

# Analysis on the environment of cultural relic as tourist attraction--take Yungang Grottoes as an example

**Zhu Xiangdong, Bai Jie**

College of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Taiyuan University of Technology,  
Taiyuan 030024, China

840052165@qq.com

**Abstract.** Cultural relic resources are precious non-renewable resources and an important cornerstone for the development of cultural relic tourism. With the rapid development of tourism industry, the native environment of cultural relics is being squeezed constantly. Meanwhile, under the economic interests, cultural relic's protection and heritage tourism contradictions continue to intensify. The present era which the architectural style is convergence, cultural relics protection is simplistic, restore historical sites blindly and other. In the historical process of economic development and the acceleration of new-type urbanization, the heritage industry faces the dual tasks and development challenges. As cultural relic protection workers, investigation of the utilization of cultural relic's tourist attractions, investigation and analysis of the Yungang Grottoes, indicating cultural relics as a tourist attraction, not only to strengthen the protection of ontology, also should attach importance to the coordinated development of the protection of cultural relics and the utilization of tourism.

## 1. Introduction

As one of the ancient civilizations in the world, China has created a brilliant ancient civilization and preserved rich historical relic resources. Cultural relics as an important witness in the development of human civilization carry abundant historical and modern values, which are extremely attractive to the modern people. Cultural relics have become unique and important tourist resources. With the development of tourism more and more cultural relic's protection units have been renovated and put into use to set up tourist attractions. As an important part of tourism resources, relic buildings occupy an important position in tourism resources. The renovation and transformation of cultural relics to meet the needs of tourism has become an important way to promote the development of local governments and enterprises in recent years. The impact of tourism on the protection of cultural relics gradually increased, and the issue of balanced development between cultural relic's protection and cultural relic tourism industry has become one outstanding issue<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 2. The value of the cultural relic tourist attraction

Cultural relics are traces of historical development, bearing the ancestors' life production and social activity relics, reflecting their social functions at that time, with historical, artistic and scientific values. The cultural relics carry natural and artificially reformed features, and the layers of imprinting of their own development. The protection of cultural relics is like a complex equation, it must have tangible protection policies, close connection with geography and natural primary landscape, and contain special symbolic meaning and place spirit<sup>[1]</sup>, these conditions constitute the cultural landscape of cultural relics



and architecture dominates. The cultural relics records the social events, the appearance, the texture, the material and other elements of the people during the specific period, indicating the value orientation and emotion of people at that time. Cultural relics as a tourist scenic spot include its historical value, artistic value and scientific value, as well as the consequent ornamental values of the landscape. In the aspect of historical value, the cultural relic's era and the social functions and social status at that time explained the connotation of the cultural relic, the more ancient relics of the age its greater historical value and carrying more social responsibilities. The artistic value of cultural relics is measured by its appearance, shape and texture, which are influenced by the beauty of the arts. The value of it is embedded in the relic itself, which is the true embodiment of the people's material standard of living and the spiritual life world at that time. In terms of scientific research, the cultural relics can reflect the productive forces, scientific and technological level and the process of social development in the period in which they are located. It provides the modern society with important information and basis for understanding the history of human development and has educational significance. Due to its historic, artistic and scientific value, the cultural relics as the core scenic spot formed a unique cultural landscape, create a profound historical atmosphere and cultural atmosphere, as visitors understand the local history and culture, the cultural charm of the feelings of the direct channel.

### 3. Case analysis

Yungang Grottoes, an example combining the Chinese Culture with Western One in 5th Century A.D, as one of the three leading grottoes in China, Yungang Grottoes are located in the south of Wu Zhou mountain north bank of Ten-Mile River. It is about sixteen kilometres to the west of Datong, Shanxi Province. All the Caves, extending about one kilometre from east to west, were hollowed out of the mountain. The existing main grottoes are 53, and the size of the statue is more than 51000, covering an area of about 400 thousand square meters. It's a historic monument combining the Chinese culture with Western one as it is a Buddhist art treasure house of royal style, which a nationality has spent nearly a dynasty completing for the first time ever since the Buddhist art was spread to China. It was excavated into the mountain because of the rock structure. It is rare and unusual in the world because of its grandness and magnificence. As the big-scale grotto temple relics built in the Northern Wei Dynasty, Rich in content and magnificent in sculpture, the Grottoes was a large Buddhist temple constructed by the skilful craftsmen by groups and generations with best technology and funding from the royal family of the Northern Wei Dynasty. As the older group grottoes built in the east of Xinjiang, Yungang Grottoes are different from other older grottoes for its magnificent royal family style. The Buddhist culture and art shown in the Grottoes involves in history, architecture and music and others. Yungang Grottoes has played an important role in artistic history of China and World due to the highest Buddhist art level it represented as an example combining the Chinese and Western cultures and masterpiece of oriental sculpture art. It is one of the top three grottoes with the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang and the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang. Yungang Grottoes, along with Ajanta Caves of Indian and Bamyan Caves of Afghanistan, are the three stone carving treasure houses of fine arts in the world <sup>[2]</sup>. It was promulgated one of the first group of key cultural relic's preservation units by the State Council in March 1961. Yungang Grottoes were inscribed into the World Cultural Heritage List by the UNESCO In December 2001 and became first group of 5A level Chinese Tourist Areas in May 2007.



