

Views on Monument in Xi'an City from 18th to 20th Century: A Cultural Heritage Studies Approach

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Abstract. Xi'an city is the capital of the Tang dynasty and one of the biggest cities in the world, and the symbol of the prosperous traditional Chinese culture. With the downfall of the Tang Dynasty, Xi'an city loses the position of political, economic and cultural center. However, Xi'an city becomes the place of memory and attracts large numbers of people to commemorate and protect. The conservation and restoration of monument in Xi'an city since 18th to 20th century by the local chronicles, ancient maps, inscriptions, historical literature and archaeological resources. The activities of protection and conservation of monument have three-phase procedures. Firstly, Bi Yuan did conservation activities such as protected imperial mausoleum; restored Xi'an beilin; repaired ancient buildings and wrote the books in the middle of the Qing dynasty. Secondly, Adachi Kiroku measured cultural heritages in Xi'an city from 1906 to 1910. The present study suggests that the conservation and restoration of monument is developed and communicated the meaning in places of memory. Thirdly, Frits Vilhelm Holm collected and duplicated the Monument of Ting nestorian popularizes in China. All in all, the three people represent the view of history, cultural perspective and values.

Keywords: Conservation; Restoration; Monument; Xi'an City; Cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Xi'an city is the capital of the Tang dynasty (618-907) and one of the biggest cities in the world, and the symbol of the prosperous traditional Chinese culture. With the downfall of the Tang Dynasty, Xi'an city loses the position of political, economic and cultural center. However, Xi'an city became the place of memory and had attracted large numbers of people to commemorate and research from 18th to 20th. There are three kinds of views on the cultural heritage and monuments.

2. Three Kinds of Views on Monument

2.1 Bi Yuan Restored and Protected the Cultural Relics

Bi yuan(毕沅1730-1797) was a governor (1773-1779) of shaanxi province (located in northwest of China) in middle of the Qing dynasty. He was very interested in visiting historical sites, collecting documents and arranging cultural relics. Bi Yuan (1730-1797) lived in Xi'an city more than fourteen years. He committed himself to protect imperial mausoleum, restore the forest of steles and repair ancient buildings. Besides that, he wrote the books Guan Zhong Sheng Ji Tu Zhi [1]and Guan Zhong Jin Shi Zhi [2] to memorize the cultural heritage. Bi yuan formulated a series of specific protection measures for Xi'an Beilin, such as directly managed by the government, then the stone monuments were arranged according to the laws and separated from the railings. However, because of his strong interest in the stone inscriptions, in the process of searching for the inscriptions on the stone, Bi Yuan took some precious cultural relics back home.



Fig 1. Guan Zhong Jin Shi Zhi(关中金石志), from Harvard–Yenching Library.



Fig 2. Zhongnan Mountain(中南山) Map, fromGuan Zhong Sheng Ji Tu Zhi(关中胜迹图志)

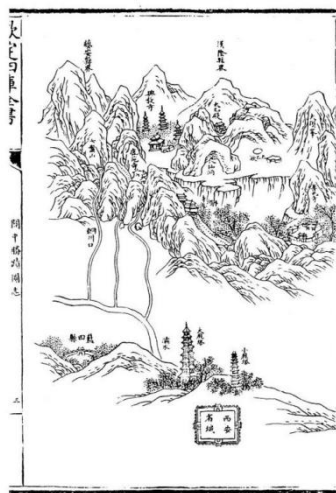


Fig 3. Xi'an City and The Surroundings, from Guan Zhong Sheng Ji Tu Zhi(关中胜迹图志)

2.2 Adachi Kiroku Measured and Protected the Ancient Architecture

With the development of modernization, the ranks of the investigation and protection of Xi'an City have been further expanded in late of the Qing dynasty. Many Japanese came to Xi'an and researched the culture relics. Adachi Kiroku is the representative of the Japanese. On one hand, Adachi Kiroku researched the cultural heritage in Xi'an city by modern measuring tools. On the other hand, he combined the historical literature and field-trip in Taibai Mountain(太白山), Wei

River(渭河) and Huaqingchi(华清池) from 1906AD to 1910AD. All the things can be read in the book ‘The Changan Historical Research’ wrote by Adachi Kiroku.[3] Adachi Kiroku was a pioneer in the use of modern advanced technology tools to inspect Xi'an City's monuments. He measured the culture relics with modern measurement tools to obtain more authentic and reliable data.



