

The Present State of the Daming Palace National Heritage Park

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1. Brief Introduction to the Daming Palace

City of Chang'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 681-907), was one of the centers in the world. It is also a milestone in the history of the development of Chinese cities. Daming Palace, one of the most important imperial palaces in Chang'an City, had witnessed the ups and downs in the empire and the world for centuries.

The Site of the Daming Palace is located on the Longshuo Plateau in the north suburb of Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province. Being a part of the Chang'an imperial city of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907), the Daming Palace, was built in the 8th year of the Zhenguan reign (A.D. 634), first named as

“Yong'an Palace”. The next year, its name was changed to be Daming Palace. In the 2nd year of the Longshuo reign (A.D. 662), Emperor Gaozong (Li Zhi) continued the constructions of the palace. Finishing with the constructions of Xuanzheng Hall and Hanyuan Hall, the palace was completed basically. After these constructions, the layout of the palace was established too. And this time Li Zhi gave the palace a new name -- “Penglai Palace”. Eight years later, it was renamed as “Hanyuan Palace”. Till the first year of Chang'an reign (A.D. 701), it returned to the name of Daming Palace.

From the beginning of construction to the ruin, Daming Palace went through 269 years. During 240 years among these, it was the center of Tang Dynasty Government. A

the Ancient City Sites in the District of Xi'an City

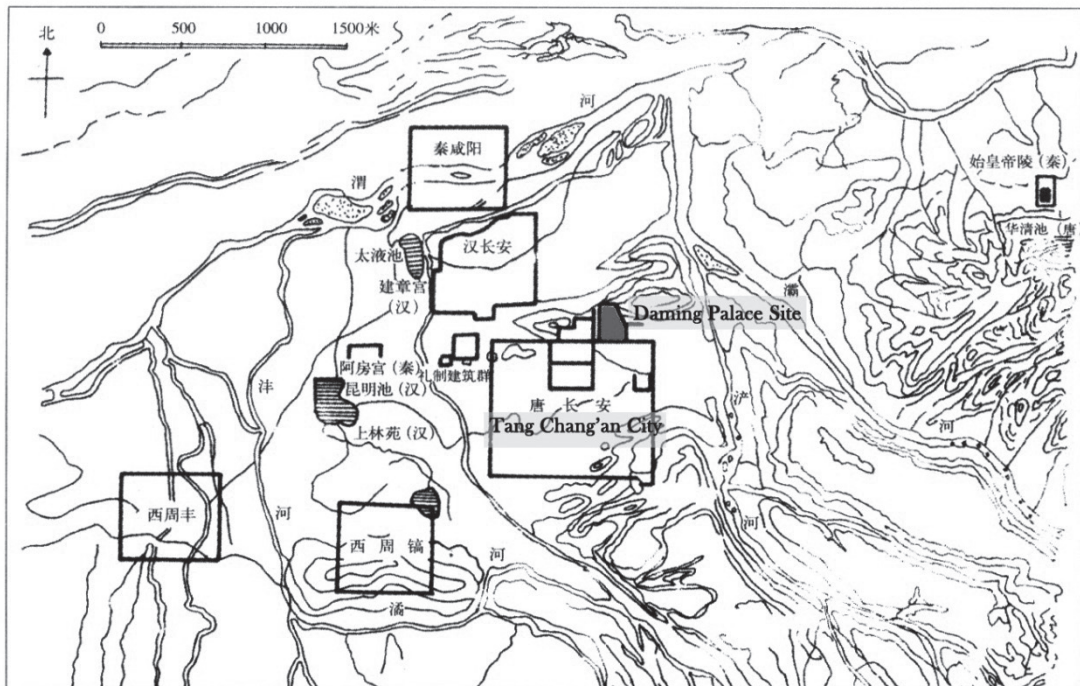


Figure 1 the Ancient City Sites in the District of Xi'an City

