

THE ORIENTAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND THE  
COMPOSITION OF ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY.  
THE PRACTICAL THINKING OF XI'AN  
LARGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

*Los sitios arqueológicos orientales y la composición  
de sus comunidades locales. El pensamiento práctico  
de los grandes yacimientos de Xi'an*

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**ABSTRACT**

Xi'an was chosen as capital city by 13 Chinese dynasties and regimes means a crucial area for Chinese history and the oriental civilization. Massive earthen and wooden structure archeological sites were preserved, underneath characterized which with large areas, significant value and hardly decipherable. In recent years, along with the urbanization and social and economic development, Xi'an has faced more pressure and challenge of cultural heritage conservation, and has explored several experiments to settle down these conflicts. In this situation, IICC-X was kept his eyes on the discussions and research of measures and methods for the protection and management of the large monuments and sites in Xi'an.

This paper examines four different physical types of archeological sites in Xi'an, which are large cross-district archeological site of Chang'an city of Han Dynasty, large district archeological site of DamingPalace in Chang'an City of Tang Dynasty, discontinuous lineal archeological site of City Wall of Sui and Tang Dynasty and single archeological site of West Market of Chang'an City of Tang Dynasty. Through analyzing the current protection and management pressure, archaeological results and conservation project and the composition of local community, the author would like point out the relation between the oriental archeological sites and its local communities. Through case study, it comes clear that the promotion of conservation of archeological sites could increase identifiability of the site, which will encourage awareness of heritage for local residents, and provide the local communities' cultural function, and brings up the cultural identity and cultural belonging of the region. Meanwhile, the consciousness and responsibility for cultural heritage conservation by local communities would be a positive and fundamental power to drive and supervise the conservation.

As a conclusion, the oriental earthen and wooden archeological sites experienced thousand years of history and under grounded, which are hardly to decipherable. Hence, the residents from the sites local communities are very week to link their cultural identification and cultural belonging to the cultural heritage. The cultural heritage conservation and interpretation project should become a positive way to improve the relationship between the oriental archaeological sites and their local communities. But when the conservation works were carrying out, the local community must be faced a process of adjustment due to physical changing of the sites, and this changing will be a positive to the forming of the cultural identification of the local community if it is in a appropriate way.

**Keywords:** Xi'an, communities, China, Archaeology.

## RESUMEN

*Xian fue elegida como ciudad capital por 13 dinastías y regímenes chinos y significa un área crucial para la historia de China y la civilización oriental. Fueron preservados sitios arqueológicos de enormes estructura de madera y tierra, caracterizados con grandes espacios por debajo, y con un valor significativo apenas descifrado. En los últimos años, junto con la urbanización y el desarrollo social y económico, Xian se ha enfrentado a más presión y a desafíos de la conservación del patrimonio cultural y ha explorado varias soluciones a estos conflictos. En esta situación, IICC-X se prestó atención a las discusiones y la investigación de medidas y métodos para la protección y el manejo de los grandes monumentos y sitios de Xian.*

*Este documento examina cuatro lugares físicos diferentes de sitios arqueológicos en Xi'an, que son el sitio arqueológico de la ciudad de Chang'an de la dinastía de Han; el sitio arqueológico de Daming Palace en la ciudad de Chang'an de la dinastía Tang; sitio arqueológico lineal discontinuo de Pared de ciudad de Sui y la dinastía Tang y el sitio arqueológico único del mercado oeste de la ciudad de Chang'an de la dinastía Tang. A través del análisis de la protección actual y el esfuerzo de gestión, los resultados arqueológicos y el proyecto de conservación junto con la composición de la comunidad local, el autor desea señalar la relación entre los sitios arqueológicos orientales y sus comunidades locales. A través del estudio de caso, resulta claro que la promoción de la conservación de sitios arqueológicos podría aumentar la identificabilidad del sitio, fomentando la conciencia de patrimonio para los residentes locales y proporcionando una función cultural con las comunidades locales, y la identidad cultural y pertenencia cultural de la región. Mientras tanto, la conciencia y la responsabilidad para la conservación del patrimonio cultural de las comunidades locales sería un poder positivo y fundamental para conducir y supervisar la conservación.*

*Como conclusión, los sitios arqueológicos de tierra y madera orientales han vivido miles años de historia bajo tierra, y apenas han sido descifrados. Por lo tanto, los residentes de las comunidades locales de los sitios difícilmente pueden vincular*

*su identificación y pertenencia cultural con ése patrimonio cultural. El proyecto de conservación e interpretación del patrimonio cultural debe convertirse en una forma positiva para mejorar la relación entre los yacimientos orientales y sus comunidades locales. Pero cuando estaban realizando las obras de conservación, la comunidad local debe enfrentar un proceso de ajuste debido al cambio físico de los sitios y este cambio será positivo para la formación de la identificación cultural de la comunidad local si se trata de una manera apropiada.*

