	City of Qocho City	S05-KZ	Site of Akyrtas	R03-CN	Bingling Cave Temple
C06-CN	Site of Yar City	S06-KZ	Site of Kostobe	R04-CN	Maijishan Cave Temple

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[67] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 43.

C07-CN	Site of Bashbaliq City	D01-CN	Site of Han'gu Pass in Xin'an County	R05-CN	Bin County Cave Temple
C08-KG	City of Suyab (Site of Ak-Beshim)	D02-CN	Site of Shihao Section of XIaohan Ancient Route	R06-CN	Great Wild Goose Pagoda
C09-KG	City of Balasagun (Site of Burana)	D03-CN	Site of Suoyang City	R07-CN	Small Wild Goose Pagoda
C10-KG	City of Nevaket (Site of Krasnaya Rechka)	D04-CN	Site of Xuanquan Posthouse	R08-CN	XIngjiaosi Pagoda
C11-KZ	Site of Kayalyk	D05-CN	Site of Yumen Pass	T01-CN	Tomb of Zhangqian

2.3.3 Shaanxi: the Starting Point of the Silk Roads

Historical status

Located in Central China, the city of Chang'an (present Xi'an) is widely recognized as the early starting point of the whole Silk Roads network (Luoyang was added later).[68] (Figure 2.7) Mainly situated in the "Guanzhong Basin," the livable climate, fertile land, and adequate water resources made this region play an essential role in the agricultural development in Central China, which served as the basis for the later flourishing of both the economy and the culture of the region. Therefore, Shaanxi has long been considered as where the civilization of ancient China originated.
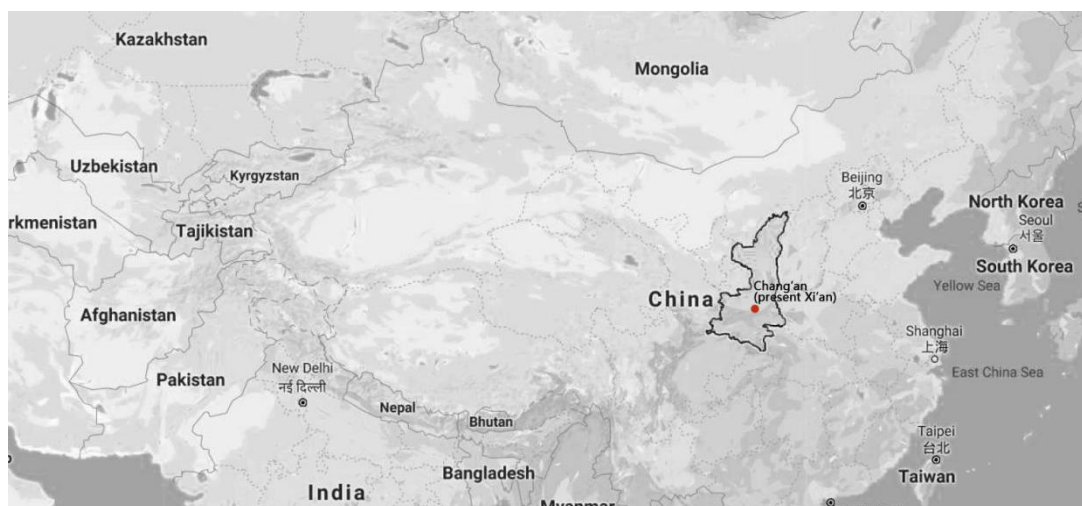

Figure 2.7 The geographical location of Shaanxi Province.

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[68] Muqi Chen, *The Silk Road, Past and Present* (Bejing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), 27.

As the capital city of the two most powerful empires in China, the Western Han and the Tang dynasties, Chang'an made great contributions to the birth and development of the Silk Roads. Meanwhile, the routes also propelled the unparalleled prosperity of the city. Through the Silk Roads, novel goods, cultures, and technologies were brought into Chang'an so that it became an international metropolis which was comparable to Rome at that time.[69] During the peak period of the Tang dynasty, Chang'an was a political, economic, cultural and religious center where a variety of exchanges took place, having a great impact not only on Central China but also on many other regions and countries in Asia and Europe.

In UNESCO's Nomination Report, the significance of this region is stated:

> It exhibits the urban culture of Chinese civilization from the 2nd century BC to 10th century AD, including site selection and layout of capital cities, function division, patterns of streets and lanes, architectural types and related urban and architectural characteristics of Han and Tang; presents transmission track and integration of religions, mainly Buddhism; witness characteristics of Han and Tang dynasties and their respective cultures created by agricultural and nomadic ethnic groups; being associated with historic events; acts as a merging place of long-distance political diplomatic activities, religious transmission and trade.[70]

As aforementioned, understanding the historic status of Shaanxi and its associated properties should not be limited to Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor. Evidence proves that besides Central Asia, the goods exchange and cultural dialogue existed between Chang'an and a variety of other countries such as India, Japan and Korea.[71] As Muqi Chen argued, the city of Chang'an "had well-developed communications in *all* directions".[72]

Heritage Resources

Given its extremely important position on the routes network, Shaanxi province has the most inscribed Silk Roads properties among all the provinces in China. Seven sites were listed as the World Heritage along with the inscription of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor. Because of its historical significance, the

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[69] "Da xi bei yi zhen" bian ji wei yuan hui, *Silk Road: the Surviving Treasures from Northwest China* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2014), 11.

[70] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 56.

[71] Franck and Brownstone, *The Silk Road: A History;* Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road: Overland Trade and Cultural Interactions in Eurasia (*Washington, D.C. : American Historical Association, 1998).

[72] Chen, *The Silk Road, Past and Present*, 27.

diversity of associated properties, and its popularity among tourists, Shaanxi Province is chosen as the study focus which is further investigated and researched in this thesis. Therefore, a brief summary of its associated heritage resources is presented in this section.

As an transnational cultural route linking a variety of countries and regions, the Silk Roads affected many cultures and civilizations for nearly two millennia, whose values are reflected in both tangible and intangible aspects. The seven inscribed sites are comprised of two archaeological sites of ancient palaces, four religious sites, and one tomb. (Figure 2.8) The two archaeological sites of ancient palace are Weiyang Palace in Chang'an City of the Western Han Dynasty and Daming Palace in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty. Once being the ancient civilization centers in Central China, they reveal unremitting efforts by Han and Tang Empires (2nd century BC to 10th Century AD) to pioneer and promote the Silk Roads, reflecting the characteristics that Han and Tang dynasties desired to seek communication with open and inclusive mind.[73] The four religious sites contain three pagodas, the Great Wild Goose Pagoda, the Small Wild Goose Pagoda, the Xingjiaosi Pagoda, and one cave temple, the Bin County Cave Temple. They represent how Buddhism was spread through Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, and Western Regions (modern Xinjiang) to Central China by means of monks' pilgrimage, lecturing, and translating of sutras; they also demonstrate the localization and development of Buddhism in Central China and reflect the characteristics of Buddhist art which integrated both the Eastern and Western cultures. As the only tomb inscribed along with the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, the Tomb of Zhangqian has great importance since Zhangqian was a remarkable diplomat who pioneered the opening up of the Silk Roads network. His two adventures made invaluable contributions to the original communication between Central China and the Western Regions.
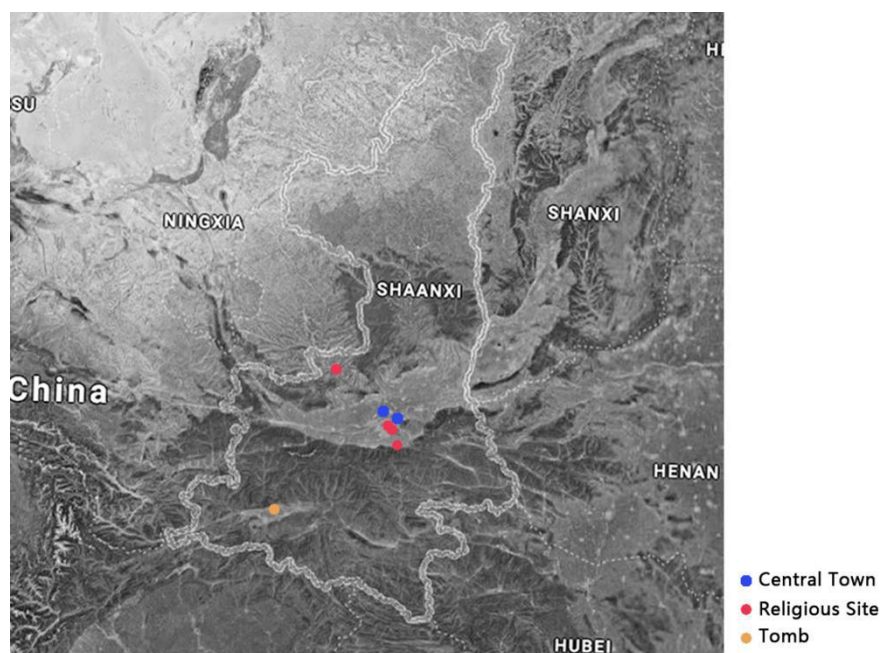
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[73] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 61.

Figure 2.8 The geographical distribution of inscribed sites in Shaanxi.

In addition to the abovementioned inscribed associated properties, intangible heritage is also interdependent evidence to demonstrate the active human communication and interaction alongside the Silk Roads. According to UNESCO's definition, the intangible cultural heritage refers to "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills- as well as instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith- that communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage."[74] It could be manifested in the forms of oral traditions and expression, performing arts, social practices, ritual and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship.[75]

The UNESCO Silk Roads online platform lists all the inscribed intangible cultural heritage along the routes; among them, Chinese shadow puppetry, Xi'an wind and percussion ensemble, and paper-cut are related closely to Shaanxi region.[76] Yi Liu investigated the intangible heritage resource on the Silk Roads (Shaanxi section) and related certain types of intangible heritage to the corresponding heritage sites, claiming that

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[74] UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: World Heritage Centre, 2003): 3.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Silk Roads Online Platform, List of the Intangbile Cultural Heritage Alongside the Silk Roads, accessed March 22, 2018. https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/silk-road-themes/intangible-cultural-heritage/list?field_route_tid=1&field_country_entity_target_id=65&field_domain_tid=All

only integrating and preserving the tangible and intangible heritage as a whole could safeguard the underlying values of the Silk Roads.[77] The inscribed seven sites and their main associated intangible cultural properties are listed in Table 2.3.[78]

Table 2.3 The seven sites and their associated intangible cultural heritage.

Category	Heritage Site	Intangible Cultural Heritage
Ancient Palace	Site of Weiyang Palace	Site selection for an ancient capital city ; Chinese traditional craftsmanship for timber-framed structures; Chinese traditional festivals and ceremonies; Cultural performances (such as dance, acrobat, and instruments).
	Site of Daming Palace	Site selection for an ancient capital city ; Chinese traditional craftsmanship for timber-framed structures; Chinese traditional festivals and ceremonies; Traditional handicrafts (such as tri-colored glazed pottery); Cultural performances (such as dance, acrobat, and instruments); Chinese painting and calligraphy.
Religious Site	Great Wild Goose Pagoda	Buddhist events and activities; The folklore of Xuanzang; Construction techniques of pavilion-style pagoda.
	Small Wild Goose Pagoda	Chinese traditional festivals and ceremonies; Construction techniques of dense-eave pagoda.
	Xingjiaosi Pagoda	Buddhist events and activities; Construction techniques of pavilion-style pagoda.
	Bin County Cave Temple	Chinese traditional festivals and ceremonies (such as the local temple fair); Buddhist art.
Tomb	The Tomb of Zhangqian	The folklore of Zhangqian; The memorial ceremony of Zhangqian.

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[77] Yi Liu, "Research on the Integrated Conservation of the Silk Road (Shaanxi Section) under the Vision of Intangible Culture," 70.

[78] Based on National Intangible Cultural Heritage List, Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage List, Yi Liu's dissertation, UNESCO'S report, and literatures on each site.

2.4 DISCUSSION

Through reviewing the literature, it is evident that the current studies and practices of cultural routes mainly focus on the identification, significance, planning, and tourism development without having any fundamental framework or guidelines for interpretation and presentation. Although a few materials on interpreting a specific route or corridor can be found,[79] considering the richness and complexity of the Silk Roads, it is argued that none of them could be applied to the Silk Roads immediately. The major challenges of interpreting the associated properties on the Silk Roads include the following aspects:

Strengthen the perceived connection. A significant distinction between interpreting the cultural route sites and other heritage sites is the "perceived connection," which should be understood from three layers. The first one is the connection between the individual sites and the entire route, such as how the site contributes to the OUV of the Silk Roads, how the site exemplifies specific exchanges on the Silk Roads, how the site associates to certain events or figures, and so on. The second type of connection exists between different sites of a shared theme. The various themes could depend on a historical figure, a particular type of architecture, a given period or a region. However, it is highly possible that one property could be linked to other sites by multiple themes. There is no need to cover all potential themes in the interpretive scheme; the most appropriate theme should be chosen according to the site's attributes and significance. In addition, the connections between the tangible properties and their associated intangible heritage should be taken into consideration. One intrinsic attribute of cultural routes is the communication and dialogues between different peoples and civilizations, which could be reflected in many different types of intangible heritage. Including the above-mentioned three types of connections into the overall interpretive scheme could facilitate visitors' holistic understanding of both the site and the diverse exchanges along the routes.

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[79] Michael Taylor, Kaisa Barthuli and Andrea Sharon, "Interpretation Along Route 66," 8th US/ICOMOS International Symposium; Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, "Chapter 6: Interpretation and Orientation," in *Preservation and Management Plan,* 2008, accessed December 9, 2017.
https://eriecanalway.org/application/files/9814/5133/0300/11-6_Interpretation_Final.pdf;
Ming Yin and Xuesong Xi, "The Construction of Interpretation System For Grand Canal Cultural Heritage," *Historic Cultural Heritage Planning* 28 (2012): 65-68.

Be relevant to people's daily life. The Silk Road is ancient, extensive, non-active, and many sections are invisible nowadays because of the urbanization. It seems the route has little relevance to contemporary people's experience or interest. Actually, the exchanges and communication took place along the route in the past greatly shaped today's world in all aspects and truly influenced everyone's daily life. One mission of the effective interpretation is to figure out the underlying relevance and convey it in a clear and attractive way to the general public.

Provoke visitors to explore more on their own. The meaning of the Silk Roads is so broad that visiting one associated site should be considered as a starting point rather then the ending. Through the enjoyable and educational interpretation, one of the ultimate goals is to stimulate visitors' desire to explore the whole routes as well as other relevant sites on their own, which could help them gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the serial property rather than individual sites. Moreover, a provocative interpretation could arouse tourists' interest in those lesser known associated properties and tie up Silk Roads sites in Shaanxi as a whole.

Engage different groups of stakeholders in the interpretive planning process. The intangible cultural properties are always inherited and promoted by the local communities. Therefore, the inclusion of locals, especially the core community of living heritage, would help enrich the underlying meaning of the site, enhance its social value, and develop the local culture and traditions.[80] Furthermore, the interpretation planning process should be more open and inclusive, involving not only professionals but also different groups of stakeholders. Building long-term, successful partnerships with a variety of external parties would provide invaluable support in all aspects.

Develop balanced and sustainable route-based tourism. As all the associated sites belonging to one serial property, the key ideas and messages of the common theme need to be consistent, and the appropriate approaches and media could be shared to narrow the gaps between different sites. Besides, from a perspective of heritage tourism, the relevant properties should be regarded as an integrated tourism

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[80] According to ICCROM's definition, living heritage is characterized by the continuity of the original function or the purpose for which it was originally established. The community which is strongly linked to the place is recognized as core community.

product, and the overall development strategy should be devised, which potentially attracts tourists to more sites, increase the length of their stay and expense, leads to a more even distribution of visitors and income, and reduce negative impacts of excessive tourists.

To further examine these issues, the rest chapters will focus on Shaanxi Province along with its seven inscribed sites, investigating the current on-site interpretive schemes, analyzing their effectiveness, and exploring potential interventions.

CHAPTER 3

DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

3.1 STUDY DESIGN

To understand the current conditions of interpreting the Silk Roads sites in Shaanxi, a field research was conducted in December 2017 and January 2018 to document the interpretive schemes of all the seven inscribed sites and assess their effectiveness of conveying the underlying meaning of individual sites and the larger Silk Roads. For each site, it consists of three parts. The overall interpretive strategy was investigated first, including the theme and sub-themes, the regular tourist route, and the interpretive infrastructure. Next, each interpretive approach was examined; its location, media, and messages were recorded, and the extent to which it conveys the connections was evaluated. Based on the comprehensive documentation and assessment, the last step was to make some general comments of each site around two aspects: key ideas and approaches.

On the basis of the information collected during the field research, this chapter attempts to provide an overview of the Silk Roads sites' interpretation in Shaanxi. The general information of each site is introduced first, including its brief history, its significance and values. And then the results of the documentation and assessment are presented and discussed; among all the interpretive methods, the approaches which emphasize the relationship between the individual sites and the larger Silk Roads are elaborated since the perceived connection is the core of interpreting sites along a cultural route. At the end, the on-site interpretation is commented in terms of whether all the connections are conveyed, whether the messages are related to the audience, whether other relevant sites are mentioned, and whether the intangible aspect is included.

3.2 DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

3.2.1 Site of Weiyang Palace in Chang'an City of the Western Han Dynasty

Overview

Located in the southwest corner of Chang'an, Weiyang Palace was the most important palace complex in the capital city of the Western Han Dynasty. Founded in 2nd century BC, it exemplified the civilization of an early unified empire of China. The contour of the palace was a square, covering an area of 4.8 square kilometers. The archaeological remains include city defence system (city walls, gates, and the moat), road system, architectural remains (halls, royal offices, and royal cultural buildings), ponds, and kilns.[81] (Figure 3.1) The palace's scale, layout, architectural form, decorative elements, as well as the recovered artifacts, demonstrate the unprecedented power and the cultural characteristics of an early capital city for the unified empire of Chinese nation. Standing on the earliest eastern starting point of the Silk Roads, it witnessed the origin and early development of the great routes network.
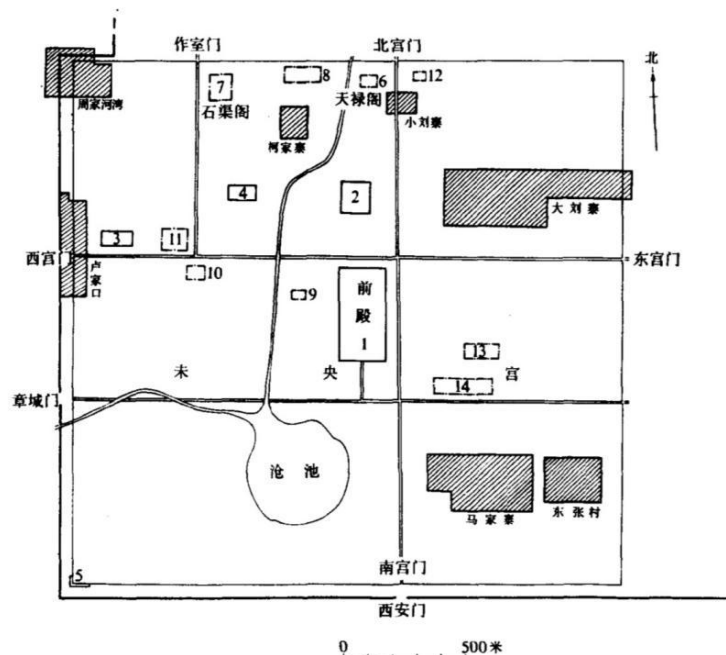

Figure 3.1 Site plan of Weiyang Palace (1. The Front Hall 2. Jiaofang Hall 3. Central Government Offices 4. Shaofu Office 5. Southwest Turret 6.Tianlu Pavilion 7. Shiqu Pavilion).

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[81] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 92.

Nowadays, this large-scale archaeological site becomes a national heritage park which is open free to the general public.

1) Tourist Route: there are multiple gates and no certain tourist route.

2) Interpretive Theme: the powerful grand-scale capital city of an early unified Chinese empire.

Interpretive approaches

• Panels

Panels are the only interpretive medium at Weiyang Palace. Placed in front of each archaeological site, they present the basic information of each site such as its size, shape, layout, and historical use. (Figure 3.2) Through text, site plans, and photos of recovered artifacts, the grandness of the palace halls and the unprecedented power of Chang'an City of the Western Han Dynasty are basically illustrated.

Figure 3.2 Panels of the Jiaofang Hall introducing the site and the artifacts through text and photos.

Comments

According to the literature review and the field research, the key messages regarding interpreting this remarkable palace on the eastern starting point of the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. The layout, architectural form, and decorative elements of the grand scale palace illustrate the unprecedented power of the capital city of the Western Han dynasty, which gave birth to the formation of the vast routes system;

2. The artifacts reflect the major characteristics of the civilization of the Western Han Dynasty and demonstrate the Han Empire's open diplomatic strategy as well as its active cultural communication;

3. It is related to certain historic figures and decisive events in the history of the Silk Roads, such as Wu

Emperor of the Western Han dynasty, who envisioned the ambitious mission to pioneer a route communicating with the Western Regions.

However, it can be argued that the current on-site interpretation is neither attractive to stimulate visitors' interest nor informative to convey the meaning of the site completely. The Silk Road is not included in the current interpretive writing, and there is no map indicates the location of the site on the routes network. Only basic information of each archaeological site is presented; the relevant historical figures, decisive events, the significant role this palace complex played on the Silk Roads, and the early communication between the Han Empire and the western nomadic ethnic groups are absent. The monotonous interpretive approach and the limited messages lead to a sterile interpretation, which lacks the perceived connections between the Weiyang Palace and the larger Silk Roads.

3.2.2 Sites of Daming Palace in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty

Overview

Located in the northeast of Chang'an City, Daming Palace was the administrative center and royal residence of the Tang Dynasty. Its construction was initiated in 634 AD and completed in 663 AD.[82] The site covers an area of 3.42 square km, with a rectangular south part and ladder shaped north part. (Figure 3.3) From south to north, the palace is comprised of three parts: the court, which includes the front, middle, and inner parts, the chamber, and the garden. The archaeological remains consist of gates, palace walls, architecture, water system and bridges, and roads system.[83] The symmetrical layout, sublime buildings, and well-arranged landscape of Daming Palace represent the elaborate Chinese ritual cultural and demonstrate the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty. As the evidence of an open metropolis, Daming Palace witnessed a variety of active exchanges taken place in Chang'an during the thriving period of the Silk Roads. It embodied the advanced economical level, political and military power, and colorful culture of the Tang Empire, who ensured the smooth transport linking different countries and regions and promoted the further development of the Silk Roads network.

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[82] Ibid., 112.
[83] China Academy of Social Science, *Archaeological Discovery and Research of Daming Palace of Tang Dynasty* (Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 2007).
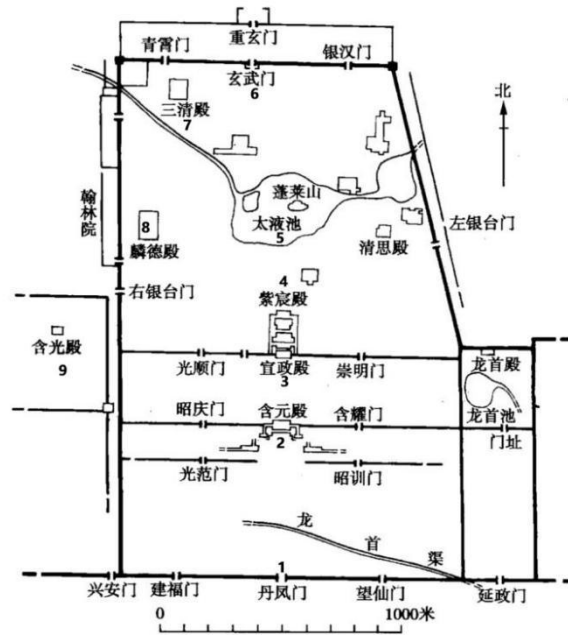
Figure 3.3 Site plan of Daming Palace (1. Danfeng Gate 2. Hanyuan Hall 3. Xuanzheng Hall 4. Zichen Hall 5. Taiye Pond and Penglai Mountain 6. Xuanwu Gare 7. Sanqing Hall 8. Linde Hall 9. Hanguang Hall).

The Daming palace used to be one of the three most important imperial palaces in Chang'an of the Tang Dynasty. Nowadays, it is a well-developed national heritage park which consists of a series of archaeological sites, landscape, and associated newly-built facilities. The visitor center and heritage museum are mainly used for presentation and interpretation. (Figure 3.4)

Figure 3.4 Site Plan of Daming Palace.

1) Tourist Route: the regular tourist route is from south to north, following the central axis.

2) Interpretive Theme: the overall theme is "exploring the ancient Eastern palace, experiencing the culture of the Tang Dynasty."[84]   The sub-themes include the construction history, the prosperous culture of the Tang Dynasty, and the conservation and management condition.

Interpretive approaches

The Daming Palace offers diverse interpretive media, including the guided tour, audio tour, entrance panels, plaques, models, leaflets, film, theme exhibitions, museum displays, and outdoor installations. However, not all of them are effective tools to convey the connections. In the following, the major approaches are selected to be discussed.

• Entrance Panel

The entrance panel shows a tourist map, an archaeological restored map, and a brief introduction of the Daming Palace including its construction history, its layout, and the main archaeological sites. It states that the Chang'an city of the Tang Dynasty was a metropolis in the world of the time, but it does not clarify the underlying interrelation between the prosperity of Chang'an City and the flourishing of the Silk Roads.