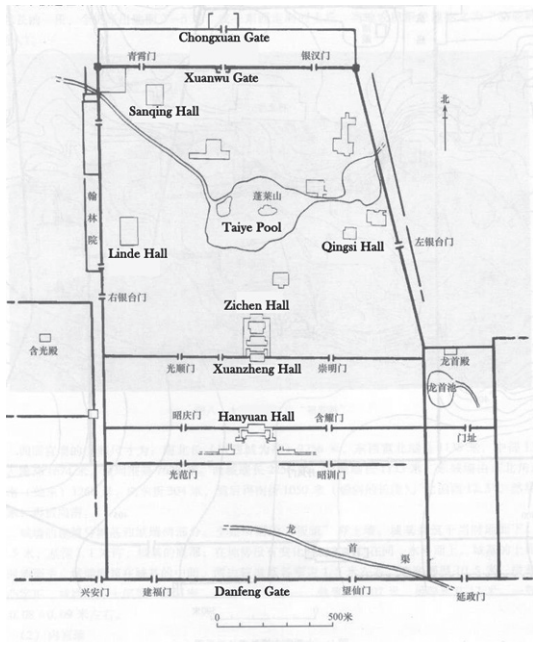


Figure 2 Plan of Daming Palace Site

large amount of political events happened in this palace, concerning the fortune of Tang Dynasty. Seventeen emperors of Tang Dynasty lived here and handled the daily affairs of the empire. It was also the largest and most elegant imperial palace at that time in China. The palace consisted of the

outer court and inner court as the tradition of Chinese imperial palaces. And the layers of halls and pavilions spread out on the central axis.

The Daming Palace was damaged in wars and got burnt down in A.D. 904 of the Emperor Zhaozong's reign. Now, in the site of the Daming Palace, over 40 sites of halls and pavilions were unearthed, mainly built around the Taiye Pool in the north zone of the palace. These sites included Hanyuan Hall, Linde Hall, Sanqing Hall, Qingsi Hall, Xuanzheng Hall and Zichen Hall. Now, those sites are the precious material of studying and researching Tang Dynasty, taking a unique place of Chinese history.

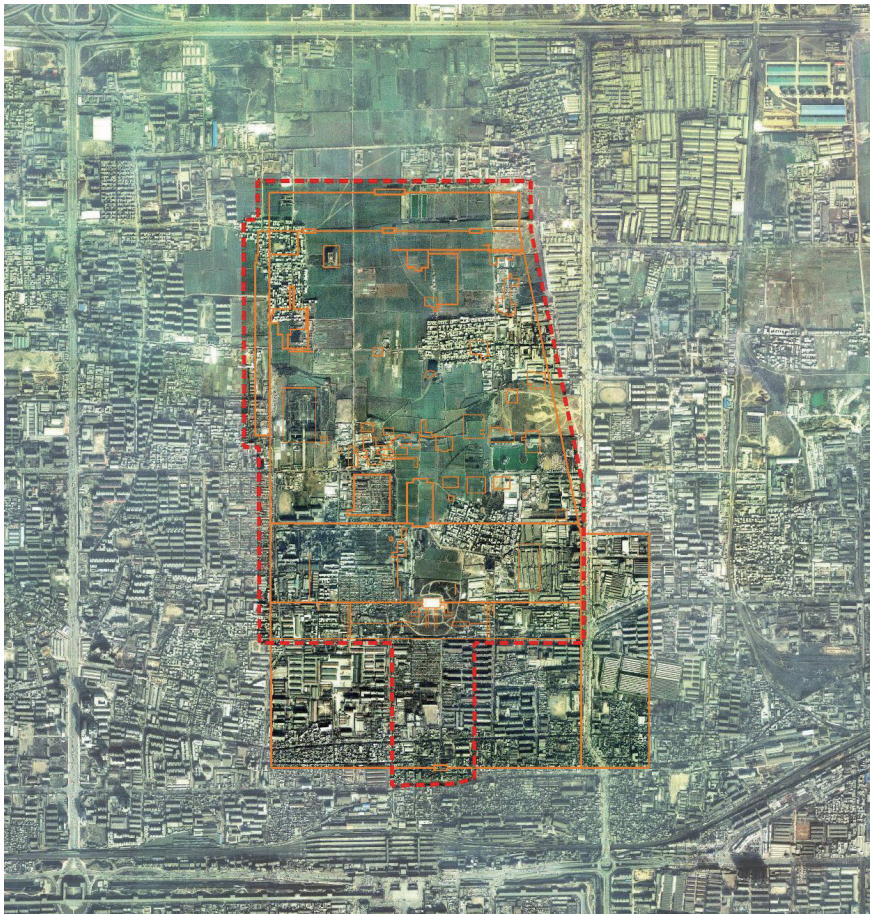
After the Qing Dynasty, the area of Daming Palace site was still a wilderness. In the former period of the World War II, lots of refugees from Henan Province rushed into Xi'an City, and settled down on the north side of the Longhai Railway, which across the northern area of Xi'an City. In the 1930s, with the construction of the Longhai Railway near Daming Palace site, many platelayers moved into this zone too. After that, there were plenty temporary buildings, making the confusing layout here. Several decades passed by, the area of Daming Palace sites is still a zone of chaos, with narrow streets, shabby houses and poor public security