**Palabras clave:** *Xi'an, comunidades, China, Arqueología*

## 1. THE CHARACTERS OF ORIENTAL LARGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Oriental architectures are distinctive wooden art, which are built with wood (the core materiel) and brick (auxiliary materiel). To compare with eastern, western culture are using more stones and quadrel to brick a building. Oriental architectures have gradually mastered the technology of building constructions since Stone Age, to create fundamental wooden structures such as wood framed adobe wall in northern China and Gan Lan-style building in southern China in order to satisfy the basic demand of living and public activities. As the development of human society, magnificent structures like the great capital, palace, temple and tomb were built based on meters high or tens of meters stereobate. At the meantime, the architectures built by loam wall and timber frame have emerged. With the long history of feudal society, architectural structure, layout, materials and ornament are reaching maturity and stabilization; therefore, independent and integrated orient civil construction system was formed gradually.

After thousands of years, ancient oriental architecture has changed dramatically due to nature and human causes. On the one hand, fragile timber can be easily damaged by weathering, rain erosion and fire disaster over thousands of years. On the other hand, the causes, like the change of dynasties, the destruction of war and construction, have made great damaged of the building. Some of buildings are now in ruins with rammed earth and residual building components, such as pillar stone-carved, eaves tile and paving tile. This is very different from the western architecture ruins mainly built by stone material. Roma architecture was the most representative one for this kind of western architecture. Relative to wood-and-earth construction, stone building are much more durable. The ruins of stone building would be enough to show magnificent stricture of original building, although it has collapsed. For orient building, it is difficult to imagine the original look of building when seeing the ruin.

## **2. XI'AN LARGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

Xi'an was chosen as capital city by 13 Chinese dynasties with over 3000 years of city history and 1300 year of capital history and regimes means a crucial area for Chinese history and the oriental civilization. Massive earthen and wooden structure archaeological sites were preserved, underneath characterized which with large areas, significant value and hardly decipherable, which includes the sites of Afang palace of qin dynasty, the sites of Chang'an city of han dynasty, the sites of Daming palace of tang dynasty, the sites of Xianyang city of qin dynasty and the sites of Banpo museum and so on.

Xi'an Large Archaeological Sites not only has large quantity, but also richening in a significant values, it is the witness to history of golden age of Chinese ancient culture development, especially the capital sites of Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasty. Xi'an occupied over 400 square kilometers, thereinto 200 square kilometers are occupied by large sites area, only the conservation area of the sites of Feng and Hao, the sites of Afang palace of qin dynasty, the sites of Chang'an city of han dynasty and the sites of Daming palace of tang dynasty reached 108 square kilometers. Meanwhile, these sites and monuments has meaningful contents, part of them has already on the world heritage list, and 150 large-scale sites are intensive protect by the State Council, rest of the sites are part of nationwide important culture relics conservation units, and it has relevant conservation methods and measures.

The composition of these large sites includes residual rammed earth remaining on the land surface, the sites and ruins underground, the sites space texture and culture environment. It is hardly to decipherable and easily damaged;. Therefore, it protection of culture heritage are difficult and expensive. On the other hand, the bad ornamental value also makes conservation investment cannot get social and economic benefits. Thus, the high cost and poor efficiency has become to the outstanding feature of sites conservation project, which restricts the development of culture heritage conservation in a certain extent.

There are different kinds of relationship between the large sites and city, which includes the sites located at rural area, such as the site of Fang and Hao, it preserved the original condition of the sites; the sites located at urban fringe, such as the site of Afang palace of qin dynasty and the site of Chang'an city of han dynasty, the outside physical space of the sites and internal residents conditions are facing sharp changes during the city development; the sites surround by city, such as the site of Daming palace of tang dynasty and the site of Xingqing palace, the sites has already become to a part of city function, sustainable conservation for the sites must adapt city development.

In the mean time, there are three different type of relationship between the sites and residents first is the sites and residents are relatively independent, they

only close to the sites on the geographical position, for instance the sites of the temple of heaven. Second is the sites are relevant to the residents, they are located at outside of the sites, and has relationship with the sites, for instance the City wall of tang dynasty Heritage Park, the site of Daming palace of tang dynasty, its surrounding residents could play, do exercise and have a rest inside the sites. Last is the sites mixed up with residents, the residents is living in the sites for generations, for instance, the internal villages inside the site of Chang'an city of Han dynasty.

### **3. THE PROPOSAL ISSUES OF SITES AND COMMUNITY**

In term of community is a group of people who live in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common; A community shall contain some elements such as a certain amount of people, a scope of area, a scale of facilities, a particular characteristic of cultural and living under the same type of organizations.