• Visitor Center

An exhibition titled "the Inscription of the Daming Palace and the Silk Roads" is displayed in the visitor center. Through a series of panels, it introduces the Silk Roads and the inscription of Chang'an-Tianshan corridor, lists all the nominated sites in China and claims Daming Palace's significant status on the Silk Roads. (Figure 3.5) The contents of the panels almost mention all types of the connections between the Daming Palace and the Silk Roads. However, the messages are very general, and the emphasis is placed upon the political and diplomatic aspect. (Figure 3.6)

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[84]   It is quoted from the tourist leaflet.

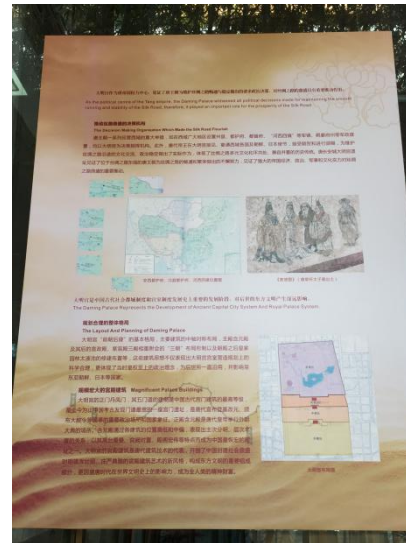Figure 3.5 The panel introducing the Silk Roads.

Figure 3.6 The panel illustrating the site's significant political position.

Another medium in the visitor center is a film, which tells a story taken place in the Daming Palace. It recreates the historical scenes that many foreigners were attracted by the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty and brought their own culture to Chang'an, promoting the mutual exchanges and influencing many aspects of Central China.

The interpretive leaflet is also provided in the visitor center. It includes a travel map with two recommended routes, a guide of service facilities, an introduction of the palace complex as well as some major remains. The significance of Daming Palace is stated as "an evidence of Chang'an City of Tang Dynasty, which was the cultural center of the world influencing many foreign countries." And there is a emblem of World Heritage and a diagram of major cities along the ancient Silk Roads.

• Panels and Restored Models

The panels and restored models in front of each archaeological sites are the interpretive media to introduce each specific building, gate, or bridge. (Figure 3.7) The contents of panels incorporate texts, site plans, historical photos, satellite photos, and pictures depicting historical events. The texts mainly clarify its location, layout, size, form, and historical function. The restored models are intuitive tools to show the original appearance of each architecture.

Figure 3.7 The panel and restored model of Hanyuan Hall.

・Heritage Museum

Around the overall theme "Daming Palace and the culture of Tang Dynasty," the exhibition consists of four parts: the architectural elements and materials of Daming Palace; its construction history; the palace's functions and the culture of the Tang Dynasty; and the conservation and management condition.

The recovered artifacts, along with the panels, are fundamental media to convey the messages. The construction components showcase the details of the architecture, and the pottery figurines illustrate the diverse culture and active exchanges in Chang'an of that time. (Figure 3.8, 3.9) Besides, a variety of interpretive media are used to enhance visitors' understanding and experience. The multimedia animation, models, and paintings reproduce the historical scenes and events taken place in the site, indicating the communication between Central China and other countries. (Figure 3.10, 3.11)

Figure 3.8 Construction components of Daming Palace.   Figure 3.9 Pottery Foreign Horse-rider.

Figure 3.10 The Model of the Morning Meeting, in which envoys from other countries attended.

Figure 3.11 The animation showing foreign leaders lived in the palace and brought their own culture.

Free guided tours are provided; tourists are led to visit the four exhibition rooms one by one. In addition to some basic information of the palace, the interpreter describes the historical stories and scenes with the help of the vivid animation and models. Also, the selected artifacts are used to elucidate the cultural fusion of the Tang Dynasty.

・Outdoor Installations

There are two types of outdoor installations: one is the sculptures which were created based on the historical scenes, the other is installations showing famous Chinese paintings. They are not only decoration but also interpretive media to display various aspects of the Tang Dynasty, such as the daily life of the aristocrats, the diplomatic ceremony, and the cultural or athletic activities, demonstrating the impacts from other regions and countries. (Figure 3.12, 3.13)

Figure 3.12 *Tribute Offering to the Celestial Empire*, by Yan Liben, Tang Dynasty.

Figure 3.13 *Tibet Envoy Greeting Scene*, by Yan Liben, Tang Dynasty.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Daming Palace and the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. It was the power center during the flourishing period of the Silk Roads, and many envoys from different countries met the Tang emperors to facilitate political and diplomatic communication;

2. Commercial and trade activities were active along the Silk Roads during the Tang, which influenced people's daily life in the aspects of costumes, diet, athletics, and entertainment;

3. It demonstrates the significant cultural exchanges and dialogues between the Tang Empire and other countries in terms of music, dance, painting, and other forms of art;

4. It witnessed the dissemination and development of religions along the Silk Roads, which led to Chang'an City being a worldwide religious center.

Although the four major aspects of the Tang Dynasty are included in the current interpretive scheme, there are several obvious disadvantages: first, much emphasis is put on the political and diplomatic communication, while other types of exchanges, especially the trade exchanges and religious communication, are overlooked; second, the explanation of foreign culture's influences is limited to the upper class; in addition, relevant sites in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty and intangible heritage are not mentioned.

Among all the seven sites, Daming Palace has the most various interpretive media, and some of them are innovative and attractive. However, its grand scale and the dispersed sites make the interpretation quite challenging. Given this condition, the visitor center and the museum are considered as the two places where could display the history and the significance of the site as a whole. While the heritage museum showcases many aspects of the site with diverse media, the exhibition in the visitor center is not well-designed and not attractive for the audience.

3.2.3 Great Wild Goose Pagoda

Overview

The Great Wild Goose Pagoda is one of the most famous landmarks in Xi'an City. It was built in the 7th to 8th century presided over by the Buddhist master, Xuanzang, to preserve sutras and Buddhist figurines

brought from India by his pilgrimage via the Silk Roads.[85] As an eminent monk, Xuanzang not only spent 18 years on travelling along the Silk Roads to seek the essence of Buddhism but also dedicated himself to the arduous translation works at Da Ci'en Temple after returning back to Chang'an. In addition, his travel journal, *Records of the Western Regions of the Great Tang Dynasty*, is a precious document which provides information of Central Asian countries and India in many aspects during the early 7th century and demonstrates the contacts among Central China and its surrounding regions.[86]

The brick pagoda is a seven-floor square-shaped building of pavilion-style, and it is 64.1 meters high.[87] (Figure 3.14) Its architectural form illustrates the transmission of Buddhist architecture and its localization in Central China. Two stone tablets embedded on both sides of the south door further prove Xuanzang's pilgrimage as well as the dissemination and development of Buddhism through the Silk Roads.

Figure 3.14 The temple hall and the Great Wild Goose Pagoda.

The Great Wild Goose Pagoda is located at Daci'en Temple, which is an active Buddhist site. The temple consists of a series of halls and courtyards; the pagoda is roughly situated in the center. At the end of the central axis, there is a new addition which was built in 1996, the Xuanzang Memorial Hall. It is the place where the majority of the exhibits are presented. (Figure3.15)

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85 UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 390.
86 Tingfu Yang, *Xuanzang Lun Ji* (Jinan: Qilu Press, 1986).
87 UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 390.

1) Tourist Route: the regular tourist route is from south to north, following the central axis.

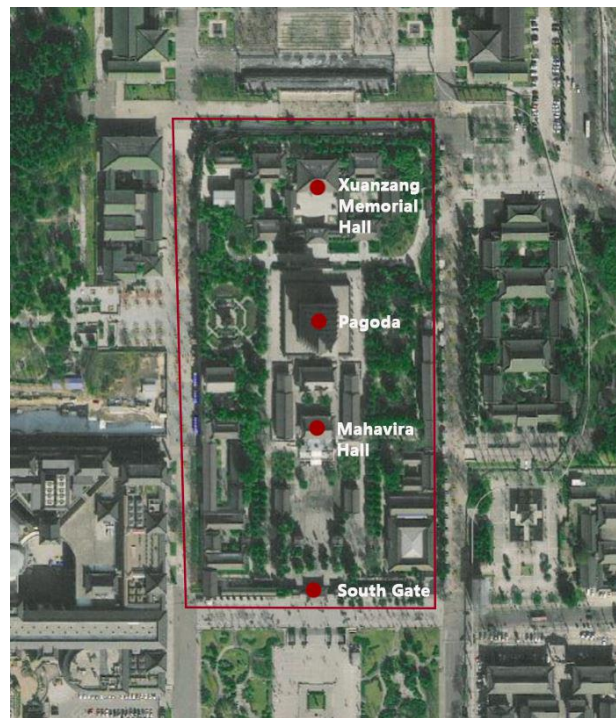2) Interpretive Theme: a significant Buddhist pagoda of the Tang Dynasty; an eminent Buddhist pilgrim-Xuanzang.

Figure 3.15 Site plan of the Great Wild Goose Pagoda.

Interpretive approaches

The on-site interpretation of the Great Wild Goose Pagoda incorporates guided tours, panels, and exhibits. Among them, the panels inside the pagoda and the exhibits presented in the Xuanzang Memorial Hall are considered as major tools conveying the connections.

 • Panels (inside the pagoda)

Four panels are presented in the first floor of the pagoda. They comprise three sub-themes: the architectural form, the original intention of construction, and the conservation condition. One of the panels indicates the architectural form of the pagoda is a combination of Indian stupa and the traditional Chinese architecture through the comparison of two photos. (Figure 3.16) Another panel explains that building this pagoda was to store the sutras and Buddhist figurines brought by Xuanzang from the West via the Silk Roads. (Figure 3.17)

Figure 3.16 The panel describing the architectural form of the pagoda.

Figure 3.17 The panel introducing Xuanzang's pilgrimage.

• Exhibits

There are three different types of exhibits in the Xuanzang Memorial Hall, which intend to illustrate Xuanzang's achievement and contributions. The large-scale relief sculpture is a contemporary artwork made of copper and wood, which aims to depict the most important episodes of Xuzang's pilgrimage. (Figure 3.18) The route of Xuanzang's travel is inscribed in the copper panels displayed in the center of the hall. In addition, the replicas of sutras brought by Xuanzang as well as his own literature are shown in the glass cabinet. (Figure 3.19) However, the lack of accompanied textual explanation makes it hard for the general public to fully understand the process of Xuanzang's journey or his translation work.
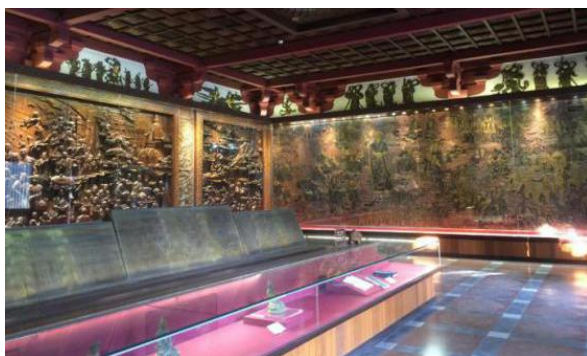

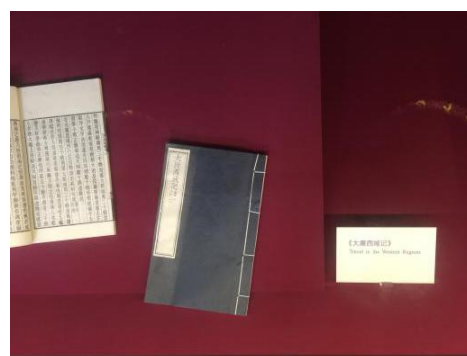Figure 3.18 The sculpture depicting Xuanzang's life story.

Figure 3.19 The replicas of Xuanzang's own literature.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Great Wild Goose Pagoda and the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. The pagoda is associated with the distinguished figure in the history of Chinese Buddhism, Xuanzang, and his pilgrimage to Indian Peninsula via the Silk Roads;

2. Its architectural form illustrates how the original stupa style gradually transformed to the pavilion style with imitation wood structure of Chinese architecture features;

3. As one of the most important temples in Chang'an, it demonstrates the dissemination and development of Buddhism in Central China via the Silk Roads.

Although two types of the connections (the architectural form of the pagoda and Xuanzang's pilgrimage) are covered by the current interpretation, neither the oversimplified narratives on the panels nor the exhibits themselves could convince visitors the underlying relationship between the pagoda and the Silk Roads (complementary writings, captions, or other interpretive media are needed). Moreover, as one of the three major sutra translation centers, the site's important status and its historical functions are almost neglected in the current interpretive scheme. The broader context, the flourishing of Buddhism in Tang Dynasty as well as other Buddhist sites in Chang'an are not incorporated into the current interpretive scheme either.

3.2.4 Small Wild Goose Pagoda

Overview

The Small Wild Goose Pagoda is situated at the Jianfu Temple, which was an important Buddhist site in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty. First built in 707 AD, the pagoda was closely associated to a significant figure in the history of Buddhist transmission, Yijing, who travelled to India via the Silk Roads and brought back a large amount of sutras and figurines. After his return, he devoted the rest of his life to the translation of Buddhist scriptures at the Jianfu Temple. As one of the three most important sutra translation centers in Chang'an, the temple also attracted many foreign monks to study, work, and debate here. It is argued that the site witnessed both the religious exchanges along the Silk Roads and the

prevalence of Buddhism in Chang'an during the Tang.

Having experienced several earthquakes, the pagoda was restored over time. The current pagoda has 13 tires and the total height is 43.38 meters.[88] (Figure 3.20, 3.21) As a dense-eave brick pagoda, it reflects how Indian stupa transformed via the Silk Roads and eventually localized in Central China. The Small Wild Goose Pagoda is another precious evidence of the spread and development of Buddhism along the Silk Roads in the Tang Dynasty.
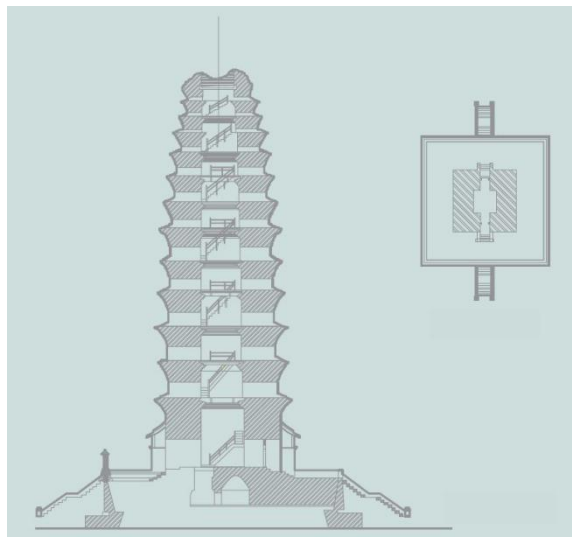
Figure 3.20 Exterior of the pagoda.   Figure 3.21 Plan of the ground floor and section drawings.

The Jianfu Temple and the pagoda become a part of the Xi'an museum since 2007. The interpretation of the pagoda is conducted at different locations, including the visitor center, two temple halls, the newly built Intangible Heritage Center near the main gate, and a showroom in the museum building adjacent to the temple. (Figure 3.22)

1) Tourist Route: the main entrance is in the north; the tourist route of the temple is linear from north to south, following the central axis.

2) Interpretive Theme: the interpretation is organized around the overall theme: a significant temple in the Tang Dynasty; a magnificent pagoda in Chang'an city. Two theme exhibitions focus on the history of the site and the important role it played on the Silk Roads respectively.

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[88] Jing Jiang, "The Small Wild Goose Pagoda," *Cultural Relic* 3 (1979).

Figure 3.22 The layout of Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

Interpretive approaches
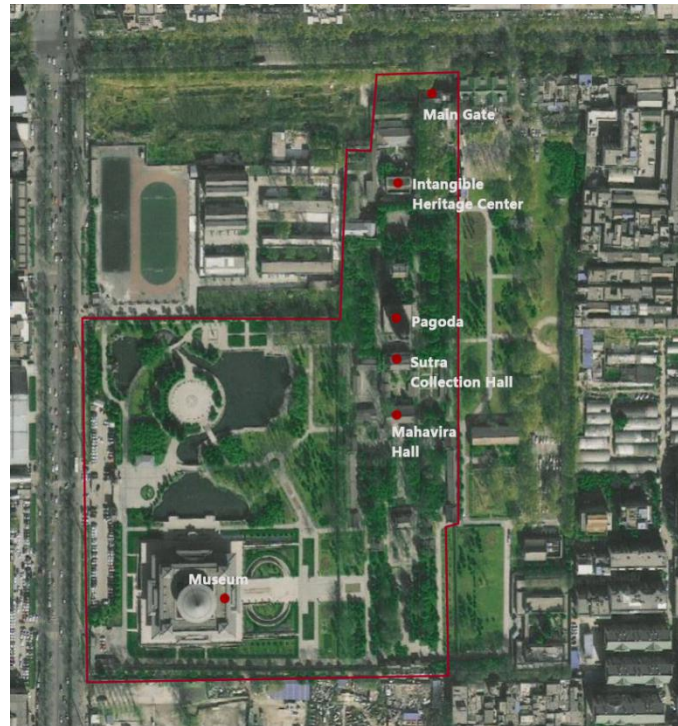
The interpretive approaches of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda include the guided tour, the entrance panel, the leaflet, the plaques, the two exhibitions, the intangible heritage performance, and the film. The panel placed at the entrance shows a route map of the inscribed corridor, an overview of the site as well as a guide map. (Figure 3.23) The leaflet provided in the visitor center consists of a guide map, an introduction of the site including its construction, functions, historical vicissitudes, the current management and protection condition, and a brief description of main structures; also, the significance statement summarizes the connections between this site and the ancient Silk Roads. The plaques in front of the buildings illustrate the history of their construction, sizes, architectural forms, techniques, and materials. The plaques of stone steles explain the year, the author, the intention and content of each stone stele; most stone steles were erected to record the restoration and reconstruction of certain architecture. (Figure 3.24) The information presented by the three media mentioned above is relatively brief and simple. Therefore, they can be considered as supplementary ones to the main approaches, which are further discussed in detail.

Figure 3.23 The entrance panel of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

Figure 3.24 The plaques of a stone stele and the Mahavira Hall, respectively.

• Exhibition

There are two theme exhibitions held at Sutra Collection Hall and Mahavira Hall respectively. The first one aims to show the history of the site. The contents include the contexts of the flourishing Buddhism in Chang'an City during the Tang Dynasty, the construction history of the temple, an overview of its vicissitudes, and the current management condition. The second exhibition is titled as "The Small Wild Goose Pagoda- A Gem of the Silk Roads." It comprises three parts: the architectural form of the pagoda, its historical use, and the relevant Buddhist figures. Panels are the major medium; text, pictures, photos, and diagrams are used to illustrate the key ideas. Beside, the replicas of sutras which were translated at the temple and the literature which were written by the relevant Buddhist Masters are presented in the exhibition cases. (Figure 3.25)
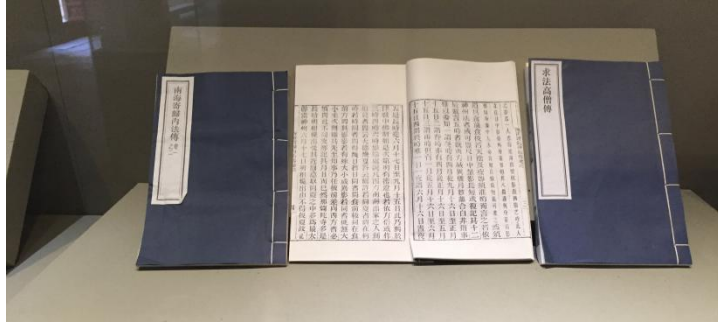
Figure 3.25 A replica of *On Buddhist Masters Going West For Buddhist Sutras* by Yijing.

The two exhibitions cover all types of connection between the pagoda and the Silk Roads: it is evidence of the inspirational role that the Indian stupa played in informing the design of Buddhist architecture in China; it is related to the certain historical figure, Yijing, and his pilgrimage; it was a sutra translation center which attracted many foreign monks. (Figure 3.26-3.28) There are two notable strengths of the exhibitions. First, the background of Buddhism's flourishing in the Tang Dynasty is introduced, and the relevant temples in Chang'an City is listed, which could facilitate audience's understanding of the broader context. In addition, a graphic comparison between the Small Wild Goose Pagoda and other pagodas along the Silk Roads is presented to show the transformation of pagoda's architectural form along the route (Figure 3.29).

Figure 3.26 A diagram showing the correlation between Indian stupa and Chinese dense-eave pagoda.

Figure 3.27 The panel including a portrait of Yijing, the road map of his pilgrimage, and his literature and translation works.
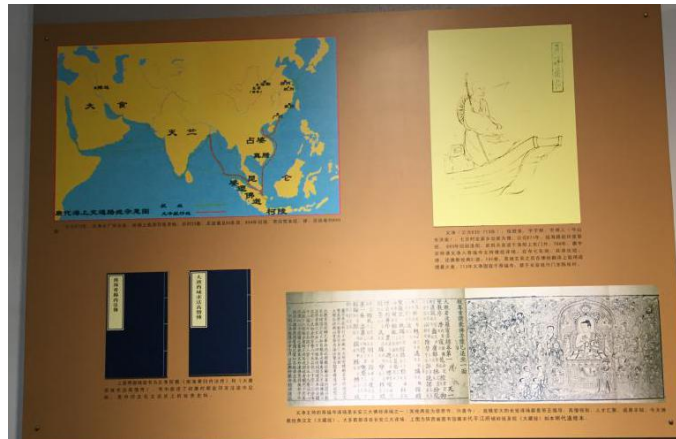

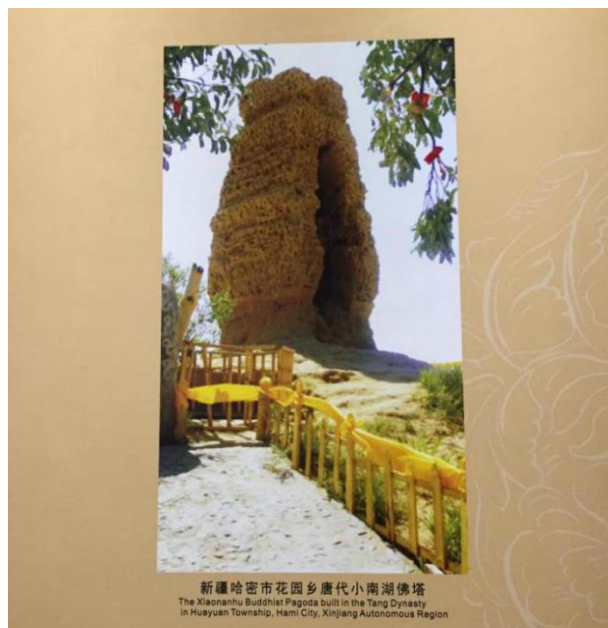Figure 3.28 The panel introducing two Buddhist masters and their translation works.

Figure 3.29 A Buddhist pagoda of the Tang Dynasty in Xinjiang Province (the westernmost province on the Silk Roads in China).

• Intangible Heritage Performance

The Intangible Heritage Center is a place where local folk artists could perform traditional instruments, shadow plays, paper-cut and some other types of intangible heritage. Also, several interactive programs are held to offer visitors an opportunity to get involved. Although intangible heritage is an integral part of the cultural route, the lack of explanatory tools makes it hard for visitors to understand the history, significance, and meaning of the performance and artworks.

• Film

The 20-minute film has two focuses: one is the construction of the pagoda and its early use, the other is the reason why its structure could resist several serious earthquakes. In the first part, the relevant historical scenes and events are recreated, including Yijing's pilgrimage, his translation work, and the gathering of many foreign monks at the Jianfu temple. Although the film mentions Yijing's travel and illustrates the pagoda's significant status of Buddhism's development in Central China, it is not well produced. The narrative is too general, and some plots lack credibility.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Small Wild Goose Pagoda and the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. It is associated to a significant figure in the history of Buddhist transmission, Yijing, who traveled to India to seek the essence of Buddhism via the Silk Roads;
2. This site was one of the three most important sutra translation centers in Chang'an which attracted many foreign monks to study and translate sutras here;
3. As a dense-eave brick pagoda, it is precious evidence which could reflect how Indian stupa transformed via the Silk Roads and eventually localized in Central China.

The core of the current on-site interpretation is the well-organized and content-rich theme exhibitions. The text, photos, diagrams, coupled with the well-chosen objects, are effective vehicles to explain the contexts, introduce the construction of the pagoda, and elucidate its original functions. However, among all types of the connections, Yijing's pilgrimage and his influences need to be further illustrated. How to

tell his story in a both credible and vivid way would be a challenge.

The Intangible Heritage Center, which aims at promoting intangible heritage, is a distinct supplement to the presentation and interpretation of the tangible ones. Nevertheless, the selection of the folk arts should be careful; it would be better to display the intangible heritage which relates to the site or the larger Silk Roads, reflecting the products of the communication alongside the routes network. More importantly, interpretive media are needed to illustrate the implication of each intangible heritage for the general public.

3.2.5 Xingjiaosi Pagoda

Overview

The Xingjiao Temple is located at the second terrace of Shaoling Yuan, Chang'an District. As one of the eight famed temples in the Tang Dynasty, it was founded by the Emperor Gao Zong to reinhume master Xuanzang, who travelled to India, translated a lot of scriptures and founded Weishi School in Buddhism. After his death in AD 664, the pagoda was built in AD 669 to preserve his Sariras (crystalline traces that remains after a respected Buddhist's corpse is burnt).[89] Subsequently, two pagodas of his disciples were added: Kuji Pagoda was built in AD 682, and Yuance Pagoda was relocated to this temple in AD 1115.[90]

Arraying like the shape of the Chinese character "品" roughly triangle, the grand Xuanzang Pagoda stands in the center, and the two pagodas of his disciples sit on the two sides. (Figure 3.30) The simple but sublime pagodas with an elegant style are rare existing square-shaped pavilion style pagodas of the Tang Dynasty. They not only have an artistic value but also are the precious examples of the transmission of Indian Buddhist architecture via the Silk Roads. Since Xuanzang, Kuiji, and Yuance are the three patriarchs of Weishi School, this temple holds a great position among the Buddhists who belong to Weishi school all over the world. The site reflects the three eminent monks' contributions to the development of Buddhism in Central China. Moreover, Yuance was a descendant of the King of Silla on the Korean Peninsula;

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[89] Yapeng Jing, "The historic Remains and Cultural Use of Xingjiao Temple," *Wen Bo* 5, no. 1 (2016): 109.