Figure 3 the Condition of Daming Palace site before the Conservation Projects and Construction of National Heritage Park

Table 1 the Explorations and Excavations of Daming Palace

Time	The Explorations and Excavations
1957.10~1959.5	Started the archaeological explorations and excavations of Daming Palace, figured out the basic situation of the site. Excavated some key sites as Hanguang Hall, Linde Hall, Xuanwu Gate, Chongxuan Gate, Neichong Gate, Yinhan Gate etc.
Fall of 1959~1960	Finished a full-scale exploration of the northern area of the site, proved up the layout of the sites of the halls and other buildings on the whole. Excavated the sites of the complex around Hanyuan Hall, the main hall in the Daming Palace.
1981	Excavated Qingsi Hall in the eastern part of the palace, and Sanqing Hall in the northwestern.
Fall of 1982	Excavated East Chaotang Hall site in the south of Hanyuan Hall.
Fall of 1983~1984	Excavated the southern part of Hanlinyuan Site.
1987.4~1987.5	Excavated the Hanyao Gate in the east of the Daming Palace.
1995.3~1996.12	Finished an all-round excavation of the complex of Hanyuan Hall and the annexes, for assisting the conservation project of Hanyuan Hall .
2001.8~2005.6	Series excavations of the Taiye Pool.
2005.9~2006.1	Excavated the Danfeng Gate.
2006.3~2006.7	For assisting the conservation project of the Hanyuan Hall's front stem, finished archaeological exploration between the Danfeng Gate and the Hanyuan Hall.

**Figure 4** Aerial Photograph of Daming Palace Site

order.

In order to figure out the basic situation of the Daming Palace site, the Chinese archaeologists started a series of excavations on the sites from 1950s (Table 1). After more than 50 years' work, now the archaeologists have already known the location, scope, layout and attribute of the sites well.

2. the Development of the Planning of the Daming Palace

Being an important ancient site in Xi'an City, the government of Xi'an city always considers Daming Palace site as a significant part in the urban overall planning. As the idea of preservation of cultural relics develops, the several urban overall plannings also make corresponding changes.

In 1953, Xi'an City drew up the first urban overall planning(1953 ~ 1972), and the area of Daming Palace site was

brought into the planning for the first time. It planned to build a park green space, around the site of Hanyuan Hall.

In 1980, Xi'an City drew up the second urban overall planning(1980 ~ 2000). The planning put forward a proposal to protect the famous historical and cultural city first. In this planning, it defined the protection scope of Daming Palace site, which was bigger than the area of park green space in the first urban overall planning, and brought forward to build a heritage park in the scope and to afforest in the park. This was the first time that the government of Xi'an City considered the historical and cultural sites and buildings in the city as a whole, and planned to build a heritage park for the Daming Palace site.

In 1995, Xi'an City drew up the third urban overall planning(1995 ~ 2010). The planning put forward a proposal to protect the significant and large scaled sites, the precious cultural relics, and the ancient architectures in Xi'an, in