In western countries, the sites are normally refers to Architectural Heritage. The characteristics of this type of heritages are highly decipherable and have strong ornamental value, and deliver clear historical information. Furthermore these heritages comes with great cultural charisma as well, and existing on real live community with same style of surroundings whether internal or external to promote a harmonious and positive environment, they are influenced to voluntarily protect the sites by this unique environment, which leads to a sustainable development of the sites. Thus these communities forming to a cultural community and gives a positive force on harmonious coexistence with sites. For instance, Athens' Acropolis, the Coliseum in Rome and the ancient city of Jerusalem.

Currently eastern countries classify sites according to the type of sites, it can be classified into two types: historic sites and monuments.

#### *A. Monuments*

Such as Big Wild Goose Pagoda, Small Wild Goose Pagoda and Bell and Drum Tower can be considered as a clear and visible monuments. In comparison with western cultural community, such monuments are existing as a very similar way. It is easily arise relative cultural community. The lifestyle and cultural custom of the residents who lives there are highly influenced by this unique culture and environment, them-self and the sites had already become part of the site culture.

On the case of temple of Heaven of Sui and Tang Dynasties located at inside of Shaanxi Normal University campus in Xi'an .It is the place where tang dynasty held ceremonies to worship heaven in the 300 years of the dynasty history with a significant Symbolism and historical status. Although it is an Architectural Heritage, it does not open to public yet. Because is a newly excavated monument

and the implementation body protection project applied. The developing plan of the monument and city development planning are on process. Therefore, it did not impact residents and it did not appear a site culture, which seems temple as the core culture.

### *B. Sites*

Because of the function of architectural sites is complete loss, it more exists like an extinction cultural phenomenon or a symbol of a period history, which are hardly to decipherable. Thus, it difficult to cognitive and understand by surrounding residents, and it hardly get tourism resources advantages without conservation and presentation, also it cannot bring obvious economic incomes to the residents directly, therefore, it is too difficult to form an internal or external cultural community which could affect surrounding residents.

The main urban area of the sites of Chang'an city of Han dynasty reached 36 square kilometers, it has comparatively clear border of city wall and rammed earth remains, which is the one of the most complete preservation city sites. 55 villages distribute inside the city sites, and over 50 thousands farmer live in collective ownership, due to the long times of culture heritage conservation limitation, their living conditions and production mode is limited, hence, these farmers' income has wide difference compare with the residents who live outside the sites. However, the sites are their place of abode and generate a unique community structure, besides local government promote culture heritage conservation for a long term that caused the sites residents have a certain protection consciousness and conscious action to resist damage the sites. In front of interests driving, the yearn for development and the aspiration of rich, this kind of consciousness and action become to very fragile. Therefore, these kind of community has a certain culture attribute but very weak.

The sites of Feng and Hao of Zhou Dynasty is the capital of west zhou dynasty, it is an roots of Chinese culture formation and influenced later generations, located at southwest of Xi'an, cover an area of 17 square kilometers. Through over 50 years archaeological excavation, it has a basic understanding on the scope of capital, the key area of sacrifice, and the burial area. But it is still blank for the information of the whole capital pattern, road and palace, and there are no obvious tower ruins. And the residents who lived there only knowing about its history regions and the all kinds of government policy, they doesn't has resonate with the sites, the life style and production mode is the same with surrounding villages, so it is not an authentic cultural community.

As a result, the Oriental architectures sites as the fence of human history, it not only witness the history that people who create it, but also witness the history of existence and development with human. On the other hand, the site should be protect in a sustainable conservation and become to a positive power of strengthen

region development, and then it should generate the sustainable conservation and development community. However, because of its own features, it hard to be cognize by public, therefore, it is difficult to form an authentic cultural community.

#### **4. THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY ISSUES BASED ON XI'AN PRACTICE**

##### *A. The composition of single archeological sites and its community*

Based on the uninterrupted excavate cultural connotation for heritage sites, and protect the single archeological sites while forming a certain range of cultural community. The Site of West Market of Tang Dynasty is the birthplace of ancient silk roads, the ancient domestic and overseas merchants having trade activities here, and the developed commercial civilization represented its highest city level during that time. Meanwhile, the site of west market of tang dynasty is the only one private heritage site conservation and development case on national conservation and presentation project. Through the conservation and presentation to the sites, plus the cultural industry in original real estate project planning, which forming a unique west market area combined with cultural heritage conservation, antique commerce and trade and business community. The established theme international tourism and culture industry projects of Silk Roads West Market of Tang Dynasty on the original site of west market of tang dynasty which reflect the tang dynasty's commercial culture and civil culture. In the mean time, it solved the issues of poor living environment and infrastructure in the site, as well as after site conservation it emerging a cultural atmosphere, and it formed a west market of tang dynasty cultural community combined with the merchant inside the site and the surrounding residents.