[90] Ibid.

therefore, his pagoda also illustrate Buddhism's further influences on Korean Peninsula.[91]
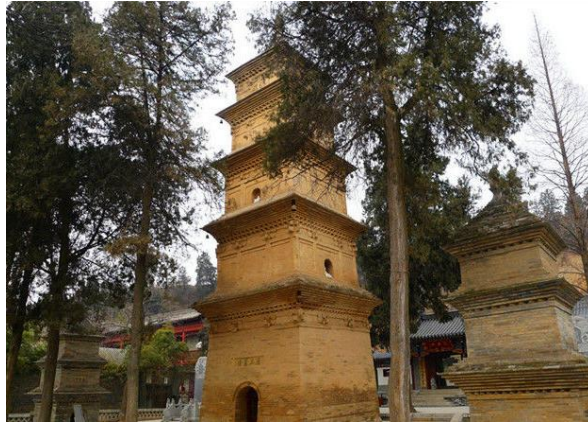
Figure 3.30 The three pagodas reflect a strict hierarchy.

The Xingjiao Temple is still an active Buddhist site located in Chang'an District of Xi'an City. The temple is divided into three courtyards: the Front Courtyard, the East Courtyard, and the West Courtyard, which consists of the Xuanzang Courtyard and the Pagoda Yard. (Figure3.31) The Xuanzang Courtyard is currently used to place interpretive panels.

Figure 3.31 The layout of Xingjiao Temple.

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[91] Dezong Zhang, "The Dissemination and Development of Weishi School in Ancient Japan and Korea," *Henan University Journal* 6 (1996).

1) Tourist Route: through the Mountain Gate visitors first enter the Front Courtyard, and then turning left would lead them to the Pagoda Yard. Behind the Pagoda Yard is the Xuanzang Courtyard, in where the panels are exhibited.

2) Interpretive Theme: the significant pagodas of three Buddhist masters.

Interpretive approaches

Since the site is not a developed tourist destination, its interpretation is very simple, including three types of interpretive media: an entrance panel introducing the construction history of the temple and the establishment of Weishi School; the badly damaged plaques in the Pagoda Yard, which intend to present some basic information such as their sizes, forms, and materials; the panels presented at the Xuanzang Courtyard, which is the main interpretive approach of this site explained in the following. (Figure 3.32, 3.33)

Figure 3.32 The entrance panel of the Xingjiao Temple.

Figure 3.33 The damaged plaques at the Pagoda Yard.

・ Panels (Xuanzang Courtyard)

A series of panels is exhibited in the corridor of the Xuanzang Courtyard to further interpret the three

pagodas. (Figure 3.34) They comprise three parts: an overview of the Silk Roads and the important

position of Xingjiaosi Pagodas on the route; the introduction of the three pagodas in terms of their

architectural forms and materials; the brief biography of Xuanzang and his two disciples.

Figure 3.34 The interpretive panels are placed at the corridor of the Xuanzang Courtyard.

Through the panels, some certain connections, including Xuanzang's pilgrimage as well as their

contributions to Weishi School are explained. However, the content is not comprehensive enough that

other types of connections are not included. Besides, another deficiency is that the panels are time-worn

and faded, which would decrease visitors' ability to read it.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Xingjiaosi Pagoda and the Silk Roads should include the

following aspects:

1. Xuanzang's Pagoda, coupled with the embedded inscription in its north wall, is evidence of his

pilgrimage and his contribution to the dissemination of Buddhism via the Silk Roads ;

2. Since Xuanzang founded Weishi School (a school of Buddhism), this site holds a great position in the

development of Buddhism in Central China;

3. Yuance was a descendant of the King of Silla on the Korean Peninsula. His pagoda and inscriptions

demonstrate the further transmission of Buddhism on the Korean Peninsula;

4. The three pagodas are square-shaped pavilion style, which exemplify the localization of Buddhist architecture in Central China.

However, the simplistic interpretive scheme can hardly convey the various connections between the pagodas and the Silk Roads. On the one hand, Xuanzang's westbound travel and the establishment of Weishi School, which could reflect the dissemination and development of Buddhism in Central China, are the two focuses of the current interpretive scheme. On the other hand, the Indian stupa's impacts on the three pagodas' architectural form and Weishi School's further influences on the Korean Peninsula are overlooked. The key messages of the panels need to be enriched, and their forms and arrangement need to be redesigned.

3.2.6 Bin County Cave Temple

Overview

Bin County Cave Temple was first built in the 5th century and intensively constructed from the 7th to 10th century when the development of Central China culture reached the peak.[92] 116 caves were constructed on the sandstone cliff in an area of 400 meters in length on the mountain of the Jing River Valley, with a total of 1988 statues.[93] (Figure3.35)
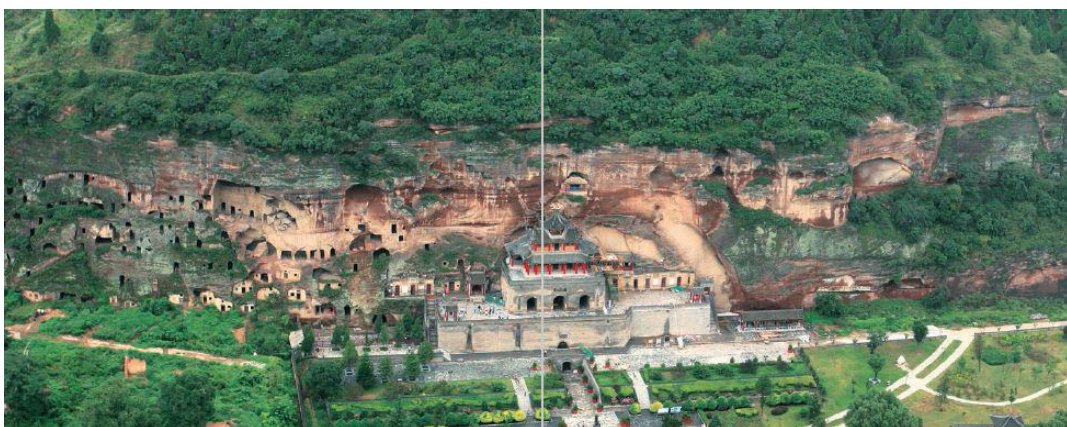

Figure 3.35 Panorama view of the Bin County Cave Temple.

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[92] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 380.
[93] Ibid.

Representing the mature stage of Buddhist art in Central China, the Bin County Cave Temple has a high aesthetic value. Also, the characteristics of the statues illustrate the Western art's impacts, reflecting the transmission of Buddhist carving art along the Silk Roads. As a significant religious site sponsored by royals and nobles near ancient Chang'an City, it demonstrates the popularity of Buddhism during the Tang dynasty and reveals how the spread of religions through the Silk Roads influenced the civilization of Central China.

Located at Chengguan Town, Xianyang City near modern Xi'an, the cave temple is no longer an active religious site but a tourist destination. It is famous for the clay sculptured Buddhist figure in the Great Buddha Cave, which was the largest in Chang'an and its surrounding areas.[94] The caves are divided into five groups: Great Buddha Cave, Thousand Buddha Cave, Arhat Cave, Monk's Quarter Cave, and Zhangba Buddha. (Figure 3.36)
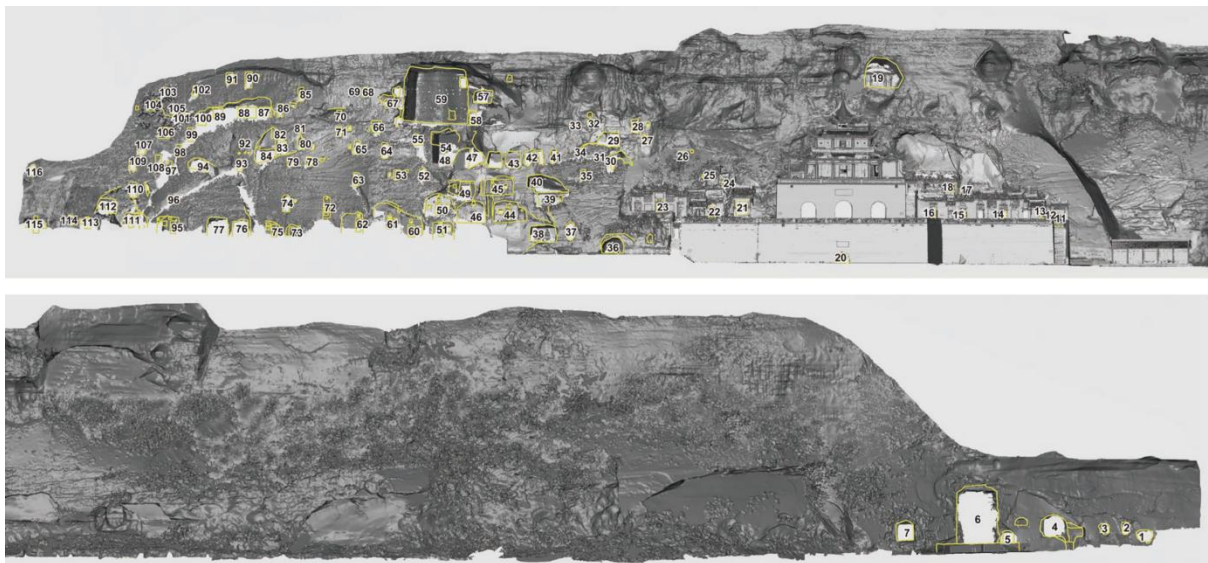
Figure 3.36 Map showing numbering of caves (1-7 Zhangba Buddha Cave, 8-18 Arhat Cave, 19-20 Great Buddha Cave, 21-25 Thousand Buddha Cave, 26-116 Monk's Quarter Cave).

1) Tourist Route: It is linear from east to west, including the three major grottoes and several smaller ones which are open to the public.

2) Interpretive Theme: the main interpretive theme is "a wonder of grotto art in the heyday of the Tang Dynasty."[95]

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[94] Zhongtang Li, *The Research and Protection of Bin County Cave Templ*e (Beijing: Contemporary Press, 1998).

[95] It is quoted from the panels of the on-site Silk Roads-related theme exhibition.

Interpretive approaches

Panels are the major interpretive media of the Bin County Cave Temple. There are three different types of panels. The panels in front of each grotto aim to introduce the grotto's shape, size, and the number of statues inside. (Figure 3.37) The panels in front of the selected niches indicate the shape and size of the specific niche, describe the statues, and state its current condition as well as its historical and artistic values. (Figure 3.38) Moreover, a series of panels placed at the entrance comprises a Silk Roads-related theme exhibition, which will be clarified more in-depth below.
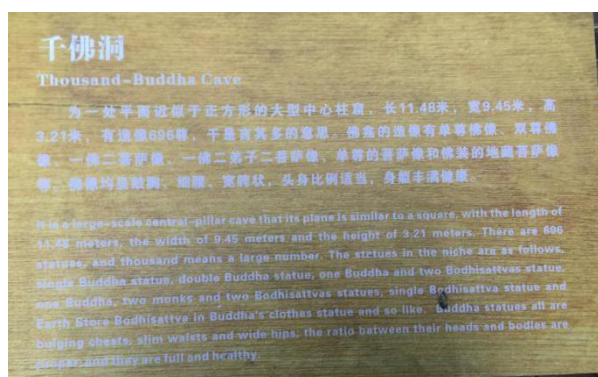
Figure 3.37 The panel of Thousand Buddha Cave.　　Figure 3.38 The panel of a specific niche.

• Guided Tour

The guided tour lasts about 30 minutes. The interpreter introduces some general information of the temple first and then leads visitors to the three grandest caves. In each cave, some niches and figurines are selected and explained in detail. In the beginning of the tour, the significance of this temple was elucidated from the perspective of the Silk Roads. Also, some details of the specific figurines which could reflect the integration between the culture of Central Plain and Western Regions were expressed during the tour.

• Theme Exhibition

Titled as "Millennium Buddhism Grottoes, Treasures on the Silk Roads," the exhibition has four parts: the preface, the heritage value, the main remains, and the history of construction. The text, coupled with the pictures and diagrams, conveys the following connections: the preface clarifies the cave temple is evidence of Buddhism's transmission via the Silk Roads in Central China; the heritage value stresses it is a demonstration of the interaction between the Eastern and Western civilization and mentions its further

impacts in the Korean Peninsula and Japan; a diagram shows its position on the Silk Roads, unveiling its influential role of Buddhism's dissemination. (Figure 3.39, 3.40)
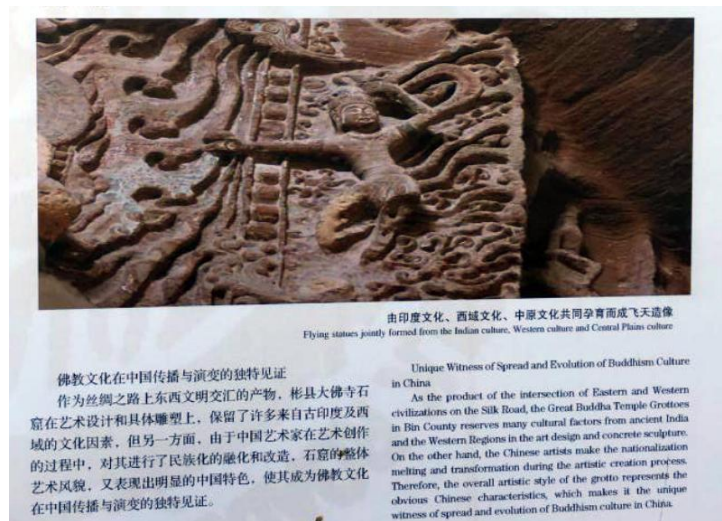
Figure 3.39 The panel indicating the statues could reflect the integration of different arts.

Figure 3.40 A map showing the location of the cave temple in the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Bin County Cave Temple and the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. The site is evidence of the transmission of Buddhist carving art along the Silk Roads, and it exemplifies its mature stage in Central China;

2. Some specific features of certain statues could clearly reflect the influences from Europe, West Asia, and Central Asia;

3. The temple demonstrates the popularity of Buddhism in Chang'an during the Tang dynasty, revealing how the spread of religions through the Silk Roads influenced the civilization of Central China.

The interpretive scheme of Bin County Cave Temple is relatively simple, which includes three approaches: the guided tour, the theme exhibition, and the panels. The guided tour is quite effective to express the connections because the interpreter could focus on some details of the statues which reflect the integration of different cultures via the Silk Roads. The theme exhibition is quite successful in clarifying the general concept and the major connections. Nevertheless, to further facilitate visitors' understanding, more detailed descriptions and specific explanations of certain statues which embody artistic characteristics of different cultures need to be added in the interpretive panels. Last but not the least, the interpretation of the cave temple also lacks the connection to other relevant sites, not only the Buddhist sites in Shaanxi but also other cave temples along the Silk Roads.

3.2.7 The Tomb of Zhangqian

Overview

Located in Bowang Town of Chenggu County, Hanzhong City, the tomb was built in the 2nd century BC.[96] It is the burial site of Zhangqian, a distinguished diplomat of the Western Han Empire and a decisive figure who adventured and pioneered the opening up of the Silk Roads. The cemetery is centered around the earth-covered tomb with brick chamber of the Han Dynasty (19.5 meters long from south to north on the bottom, 16.6 meters wide from east to west and 4.26 meters high).[97] (Figure 3.41) Other cultural heritage of the site include two limestone animal carvings which face each other standing in the protective pavilion and four stone tables which were placed at the south of the tomb. (Figure 3.42)

Figure 3.41 The tomb and the stone steles.

Figure 3.42 The stone tiger.

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[96] UNESCO, *Silk Roads,* 412.
[97] Ibid.

The Tomb of Zhangqian contains two parts, the Memorial Hall and the site area. (Figure 3.43) The Memorial Hall comprises two watching towers, a sacrifice hall, and four exhibition rooms surrounding a courtyard. The tomb and the associated stone steles and carvings are in the north of the site.

Figure 3.43 Aerial view of the Tomb of Zhangqian.

1) Tourist Route: the regular tourism route is from south to north, visiting the Memorial Hall first and seeing the tomb later.

2) Interpretive Theme: the overall interpretive theme is "commemorating the pioneer of opening up the Silk Roads;" the two sub-themes are "the life story of Zhangqian" and "the great contributions of Zhangqian."[98]

Interpretive approaches

The guided tour and the theme exhibition are the two main approaches of conveying the interpretive theme and sub-themes. Other media such as the audio tour, the leaflets, the entrance panel, and the plaques of the stone steles and carvings only present a brief overview of the site or some very basic information of the artifacts. (Figure 3.44, 3.45)

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[98] Both the theme and sub-themes were quoted from the interview with the curator.

Figure 3.44 The entrance panel including
a map and a brief introduction of the site.

Figure 3.45 The plaque of the stone tiger
presenting Some basic information.

• Guided Tour

The guided tour lasts forty minutes. The interpreter introduces the site briefly and leads visitors to see the theme exhibition. Based on the panels and exhibits, not only the life story of Zhangqian but also his far-reaching influences are elucidated through the narrative. Having been shown around the theme exhibition, visitors are directed to see the tomb. Some basic information such as its architectural form, material, and current conservation condition is told by the interpreter; the stone steles and the two stone tigers are also introduced.

The focus of the guided tour is the theme exhibition. The connections are conveyed clearly through the narrative, and by showing the artifacts and models, the perceived connections are further strengthened. Visitors could not only get to know Zhangqian's story and his great contributions but also understand how the communication and exchanges along the Silk Roads have changed daily life along the route.

• Theme Exhibition

The exhibition consists of two sub-themes: Zhangqian's life story and his contributions. Panels and exhibits are the two primary media of the exhibition. Text, pictures, photos, historical maps, chronologies, and diagrams are organized together on the panels to convey the key ideas. (Figure 3.46) As a supplement, the selected exhibits make the abstract statements easier to understand. Items on display include replicas of historical records, recovered artifacts of Han Dynasty, and the goods which were introduced to China

via the ancient Silk Roads. (Figure 3.47-3.49). They convince visitors that the diverse exchanges did exist in the past and such communication affects our life until today.

Figure 3.46 The panel introducing an episode of Zhangqian's first trip through text, pictures, and a map.

Figure 3.47 The display of historical records which documented states of the Western Regions.

Figure 3.48 The display of coins of the Han Dynasty.

Figure 3.49 Models of different kinds of food which is imported via the Silk Roads.

Other media of the exhibition include a 3D route map and an interactive screen. The map illustrates different types of routes by using lights of different colors such as the route of Zhangqian's first and second diplomatic trip and the whole Silk Roads network. (Figure 3.50) The interactive screen offers visitors an opportunity to explore the topics they are interested in, which include Zhangqian's life story, his chronologies, his influences, and the literature and poems about him. However, the information presented here is relatively simple.
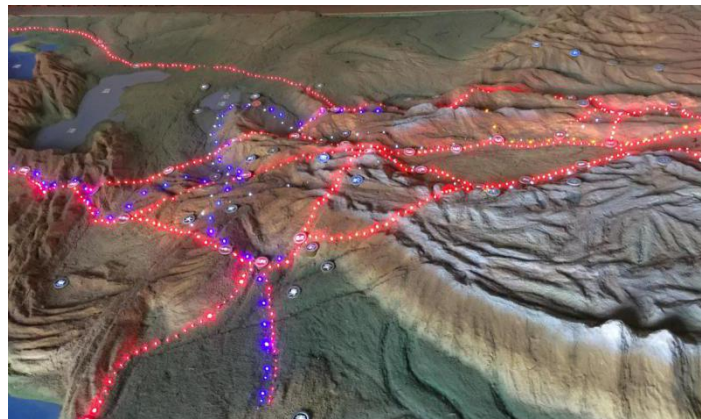
Figure 3.50 The 3D routes map indicateing different routes.

Through the exhibition, Zhangqian's adventure to the West Regions is elucidated; his contribution and influences are expressed from different layers (national and transnational) and a variety of aspects (military, diplomatic, and cultural). One advantage of the exhibition is that it introduces a broader context and connects this site to the relevant heritage sites by using maps, photos, and diagrams. In addition, the exhibition makes the ancient route be relevant to visitors by showing the photos or models of imported food, fruit, instruments, and so forth.

Comments

The key messages regarding interpreting the Tomb of Zhangqian and the Silk Roads should include the following aspects:

1. It is a site associated closely with the decisive figure of the Silk Roads who pioneered the opening up of the routes network;

2. The tomb, along with its associated relics, is evidence of Zhangqian's pioneering expedition to the Western Regions and the early communication between the Han Empire and the nomadic ethnic groups

in 2nd century BC.

The exhibition is the most effective interpretive approach of the site. It is argued that through the various media, Zhangqian's pioneering trips are clarified, and his contribution to the Silk Roads are illustrated. However, besides the advantages mentioned above, there are still some disadvantages. First, in terms of the Silk Roads' influences, emphasis is put on the Western Regions' impacts on Central China, but the benefits are mutual. Second, since Zhangqian is the pioneer of opening up the Silk Roads, the development of the route networks after the Han Dynasty should be explained more. Third, the tomb, the stone steles, and the stone tigers are not included in the current exhibition. Without the guided tour, visitors could only get limited information from the plaques. Last but not the least, the annual memorial ceremony held by Zhangqian's descendants, as well as other on-site activities, is only presented through several photos. Visitors could hardly perceive the continuity of the heritage place to connect the site and the historical figure.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEWS, SURVEYS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 SELECTION OF CASES

Based on the documentation and assessment of all seven sites in Shaanxi, the general situation of the on-site interpretation is outlined. In order to collect more data to further explore the current interpretive issues of the Silk Roads sites in Shaanxi Province, the strongest site of each category is chosen as case study according to the following criteria:

1) Does the theme or sub-themes convey the connections between the individual site and the broader routes network?

2) How many approaches are used? And how many of them convey the connections?

3) To what degree are the connections conveyed clearly and completely by the overall interpretive scheme?

4) Are any other relevant sites along the Silk Roads are mentioned in the current interpretation?

5) Is there any relevant intangible heritage included in the interpretive scheme?

According to the results of the first round field research (see chapter 3), the Daming Palace, the Small Wild Goose Pagoda, and the Tomb of Zhangqian were selected to be studied and analyzed more in-depth. Interviews and surveys were conducted in the three sites in January, 2018. Because of the time constraints, the number of respondents was relatively small. However, the intention of the survey was not to offer a comprehensive assessment but a general sense of visitors' reception and preference to direct the potential proposals. For each case study, different types of data are collated and integrated to elicit an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and difficulties. In addition, a synthesized analysis of Shaanxi sites as a whole is discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.2 INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS OF CASE STUDIES

4.2.1 Site of Daming Palace in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty

Interview

Two interviews were conducted by the author on January 8, 2018; one interviewee was the secretary of the Conservation and Reform Office of the Daming Palace, the other was an interpreter at the museum. The main questions included: the design, implementation, and monitoring of the interpretive scheme; the objective, focus, and strategy; the main approaches and media; how the connections to the Silk Roads were conveyed; difficulties they encountered; opportunities and short-term or long-term plans. The key points are presented below.

Objective and focus. "We intend to utilize this archaeological site to tell the history of the Tang Dynasty and to present its positive and open culture in many aspects," the secretary explained, "because as the most important and magnificent palace complex, the Daming Palace should represent a whole picture of the Tang Dynasty rather than just a group of royal architecture." Hence, the focuses of the current interpretation are made up of two aspects: the planning, design, and construction of the palace; the history and culture of the Tang Dynasty.

Approaches and media. The layout of the palace complex and the original appearance of each building are illustrated mainly through the restored models of different scales. As for telling the history and culture, their strategy is "recreating the historical events or scenes" because "it is easier to attract visitors' attention and facilitate their understanding." They seek to convey this information through film, animation, pictures, and paintings.

The connections to the Silk Roads. Asked how she understood the connection between the site and the route, the secretary said, "The palace was the power center of the starting point on the Silk Roads." Likewise, the interpreter admitted that the diplomatic connection was her interpretive focus. Both of them considered the exhibition in the visitor center arranged after the inscription as the most direct approach to reveal the connections; meanwhile, the museum display plays "an integral role."

Difficulties. It was recognized that the cultural and religious exchanges should be explained more. However, as the secretary mentioned, how to "unveil these exchanges in an attractive and truthful way" and how to "integrate all aspects as a whole" were not easy. Moreover, arousing audiences' interest was challenging for the interpreter since "compared to other ancient palaces such as the Forbidden City, there is no well-preserved architecture," and the majority of the artifacts are "fragmentary and unappealing" architectural elements. Therefore, they were striving to utilize effective and feasible interpretive media to present the splendid history and the colorful culture embodied in the palace rather than merely introducing the architecture.

Short-term or long-term plans. Collaborating with other museums to hold temporary exhibitions in relation to the Silk Roads is one idea; they also expressed the expectation of a long-term communication and cooperation plan with other nominated sites. Besides, the ongoing traditional ceremony project is an opportunity to get people participated in and enrich the site's cultural meaning. Speaking of the potential use of high technology, the secretary also mentioned they had experimented some innovative media, but they were not applied on site because of "the unsatisfactory trails."

Survey

In order to better gauge the effectiveness of the current interpretive scheme and get feedback from the visitors, a survey was conducted on January 5 and 6 of 2018 with questions delving into respondents' attitudes regarding the perceived connections conveyed by the on-site interpretive approaches and media.