Satellite image of 2002



Satellite image of 2017

With the adjustment of economic structure and the transformation of urban functions as well as to meet the needs of tourist attractions development in Datong city, the government started to comprehensively rehabilitate the surrounding environment of Yungang Grottoes and demolished buildings, appendages within 50 meters on both sides of 14 km along the urban area to Yun gang scenic spot in 2008, then demolished the five villages of Yun gang Village, Ma Village, Weishitun Village, Zhulin Temple Village and Zhangsiyao Village around the scenic area, and demolished the part of of Jinhuaogong Coal Minner village. Simultaneously, reforested the trees on the surrounding mountainous areas, a series of tourism infrastructure facilities have been built in the scenic area, such as visitor service centre, forest park, plaza, Foguang Road, Lingyan Temple, Long Wang Temple, intangible cultural heritage exhibition park, Yungang Grottoes museum, performing arts centre, commercial street and greenbelts and water bodies. Yungang scenic area after renovation and expansion of the area expanded to 5 million square meters, compared with 2008's 520,000 square meters expanded by 10 times.

*International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* states that "The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time"<sup>[3]</sup>. Throughout the entire Yungang Grottoes scenic area, for the expansion of scenic spots the surrounding five villages were demolished in the process of renovating scenic spots, which make the scenic facilities more complete, increase the interest of tourist attractions and excavation of the cultural characteristics of the grottoes, construction a series of pseudo-classic architecture featuring Northern Wei culture. In the process of scenic area construction, the original environment of Yungang Grottoes was artificially changed. The living environment and quality have been improved, but the original sense of the site is damaged, and the original functions, traditions and people's lives have been affected. The real surrounding environment of Yungang Grottoes has not been effectively protected, separating the cultural attributes and social values of Yungang Grottoes and its surroundings. But beyond that, the authors have found that the Cave NO. 9 to the NO.13th Cave cornice project is completed, but its height, colour, material and shape quite different from the existing style of the Qing Dynasty in the Cave NO.5 and the Cave NO. 6. In addition, the follow-up protection project is also in the tight preparations, and will continue the style of the named Northern Wei Dynasty which the dimensions of new cave eaves massive, pillars and walls are thick and strong painted dock red. Although the designer absorbed the architectural style and artistic style of the paintings depicted in the Yungang Grottoes coordinate the characteristics of the new buildings with the Yungang Grottoes, but the Northern Wei Dynasty lack of authentic data, it will cause the error transmission and continuation of historical information in a certain extent. In fact, the value of Yungang Grottoes is not only reflected in its unique culture of the Northern Wei Dynasty, but also its typical example of architectural layout, functions and artistic features of the Tang, Liao, Jin, Ming and Qing Dynasties, which have been condensed in 1500.

*The Guidelines for the Conservation of Cultural Relics and Historic Sites in China (2015)* emphasize that “the addition of protective structures outside cultural relics and historic sites can only be used to protect the most dangerous parts, and the appearance features should be diluted and the original image features of cultural relics and historic sites reduced influences” [4]. The development of tourism magnifies the unique cultural characteristics of the Northern Wei Dynasty in Datong, tourism services and cultural function has been improved, yet in the process of cultural relic protection, the changes of social, economic and environmental texture affect the choice of value. As a result, protection principles and protection measures cannot fully play a limiting role; valuations of cultural relic’s protection units are also temporary and subjective. An effective program of protection and development must stipulate the role and direction of modern architecture and cultural innovation in the protection of cultural relics and respect the continuity of historical development; otherwise it will lead to misleading and misinterpreting urban history and culture.

#### 4. Conclusion

With the development of social-economic and cultural education, people’s living standard and cultural literacy have been continuously improved. Tourism has become an important part of daily activities, an aesthetic way of life and an enjoyable lifestyle, so tourism environment not only to meet the tourist’s higher physiological requirements, also to satisfy the tourist’s psychological aesthetic demands. The tourist attractions that rely on cultural relics as the core should avoid the transition and development of cultural relics, attach importance to the excavation of historical value, artistic value and scientific value of cultural relics. Scientific conservation and rational utilization of cultural relics and its environments should be based on the principle of giving priority to the protection of cultural relics and making rational use of them [5]. The original environment texture and atmosphere of the cultural relics are very important for the protection of cultural relics, they cannot crack the relationship between the cultural relics and the texture of the original environment rigidly for the purpose of economic development, so that those who come to visit lose their historical significance and value basis for understanding the cultural relics, resulting in wrong interpretation of historical information. Cultural relics are the information carriers of human civilization and cultural heritage, they have very high historical, scientific and artistic values. Because simply pursuing social-economic values or any other reason reclaims the cultural relics without a bottom line lead to the value of the cultural relics lost or destroyed, mankind will face tremendous losses that can never be compensated.

#### Acknowledgments

This article is under the National Social Science Fund chaired by Professor Zhu Xiangdong *Environmental landscape design of the surrounding ancient buildings and regional culture study under Urbanization* (No. 900101-03910398) and thanks my research supervisor Professor Zhu Xiangdong for his guidance and teaching.

#### References

- [1] Francesco Bandarin and Ron van Oers. *The Historic Urban Landscape: Managing Heritage in An Urban Century*:69-70. 2011
- [2] <http://tour.yungang.org/welcome.aspx>
- [3] International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. Article 1. 1964
- [4] *The Guideline for the Conservation of Cultural Relics and Historic Sites in China*. Chapter 2-18. 2015