##### *B. The composition of lineal archeological sites and its community*

a series of sites distribute as single sites, such as the site of Chang'an city of Sui and Tang Dynasty, on the base of Yanping Gate conservation and presentation project and the site of Nanguo city (located at Qujiang district) original location presentation project, they combined the site presentation and urban landscaping build a linear city garden, and identifying the green plants through the extension part of city wall, and with amusement and leisure facilities at the same time. It's not only as the logo of the city wall, but also shows the grand scale of the site of Chang'an city wall of Sui and Tang dynasty to visitors, and provides a recreation and rest area to nearby residents. Thus, it formed a culture area with its characteristic, and the surrounding residents have a continuous deepening understanding for the site, and create new living habits, therefore they overcome the division of original geographic community, and forming the site of city wall of Sui and Tang dynasty linear distribution communities with a new cultural connotation.

### *C. The composition of large district archeological sites and its community*

The site distributes in the large areas, and the communities distribute in the outside of the site no residents living in the site. The site of Daming palace of Tang Dynasty located on Longshou terrace, northeast of Xi'an, it is a large-scale palace that covers an area of approximately 3.5 square kilometers. The verified over 40 heritage site include hall, stage, floor, pavilion and so on, it is the most complete preserved palace site of tang dynasty, and also is the precious material of tang dynasty's architecture research.

Along with the expansion of city development, it makes Daming palace into the city center area. To promote and accelerate Daming palace conservation work is an urgent need on city development and improve residents' living environment.

With the rapid expansion of Xi'an city development, which makes the sites of Daming palace has enter into the center of city area in city planning. Meanwhile, it is urgent needs to improve city development and residents living environment under the situation of accelerate and promote the sites of Daming palace protection project. After a sufficient demonstration, In 2007, Xi'an government decided make the protection and utilization of the site of Daming palace into the north city's renovation project, in order to have an unified planning, arrangement, deployment and organize. In the meantime to construct Damning palace national archeological site park[7]. Through the conservation project to remould the perimeter zone, relocate original residents, who lived inside the site and placement all the original residents surrounding of the site, and all the surrounding residents regard Daming palace national archeological site park as their casual living center. The residents who lived surrounding the site include the original residents, the people who purchase apartment here and also the new residents in offices areas. The numbers of residents, their lifestyle and cultural activities have huge change than before.

### *D. The composition of large cross-district archeological sites and its community*

The site conservation area has living residents, blend with site area. The main area of Chang'an City of Han Dynasty is about 36 kilometers, planning area is 75 kilometers, and tens of thousands residents living there. Currently, Chang'an City of Han Dynasty use strict protection on the key area, and give the intact protection and residents' relocation for Weiyang palace site area. On the other hand, they applied general conservation and planning in the whole site area, based on the site adequate protection and natural ecological environment conservation; explore more positive and long-term relationship between the site and residents, in addition, implement the culture heritage conservation display project positively, highlights cultural image and cultural glamour of the site, improve surrounding environment and infrastructure voluntary, and make the site area are more comfortable for people living which is beneficial to form a



cultural industry, meanwhile, via voluntary way for regional residents adjustment, and form a unified development method of site conservation and residents living. The conservation plan is modified and constant argument at present.

## **5. ANALYSIS ON THE COMPOSITION OF ORIENTAL LARGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

### *A. The relationship between original community and archaeological site*

The Oriental Large Archaeological Sites has the characteristics of large areas and hardly decipherable, although there has certain scale communities with number of residents living inside or surrounding the site, however, because there is short of or cannot form an cultural activities relevant to the site and also did not establish a social structure associated with culture, thus it cannot be called as a cultural community.

### *B. The forming process of new community*

First, it need to discovery heritage site through archaeological exploration and form the conservation area. And then to carry out the sites conservation and presentation project to research its cultural connotation, in order to form a subarea pattern through regional planning. After that formation a prototype of the community, the residents who lived in the community generating psychological emotions which are cultural identification and cultural belonging via accepting the site, thus, the whole community appears a consciousness of community influenced by heritage site culture, and formation a site cultural community finally.

### *C. the way to adjust the cultural community*

The formation and adjustment of cultural community carry out the regional adjustment mainly via government administrative and economic measures currently. Due to the simply and fast measures that the cultural community are limited by formation speed and quality. However, it should adopt voluntary way for community adjustment and achieved the changes from passiveness to initiative, and the core should be residents' choice, in order to stimulate residents' thinking on the relationship with heritage site. Consequently, it should have more advantage on cultural community formation and reached the ideal situation of sharing development achievement between site conservation and residents living.

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