Know the audience. The two-day survey yielded thirty respondents. The overwhelming majority (90 percent) of respondents were visitors from other provinces. 83 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher. But in terms of their knowledge background of the sites and the Silk Roads, none of them recognized that he knew the site or the route to a great extent before visiting.

The reception of the connection. With the perceived connections being a focal point of this research, understanding visitors' reception levels is important. In Graph 4.1, the survey results reveal that only 3 percent of respondent (n=1) perceived a strong connection; most of them recognized that they perceived

the connection at a moderate or a slight level, 60 and 37 percent, respectively. Graph 4.2 shows that almost all the respondents (93 percent) learned the political communication, but only 30 percent learned the religious exchanges took place along the route. In addition, only 23 percent had a strong desire to learn more about the Silk Roads after visits, while 30 percent had no further interest at all.

Did you perceive the connection?
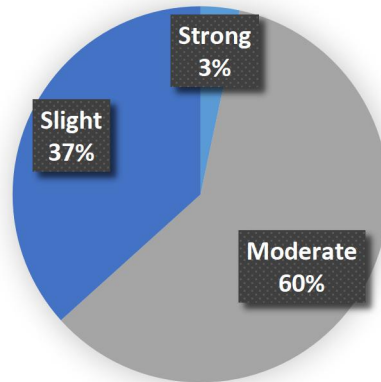
Graph 4.1

What kind of connection?
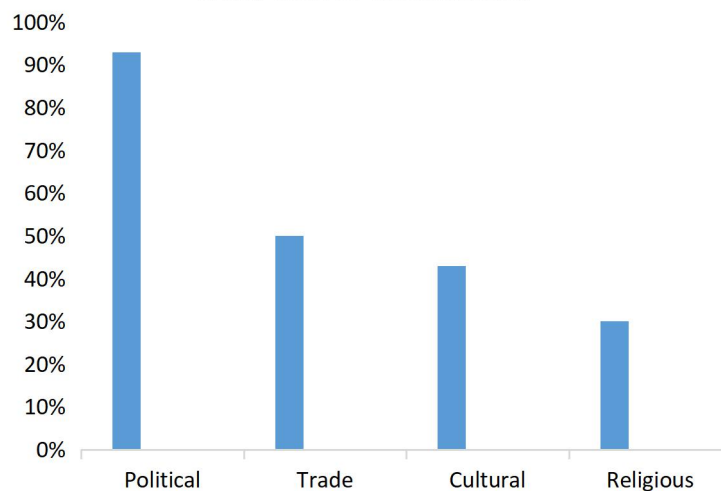
Graph 4.2

Approaches and media. Understanding visitors' preference is one of the essential factors for analysis and potential proposals. In Graph 4.3, panels and restored models of each archaeological remain, the heritage museum, outdoor installations, and the entrance panel were the most-used ones. With regard to their effectiveness of conveying the connections, the exhibition at the visitor center and the museum were recognized as the most useful approaches, with grades of 3.6 and 3.3 respectively (Graph 4.4). The most interesting and enjoyable medium was the heritage museum; both the guided tour and the museum

display received a high satisfaction. Nevertheless, respondents suggested the entrance panel, the visitor center's exhibition, and the film needed to be improved.

The most used media
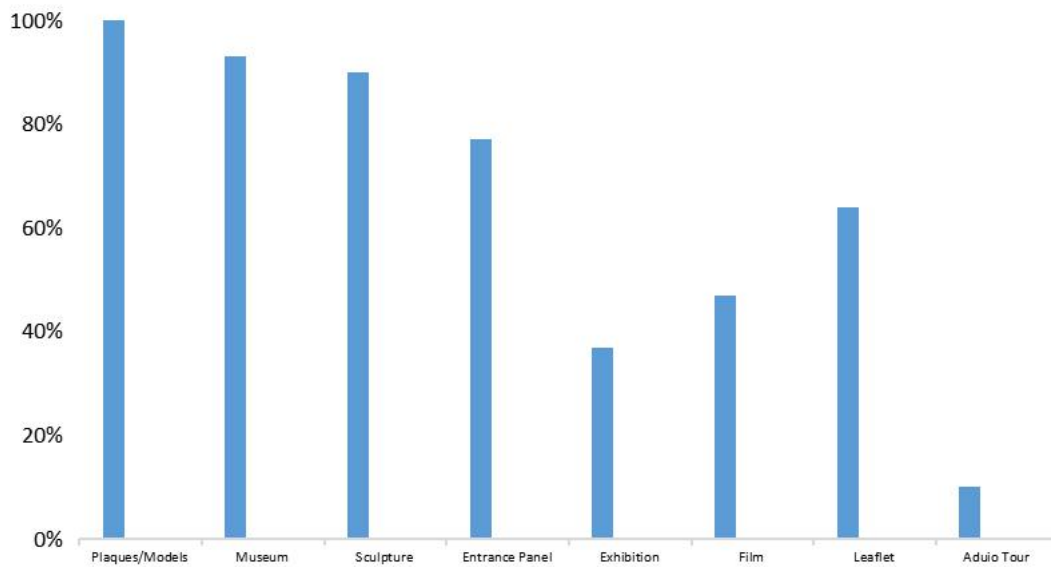
Graph 4.3

The most effective media
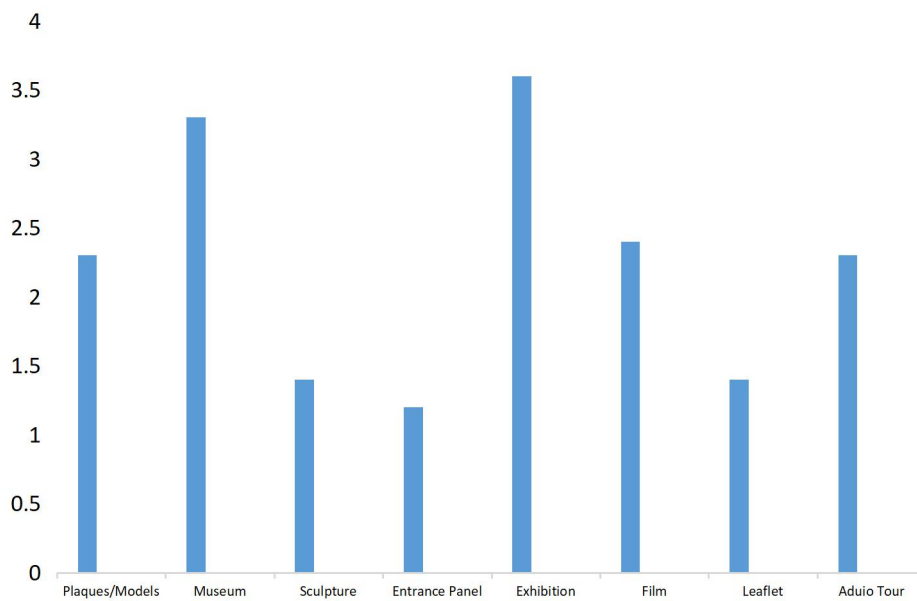
Graph 4.4

Comments or suggestions. According to the comments collected from the respondents, there were some notable trends. Visitors preferred 1) people-based interpretation such as the free guided tour, which was praised as an educational and pleasurable experience; 2) direct and intuitive media, such as graphs, diagrams, pictures, statues, models, and the animation; 3) innovative and interactive media, which were scarce currently. On the contrary, respondents did not like to read the text-heavy panels or spend a long time on one media (for instance, the film).

Analysis

Based on the results of aforementioned documentation, assessment, interviews, and survey of the Daming Palace, an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, difficulties, and opportunities is conducted around two aspects, the key ideas and approaches. (Table 4.1) The analysis presented below will serve as a cornerstone for generalizing the common issues of all Shaanxi sites as well as proposing the recommendations and interventions.

Table 4.1 Analysis of the Site of Daming Palace.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Difficulties	Opportunities
Key Ideas	1.Four types of exchanges are included; 2.The political aspect is conveyed successfully.	1.Religious and cultural aspects are weak; 2.Focus on the life of upper class; 3.Not incorporate other sites.	1.Relate the site to audiences; 2.Illustrate mutual influences; 3.Inform, educate, and inspire visitors.	1.Create a panorama of Chang'an City; 2.Help promote other less-known nominated sites.
Approaches	1.Heritage museum is effective; 2.Free guided tour; 3.Diverse media.	1.Exhibition at the visitor center is not attractive; 2.Film is too long; 3.The accuracy of recreating historical scenes.	1.Most artifacts of this site are architectural elements; 2.Bring the past alive.	1.Traditional ceremony; 2. Cooperate with other museums or relevant sites; 3.High-tech media.

4.2.2 Small Wild Goose Pagoda

Interview

Two interviews were conducted by the author at the Small Wild Goose Pagoda: one with the secretary of the Education and Promotion Department was done on January 2, 2018, the other with an interpreter was done on January 3, 2018. The main questions were similar to those of the Daming Palace. The findings are presented below.

Objective and focus. Since the pagoda being one part of the Xi'an Museum since 2007, the interpretive goal is not only to introduce the site itself but also to incorporate it into the broader context of the city. There are three aspects, including the construction of the pagoda, its historical use and status in ancient Chang'an City, and its significance in the transmission and development of Buddhism in Central China.

Approaches and media. The plaques in front of each structure and the two exhibitions were regarded as the main approaches by the secretary. One aims at presenting some basic information of the specific architecture or stone stele, the other intends to "show the site as a whole from a more comprehensive perspective."

The connections to the Silk Roads. "The pagoda is evidence of Buddhism's dissemination and development via the Silk Roads, which is reflected on its architectural form as well as its historical function, the sutra collection and translation center," the secretary further added, "of course, Yijing was an important figure associated with this site." After the inscription, the theme exhibition was arranged, the new entrance panel was placed, and more Silk Roads-related information was added to the interpreters' narratives.

Difficulties. Telling Yijing's pilgrimage was the toughest part for the interpreter, because "compared to Xuanzang, Yijing is lesser known to the general public." Hence, "how to arouse people's interest to hear his story" as well as "how to tell the story in a vivid way" were challenging. Moreover, since the temple no longer has the religious function, the interpreter expressed concern about how to convince visitors the site was once a significant religious center in Chang'an City.

Resources and Opportunities. Both interviewees agreed that Xi'an Museum could provide valuable complementary resources to the interpretation of the pagoda. One permanent exhibition is about Buddhist statues, which presents an overview of Buddhism's development in Central China and connects relevant sites in Chang'an City. Besides, the secretary argued that the temporary exhibition was also an opportunity to broaden visitors' knowledge about the Silk Roads. Speaking of the intangible heritage, various traditional ceremonies had been held at the site in certain festivals.

Short-term or long-term plans. The secretary mentioned one ongoing project was a mobile phone app which attempts to offer a free and convenient interpretive service for visitors. Also, seeking more cooperative opportunities with other museums or relevant sites is a long-term strategy, because "the cooperation between nominated sites in Shaanxi is currently far from adequate."

Survey

The survey was completed on January 9, 2018, with a total of 30 respondents. The intention and main questions were consistent to those of the Daming Palace.

Know the audience. Most respondents (73 percent, n=22) were visitors from other provinces, and 76 percent (n=23) visited both the temple and the Xi'an Museum. 80 percent of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher, but only one respondent recognized that he knew both the pagoda and the Silk Roads to a great extent before visiting. Over half respondents considered they knew the site and the Silk Roads at a slight level, 67 (n=20) and 57 (n-17) respectively.

The reception of the connection. In Graph 4.5, it is evident that most respondents (70 percent) recognized that they perceived the overall connection at a moderate level. To gain insights on conveying each type of the connections, Graph 4.6 shows that almost all the respondents (90 percent) perceived the stylistic connection; however, less than half (43 percent) learned Yijing's pilgrimage. Only 30 percent respondents stated that visiting this site aroused their intense interest to learn more about the Silk Roads or relevant sites, while 17 percent expressed they had no interest at all.

Did you perceive the connection?
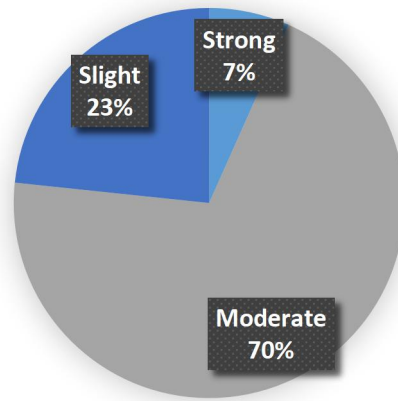
Graph 4.5

What kind of connection?
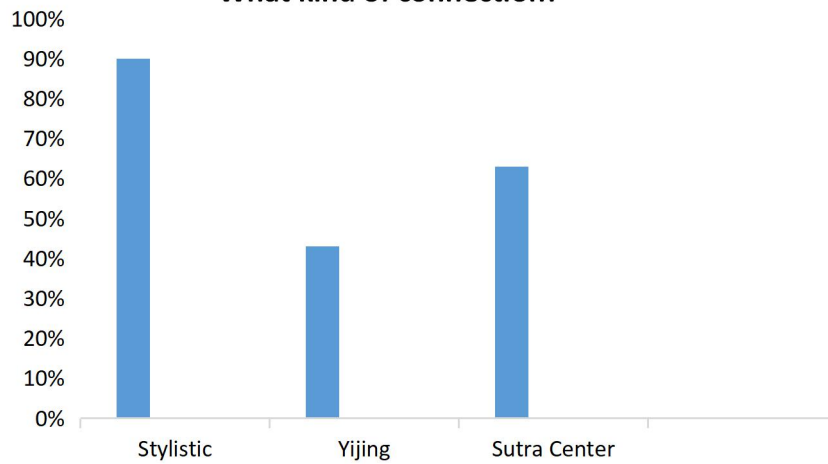
Graph 4.6

Approaches and media. Graph 4.7 indicates that the plaques, exhibitions, entrance panels, and the intangible heritage center were used by over 80 percent respondents. The guided tour and the exhibitions were recognized as the most effective approaches, which got the grades of 3.5 and 2.9 respectively (Graph 4.8). The most interesting and enjoyable medium was the intangible heritage performances, while the film was regarded as the most unsatisfactory one which required improvement.

The most used media
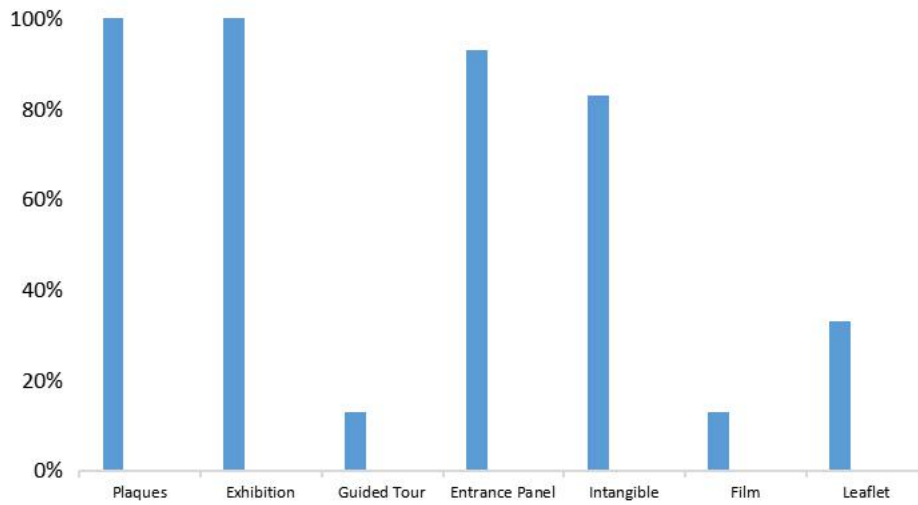
Graph 4.7

The most effective media
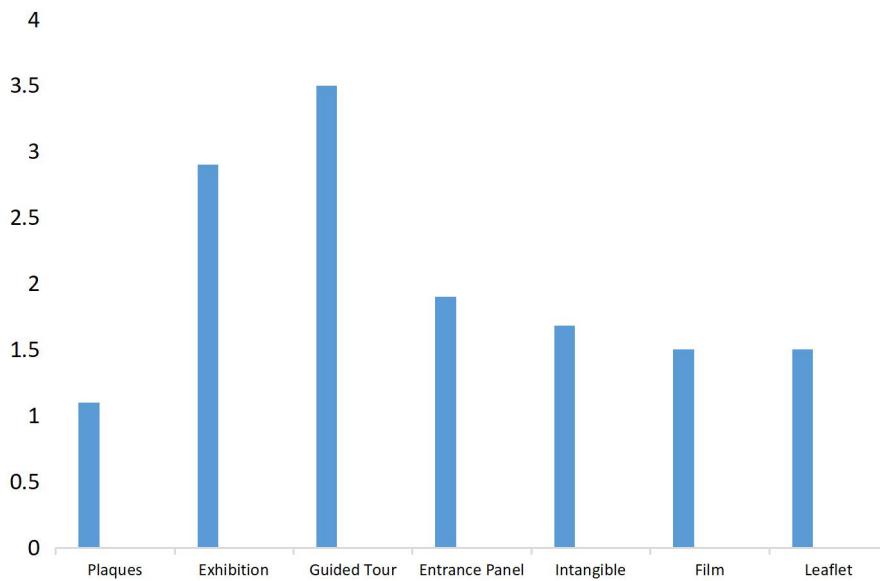
Graph 4.8

Comments or suggestions. Key trends elicited from respondents' feedback included: 1) over half respondents did not learn Yijing's pilgrimage through their visits; respondents who noticed this connection suggested his travel needed to be told in a more detailed and attractive way; 2) the current

multimedia interpretive tool, the film, was unsatisfactory; 3) storytelling and recreating historical events were preferred rather than didactic narratives; 4) the general public tended to look at images instead of text on the panel; 5) only a few people had been to the visitor center.

Analysis

The analysis of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda shown below reveals the site's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and difficulties in terms of its key ideas and approaches (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Analysis of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Difficulties	Opportunities
Key Ideas	1.All types of connections are mentioned; 2.Provide a context of Buddhism's flourishing period in Chang'an.	1.The presentation of Yijing's pilgrimage is relatively weak; 2.Its historical use and significant status need to be strengthened.	1.Present its original function and convince people its significance; 2.The associated figure is less known.	1.Connect other relevant Buddhist temples; 2.Include intangible heritage.
Approaches	1.The theme exhibition is related to the Silk Roads directly; 2.Diagrams and comparison of photos are clear.	1.Visitor center is not fully utilized; 2.The film needs to be improved; 3.The selection of intangible heritage performances.	1.Tell the story in a vivid way; 2.Lack of effective multimedia device.	1.Xi'an Museum's exhibitions; 2. Ongoing mobile phone app plan; 3. Traditional ceremonies; 4.Cooperation.

4.2.3 The Tomb of Zhangqian

Interview

The author Interviewed with the curator of Zhangqian's Memorial Hall and an interpreter separately on January 12, 2018. The key points are collated and summarized below.

Objective and focus. The curator clarified that their goal was through introducing the site to tell the life story of Zhangqian, reveal his historical significance, and spread "his pioneering spirit, his patriotism, his brave, and his perseverance" to visitors. The current interpretive focuses are Zhangqian's two diplomatic trips and his contributions.

Approaches and media. The main approach is the exhibition, which consists of panels, models, a 3D route map, an interactive screen, and two paintings. In addition, the curator also considered the guided tour as another important approach since "the people-based, interactive experience cannot be replaced, and it is really informative and pleasurable."

The connections to the Silk Roads. Since the core figure of this site is Zhangqian, whose adventure pioneered the Silk Roads, it is evident that the tomb has a strong intrinsic connection to the route. As the curator argued, "there is no doubt that Zhangqian's life story and his influences should be interpreted around the theme of the Silk Roads." For the interpreter, the Silk Roads was the overarching theme that ran throughout her interpretation.

Difficulties. Interpreting the tomb faces some challenges since "for the general public, it lacks artistic value," and "the artifacts of this site are very limited." Therefore, how to increase visitors' interest and how to convince people its authenticity were regarded as the biggest problems by the interpreter. She also mentioned that explaining Zhangqian's far-reaching impacts from a transcontinental perspective was more difficult than a national perspective, and conveying his spirit to audiences required an in-depth understanding of both the history and the contemporary context. Speaking of the financial issue, the curator said the main resource was from the governmental grants; therefore, they could hardly afford high-tech devices, "even the maintenance fee of current media is a pressure."

Opportunities. Because of the "one belt and one road" initiative, the popularity of the site is increasing. Furthermore, based on the proposal of Zhangqian Cultural Park, the Chenggu County Museum will be built adjacent to the memorial hall. Hence, the curator thought they should grasp this opportunity not only to enhance the interpretation of Zhangqian and his time but also to promote the local cultural and economic development. It is predictable that more space in the museum could be used for exhibits as

well as other interpretive media.

Short-term or long-term plans. The memorial ceremony held by Zhang's clan takes place on site every year, as well as other cultural activities. The interpreter suggested that such events could prove "the tomb is the evidence of the certain historical figure" and "link the past and present;" hence, they planned to promote these activities to enhance the public participation. The curator also expected some cooperative opportunities with other nominated sites, discussing the issues of management, interpretation, and promotion.

Survey

The survey was completed on January 12 and 13 of 2018. Since the Tomb of Zhangqian was not a popular tourist destination located in a small town in Hanzhong City, the total respondents were 12. However, their responses to most questions were highly consistent, which made it possible to come to some key trends and common issues.

Know the audience. The overwhelming majority (92 percent, n=11) of respondents visited the tomb were living in Shaanxi Province; 42 percent (n=5) were from Xi'an City and 50 percent (n=6) were from Hanzhong City. Only one visitor was from an adjacent province, Sichuan. 67 percent held a bachelor's degree or higher, and over half of respondents claimed that they knew Zhangqian as well as the Silk Roads to a moderate extent before visiting the site.

The reception of the connection. Having learned Zhangqian's life story (especially his two pioneering trips) as well as his contributions through the on-site interpretation, all respondents expressed that they could perceive a strong connection between the site and the Silk Roads. Nonetheless, it was noted that only half respondents realized the significance of the tomb itself, and they expressed concerns about the lack of interpretation of the tomb as well as the associated stone steles and stone tigers. Moreover, less than half of respondents (42 percent, n=5) knew that the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List after visiting. With regard to their interest in the further exploration of relevant sites, 50 percent expressed an intense interest, while 33 percent had a little interest and 17 percent had no interest.

Approaches and media. Graph 4.9 illustrates that the exhibition, the plaques, and the entrance panel were used by most respondents, but the guided tour, the audio tour, and leaflets were only used by a few people. Among all the interpretive approaches, it is evident that the exhibition was the most effective one which was graded as 3.9. On the contrary, the least effective media were recognized as the plaques and leaflets, with grades of 1.2 and 1.25 respectively. Although not many respondents asked for an interpreter, the guided tour received a high satisfaction by visitors who joined it.
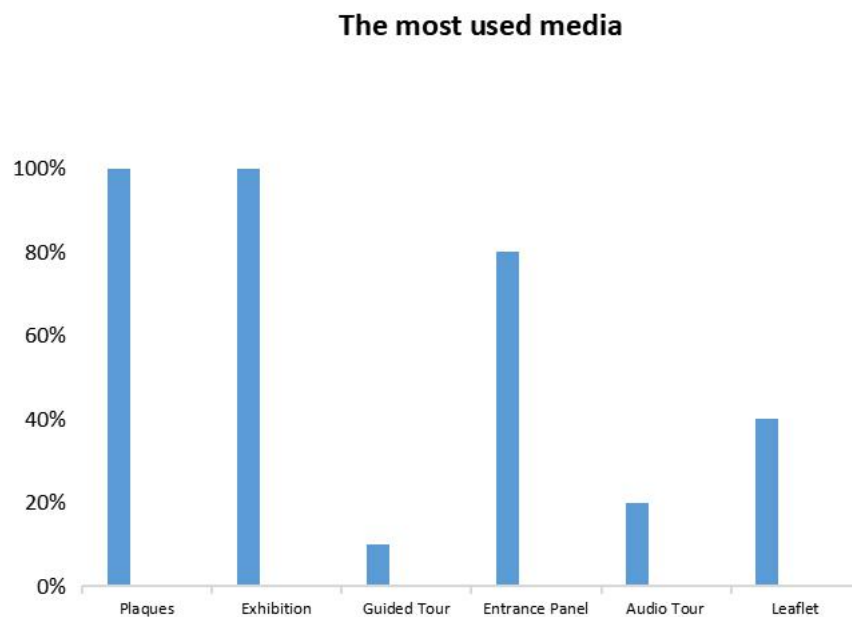
Graph 4.9

Comments or suggestions. The key trends and comments which got the most mentions were extracted from the on-site communication with respondents. 1) The presentation of tangible elements of daily life which were imported through the Silk Roads was impressive. Some respondents commented, "I did not know how the Silk Roads had changed our daily life until I saw the exhibits." 2) The comparison of artifacts at different locations along the Silk Roads was complimented as "a great vehicle to demonstrate the economic and cultural connection." 3) However, the majority of respondents thought the interpretive media were monotonous and outdated; the new media they suggested included the free smartphone trail, a film or documentary about Zhangqian, and more attractive interactive screens. 4) Last but not the least, almost all the respondents did not gain much historical information about the tomb, the stone steles, and the two stone carvings.

Analysis

The analysis of the Tomb of Zhangqian shown below reveals the site's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and difficulties in terms of its key ideas and approaches (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Analysis of the Tomb of Zhangqian.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Difficulties	Opportunities
Key Ideas	1.Zhangqian's life story and his contributions are conveyed; 2. Other associated sites are mentioned; 3.The exhibits are relevant to people's daily life.	1.Little information of the tomb and stone steles; 2.The two-way influences and mutual benefits need to be explained more; 3.The later development and decline of the route after Han need to be included.	1.Understand Zhangqian's contribution from a broader perspective; 2.Arouse visitors' interest in the tomb itself.	1.Display intangible heritage; 2.Link the site to the current context, both cultural and political; 3.Promote local culture and economy.
Approaches	1.The theme exhibition is effective; 2.The 3D route map, images, and models are intuitive tools.	1.Visitor center is not fully utilized; 2.Plaques do not provide much information; 3.The interactive screen is neither informative nor interesting.	1.Insufficient funds; 2.The tomb lacks artistic value for the general public; 3.Scarce artifacts of the site.	1.Chenggu County Museum is in progress; 2. Utilize the Memorial Ceremony; 3.Cooperation with other sites.