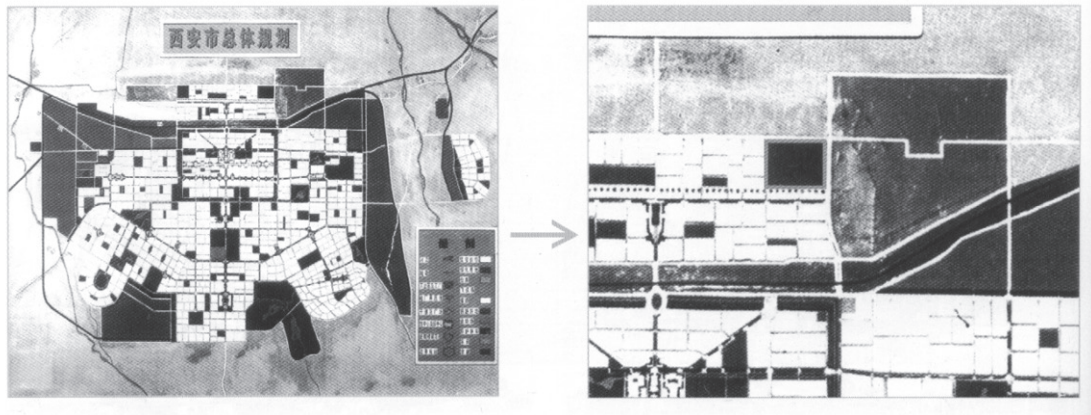


Figure 5 the first urban overall planning of Xi'an City

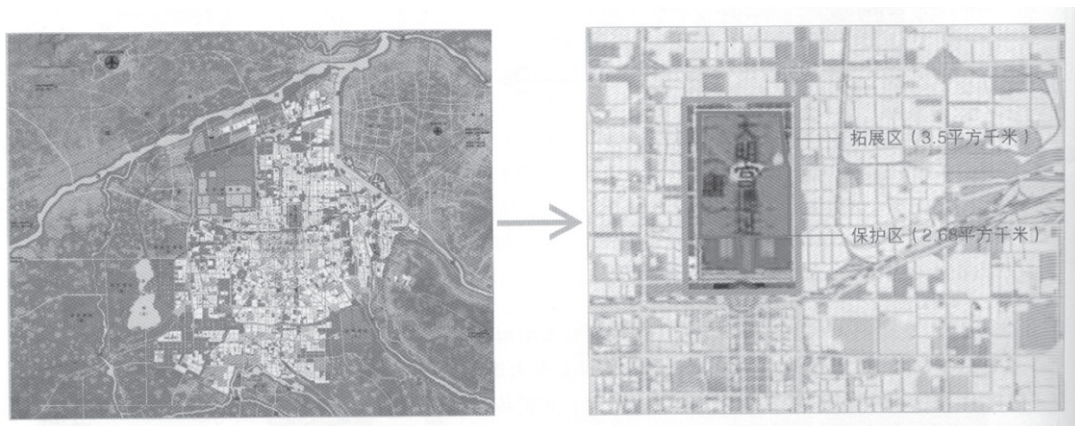


Figure 6 the fourth urban overall planning of Xi'an City

order to develop the historical cultural customs and to preserve the traditional city pattern and flavor. For the Daming Palace site, 1) protect and reconstruct the original structure, 2) protect the Daming Palace site on the whole, 3) combine the conservation and the utilization of the site. It also planned to build a Daming Palace Museum, starting from conservation project of Hanyuan Hall, laying out the front stem before the Hanyuan Hall, and renewing the Taiye Pool.

In 2004, Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage replied and passed the *Preservation Planning of Daming Palace Site*. On 16 Jul. 2005, the government of Shaanxi Province passed and proclaimed the *Preservation Overall Planning of Daming Palace Site*. This was the special planning for the Daming Palace site. The passing of the two plannings as well marked a new age of putting the conservation into practice, for Daming Palace site.

In 2008, Xi'an City drew up the forth urban overall planning(1995 ~ 2010). The planning put forward a proposal to protect the city pattern on the whole and protect the capital cities sites, the tombs of the emperors, the palaces and gardens and other historical cultural relics in dynasties. And it as well propose to protect the "Authenticity, sustainability, and readability" of the Daming Palace site.

Besides, in 2006, Chinese State Council proclaimed the

Compendium for Cultural Development in the Eleventh Five-Year-Plan. In this file, "to build the preservation and exhibition park of Han Chang'an City, Daming Palace and other important large scaled sites" was clearly proposed. In addition, in the *Overall Preservation Planning of Large Scaled Sites in the Eleventh Five-Year-Plan* passed by Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the exhibition project of Daming Palace site was enlisted as one of the key projects, too. These two plannings provided a policy and law support for the further conservation projects and heritage park constructions of Daming Palace site.

Under the guidance of the plannings mentioned above, some conservation practices of the Daming Palace site have been put into effect. In the last few years, the Daming Palace national heritage park was being constructed as well. In this process, the idea of preservation also changed on different aspects, hence the conservation practices also changed with it.