Fig 4. Giant Wild Goose Pagoda (photo by Adachi Kiroku)



Fig 5. Bell Tower in Jinglong Taoist Temple(景龙道寺), photo by Adachi Kiroku

The camera took a lot of precious pictures to record the preservation of cultural relics in late of the Qing Dynasty. After a hundred years of marshes, some monuments have long been beyond recognition. The images left by Adachi Kiroku were the only real historical data. They become the first-hand information to research 19th to 20th century cultural relics of Xi'an City.

It can't be ignored that Adachi Kiroku had its advanced knowledge reserves and inspection tools, he still inevitably made some mistakes, which brought some troubles to the later modern scientific archaeology.

2.3 Frits Vilhelm Holm and the Monument of Ting Nestorian Popularizes in China

Frits Vilhelm Holm (1881–1930) was a Danish scholar and adventurer. His books usually gave his name as simply Frits Holm or Frits V. Holm.

Holm was best known for his attempt, in 1907, to 'steal' the famous Monument of Ting nestorian popularizes in China(大秦景教流行中国碑) - an ancient monument of Xi'an and sell it to a Western museum. Alerted to his activities, the local authorities moved the monument from its outdoor location on the western outskirts of the city, and into beilin(碑林) museum. In order not to leave China empty-handed, the disappointed Holm had an exact copy of the monument made for him in Xi'an.



Fig 6. Monument of Ting nestorian popularizes in China(大秦景教流行中国碑), on its tortoise pedestal, photographed by Frits Vilhelm Holm shortly before it was moved to the Beilin Museum, and out of his reach.

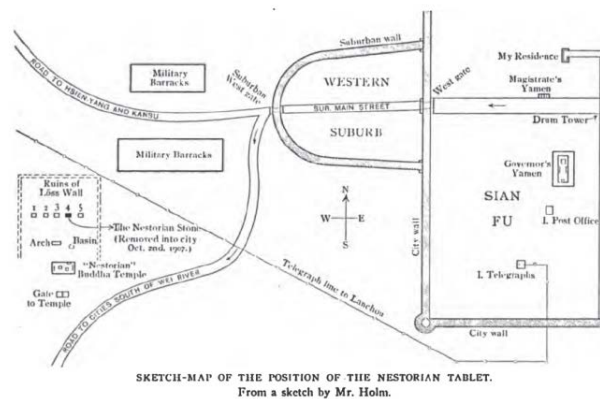


Fig 7. A map of the relative positions of Chongren Temple, Jingjiao Monument and Xi'an City, drawn by Danish explorer He Lemo in 1907.

Frits Vilhelm Holm's imitation of the monument was not only a major event in Xi'an, but also caused repercussions in Europe, America and East Asia. In 1908-1916, he presented the duplicates to museums and universities in 13 countries. Through the worldwide distribution and donation of monuments to museums and academic institutions, Frits Vilhelm Holm has made the Monument of Ting nestorian popularizes in China(大秦景教流行中国碑) an unprecedented international impact. Although the original monument is located in Xi'an City in the hinterland of the northwestern

hinterland, it is difficult for ordinary Westerners to see their true colors. The widespread distribution of imitation monuments and molded monuments around the world has enabled more scholars and people to be fortunate enough to see them. The texts and patterns similar to the original monument have promoted the understanding of scholars and people in many countries on monument of Jingiao and Xi'an.[4]

3. Conclusion

We may conclude that there are three kinds of views of monuments. Firstly, protection and conservation activities did by Bi Yuan(毕沅) in middle of the Qing dynasty. Which is the traditional attitude of Chinese, such as Confucius had traveled around the country and examined the relics of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.[5] Secondly, Adachi Kiroku measured the cultural heritage in Xi'an city from 1906 to 1910, the developed the conservation of monument and communicated the meaning of places of memory. Thirdly, Frits Vilhelm Holm collected and duplicated the Monument of Ting nestorian popularizes in China(大秦景教流行中国碑). Holm's replicas enhanced the influence of the monuments on the world.

The architecture and culture relics in Xi'an city may disappeared physically, but they did leave a tangible legacy in that Xi'an greatly influenced other capitals in East Asian states who were eager to be seen as civilised and advanced as China. All in all, there are different forms in Xi'an city of memory from 18th to 20th, they represented the viewpoint on history, cultural perspective and values of the elders.

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