4.3 SYNTHESIZED ANALYSIS OF SILK ROADS SITES IN SHAANXI

Based on the observation, documentation, and assessment of all seven inscribed sites, along with the common issues and key trends elicited from the interviews and surveys, a synthesized analysis of Silk Roads sites in Shaanxi Province is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Strengths

The distinguished status on the Silk Roads. Xi'an (ancient Chang'an City) is recognized as the starting point of the extensive Silk Roads network. It was the capital city of the Western Han and the Tang dynasties, which contributed greatly to the opening up and the most flourishing period of the route respectively. As a witness of the origin and development of the Silk Roads, Xi'an City and its surrounding area held an extraordinary status with a distinct identity on the routes network, which makes it a famous destination with a good reputation.

The abundant historical resources. To some extent, the significant historical status means plentiful historical resources. Shaanxi has the most inscribed Silk Roads associated properties among all provinces in China. The seven sites of three different categories could represent various aspects of the entire route: eminent figures started their journeys from here; decisive events took place here; active exchanges were carried out here; the eastern and western art collided and blended here. In addition, some museums built within or adjacent to the sites provide supplementary information and resources. The rich collection, as well as potential temporary exhibitions, makes it possible to interpret the Silk Roads from a broad perspective and connect relevant sites through the corresponding artifacts. It is also noted that this region has abundant intangible heritage resources; different types of performances, traditional events, art and crafts reflect the characteristics of the local culture, which was impacted by the active communication between various civilizations alongside the Silk Roads.

Weaknesses

The connections are not conveyed comprehensively. According to the results of documentation and assessment, it is argued that currently none of the seven sites conveys the connections comprehensively. Some well-developed sites such as Daming Palace and Small Wild Goose Pagoda have covered all key points of the connections, but there are some aspects are relatively overlooked and weak, which are not fully presented or explained in an appropriate way. Other sites, especially the undeveloped ones such as the Weiyang Palace and the Xingjiaosi Pagodas, still miss one or more essential connections in their interpretive schemes; the lack of both key ideas and effective media lead to a sterile and futile interpretation. In a word, the overall interpretation condition of Shaanxi Silk Roads sites is not satisfactory; the different types of connections need to be clarified, and more possible approaches need to be

explored.

The lack of cooperation. Another pressing issue is the lack of collaboration between the associated sites in Shaanxi, which precipitates in several negative outcomes. First, there is no overall framework or guideline to direct each site's interpretive practice so that the status quo of the seven sites is uneven. Besides, Silk Roads sites within Shaanxi Province, especially those of the same category, have a strong intrinsic connection with each other. However, such connection could not be perceived effectively through the current interpretation, let alone a sense of the whole route. Moreover, in the light of respondents' feedback from the survey, most visitors neither knew other relevant sites nor had a strong desire to further explore them. Obviously, the meaning of a cultural route is not fully conveyed, and the advantage of an inscribed cultural route is not made good use. It is believed that enhancing the cooperation could solve the existing problems to a great extent. Although the sites have different management framework, actually, the Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau is in charge of all the properties, which makes it possible to further an effective and practicable cooperative scheme.

Opportunities

Develop the Silk Roads sites as a whole. It is observed that distinct discrepancies exist between the famous sites and the lesser known ones in Shaanxi. With the associated sites being inscribed on the World Heritage List under one serial property, the initial section of the Silk Roads, it is a great opportunity to develop them from a holistic perspective. Furthermore, the "one belt one road" initiative also brings a lot of attention to Shaanxi, which could result in the growth of tourists. To maximize the potential benefits, it can be argued that an effective interpretive scheme could not only conceptually connect relevant sites as a whole but also promote the local tourism development. In this case, the on-site interpretation could help with the formation of the Silk Roads concept and increase visitors' interest to learn and explore more relevant sites, realizing a shared cultural identity and balancing the different levels of development.

Utilize the intangible heritage. Intangible heritage is always an integral part of a cultural route. Nonetheless, most Shaanxi Silk Roads sites have not included intangible aspect to their interpretive schemes, but it does not mean the intangible heritage resources are scarce. Actually, the field research and interviews found that there were traditional festival activities taken place in Daming Palace, folk arts

displayed in Small Wild Goose Pagoda, religious events taken place in the active temples (the Xingjiao Temple and the Great Wild Goose Pagoda), and memorial ceremonies held by Zhangqian's descendants. These intangible heritage are effective vehicles to present the products of human communication and exchanges, exhibit ancient traditions as well as promote public engagement, linking the past and present.

Difficulties

Be relevant to the audience. The current interpretation does not express the correlation between the Silk Roads sites and the visitors' personal experience effectively, even though the route did greatly shape today's world and influence everyone's daily life in many aspects. According to the field research, the interpretive focuses are always the important historical facts, major events, distinguished figures, or the ruling class, while the great impacts of the routes on the lives of most ordinary people are neglected. Therefore, the mission of a successful interpretation is to figure out the inherent relevance and link the sites to visitors in a clear, attractive, and pleasurable way. Only when audiences perceive the underlying relationship between heritage and themselves could the interpretation be efficient, effective, and meaningful.

Provoke visitors to explore more. The on-site interpretation of most Shaanxi Silk Roads sites stays at the stage of merely presenting historical information by whatever approaches. Even though a few of them strive to make it both informative and enjoyable, it is still fruitless since the ultimate goal of interpretation should go beyond informing and entertaining. As many scholars agreed, the purpose is to stimulate their interest and provoke them to broaden their horizons on their own.[99] Nonetheless, the results of the surveys indicated that the current interpretation did not satisfy these purposes. To both benefit the visitors and develop the associated properties, it is time to update the out-of-date notions and set new goals and principles to interpret the Shaanxi Silk Roads sites in a more effective and beneficial way.

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[99] Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage*, 9; Uzzel, "Heritage Interpretation in Britain Four Decades After Tilden," 296; Beck and Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century*, 8.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

5.1 INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK FOR SHAANXI SILK ROADS SITES

On the basis of the literature review, the results of the field research, and a synthesized analysis of the current condition, an interpretation framework applied to all Shaanxi Silk Roads associated properties is proposed and discussed below.

5.1.1 Vision Statement

Interpretation is essential in accomplishing the missions of heritage preservation in terms of linking people to the precious cultural resources to further their learning, exploring, and ultimately, to foster a sense of common purpose in protecting such sites. As heritage sites associated with a cultural route, they always have some collective goals and a shared ideal scenario. The vision of interpreting Shaanxi Silk Roads sites is stated as:

The well-organized on-site presentation and interpretation of both tangible and intangible heritage could help facilitate a pleasurable and meaningful experience. Through a variety of informative and attractive approaches, audiences could not only learn historical facts of each associated site but also perceive its intrinsic connections to the larger Silk Roads; they could not only understand the values embodied in the individual sites but also comprehend the significance of the whole routes network. After the visits, they could recognize the underlying relevance between their daily life and the ancient, non-active routes, and they would have the interest to see more relevant properties and further explore the Silk Roads heritage.

5.1.2 Objectives

Following the vision statement, the objectives aim at elaborating and conveying key aspects to help

achieve the "ideal scenario" through which values will be communicated and benefits will be provided to both visitors, heritage sites, and other stakeholders. The general and specific objectives of interpreting Shaanxi Silk Roads sites include:

1. *Convey the perceived connections to help visitors construct a holistic understanding.*

In order to unveil the deeper meaning of both the sites and the routes, the primary objective is to interpret the sites from a perspective of the whole Silk Road. Considering the inherent attributes of a Silk Roads site, besides the basic historical information, three types of *connections* need to be included in the interpretive schemes:

1) Strengthen the connections between individual sites and the broader Silk Roads;

2) Express the connections between relevant sites along the route;

3) Link the tangible properties and the intangible heritage.

2. *Connect people to their cultural heritage.*

Interpretation is a type of communication between the heritage, the visitors, and the locals. To facilitate a more efficient and effective communication process and make people truly feel the underlying connection between the site and themselves, three specific objectives need to be satisfied:

1) Make the interpretation be relevant to people's daily life;

2) Provoke visitors to explore more about the Silk Roads as well as relevant sites;

3) Engage and motivate all groups of stakeholders to contribute to the shared cultural heritage.

Also, relating people to the heritage properties could help enhance their awareness of preservation.

3. *Promote balanced tourism development.*

Interpretation is an essential part of the route-based tourism, which intends to link the associated sites closely and could potentially promote the less known destinations to achieve a more balanced tourism development. The field research found that a big gap existed between the well-developed sites and others in terms of the interpretive facilities, concepts, and personnel. However, it is believed that a cooperative interpretive scheme could help achieve the following sub-objectives:

1) Narrow the gap of interpretation level between different sites;

2) More even distribution of tourists and incomes.

5.1.3 Principles

On the basis of the review of interpretive principles evolved through generations (see chapter 2), a set of supportive principles tailored to the specific context is proposed, which serves as a bridge to help put theoretical concepts into practices.

1. An approach that moves from the general to the specific. The Silk Roads sites must be considered as one integral part of a serial property rather than merely a local monument. An overview of the Silk Roads needs to be introduced first, and then the interpretive scope is narrowed down to a sub-theme and the specific site. Constructing a richer understanding requires different layers of presentation and interpretation.

2. Relate the site/ route to the lives of ordinary people. Even though the associated sites are always tied closely to certain historical figures, events, classes, or religions, finding out their potential connections to the daily lives of the general public is a prerequisite for a more meaningful interpretation.

3. Visitors should be provoked to learn and explore more. A successful interpretation should be provocative. After their visit, people would have an intense interest of the Silk Roads heritage and be stimulated to explore other relevant sites and learn more about the whole routes network on their own.

4. Appropriate approaches and media. There are a series of considerations for how to design and select feasible and effective interpretive approaches, such as the content of basic historical facts, the types of connections, the budget, the available space, and the expertise. The situation varies from one site to another; however, diverse and interactive media are highly suggested if possible.

5. Audiences should be activated to contribute to the heritage. Audiences are not passive receivers of the interpretation; instead, they have the potential to enrich the contemporary meaning of the monument, inherit the spiritual legacy of the historical figures, promote the local intangible heritage, and continue the communication among various cultures.

6. The inclusion of intangible heritage and the promotion of social value. Encouraging the locals, especially the core community of living heritage,[100] participate in the interpretive planning process and incorporating the intangible heritage into the interpretive schemes could not only unveil the deeper meaning of a site but also enhance the site's social value, linking the past and present.[101]

7. Synergy and partnership. Interviews found that currently the interpretive plans were designed and carried out by experts of each site separately, which is neither cooperative nor inclusive. Instead, interpreting associated properties along a cultural route requires a long-term collaboration plan among different sites; besides, the engagement of a variety of external parties- financial, volunteer, academic- could assist in improving and promoting the interpretation.

8. Alternatives for different audiences. In addition to an interpretive scheme for the general tourists, some other applicable alternatives tailored to specific needs of different groups of visitors should be taken into account as well. Representative special groups include: school children, elderly people, disabled people (physical disabled, visually or hearing-impaired) , religious groups, and foreign tourists.

9. Be flexible. The archaeological discoveries of some sites, such as the Weiyang Palace and the Daming Palace, are ongoing; some potential research results are likely to be published in the future. Therefore, the interpretation should be capable of being modified and changed to respond to new findings or altered notions.

5.1.4 Recommended Actions

The recommendations consist of three groups: a proposed overall management system in which the interpretation is situated; some general suggestions for the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage, who is responsible for all Silk Roads associated properties in Shaanxi; a more specific action plan for individual sites to guide them to enhance the on-site interpretation respectively.

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[100] Among the Shaanxi Silk Roads sites, the Xingjiaosi Pagoda, the Great Wild Goose Pagoda, and the Tomb of Zhangqian are regarded as living heritage sites; the associated core communities are monks who live at the Xingjiao Temple, monks who live at the Daci'en Temple, and Zhangqian's descendant.

[101] The intangible heritage associated with each site is discussed in Chapter 2.

Proposed governance framework

Since the interpretation is an integral aspect of the heritage management system, its effectiveness is highly depended on the governance framework. It is argued that an inclusive, cooperative, and efficient governance framework is the cornerstone for conducting the proposed actions to achieve the positive outcomes. Figure 5.1 shows the current governance framework of Silk Roads properties in Shaanxi.[102] It is evident that the interpretive planning are conducted exclusively by governments of different levels, and the decision-making process almost only involves experts. Therefore, to ensure the implementation of the recommended actions, a modified governance framework is put forward which stresses the following aspects. (Figure 5.2) 1) Because the overarching objectives include issues on many aspects such as sustainable tourism and local development, a strong alliance between cultural heritage departments and other relevant departments such as planning department and environment department is established to reinforce the competencies. 2) For the living heritage sites, the core community should be given more rights to be included in the decision-making circle. 3) The voices of other stakeholders and organizations such as local communities, research institutes, universities, and religious groups should be heard and considered via a set of participatory tools such as focus groups and interviews.
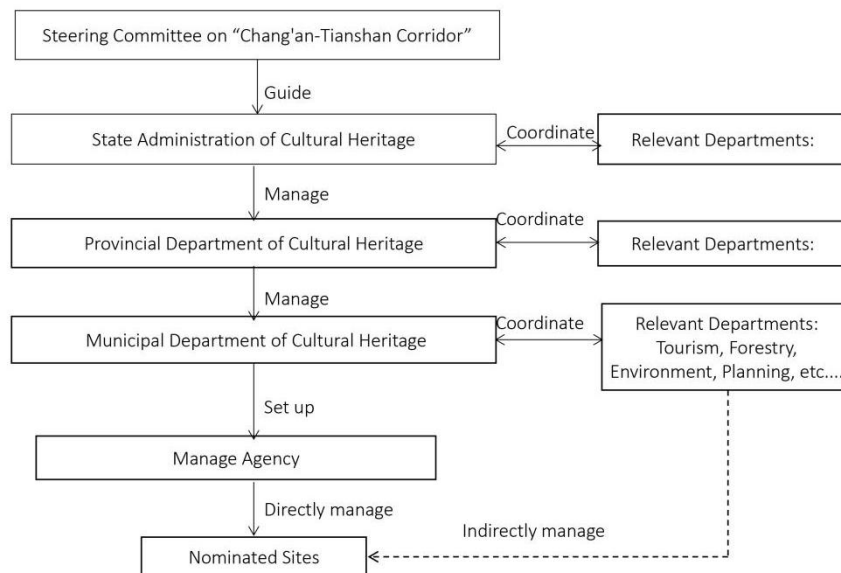

Figure 5.1 Current Governance Framework of Silk Roads Properties in Shaanxi.

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[102] Based on the UNESCO's nomination report and the field research conducted by the author.
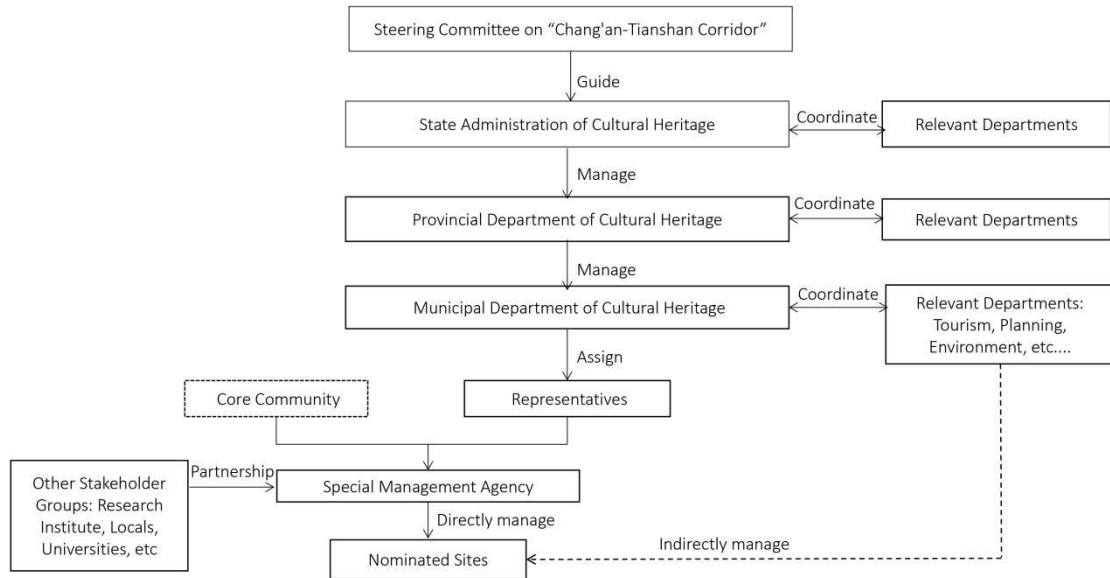
Figure 5.2 Proposed Governance Framework of Silk Roads Properties in Shaanxi.

For Shaanxi Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage:

1. Formulate a consistent introduction of the Silk Roads.

In light of the current gaps of interpretation between the seven sites, it is argued that a consistent introduction of the Silk Roads would be effective to develop the associated sites as an integrated serial property and narrow the existing gaps. It is suggested that the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage should formulate a consistent introduction of the Silk Roads as well as the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor. The corresponding media such as interpretive panels, 3D physical models of the routes network, and the interactive map system of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor should be designed and produced by the provincial government and distributed to individual sites.

2. Devise a regional interpretive theme applied to all Shaanxi sites.

A shared regional theme could not only relate the Shaanxi Silk Roads sites as a whole but also lead to a more meaningful interpretation, because the scale of the great Silk Roads is extremely extensive, a sub-theme could strengthen the perceived relevance between visitors and the routes network. Considering the historical status of Shaanxi and the significance of all the sites, the regional theme is proposed as "the starting point of the Silk Roads, a witness of its origin and prosperity." The shared theme should be applied to the interpretive media introducing all Shaanxi Silk Roads sites such as the travel brochure or the interactive map system of Shaanxi section.

3. Create incentives to motivate visitors to explore more.

The sites of a cultural route within a certain area could be developed as an integrated tourism product to help visitors construct a more comprehensive understanding of the given region and promote the balanced tourism development. To achieve these objectives, the provincial department should devise some incentives which stimulate visitors to experience the associated sites as many as possible. One proposal is a booklet called "travel journal of the Silk Roads." It presents some basic information of the Silk Roads as well as its associated properties in Shaanxi, and visitors could add photos and comments of individual sites to complete the booklet. (Figure 5.3)

Figure 5.3 Proposed templates of the booklet.

Another proposal is a mobile phone application called "my journey of the Silk Roads." Users could mark the places they have been to in the online map system so that their own route would be generated; also, they could upload photos, audios, or videos, and add comments to each point; moreover, all the users could share their insights via the online BBS system with others, forming a "virtual Silk Roads" of communication and dialogues. (Figure 5.4)
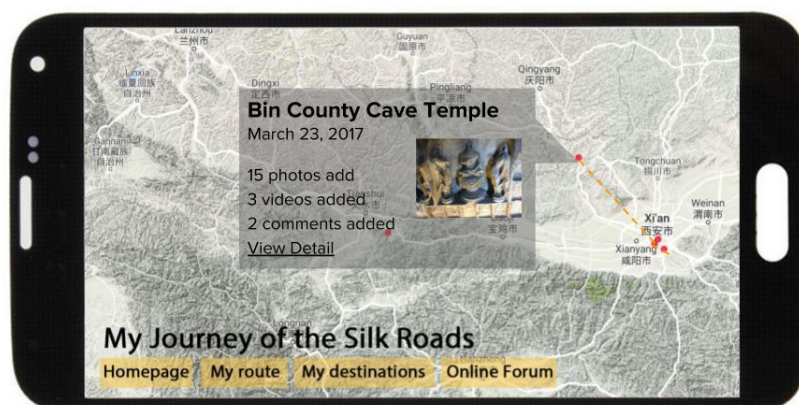
Figure 5.4 Proposed mobile phone application.

4. Organize panel discussions and workshops.

The significance of collaboration has been discussed earlier. The panel discussion is suggested to be regularly held by the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage to gather managers of inscribed sites, officials of both local and municipal departments, and experts from academic or research institutions. The panel attempts to offer an opportunity for them to discuss issues regarding presentation and interpretation, exchange ideas, learn from successful experiences, and gain updated information form scholars. In addition, thematic workshops could be organized to focus on specific issues if necessary.

5. Joint staff/ volunteer training.

The staff and volunteer training is crucial to maximizing the effectiveness of the on-site interpretation. Currently they are trained by experts on each single site. Since the seven properties are linked by an overall concept, it is of great importance that the staff and volunteers get to know not only each heritage site but also the Silk Roads as well as other relevant sites. Therefore, the joint training for all staff and volunteers from the seven sites is organized to equip them with fundamental knowledge of the routes network, basic understanding of other properties, and useful communication skills.

6. Provide support when necessary.

Because of the lack of professionals and funds, some undeveloped sites cannot conduct an effective interpretive planning independently; sometimes even if the local bureau of cultural heritage or the external parties are involved, the grants and expertise are still far from adequate. In such conditions, the provincial department has the responsibility to provide the necessary assistance in terms of financial, intellectual, and technical aid.

For each associated site:

1. Figure out all types of connections and set interpretive theme(s). The first step is to systematically review how the specific site contributes to the whole routes network and how it connects to other relevant sites. The interpretive theme and sub-themes would be built upon these fundamental findings. It is noted that the notions are not permanent once they've been determined. If further archaeological discoveries and studies suggest new understanding of the sites or the Silk Roads, the ideas should be altered/polished.

2. Find out the relationship between the site and visitors. It is essential to investigate how to relate visitors' interest and experience to the site. The potential connections include: the historical figure is the character archetype of a popular literary figure (such as Buddhist Master Xuanzang and Tang Sanzang in *Journey to the West*);[103] the goods traded via the route have changed the way we live; the ideas spread via the route have changed the way we think; the historical events could inspire people's spirit of patriotism, bravery, and pioneering in the contemporary context, and so on. Besides, the particular connections to the specific groups of people need to be considered as well.

3. Modify the current interpretive media and/or add new ones. Following the fundamental two steps, next is to modify the existing media or propose new tools to convey the interpretive theme, strengthen the perceived connections, and link the ancient sites to the audience. Message elements should be accurate and truthful, expressing all key ideas and clearly aligning with objectives; the form of the media

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[103] *Journey to the West*, a remarkable classical novel in Chinese literature, was written by Wu Cheng'en published during the Ming Dynasty. It is an extended account of Xuanzang's westward pilgrimage in the Tang Dynasty.

is expected to be interesting, enjoyable, and interactive.

4. Incorporate the intangible heritage into interpretation. For the sites which have already held several intangible heritage activities, the task is to figure out a way to engage the key community and include the intangible part to the interpretive scheme. For those which currently have not embodied any intangible heritage, the primary thing is to find out if there is any potential intangible resource to be preserved, presented, and interpreted.

5. Seek partnerships. Each site should identify and look for its own possible partnerships, no matter financial, institutional, academic, technical, or volunteer. Working with partner groups could develop cooperative interpretive programs, get a variety of external supports, and receive valuable comments or advice on interpretive plans.

6. Ensure long-term monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Evaluation should be built into the process of interpretive planning at multiple stages. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that such mechanism is currently absent in most Shaanxi sites, it is recommended that following implementation of the new plan, evaluation of its effectiveness mainly based on the visitor reactions is conducted by the staff or volunteers. Also, a long-term monitoring and evaluation project should be carried out in a specified time frame to update the messages and maintain/alter the interpretive approaches and media.

5.2 PROPOSALS FOR CASE STUDIES

Building upon the framework for all associated sites of the Silk Roads in Shaanxi, the following proposed interventions for case studies aim to discuss how the framework is applied to each specific site to enhance the effectiveness of its on-site interpretation. Due to time constraints, the proposal is mainly targeted at the general visitors, consisting of the modified interpretive theme and sub-themes, feasible interventions for interpretive approaches and media based on its existing condition, and other recommended actions.

5.2.1 Site of Daming Palace in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty

Interpretive theme

Table 5.1 Interpretive theme and sub-themes of the Daming Palace.

Overall theme	A palace of the powerful Tang Empire, a witness of the prosperous Silk Roads.
Sub-themes	1.The power center and political/diplomatic communication;
	2.The commercial trade activities and representative goods;
	3.The exchanges of cultures, arts and techniques;
	4.A worldwide religious center.

Approaches and media

The regular tourist route and the arrangement of interpretive spots are basically unchanged: the two major exhibition spaces are the visitor center and the heritage museum; besides, archaeological sites and outdoor installations dispersed in the field also undertake the interpretive function. (Figure 5.5) To align with the proposed themes and interpretive goals, Table 5.2 shows the modified elemental messages and suggested media for each spot. The description and explanation of major interventions are further illustrated and elaborated below.

Figure 5.5 Interpretive spots of the Daming Palace (base image via Baidu).

Table 5.2 Interpretive spots of the Daming Palace.