3. the Conservation Practices of the Daming Palace Site

To protect the Daming Palace site, the conservation practices began since 1980s. In 1984, the Chinese State Admin-

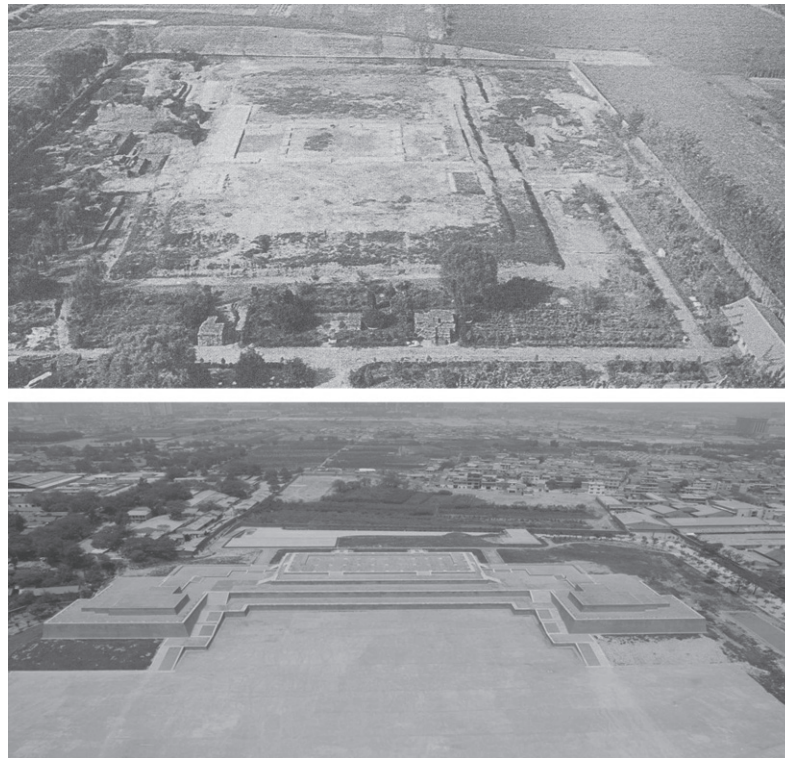


Figure 7 the Hanyuan Hall Site before and after the Conservation Project

istration of Cultural Heritage decided to start the conservation project of Linde Hall. This was the first conservation project on the Daming Palace site. The next year, the part of the front hall accomplished. In 2005, the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage passed and appropriated funds for the second phase of the conservation project. By the end of 2006, the project completed.

In the early 1990s, under the negotiation of UNESCO, Japanese Government and Chinese Government, they agreed used the fund supplied by Japanese World Heritage Trust Grant and Government of Xi'an City, to protect the Site of Hanyuan Hall together. From 1995 to 1996, the Institute of Archaeology CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) excavated the Site roundly. Based on the archaeological work, the conservation project started in May 1998, and completed after the five-year work in Mar. 2003.

In Nov. 2002, the Japanese Government and Chinese Government signed an agreement to protect the environment of Hanyuan Hall on Daming Palace Site, with the fund supplied gratis by Japanese Government. In this project, an exhibition hall of 1005 square meters, a preservation hall of 374 square meters for the brick kiln were built, and the environment protection were completed.

All the projects mentioned above, are very good samples for the conservation projects to a large scaled site. They also supplied a good condition for the further conservation

practices and constructions.

In 2003, according to the Preservation *Planning of Daming Palace Site* passed by the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the conservation project of Dafu Hall Site and Chongxuan Gate Site, Wangxian Pavilion Site was started. Then in 2005 Government of Xi'an City decided to start the project of environment renovation and buildings remove in the area of Hanyuan Hall's front stem. In this project, an area of 3,500,000 square meters, 89 enterprises or institutions, and 25,000 families, 100,000 people were involved. Lots of residents finally got rid of the shabby houses and horrible living condition. The district of Daming Palace Site was improved for the future construction of national heritage park too.

4. the Construction of the Daming Palace Heritage Park

In 2007, a heavy rain struck Xi'an City. In the area of Daming Palace site, rough roads became many residents' worry. Although many conservation projects like that of Hanyuan Hall and Linde Hall had been done, the whole area of Daming Palace site was still in the chaos, about both the living condition for the residents and the preservation condition for the site. But the construction of the Daming Palace heritage park changed that later.



Figure 8 the Reconstructed Danfeng Gate



Figure 9 the Underground Museum

On Jan. 24, 2008, for the constructions of the national heritage park of Daming Palace Site, the international concept design evaluation conference was held in Xi'an. The conference also delivered the sound of the opening of the national heritage park's construction. On Mar. 29, 2008, construction of Danfeng Gate site protection exhibition project was launched, marking construction work of Daming Palace National Heritage Park in full swing.