Spot	Messages	Media
1.Entrance Panel	The basic information of the site, its brief history, and a guide map.	• Panels
2.Visitor Center	Introduction of the Silk Roads network, the inscription of its initial section, and the context of Shaanxi section.	• 3D route map (physical) • Panels • Interactive touch monitors • Leaflet
3.Archaeological remains	The basic information of each remain, its original appearance, and relevant historical events.	• Panels • Models • Augmented reality
4.Heritage Museum	a)The political center of the powerful Tang Empire	• Panels • Artifacts • Animation • Interactive touch monitor
	b)Active commercial and trading exchanges	• Panels • Models • Animation • Interactive touch monitors • Artifacts
	c)Communication of cultures, arts, and techniques	• Panels • Audio and video • Artifacts • Interactive touch monitors • Augmented reality
	d)A worldwide religious center	• Panels • Interactive touch monitors • Documentary • Artifacts
5.Outdoor installations	Historical scenes or events; traditional Chinese paintings depicting the life of Tang.	• Sculptures •Art installation of traditional paintings • Augmented reality

• Entrance Panel

The primary goal of the entrance information panel is not only to provide an introduction of the site but to increase visitors' curiosity and arouse their interest to explore the place. In addition to the presentation of some basic information including its brief history and guide maps, selected topics or questions could be added in the text, such as "explore the international communication during the most prosperous dynasty in Chinese history" or "discover the life of ordinary people in Chang'an City."

• Visitor Center

The visitor center is proposed to rearrange a theme exhibition of the Silk Roads, from the overall routes network to the inscribed initial section and the overview of Shaanxi region. A 3D route map is installed to show the whole picture of the grand-scale Silk Roads network, indicating different routes (the Land Silk Roads, Oasis Silk Roads, and Maritime Silk Roads) and the geographic features. Two interactive touch monitors are placed. One introduces the inscribed Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, including its OUV, the route map, information of the associated properties, and so on; the other focuses on Shaanxi Province and its relevant sites, revealing the extremely significant status of this region and providing more detailed information of each site. (Figure 5.6, 5.7) Panels are complementary media to highlight the key ideas. Besides, two types of publications are offered at the visitor center: one is the existing leaflet about the site of Daming Palace, the other is the travel brochure of all Shaanxi Silk Roads properties produced and distributed by the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage.
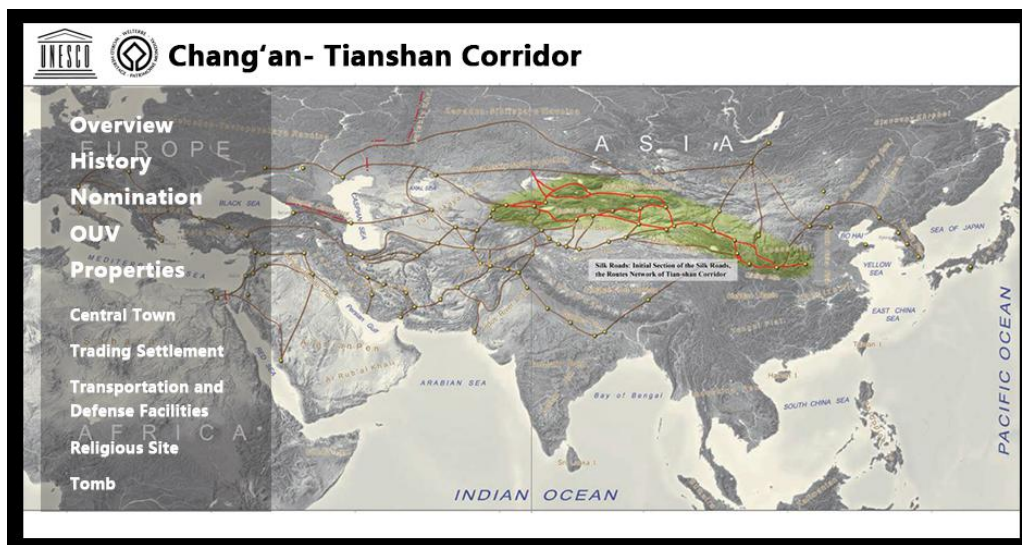
Figure 5.6 Proposed interactive touch screen for audiences to explore Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor.
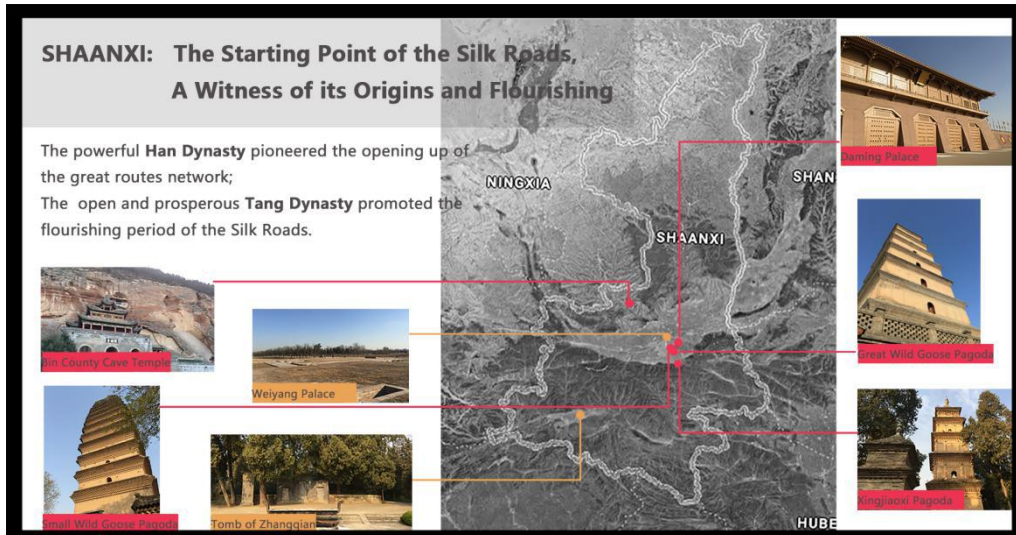
Figure 5.7 Proposed interactive screen showing inscribed sites in Shaanxi.

• Archaeological remains

The results of archaeological excavations which have been done, coupled with the academic research, inspired the virtual recreation of the palace. Therefore, it is possible to use AR technology to showcase the past of the site in a vivid way. Through a mobile phone app, visitors could see virtually reconstructed architecture directly on site; moreover, some events recreated based on the historical records are displayed as well. (Figure 5.8)
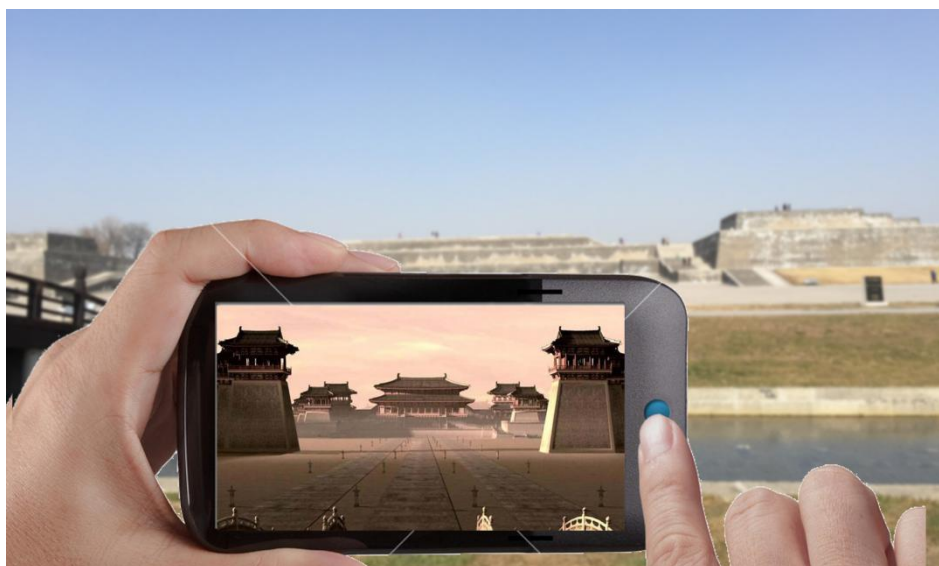
Figure 5.8 AR technology showing reconstructed Hanyuan Hall.

• Heritage Museum

Room 1: The political center of the powerful Tang Empire. The first room introduces the construction of the palace complex and mainly focuses on the political and diplomatic communication between the Tang Empire and other countries. The construction components and the existing models are displayed to show its construction history, layout, and architecture. The existing animation, which describes the scenes of many envoys coming to the palace to meet the Tang emperor, is retained. Besides, a proposed interactive touch monitor illustrates the route map of the Silk Roads during the Tang Dynasty; when audience clicks on a specific country, an overview of the country, along with its relationship with the Tang Empire, would be elaborated.

Room 2: Active commercial and trading exchanges. The second part of the exhibition intends to exhibit a variety of commercial activities taken place in Chang'an and display the goods exchanges via the Silk Roads. Similar to the aforementioned animation, another animation is created to depict the restaurants, taverns, and shops operated by foreign merchants at that time. Models of imported and exported goods traded via the routes are displayed to demonstrate how the Silk Roads changed both the East and West.

Room 3: Communication of cultures, arts, and techniques. The third exhibition room is about communication and integration of the following aspects: cultures (costume, diet, and sports), arts (music, dance, painting, and architecture), technology and techniques (papermaking, printing, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, and so on).

In the first part, it is proposed that using three display monitors to show the pictures of different types of clothing, the typical fusion food and drinks, and the animation of athletic activities introduced from or exported to other countries during the Tang Dynasty, respectively. (Figure5.9, 5.10) The use of augmented reality could also develop an interactive program which helps the visitors "try on" the costumes of the Tang Dynasty.

Figure 5.9 Costume of the Tang Dynasty reflecting great impacts from the Western Regions.

Figure 5.10 Polo was a popular sport, which was introduced from Persia and further influenced Japan.

In terms of the communication of arts, the audio-visual area is designed to learn and appreciate the products of arts exchanges between the East and West. Visitors could listen to the music played by the instruments introduced via the Silk Roads, view the ancient paintings depicting the dance of Hu (the Central Asian ethnic groups), and compare the works of calligraphy, paintings, and the traditional architecture in China, Japan, and Korea, further understanding the interrelationship between different civilizations. (Figure 5.11, 5.12)

Figure 5.11 Huteng Dance. Source: Wall Painting of the Tomb of Su sixu, Tang Dynasty.
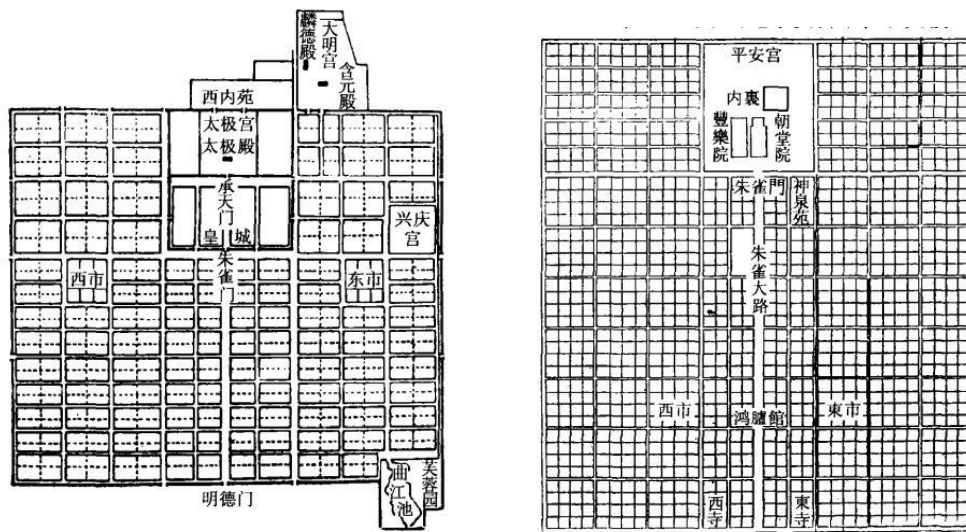
Figure 5.12 A comparison between Chang'an City of the Tang and Heiankyo (present Kyoto).

The dissemination of technology and techniques is explained through the presentation of the routes map, combined with texts and pictures introducing the origins, contents, work principles, and the development and spread history of the given technology or technique. (Figure 5.13)
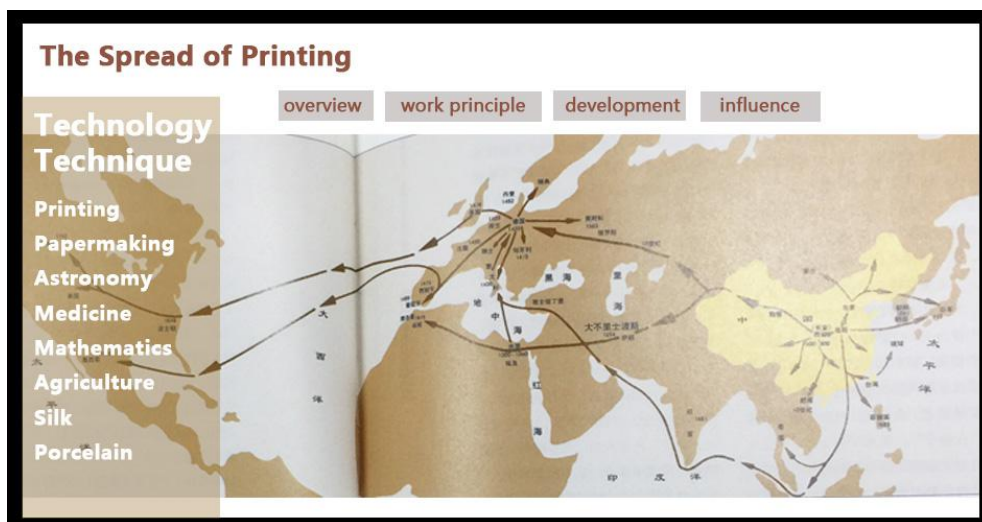
Figure 5.13 Thw proposed interactive screen illustrating the spread of technologies via the Silk Roads.

Room 4: A worldwide religious center. The last part of the exhibition introduces the transmission of religions along the Silk Roads and their further development in Chang'an City. The interactive touch monitor displays the maps showing the distribution of significant sites of Buddhism, Islamism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism along the Silk Roads, respectively. The maps could be zoomed in by the users to focus on one specific site, and when the user clicks on the site, its basic information, as well as

images, is presented. In addition, it is suggested that a documentary which records the current condition of existing significant religious sites in Xi'an and its surrounding area is played at the museum, demonstrating the far-reaching influence of the Silk Roads until today.

• Outdoor Installations

The existing sculptures, which were produced to recreate historical scenes, should be examined whether they accord to the historical facts. The fictitious ones need to be modified or removed, and new artworks based on the reliable historical records are encouraged to be created and installed in the heritage park. In order to make the outdoor installations be understandable, the augmented reality is utilized to provide more information including the historical background, detailed descriptions, and explanations of the sculptures and paintings through the mobile phone application.

Other recommendations

Collaborate with other museums. Since the interviews found that the recovered artifacts from Daming Palace were scarce, it is suggested collaborating with other museums in terms of art loans or temporary exhibitions would be a way to enrich its collection to tell the story of ancient Chang'an City and the communication between Central China and other regions. No matter how advanced technology is applied, artifacts, which are direct evidence of the history, serve as a basis for interpretation; they are irreplaceable vehicles to convey historical information and convince the audience of the attributed values of a heritage site. The potential partners could be the History Museum of Shaanxi Province and Xi'an Museum who own a rich collection of artifacts of the Tang Dynasty, or museums in other provinces alongside the Silk Roads, such as Dunhuang Museum, Xinjiang Museum and Gansu Museum.

Academic cooperation. Because of the grand scale and the complexity of the site, the archaeological excavation has not completed, and the research work is continuing. Cooperating with Institute of Archaeology (Chinese Academy of Social Science) and local universities such as Northwest University to fill the current academic gaps could lay foundations for future interpretive planning. The site should support scholars and students' research and make the on-site resources more accessible. In the meantime, the professionals could help find out existing problems and make valuable advice. Co-organized workshops or

seminars could be considered as feasible approaches as well.

Promote social and cultural activities. The palace once represented a worldwide political, cultural, and economic center. Although it lost the original functions, it could continue to be a landmark place for social events (such as Kite Festival and Poetry Festival), traditional festival ceremonies (such as Spring Festival blessing), and cultural performances (such as folk dancing, singing and instrument playing). Through such activities, the locals could participate in, and their awareness of preservation would increase; meanwhile, the site's significance is enhanced, and its meaning and values are reinterpreted in the present context.

5.2.2 Small Wild Goose Pagoda

Interpretive theme

Table 5.3 Interpretive theme and sub-themes of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

Overall theme	A Buddhist center in Chang'an, a magnificent pagoda on the Silk Roads.
Sub-themes	1.The construction history and its architectural form;
	2.Yijing's pilgrimage and his contributions;
	3.The pagoda's historical status in the dissemination of Buddhism.

Approaches and media

The interview found that there was an ongoing mobile phone trail project organized by the museum, and the conversation with respondents also indicated that the free smartphone trail is one of the interpretive approaches they would like to use. Therefore, the proposal for the Small Wild Goose Pagoda is based on a mobile phone application: the suggested tourist route is already set, and the prepared recording would play at each interpretive spot. (Figure 5.14) Table 5.4 shows the location of each spot, along with its key messages and proposed media.
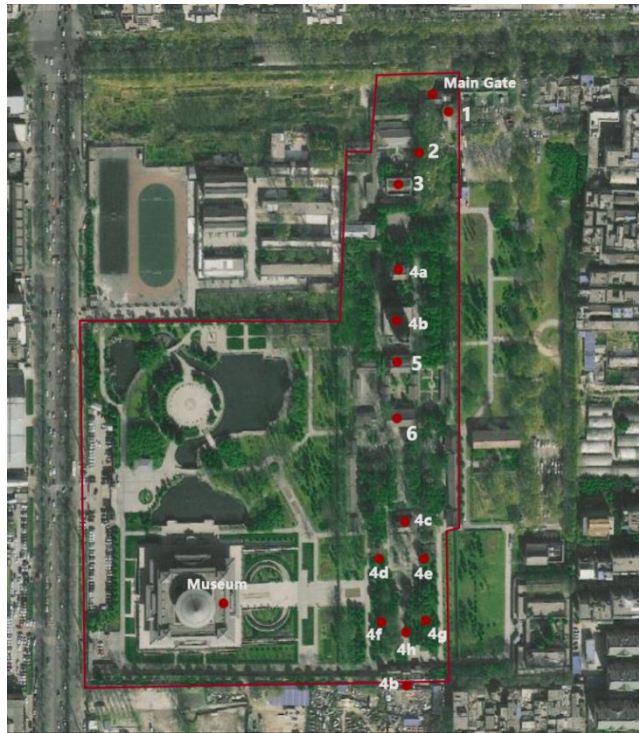
Figure 5.13 Interpretive spots of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

Table 5.4 Interpretive spots of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

Spot	Message	Media
1.Visitor Center	Introduction of the Silk Roads network, the inscription of its initial section, and the context of Shaanxi section.	• Panels • Interactive touch monitor • Leaflet
2.Entrance Panel	An overview of the site.	• Panels
3.Intangible Heritage Center	Traditional festival ceremonies, local folk arts and crafts.	• Panels • Live performance • Interactive program • Documentary
4.Each building and stone stele	Basic information (the construction year, style, form, size,material, use, and so on)	• Plaques • Augmented reality
5.Sutra Collection Hall	The general history of the site.	• Panels • Artifacts • Video
6.Mahavira Hall	The connections between the site and the Silk Roads.	• Panels • Artifacts • Interactive touch monitors • Animation • Paintings

• Visitor Center

The proposal for the visitor center of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda is similar to that of the Daming Palace; both of them aim at introducing the Silk Roads network and providing the background information to understand the site. The interactive touch monitors present the whole routes network, the inscribed section, and the associated properties in Shaanxi Province, respectively. Likewise, two types of publications are offered at the visitor center: one is the existing leaflet about the JIanfu Temple and the Small Wild Goose Pagoda, the other is the travel brochure of all Shaanxi Silk Roads properties.

• Entrance Panel

Following the introduction of the broad context of the Silk Roads, the purpose of the entrance panel is to provide visitors an overview of the specific site and increase their interest to discover and explore instead of merely being a passive receiver of messages. The strategy is to present the basic information of the site on the panel and include some questions in the recording to encourage them to find out the answers through the visits. Some examples include: Why does the Small Wild Goose Pagoda have such a special architectural form? What's the relationship between the Small Wild Goose Pagoda and the Great Wild Goose Pagoda? Who once lived and worked in the temple?

• Intangible Heritage Center

After visiting the visitor center and seeing the entrance panel, the next stop of the trail is the intangible heritage center. The goals of the intangible heritage center include showcasing the local art and crafts, displaying the on-site ceremonies and activities, and promoting the engagement of the general public. It is a place for local artists to conduct art performance such as the shadow puppetry and Xi'an wind and percussion ensemble and display their artworks such as paper-cut. (Figure 5.15-5.17) An overview of each kind of intangible heritage, as well as how they represent the local culture or reflect the cultural communication, is presented through the panels. Also, there are interactive programs for people to participate in, through which they could learn and experience the traditional art and crafts. Another medium in the center is a documentary which records the on-site traditional activities and events taken place in the past several years, linking the ancient site to the visitors, demonstrating its social value, and encouraging the audiences to participate in the future events. (Figure 5.18)

Figure 5.15 Chinese shadow puppetry, an inscribed intangible cultural heritage, is acted by leather or paper silhouette figure, embodying information of local traditions, social beliefs, and local customs.

Figure 5.16 Xi'an wind and percussion ensemble, an inscribed intangible cultural heritage, is a type of music integrating drums and wind instruments mainly performed on religious occasions.
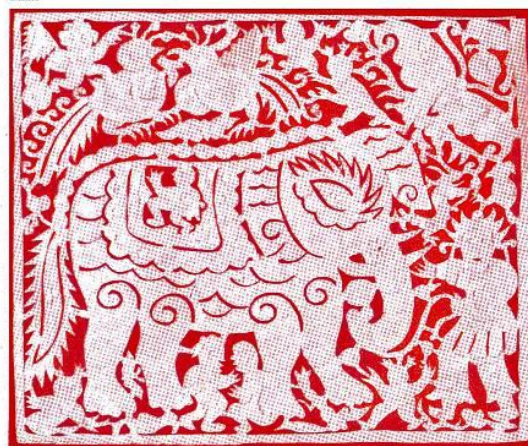
Figure 5.17 The motif of the paper-cut reflects the impacts of the Western Regions (elephants were introduced via the Silk Roads).

Figure 5.18 The traditional festival activity took place in the Small Wild Goose Pagoda.

• Buildings and stone steles

The smartphone trail would guide users visit each buildings and stone steles following the central axis. Since the existing plaques only present a little information and they are text heavy, it is suggested that augmented reality technology is applied to the smartphone application. Visitors could learn more information about each architecture and stone stele in the form of audio or image, such as historical photos of the specific building or the story/event about the stone steles recorded in its inscription. (Figure 5.19)

Figure 5.19 AR technology providing more information of the stone stele.

• Sutra Collection Hall

The first exhibition at the Sutra Collection Hall continues the existing theme- the history of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda. Because of its relatively limited space, the main media are panels and artifacts; the key messages conveyed include the original construction of the temple, the addition of the pagoda, the latter restoration and reconstruction, and current protection and management. As a supplementary medium, a display monitor is proposed to show historical pictures of the pagoda in different time periods (Figure 5.17); the visual comparison could facilitate visitors' understanding of how the site changed over time.
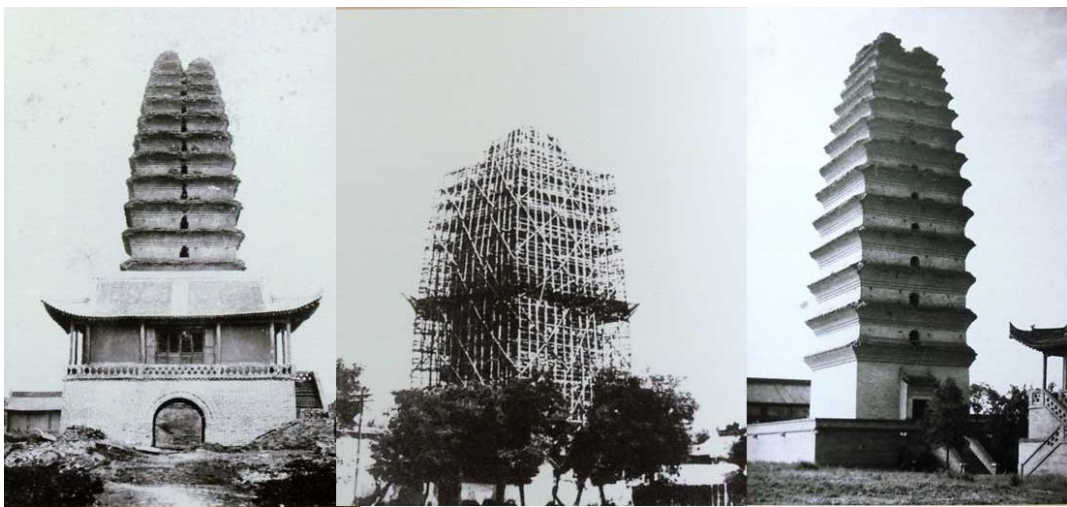
Figure 5.20 A series of photos showing the pagoda before restoration, under restoration, and after restoration during 1964-65.   Source: Architecture Around the World.

• Mahavira Hall

The exhibition held at the Mahavira Hall aims to unveil the relationship between the pagoda and the Silk Roads and conveying the perceived connection to the audience. It consists of three parts: the pagoda's construction and its architectural form, Yijing's pilgrimage, and the historical position of the site in the domain of Buddhism.

Architectural form. Illustrating the architectural form of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda is mainly through a diagram which describes the transformative process of religious buildings' form from original Indian Stupa to the localized dense-eave pagoda in Central China. It is proposed that an interactive monitor shows a map indicating the pagodas of the same style in China to demonstrate the large-scale impacts of the religious communication via the Silk Roads; more information of each building is shown on the screen

when the user clicks on, encouraging visitors to discover on their own. (Figure 5.21)
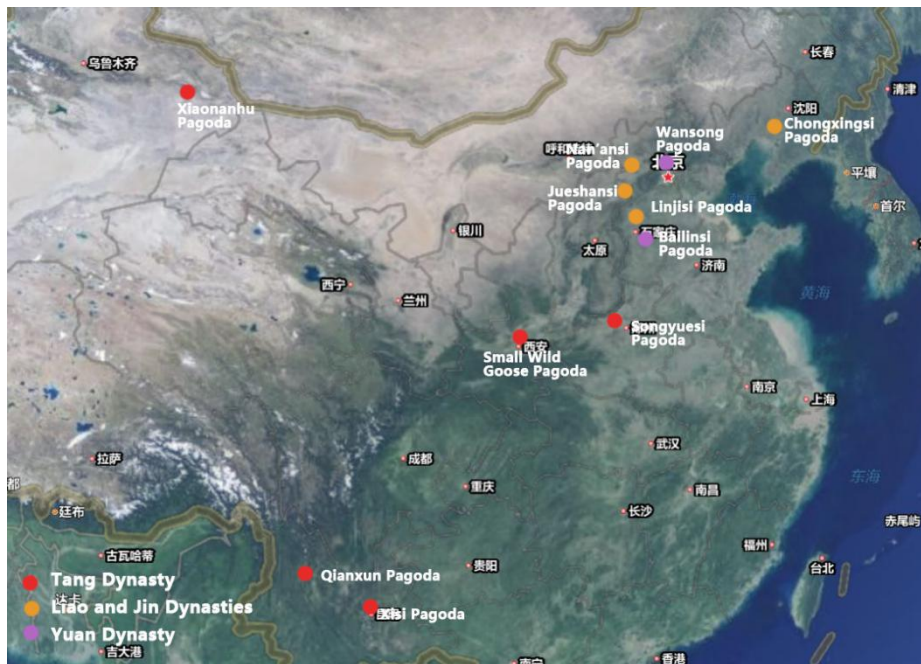
Figure 5.21 A map indicating the distribution of major dense-evaes pagodas in China of different periods.

Yijing's pilgrimage. A short animation is produced to tell the life story of Yijing according to the historical records and document, and it is supplemented by a route map of his travel as well as the replicas of some sutras he brought from India, which could help convince the audience of his remarkable achievement and contributions.

Historical status. To elucidate the flourishing period of Buddhism in Chang'an, in addition to the existing table of major temples in Chang'an and its surrounding area during the Tang Dynasty, an interactive monitor is proposed to show the distribution of existing significant Buddhist sites around Xi'an. The three most important sutra translation centers are indicated, along with the overview of each individual sites, facilitating visitors' understanding of the context and historical changes. (Figure 5.22, 5.23) To further explain the Jianfu Temple and the Small Wild Goose Pagoda, an animation is created as an interpretive tool to describe the historical scenes, including foreign monks coming to the temple via the Silk Roads, they gathering at the temple, lecturing, debating, doing translation work, and so on. The profiles of eminent Buddhist masters who once lived, studied, and worked here, coupled with the replicas of their major works, are presented to verify the Small Wild Goose Pagoda played an essential role in the

dissemination and development of Buddhism in Central China. (Figure 5.24)

Figure 5.22 A table showing the important temples during the Tang.

Figure 5.23 A proposed map indicating the existing ones.

Figure 5.24 Portraits of three Buddhist masters (left to right: Jingangzhi, Shanwuwei, Bukong).

Other recommendations

Encourage visitors to explore Xi'an Museum. After visiting the temple and the pagoda, tourists are recommended to explore the adjacent Xi'an Museum to know the overall context of the old capital city of many dynasties in Central China. At the end of the smartphone trail, some words could be said to introduce the museum to stimulate the audience's interest; main exhibitions could be highlighted, such as the theme exhibition of Buddhist status, which provides an overview of the Buddhist dissemination and development in ancient Chang'an City.

Organize temporary exhibitions. It is suggested that Xi'an Museum should seek opportunities to cooperate with other museums or galleries to co-organize temporary Silk Roads-related exhibitions, which are complementary to the permanent ones. Since Xi'an Museum is one of the national first-level museums, its potential partners could be institutions in other provinces, even in other countries along the Silk Roads.

Engage local communities and folk artists. Although the temple is no longer a religious site, nowadays it becomes a public space for local communities to promote traditional Chinese culture and hold various ceremonies and festival activities, such as the Coming-of-age Ceremony and the Chinese New Year's Blessing. Moreover, the intangible heritage center intends to support and develop different kinds of local arts. It is essential to get the relevant groups involved in the interpretive planning process by a variety of participatory approaches such as interviews.

5.2.3 The Tomb of Zhangqian

Interpretive theme

Table 5.5 Interpretive theme and sub-themes of the Tomb of Zhangqian.

Overall theme	A great pioneer of opening up the Silk Roads.
Sub-themes	1.Zhangqian's life story;
	2.Zhangqian's contributions and his spiritual legacy;
	3.How Silk Roads changed today's life.

Approaches and media

The proposed interpretive plan is based on the synthesized analysis of the current condition, and it intends to modify and elaborate the existing approaches and media, completely conveying the meaning of the site in an enjoyable and enlightening way. Figure 5.22 indicates the interpretive spots, Table 5.6 shows the key messages and the suggested media of each spot.
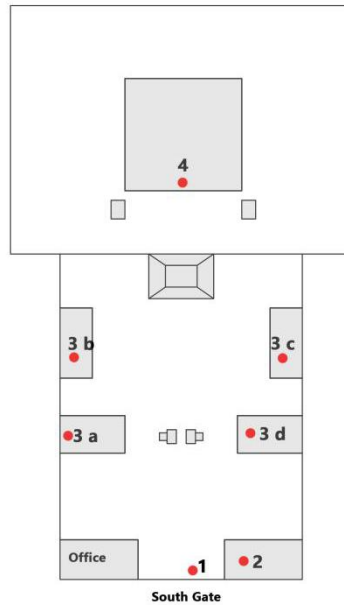
Figure 5.25 Interpretive spots of the Tomb of Zhangqian.

Table 5.6 Interpretive spots of the Tomb of Zhangqian.

Spot	Message	Media
1.Entrance Panel	An overview of the site.	• Panels
2.Visitor Center	The introduction of the inscribed section, and the context of Shaanxi section.	• Panels • Interactive touch monitors • Documentary • Leaflet
3.Exhibition Hall	a)Overview: Zhangqian's trips and the Silk Roads network.	• Interactive 3D route map • Monitor
	b)An eminent diplomat: Zhangqian's life story.	• Panels • Artifacts • Animation • Virtual tour • Interactive touch monitor
	c)The Silk Roads: a bridge linking the West and East.	• Panels • Artifacts • Models • Slide show
	d)Inheritance and promotion: material heritage and spiritual legacy.	• Panels • Documentary • Interactive program
4.The Tomb	The discoveries of archaeological excavations, the information and significance of the stone steles and stone carvings.	• Plaques • Augmented Reality

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• Entrance

Because the exhibition spaces are dispersed at five separate buildings, the primary purpose of the entrance panel is to provide a site map with a recommended tourist route to ensure visitors would have a complete experience. The text should clarify that the tomb is a World Heritage Site associated with the Silk Roads so that tourists would be more interested to see the theme exhibition held at the visitor center.

• Visitor Center

Since the site is relatively less known, and the whole Silk Roads network would be explained later in the exhibition hall, the visitor center mainly aims at introducing the inscribed section and its associated properties to make visitors recognize the tomb's significance and inspire their interest. The route map of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor is displayed on an interactive touch monitor, and all the properties are indicated, along with an introduction of each site. If the map is zoomed in to focus on the Shaanxi Province, its significance in the history of the Silk Roads will be unveiled, and more detailed information of each site, as well as some travel tips, will be provided.

• Exhibition Hall

Room 1: Overview- Zhangqian's trip and the Silk Roads network. A large-scale 3D routes map is placed at the center of the exhibition room, which uses lights of different colors to illustrates the routes of the whole Silk Roads, Zhangqian's first diplomatic trip, and his second trip, respectively. An interactive touch monitor is connected to the routes map; when the user selects one specific route, the corresponding light will turn on, and its brief introduction will appear on the screen. Displaying and comparing Zhangqian's pioneering trips and the whole routes network, the device intends to reflect the underlying relationship between these routes and reveal Zhangqian's contribution to the origin of the grand-scale Silk Roads.

Room 2: Zhangqian's life story. Entering the second exhibition room, visitors would first watch a short animation, which is comprised of the most important episodes in Zhangqian's life including he being assigned the diplomatic mission by Emperor Wu, his first and second trips to the Western Region, and his adventure to the Southwest China, to get a general sense of this eminent figure. And then the audience explore his life story in chronological order through the content-rich information panels as well as the

artifacts. To unpack the context of Zhangqian's diplomatic trips, a virtual tour of the Weiyang Palace could make people perceive the powerful and prosperous empire, and the profile of Emperor Wu is presented to further explain the ambitious political and military mission. To clarify his two westbound adventures, it is also proposed to use an interactive touch monitor to show the map of the Western Regions in the Han Dynasty, indicating the major states, along with the corresponding information of each state and its relationship with the Han Empire. (Table 5.7)

Table 5.7 A list of major states in the Western Regions during the Han Dynasty.

States	Present Location	States	Present Location
Wusun 乌孙	Zhetysu area	Loulan 楼兰	Ruoqiang County, Xinjiang Province, China
Dayuan 大宛	Fergana	Yutian 于阗	Hetian County, Xinjiang Province, China
Qiuci 龟兹	Kuche County and Baicheng County, Xinjiang Province	Yarkant 莎车	Yarkant County, Xinjiang Province, China
Yanqi 焉耆	Yanqi County, Xinjiang Province, China	Darouzhi 大月氏	Hexi Corridor
Baktria 大夏	Afghanistan	Kangju 康居	Southeast of Kazakhstan
Ruoqiang 若羌	Southeast of Ruoqiang County, Xinjiang Province, China	Kumak 姑墨	Aksu City, Xinjiang Province, China
Shule 疏勒	Shule County, Kashgar City, Xinjiang Province, China	Gaochang 高昌	Turpan City, Xinjiang Province, China

Room 3: The Silk Roads- a bridge linking the West and East. The third part of the exhibition focuses on the early communication between the West and East after Zhangqian's opening up of the Silk Roads. It consists of two aspects: the trading activities and cultural communication. The results and influences of trade exchanges are explained by presenting the models of both imported and exported goods, which are intuitive tools to convey the impacts of the Silk Roads on everyone's life. (Table 5.8) Another major medium is an electronic map displaying the distribution of recovered artifacts of the Han Dynasty along the routes network, which could demonstrate the existence of exchanges between the different regions and the far-reaching influence of the Silk Roads. (Figure 5.26)

Table 5.8 Imported and exported goods during the Han Dynasty.[104]

Imported	Exported
Horse, Elephant, Rhino, Peacock, Lion, Ostrich, Alfalfa, Grape, Pomegranate, Ginger, Pepper, Carrot, Walnut, Lima bean	Silk, Leather goods, Medicine, Dyestuff, Spice (such as Chinese cinnamon), Ironware
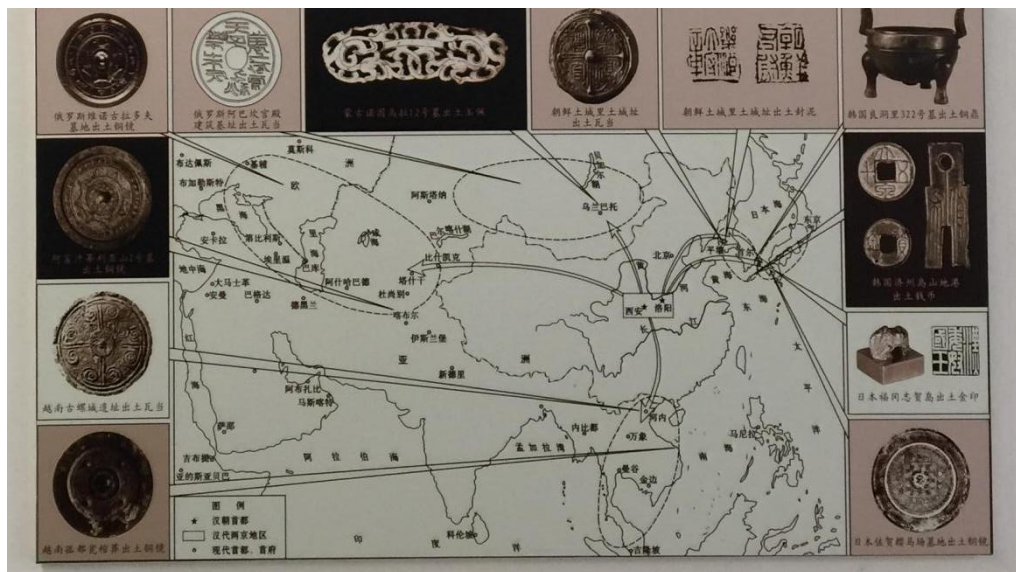
Figure 5.26 A map showing the distribution of recovered artifacts of Han Dynasty in different locations.

The early cultural communication is mainly reflected on the three aspects: dance, acrobatics, and music. A slideshow is proposed to display the pictures from historical records or documents which depict dance and acrobatic performance. Another slideshow displays the pictures of imported instruments; at the same time, the audience could listen to the corresponding music played by the specific instrument. Although the site is related directly to the origin of the Silk Roads, a brief introduction of its later development and decline should be included as well, helping visitors construct a complete understanding of the routes network's history.

Room 4: Inheritance and promotion. The goals of this room include reviewing the efforts of protecting and managing the site, showcasing the relevant ceremonies and activities, and promoting Zhangqian's spiritual legacy to the general public. Besides the existing panels, it is suggested that a documentary

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[104] Jichun Yong, *History of the Silk Roads*, 115-122.

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which records the past memorial ceremonies held by Zhangqian's descendants is played to illustrate the site's continuous use. Also, some selected works from the past theme art festivals and competitions, such as poems, paintings, and calligraphy, are presented to show the contemporary reinterpretation of Zhangqian's spiritual legacy. At the end of the whole exhibition, there is an interactive area for visitors to leave their thoughts and comments by various approaches including writing, drawing, or sound/video recording to share their own ideas with others.

• The Tomb, Stone Stele, and Carvings

The field research found that the plaques do not provide much information of the tomb and its associated stone steles and stone carvings, so visitors could neither recognize their significance nor connect them to the specific figure and the historical events. Therefore, the augmented reality is applied to recreate the rendering model of the inside of the tomb, accompanied by the recording which explains the findings of the archaeological works. AR technology is also used to tell the background story of erecting the stone steles, clarify the inscriptions on them, and expound the values of the carvings.

Other recommendations

Regard Zhang's clan as the core community. The memorial ceremony conducted by the descendants of Zhangqian is held on site every year, which is an important vehicle to convey the underlying meaning of the site and interpret it in a participatory way. During the process, the Zhang's clan plays a decisive role; it is recognized that they are the primary users and inheritors of both the tangible and intangible heritage. There is no doubt that they should be considered as the core community of the site. Compared to other groups of stakeholders, they should be given more rights and responsibilities to be involved in the decision-making circle.

Promote the on-site activities. In addition to the annual memorial ceremony, the field research found that some Zhangqian-related theme cultural activities and art events were taken place on site as well. These activities are good opportunities for the general public to participate in, to comprehend Zhangqian's spirit and reinterpret or recreate artworks based on the understanding they constructed. It is advised that site managers organize more relevant activities and promote them by multiple ways such as newspaper, television, and social media to publicize the less known site and disseminate its values.

Utilize the Chenggu Museum. The curator mentioned that the ongoing development project of Zhangqian Cultural Park included a museum which would be built adjacent to the memorial hall. The Chenggu Museum will provide important supplementary resources to the site; it not only exhibits more artifacts to present the historical background of Zhangqian's diplomatic trips but also has available spaces to install potential interpretive devices. To further envision the long-term interpretive planning, the museum needs to be taken into account and be utilized properly.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Through the previous chapters, the thesis has demonstrated the necessity of rethinking the interpretation of Silk Roads associated sites from a perspective of cultural routes and argued the the potential advantageous outcomes. Documenting, assessing, and analyzing a specific region and its inscribed sites by a set of methodologies, this project attempts to present a reasonable and feasible process of examining the current interpretive scheme as well as putting forward convincing proposals and recommendations. Although this study only focuses on one section of the whole Silk Roads, it is hoped that it could not only help with the improvement of associated properties in Shaanxi but also shed light on other Silk Roads relevant sites in China, even in other regions and countries.

Key findings

Compared to other types of cultural heritage, it is more challenging to unveil the meaning of a site on a cultural route effectively and completely. It is argued that the crux of interpreting Silk Roads-related sites is conveying the *perceived connections* between the individual sites and the broader routes network, which include the three layers of implications: 1) the contribution of the individual sites to the OUV, the meaning, and the implications of the entire Silk Roads; 2) the connections between the relevant sites under a shared sub-theme; 3) the connections between the tangible sites and their associated intangible properties, which could reflect the communication and various exchanges among different cultures and civilizations.

Interpretation is also an effective vehicle to connect people to their heritage. The messages should be relevant to people's interest, experience, and their daily life, and the interpretive approaches need to be more interactive so that the visitors could participate in as "discoverers" even "contributors" rather than "passive receivers." Moreover, since all the seven sites belong to a common serial property, visitors should be provoked to explore other relevant sites and learn more about the Silk Roads on their own. In addition to the visitors, other groups of stakeholders, especially the core communities and the locals, should be

motivated to engage in the interpretive planning process by means of a set of participatory methods. Research institutes, universities, museums, Buddhist organizations, and other types of external parties are potential partnerships which could provide valuable academic, financial, administrative, and technical assistance.

In addition, it is believed that a series of beneficial results would be brought about by appropriate and effective interpretation. Besides helping visitors construct a holistic understanding of the associated properties and connecting people to the Silk Roads heritage, another distinguished benefit is that the lesser known sites would be significantly promoted so that they would attract more tourists. The more even distribution of tourists could narrow the current gap among different sites and lead to a more sustainable development of the local tourism market.

Because of the intrinsic inter-relevancy of sites on a cultural route and the fact of the existing governance system in China, an effective and efficient interpretive framework calls for the active involvement of both governments and management bodies of each site. The Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage is mainly responsible for setting the overall framework, devising the regional interpretive strategies, and organizing cooperative projects; meanwhile, each site should examine their current interpretation condition in terms of the falicities, the key ideas and messages, and visitors' feedback, find out appropriate interventions, get stakeholders involved in, and seek potential partnerships.

Limitation

Although the scope of the study has been clarified in the first chapter, some limitations of the research at different stages should be reviewed and further explained.

1) The thesis is confined to one section of the extensive Silk Roads network. Although Shaanxi Province is a representative parcel with abundant historical resources, it does not cover all types of inscribed properties alongside the routes. For example, the trading settlements and the transportation and defense facilities are not discussed in this thesis. On the other hand, besides the inscribed sites, there are some other sites also related to the routes. As aforementioned, the selection of certain corridor and certain properties is only a strategy of nomination. Likewise, not being inscribed does not mean those

sites are irrelevant to the Silk Roads.

2) The proposed interpretive themes and key concepts are based on the historical records and existing scholarships. However, it is highly possible that the ongoing archaeological excavations and future research would discover more evidence and unveil new types of connections. Therefore, the interpretive themes, concepts, messages, and approaches should be modified according to the updated information. In addition to arguing several definitive proposals, the thesis also expects to discuss a set of scientific methodologies and a reasonable process of interpreting Silk Roads sites.

3) Because of the time constraints, the number of survey's respondents is too small to know the demographic of visitors comprehensively; almost all respondents were domestic tourists so that the proposals for case studies are mainly targeted to the general domestic visitors. Special groups such as school children, elderly people, or foreigners are not discussed in this thesis. Nonetheless, it is recognized treating different audiences should utilize different approaches. Hence, in the future studies and practice, their various needs should be taken into account, and tailored programs should be designed for corresponding groups.

4) As an integral part of an effective interpretive planning process, conducting long-term monitoring and evaluation mechanism is mentioned as one recommended action for each site in Chapter 5, but specific monitoring strategies are not further explored in detail for case studies, because they are not regarded as the focus of this research. However, it is important to note that interpretive planning is always an ongoing project, in which monitoring plays an essential role to help find out problems of interpretive infrastructure, examine deficiencies of existing approaches and messages, and collect valuable comments from audiences.

Next phase

Building upon the existing findings, there are several issues need to be explored to further enhance the interpretation of sites on the Silk Roads.

1) The Silk Roads-related sites are not limited to those have been inscribed as World Heritage. Since the

Silk Roads are non-active nowadays and most sections are invisible, it is argued that its underlying meaning and significance are mainly embodied on associated properties, and the success of interpreting the routes heavily depends on clarifying the *interconnectio*n between these sites. Therefore, it is of great importance that more relevant sites need to be identified, classified, and incorporated into the Silk Roads collaborative network. And the general recommendations put forward in this paper as well as the proposals for case studies could be applied and consulted for their interpretive planning.

2) This thesis touches on three categories of associated sites of the Silk Roads, while another two typical types are not investigated. Since heritage sites of the same category always have similar types of connections to the Silk Roads, examination of sites of trading settlements as well as transportation and defense facilities are prioritized in the future research. Only when the five most representative types of associated sites are studied could the interpretation framework of the whole routes network be complete and effective.

3) The inscription, coupled with the "one belt one road" initiative, has brought much attention to the Silk Roads at home and abroad. It is predictable that not only the amount but also the diversity of visitors in terms of their age range, nationalities, purposes of visits would inevitably increase in the near future. Therefore, analyzing the demographic of potential visitors and considering their different needs and preference are another crucial steps for next phase of the research.

Interpretation should be regarded as an inclusive and evolving process which involves many aspects and always be adjusted back and forth rather than a definitive result which can be achieved overnight. Interpreting heritage sites on the Silk Roads, however, is more challenging because of the richness, dynamics, and complex of this large-scale ancient routes network. Investigating one specific section of the whole routes and examining the inscribed properties, this thesis is only a starting point of the study on interpretation issues of the Silk Roads sites. It is hoped that rethinking this topic under a vision of cultural routes could provide a new lens of interpretation and promote the overall preservation of relevant heritage properties.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interviews

1. The site of Daming Palace in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty

a) Secretary, the Conservation and Reform Office

(1) Is there any change after the nomination of the site?

Yes, although the site was quite popular before inscription, it is observed that the number of tourists has increased constantly. After the inscription, we arranged the Silk Roads-related exhibition in the visitor center. Also, we added relevant messages in the recording of the audio tour.

(2) Are there any principles or guidelines to interpret all the nominated sites in Shaanxi Province?

No, I don't think there is any principles or guidelines provided by the provincial government. I think managers of each site decide their own interpretive schemes.

(3) Who designed the interpretive scheme of the site and how did you implement it?

We have a group of staff who works on the design of the interpretive plan as well as its implementation and maintenance. In terms of the technical and technological issues, we usually ask external companies for assistance.

(4) What are the interpretive goals of the site?

We intend to utilize this archaeological site to tell the history of the Tang Dynasty and to present its positive and open culture in many aspects. As the most important and magnificent palace complex of the Tang Empire, the Daming Palace should represent a whole picture of the prosperous Tang Dynasty rather than just a group of royal architecture. Therefore, we recognize that there are two main aspects of our interpretation: one is the construction history, the layout, and the architecture of the palace, the other is the history and the colorful culture of the Tang Dynasty.

(5) What are the main interpretive approaches?

We have a variety of on-site interpretive media which attempt to provide an enjoyable and educational experience for visitors. We use physical models of different scales to show the overall layout of the site as well as the original appearance of each architecture. Of course the artifacts and interpretive panels in the museum are major vehicles to convey the key information. But we also believe that recreating the historical events or scenes is quite effective since it is easier to attract visitors' attention and facilitate their understanding. Hence, we utilize film, animation, pictures, paintings, and sculptures to make the interpretation more interesting and unforgettable.

(6) What kind of connections do you think between the site and the Silk Roads? In the current interpretive scheme, do you think they've already been paid much attention to?

Because the palace was the power center of the starting point city on the ancient Silk Roads, its important political role is regarded as our main interpretive focus. Many foreign leaders and envoys came to Chang'an via the Silk Roads and met the Tang emperors here so that the diplomatic connection between Central China and other regions and countries is very strong. Besides, other types of communication are also mentioned in our interpretive scheme. The thematic exhibition in the visitor center is the most direct approach to unveil the connections between the site and the broader routes Silk Roads; in the mean time, the heritage museum plays an integral role to elaborate each type of communication.

(7) In your opinion, what are the difficulties of interpreting the site?

As you know, there are several different types of exchanges and communication took place along the Silk Roads during the Tang Dynasty; maybe in the current scheme, too much emphasis is placed upon the political and diplomatic aspect. We are trying to figure out how to unveil these exchanges in a both attractive and truthful way and how to integrate all aspects as a whole to present the panorama of the ancient flourishing Chang'an City.

(8) In your opinion, what are the opportunities of connecting this site and the whole Silk Roads?

I think collaborating with other museums such as the History Museum of Shaanxi Province and the Xi'an Museum, even museums in other provinces to hold temporary exhibitions would be very helpful. The display of more artifacts of the Tang Dynasty could reflect the products of the active exchanges and communication along the Silk Roads during the Tang. In addition, cooperating with other inscribed sites, especially those of the Tang Dynasty, would be an effective way to strengthen the connection. For example, introducing the Buddhist sites in Chang'an could help audiences understand the religious exchanges of the time.

(9) Did you have any cooperation or communication with other nominated sites, like meetings or joint training?

Currently the cooperative opportunities are very scarce, but we really look forward to communicating with other inscribed sites to exchange ideas and learn from each other. I hope there could be more collaborative projects among the inscribed sites to share the information and work out some overall plans to promote the Silk Roads heritage as a whole.

(10) Do you have any short-term or long-term plan?