On Aug. 3, 2008, the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage passed the *Overall Planning of Preservation and Exhibition of Daming Palace National Heritage Park*. Two months later, on Oct. 21, 2008, the opening ceremony of the construction beginning of Daming Palace National Heritage Park was warmly held before the Hanyuan Hall site.

On Jan. 20, 2010, the principal part of Danfeng Gate site protection exhibition project was completed, creating a new landmark in Xi'an City. Before long, the preservation and exhibition project of Xuanzheng Hall and Zichen Hall sites were completed. The two sites were exhibited in the form of "Tree House", which is a new attempt of displaying the earthen sites. Then, an underground museum showing the history and relics of Daming Palace and Tang Dynasty was built between the Hanyuan Hall site and Xuanzheng Hall site. Meanwhile, an archaeological exploration center was built on the west side of the front stem of the Ganyuan Hall site, using an old factory in this area before. On the east side of the front stem, a tourist reception center was completed.

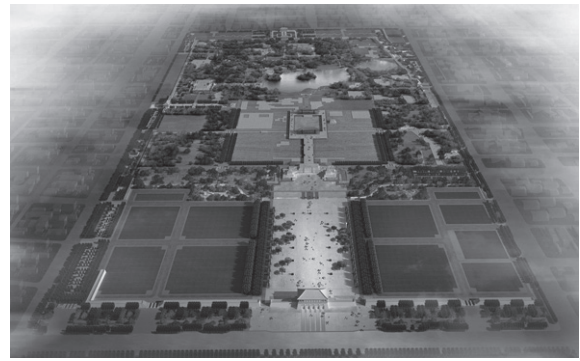


Figure 10 the Effect Illustrator of the Daming Palace National Heritage Park

In this center, a 3D IMAX cinema was also included too. And a set of micro model of the Daming Palace was finished and put on the east side of the unearthed museum. Shortly afterwards, Daming Palace national heritage park was surrounded by palace gates and walls, the whole project has begun to take shape¹.

In the process of constructing, the Daming Palace heritage park was managed by an enterprise-style institution. And the institution also claimed that they will build ten view spots, like Tang Dynasty famous flowers garden, Tang Dynasty folk custom garden, and so on.

On Oct. 1, 2010, the Nation Heritage Park opened to the public, finally. Now, the area from the Danfeng Gate to the Hayuan Hall is free for all the tourists and residents, as well as it charges Rmb 60 Yuan for entering the other area. Along with the opening of the park, the district of Daming Palace becomes one of the hottest commercial centers in Xi'an City. The prices of the real estates around the park increased sharply since the construction of the heritage park likewise.

Undoubtedly, the accomplishment of the Daming Palace heritage park, improved the conservation condition of the site. At the same time it is also a very good attempt of showing the archaeological sites and spreading the history knowledge to the public. But, there are also some other voices, about the construction of the heritage park.

"In 1930s and 1970s, Xi'an City did two surveys of landform features, the contour map showed that, the landform of Daming Palace site was not changed too much in the

¹The readers interested in more news about the current state of Daming Palace Heritage Park, please go to: <http://map.dmgpark.com/>. There are an E-map of the heritage park and more detailed introductions of the sites on the website.

past more than one thousand years. Strictly speaking, the archaeological work of Daming Palace site, except the Hanyuan Hall and a few other sites, is not finished yet. But now the sites were covered by cement and concrete harshly. Even more, an underground museum was built by the Taiye Pool. All these are huge damages to the heritage. How can we continue the archaeological work in the future? It is a question without answering.” Xu Pingfang (the former president of Institute of Archaeology, CASS) said.

Xie Chensheng (a famous archaeologist) said, “Building a heritage park is an effective way of protecting the large scaled sites, and I always support such way. I think, the buildings remove project in the area of Daming Palace site by the local government is very good, but the most important principle of cultural industry is the social effectiveness. I am strongly against the enterprise-style management of the cultural heritage for financial gain, against take heritage as a ready source of money, against the ten view spots in Daming Palace. This sort of conducts was damage to the heritage park.”

Now, the constructions of heritage parks like the one of Daming Palace are very popular in China. But how can we balance the conservation of the sites and relics and the benefits in the process? How can we really protect the “authenticity, sustainability, and readability” of the heritages? It is still a question to be answered in the future.

Reference

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