We have long been striving to find out more attractive and effective interpretive media. Now we are thinking about add some high-tech devices as supplementary approaches to the traditional panels and models. We had experimented several innovative methods; unfortunately, because of the unsatisfactory trails, we did not apply them on site. But we will continue this project and try to find feasible and suitable interpretive media.

b) Interpreter

(1) What is your interpretive goal?

My interpretive goal is to reveal the values and significance of the palace and unveil the history and the culture of the Tang Dynasty. To be specific, I would tell the construction history of the palace including the brief construction process as well as the relevant historical figures, introduce the elaborate layout of the site and the impressive architecture, present the life during the Tang Dynasty, and display the colorful culture of the Tang.

(2) Is there any guidance document or any training for interpreters?

All the interpreters are trained on site by the instructors. We were asked to organize our own interpretative narratives according to the key ideas and messages they provided; also, we were trained to gain some communication skills and to express artistically.

(3) Has the interpretation of the this site changed after the nomination? If so, how?

The exhibition in the visitor center was arranged to present the historical status of the Daming Palace in the history of the Silk Roads. It reveals different types of exchanges taken place between Chang' an and other regions via the Silk Roads and illustrates the significant historical status of the Daming Palace and how it contributed to the development of the Silk Roads. But in terms of the exhibition in the heritage museum, there is no obvious change.

(4) Do you mention any other relevant sites in your interpretation?

I don't mention any other specific sites. But I agree that selecting the most representative relevant sites of the Tang Dynasty and including them to the interpretive scheme would be helpful to prove the open and prosperity of Chang'an City and demonstrate the diverse communication between Central China and other regions along the Silk Roads.

(5) In the current interpretive scheme, how important do you think the connections between the site and the Silk Roads are? They've already drawn much attention or they are kind of overlooked?

To be honest, on the one hand, although we would mention the various types of exchanges including the political, commercial, cultural, athletic, and religious communication, our interpretive focus is the diplomatic and political communication between Tang Empire and other countries since the primary function of the palace was a administrative center. To some extent, other aspects of the Tang culture are overlooked in the current interpretive scheme. On the other hand, even though we elaborate the political aspect, we would not introduce the Silk Roads in detail, let alone the inscribed corridor. We would only mention the word "Silk Roads" few times during the whole interpretation.

(6) What's your strategy to interpret the connections?

I found that the the animation, models, pictures, and paintings are the most attractive ones among all type of media in the heritage museum. So I usually use these media to tell the story or recreate the historical scenes to the visitors. Of course the narratives are based on the basic historical information, and I would make them interesting and vivid. Besides, I usually select several artifacts to further illustrate the communication among different cultures, such as the figurine of the Hu horse-rider, or the wall painting of polo.

(7) Did you encounter any difficulties when you interpreted the connections?

Compared to other ancient palaces such as the Forbidden City, there is no well-preserved architecture, and the majority of the artifacts are fragmentary and unappealing architectural elements. The lack of artifacts always makes the visitors can hardly perceive the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty and the active communication taken place in Chang'an City.

(8) In your opinion, what are the opportunities of interpreting the connections?

Many traditional ceremonies and social events were held in the site of Daming Palace, Although the palace lost its original functions, promoting such activities would continue its use as a place for showing local traditions and facilitating cultural exchanges in the contemporary context. Through the display of intangible heritage and the communication among different groups of people, both the participants and the viewers could learn the far-reaching influence of the Silk Roads, which is embodied in the various kinds of intangible properties.

2. The Small Wild Goose Pagoda

a) Secretary, the Department of Education and Promotion

(1) Are there any principles or guidelines to interpret all the nominated sites in Shaanxi Province or Xi'an City?

No, there is no such interpretive guidelines or plan. I think each site is in charge of its own interpretive scheme.
(2) Who designed the interpretive scheme of the Small Wild Pagoda?

The Research Department and our department decide the interpretive contents together, and there is an external company who helps us with the technological things, such as the system of the smartphone trail, which will be applied to our site soon.

(3) What do you think about the importance of the connections between the site and the Silk Roads? In the current interpretive scheme, do you think they've already paid much attention to?

Both the pagoda and the temple are related closely to the Silk Roads. The site can not be interpreted completely without introducing the Silk Roads and the connections. The pagoda is evidence of Buddhism's

dissemination and development via the Silk Roads, which is reflected on its architectural form as well as historical function, the sutra collection and translation center. Many monks from different regions, lectured, studied, and translated sutras here. Of course Yijing, who took the journey of pilgrimage to the West and brought a lot of sutras and Buddhist figurines back to Chang'an, was an important figure associated with the site. The connections between the site and the roads are main points of our interpretive scheme.

(4) Has the interpretation of the connection between this site and the Silk Road changed through time? If so, how?

Yes, after the nomination, the connections between the site and the Silk Roads became a focus of the interpretation. The panel which indicates the nomination and the routes map of the Silk Roads is placed at the entrance of the temple. And we arranged the thematic exhibition, adding more information of the connection to the panels in the two halls. The interpreters are asked to talk about the Silk Roads as well.

(5) What are your main interpretive approaches?

One major interpretive medium is the plaques. They provide some basic information of each building or stone stele. Also, the exhibition "The Small Wild Goose Pagoda- A Gem of the Silk Roads" is another important interpretive approach for all the visitors. It aims to show the site as a whole from a more comprehensive perspective. Both the panels, the artifacts, and the replicas on display are effective media to convey the historical information, the values, and the connections between the site and the roads. And some visitors are willing to join the guided tour, which is another effective interpretive approach.

(6) Besides the exhibition, the stone steles, the artifacts, and the ancient books and sutras, what kind of resource do you have?

One advantage of our site is that it is adjacent to the Xi'an Museum. The permanent exhibition of the first floor is about the transmission and development of Buddhism in the ancient Chang'an City. Many Buddhist statues from various temples in Xi'an are on display. T hey are evidence of the religious cross region dissemination through the Silk Roads. In addition to the permanent exhibition, the temporary exhibition could be a good opportunity to enhance the interpretation of the Silk Roads as well. Currently, the theme of the temporary exhibition is "Exhibition of Sketches around Taklimakan Desert and Silk Road Art Derivatives." Although it is not related to the site directly, the exhibition could enrich visitors' knowledge of the art and culture of the Western Regions.

(7) What do you think of the intangible heritage of the site? I noticed there is a intangible heritage center.

Of course the intangible heritage is an integral part of our site. The center is used to show some folk art and intangible cultural heritage. There are also some interactive programs for visitors to engaged in. It is could be an effective supplement for the material evidence and exhibits. Also, some traditional ceremonies were held at our site, including the Double-Seventh Day event, the   Coming-of-age Ceremony and the Lunar New Year's Blessing. We usually hold six to eight traditional ceremonies each year.

(8) Did you have any cooperation or communication with other nominated sites, like meetings or joint training?

The cooperation between nominated sites in Shaanxi is currently far from adequate. But we hope to have the opportunity to communicate with other nominated sites in the future.

(9) In your opinion, what are the difficulties and opportunities of connecting this site and the whole Silk Roads?

According to the visitors' feedback, the on-site exhibition and the guided tour work well. However, the lack of multimedia devices is a deficiency. If more high-tech installations could be applied, the interpretation would be better. In addition, we also organize some lectures and interactive programs about the tangible and intangible heritage of the Silk Roads and the site; the activities always take place at the museum. In the past year, we intended to conduct 26 activities; however, only 16 were held successfully. Not many people were interested in such activities, even though they were free. The enrollments were not high; some people who had registered did not show up of the day. I think we need to rethink the means of promotion and adjust the content and form according to people's needs and interests.

(10) Do you have any short-term or long-term interpretation plan?

We are working on a mobile application to provide the free and convenient interpretive service for visitors. And we are looking forward to cooperating with other museums or art institutes to hold more temporary exhibitions.

b) Interpreter

(1) What are your interpretive scope and objectives?

Our interpretation includes the major exhibition at the Xi'an Museum, the Jianfu Temple, and the Small Wild Goose Pagoda. Therefore, we have multiple goals: a) tell the brief history of the Xi'an City; b) introduce the history of the Jianfu Temple; c) interpret the construction of the pagoda and its values.

(2) How do you decide the time distribution of the three parts?

Our guided tour lasts 1.5 hours. Typically, the pagoda is the priority among the whole interpretation, because it is very famous, and it is the reason for many tourists to come here. But the time distribution also depends on visitors' interest; we would adjust our interpretive plan according to their specific requirement.

(3) What kind of visitors are willing to pay for the guided tour?

The people who are interested in history or cultural heritage, and visitors who come from other cities or provinces. Also, if there are children in the group, parents usually are willing to ask a interpreter to

introduce the history of the site to educate their kids.

(4) Has the interpretation of the this site changed after the nomination? If so, how?

Yes, after the nomination, we added more messages about the Silk Roads. We also adjust our narratives to strengthen the connections between the site and the roads.

(5) In the current interpretive scheme, what kind of the connections are conveyed through your interpretation? They've already drawn much attention or they are kind of overlooked?

I think we've already paid much attention to the connections, which include: a) the architectural form of the pagoda reflects the influences of Indian Stupa; b) Yijing, who traveled via the Silk Road to pursue the essence of the Buddhism and translated sutras after coming back to Chang'an at the Jianfu Temple, was an eminent figure associated closely to our site; c) the Jianfu Temple was a place where Buddhist Masters from different countries and regions worked together. It witnessed the dissemination and development of Buddhism in Central China during the flourishing period of the Silk Roads.

(6) What's your strategy to interpret the connections?

I use different interpretive strategies for different audiences. If the audiences are children, I would interpret the site by telling the lively story; if the audiences are general public, I would combine the various approaches, such as telling the story, introducing the background of the Silk Roads, and explaining the form and historical function of the site; if the audiences are people who are interested in history or have the basic knowledge of the site, I would spend more time on discussing the values and influences of the site; if the audiences are monks (some of the past visitors were monks from other regions and countries), I would introduce more about the Buddhist activities took place here and the sutras which were translated here.

(7) Do you mention any other nominated sites in your interpretation, especially the religious sites in Shaanxi Province?

Yes, the Great Wild Goose Pagoda. I usually compare the two pagodas, especially their different architectural forms and the life stories of the two monks, Xuanzang and Yijing, who worked at the two pagodas respectively. But I would not mention other Buddhist sites unless visitors ask.

(8) Did you encounter any difficulties when you interpreted the connections?

Compared to Xuanzang, Yijing is less known to the general public. Sometimes the visitors did not want to know this figure. They were more interested in the structure of the pagoda and the reason why it resisted several severe earthquakes. How to arouse visitors' interest to hear about the story of Yijing and how to tell the story in a vivid way are kind of challenging. And since the temple no longer has the religious function, how to convince visitors the site was once a significant sutra translation center is not easy.

(9) In your opinion, what are the opportunities of interpreting the connections?

We need to take good use of the Xi'an Museum. The exhibition in the first floor is about Buddhist statues, which could be a supplement to our site. The statues on display reflect the development of the Buddhism in Central China. However, currently, this exhibition is not included in our regular interpretation. I think if our interpretive scheme incorporates this part, visitors would understand not only the single site but also the whole picture of Buddhism in the ancient Chang'an City, and all relevant religious sites in Xi'an could be connected.

(10) What do they think about possible interventions could apply to improve current condition?

The museum is considering to purchase more equipment such as tablets for us. We can use it to show more pictures or short videos to visitors if necessary. I think it is a good idea that could make the interpretation more vivid and interesting. Also, as I mentioned before, besides interpreting our individual site, maybe introducing more relevant religious sites and understanding them as a whole is a good idea.

3. The Tomb of Zhangqian

a) Curator

(1) Is there any change after the nomination of the site?

Yes, the popularity of the site has grown constantly, and the number of tourists has increased. Currently we are working on enhancing the brand awareness of Zhangqian's hometown.

(2) Are there any principles or guidelines to interpret all the nominated sites in Shaanxi Province?

The tomb of Zhangqian is under the direct control of the Culture and Tourist Department of Chenggu County's government, whose supervisor unit is the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage. But there is no overall document of interpreting the seven nominated sites in Shaanxi.

(3) Who designed the interpretive scheme of the site and how did you implement it?

We invited some scholars to discuss the interpretive approaches together. And the final interpretive scheme was approved by the Culture and Tourist Department of Chenggu County and the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage.

(4) What are the interpretive goals of the site?

Our main goal is to introduce the life story of Zhangqian and his historical significance. His contribution includes three aspects: his westward trip was a diplomatic and political success to the Western Han Dynasty; he pioneered the Silk Roads and facilitated exchanges between Central China and the Western Regions; the Silk Roads continued thousands of years and both the West and East benefited a lot from the routes network. In addition, we hope that people could learn from Zhangqian's pioneering spirit, his

patriotism, his brave,and his perseverance.

(5) What are the main interpretive approaches?

Our main interpretive approaches are the exhibition. In addition, the guided tour is an important supplementary approach because the people-based, interactive experience cannot be replaced, and it is really informative and pleasurable.

(6) What kind of connections do you think between the site and the Silk Roads? In the current interpretive scheme, do you think they've already been paid much attention to?

The tomb is a significant evidence of the certain historical figure and the decisive event in the history of the Silk Roads. Zhangqian's diplomatic trip to the Western Regions, which made the Han dynasty know more about other countries and resulted in the formation of the Silk Roads. Because Zhangqian is the core figure of the site, there is no doubt that his life story and influences should be interpreted around the theme of the Silk Roads.

(7) In your opinion, what are the difficulties of interpreting the site?

First, the site is a very old tomb, and the recovered artifacts are scarce. The most important artifact is a seal, but it is displayed at the National Museum in Beijing. Second, for general tourists, the tomb is not a very attractive site. Arousing their interest is a big challenge. Third, because of the location, the number of tourists is less than other inscribed sites. It is hard for us to afford the high-tech interpretive media, even the maintenance cost of the current media such as the interactive monitor and the 3D route map is a pressure; hence, some visitors complained that the interpretive media is kind of monotonous and outdated.

(8) In your opinion, what are the opportunities of connecting this site and the whole Silk Roads?

Because of the concept of "one belt one road," both the government and the general public begin to know this site. However, the new road which President Xi put forward is more like a conceptual one. How to connect the ancient tomb and the new roads of the political cooperation, economic development, and cultural communication is very challenging. But there is no doubt that we really need to grasp this opportunity to promote our site since Zhangqian is an influential figure even in today's context.

(9) Did you have any cooperation or communication with other nominated sites, like meetings or joint training?

Not yet. But I really hope that we could have such chance to cooperate with other relevant sites. We'd like to learn some advanced experiences from other sites and find a way to promote our site. I think the Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage would be the right organizer.

(10) Do you have any short-term or long-term plan?

The Museum of Chenggu County, which is next to our site, is under construction. It will display more artifacts and provide extra exhibition area for us. In addition, some advanced multimedia installations would be available there to convey the connections more effectively. We should utilize this opportunity to improve our site and develop the local culture and economy.

b) Interpreter

(1) What is your interpretive goal?

My interpretive goal is to tell the history of the site, the story of Zhangqian's trip to the Western Regions, and his contribution. I hope after the visits, visitors could know more about Zhangqian, understand and appreciate his contribution.

(2) Is there any guidance document or any training for interpreters?

The curator gave us an outline of interpreting the site, but it is not for us to recite. Rather, we need to understand the contents and use our own words to express the key messages. Different interpreters have different interpretive styles. In addition, we have regular seminars to exchange ideas and understandings of the site. There are non-scheduled examinations of our work as well.

(3) Has the interpretation of the this site changed after the nomination? If so, how?

Yes, we paid more attention to the connections between the site and the Silk Roads. During our guided tour, we introduce more information of the Silk Roads to help visitors understand the background. Also, when we summarize Zhangqian's contribution, we would pay more attention to the influential role he played in the opening up of the Silk Roads.

(4) Do you mention any other relevant sites in Shaanxi? Like the Weiyang Palace in Chang'an City of the Western Han Dynasty?

I don't mention any other specific sites unless visitors ask. Usually, I only talk about the richness and prosperity of the Western Han Dynasty as the backdrop of Zhangqian's diplomatic trip. But one of the panels indicates the layout of the Weiyang Palace to show its grand scale and the prosperity of the Han Empire.

(5) In the current interpretive scheme, how important do you think the connections between the site and the Silk Roads are? They've already drawn much attention or they are kind of overlooked?

This site is associated closely to the Silk Roads. No doubt that Zhangqian's most far reaching contribution is the opening up of the routes network. Even if the site is not nominated under the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor, we would consider the connection as a priority of the interpretation.

(6) What's your strategy to interpret the connections?

My strategy is to use the panels and exhibits to explain the life story of Zhangqian, which is tied closely to the Silk Roads. I think clarifying the story of his diplomatic trip is the prerequisite of conveying the connections. And the tomb is served as an evidence of the great historical figure and the far-reaching historical events. At the end of the guided tour, I'd like to discuss his significance with the visitors. When some of them mention Zhangqian's contribution to the Silk Roads, I would put more insights and stress such connection.

(7) Did you encounter any difficulties when you interpreted the connections?

For the general public, the tomb lacks artistic value. It is a big challenge for us to increase their interest. And some visitors complained that the artifacts are very limited so that they can hardly perceive the connections between the site and Zhanqqian, let alone the connections between the site and the larger Silk Roads. Another difficulty for me is that when I explain Zhangqian's contribution, I don't know how to understand his influences from a broader context, like from the perspective of the world history.

(8) In your opinion, what are the opportunities of interpreting the connections?

The lack of artifacts has long troubled us interpreters, but I believe the condition will be improved, because the Museum of Chenggu County will serve as a supplement, displaying some relevant exhibits. Also, some advanced multimedia interpretive media will be installed at the museum.

(9) What do they think about possible interventions could apply to improve current condition?

The Memorial Ceremony held by the Zhang's Clan takes place on the site every year. I think it is an activity which could convey the connection between this site and Zhangqian effectively. People who watched this ceremony said that they felt like the spirits of Zhangqian still existed. It is an intangible heritage which could broaden the meaning of our site. I think we really need to take advantage of this event. Promoting this ceremony could not only increase our site's popularity but also interpret it in a contemporary context.

Appendix B: Surveys

Visitors Survey (the Site of Daming Palace)

Age _18-35   _36-55   _56 or older
Gender   _male   _female
Place of residence   _ Xi'an City   _ Other cities in Shaanxi Province
                      _Other provinces in China   _Overseas
Level of education   _Elementary school to 9th grade   _High school
                      _Vocational school   _Bachelor's degree _Master's degree and higher

1. To what extent do you know about Daming Palace before visiting?
    _ To a great extent   _ To a moderate extent   _ To a slight extent   _ Not at all

2. To what extent do you know about the Silk Roads before visiting?
    _ To a great extent   _ To a moderate extent   _ To a slight extent   _ Not at all

3. Do you know that the Daming Palace was listed as a World Heritage site along the inscription of the Silk Roads?
    _ Knew it before visiting   _ Knew it after visiting   _ I don't know

4. Did you perceive the connection between this palace and the Silk Roads through the on-site interpretation?
    _ Very strong connection   _ Moderate connection
    _ Slight connection   _ No connection

5. What kind of connections did you learn from the visit? (multi-choices)
a. Daming Palace was the power center of the Tang Dynasty; many foreign leaders and envoys met the Tang emperors here, which made Chang'an a political center all over the world
b. Trade exchanges between Central China and the Western Regions took place here, and the artifacts reflect the impacts on people's daily life
c. Cultural exchanges were flourishing. The architecture, music, dance, paintings of Central China were influenced by the West, and the culture of Central China further influence Japan and Korea
d. Chang'an became a religious center because of the spread and development of different religions via the Silk Roads
e. Other_____

6. Please indicate how effective each interpretive approach conveys the connection(s).

    4="very effective" 1="least effective" or check "didn't use"

	4	3	2	1	Didn't use
Audio tour					
Exhibition (visitor center)					
Film (visitor center)					
Leaflets (visitor center)					
Entrance Panel					
Plaques/Models					
Heritage museum					
Sculpture and outdoor installation					

7. Which interpretive method(s) do you think are interesting and enjoyable? (multi-choices)
_ Audio tour   _ Exhibition (visitor center)   _ Film (visitor center)   _ Leaflet
_ Entrance panel   _ Plaques and models   _ Heritage Museum
_ Sculpture and outdoor installation

8. Which interpretive method(s) do you think need to be improved? (multi-choices)
_ Audio tour   _ Exhibition (visitor center)   _ Film (visitor center)   _ Leaflet
_ Entrance panel   _ Plaques and models   _ Heritage Museum
_ Sculpture and outdoor installation

9. What kind of interpretive installation do you want to see more? (multi-choices)
_Videos such as documentary films   _Smartphone trail   _High-tech devices
_Interactive devices   _Routes map of the Silk Roads and relevant sites
_Intangible cultural heritage display   Others_____

10. Does this visit arouse your interest in knowing and visiting other relevant sites along the Silk Roads?
_Yes, very strong interest   _Yes, a little bit interest   _No

11. Any comments or suggestions?

Visitors Survey (The Small Wild Goose Pagoda)

Age _18-35   _36-55   _56 or older
Gender   _male   _female
Place of residence   _ Xi'an City   _ Other cities in Shaanxi Province
                    _Other provinces in China   _Overseas
Level of education   _Elementary school to 9th grade   _High school
                    _Vocational school   _Bachelor's degree _Master's degree and higher

1. To what extent do you know about the Great Wild Goose Pagoda before visiting?
   _To a great extent   _To a moderate extent   _To a slight extent   _Not at all

2. To what extent do you know about the Silk Roads before visiting?
   _To a great extent   _To a moderate extent   _To a slight extent   _Not at all

3. Do you know that the Small Wild Goose Pagoda was listed as a World Heritage site along the inscription of the Silk Roads?
   _Knew it before visiting   _Knew it after visiting   _I don't know

4. Did you perceive the connection between this pagoda and the Silk Roads through the on-site interpretation?
   _ Very strong connection   _Moderate connection
   _ Slight connection   _No connection

5. What kind of connections did you learn from the visit? (multi-choices)
a. The architectural form of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda demonstrates a stylistic connection to the stupas of India
b. The story of Yijing's religious travel to the West and the translation work he did at the Small Wild Goose Pagoda
c. This site was one of the most important sutra translation centers in the Tang Dynasty, in where monks from all over the world worked, studied and debated
d. Other_____

6. Please indicate how effective each interpretive approach conveys the connection(s).

   4="very effective" 1="least effective" or check "didn't use"

	4	3	2	1	Didn't use
Guided tour					
Entrance panel					
Exhibitions					

Plaques					
Leaflet					
Film					
Intangible Heritage Center					

7. Which interpretive method(s) do you think are interesting and enjoyable? (multi-choices)
_Guided tour   _Entrance Panel   _Exhibition   _Plaques   _Leaflet   _Film
_ Intangible Heritage Center

8. Which interpretive method(s) do you think need to be improved? (multi-choices)
_Guided tour   _Entrance Panel   _Exhibition   _Plaques   _Leaflet   _Film
_ Intangible Heritage Center

9. What kind of interpretive installation do you want to see more? (multi-choices)
_Videos such as documentary films   _Smartphone trail   _High-tech devices
_Interactive devices   _Routes map of the Silk Roads and relevant sites
_Intangible cultural heritage display   Others_____

10. Did you visit both the Jianfu Temple and the Xi'an Museum?
_Yes   _No

11. Does this visit arouse your interest in knowing and visiting other relevant sites along the Silk Roads?
_Yes, very strong interest   _Yes, a little bit interest   _No

12. Any comments or suggestions?

Visitors Survey (The Tomb of Zhangqian)

Age _18-35   _36-55   _56 or older
Gender   _male   _female
Place of residence   _ Xi'an City   _ Other cities in Shaanxi Province
                        _Other provinces in China   _Overseas
Level of education   _Elementary school to 9th grade   _High school
                        _Vocational school   _Bachelor's degree _Master's degree and higher

1. To what extent do you know about Zhangqian before visiting?
   _To a great extent   _To a moderate extent   _To a slight extent   _Not at all

2. To what extent do you know about the Silk Roads before visiting?
   _To a great extent   _To a moderate extent   _To a slight extent   _Not at all

3. Do you know that the Tomb of Zhangqian was listed as a World Heritage site along the
    inscription of the Silk Roads?
    _Knew it before visiting   _Knew it after visiting   _I don't know

4. Did you perceive the connection between this tomb and the Silk Roads through the on-site
      interpretation?
    _ Very strong connection   _Moderate connection
    _ Slight connection   _No connection

5. What kind of connections did you learn from the visit? (multi-choices)
a. The life story of Zhangqian, who adventured and pioneered the Silk Roads (10)
b. The contribution Zhangqian made to the Silk Roads and his influences
c. The stone tigers and inscriptions are evidences of the certain historical figures and events which are related closely to the opening up of the Silk Roads
d. Other_____

6. Please indicate how effective each interpretive approach conveys the connection(s).
      4="very effective" 1="least effective" or check "didn't use"

	4	3	2	1	Didn't use
Guided tour					
Audio tour					
Exhibition					
Entrance Panel					
Leaflet					
Plaques					

7. Which interpretive method(s) do you think are interesting and enjoyable? (multi-choices)
_Guided tour   _Audio tour   _ Exhibition   _Entrance panel   _Plaques   _Leaflet

8. Which interpretive method(s) do you think need to be improved? (multi-choices)
_Guided tour   _Audio tour   _ Exhibition   _Entrance panel   _Plaques   _Leaflet

9. What kind of interpretive installation do you want to see more? (multi-choices)
_Videos such as documentary films   _Smartphone trail   _High-tech devices
_Interactive devices   _Intangible cultural heritage display   Others_____

10.Does this visit arouse your interest in knowing and visiting other relevant sites along the Silk Roads?
_Yes, very strong interest   _Yes, a little bit interest   _No

10. Any comments or suggestions?