

China's Protection and Utilization of Museum Relics: Latest Trends

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ABSTRACT

Museum relics, as a significant embodiment of a nation's traditional culture, have remarkably important scientific, artistic and historical values. The effective and rational measure has been implemented by the Chinese government to protect museum relics, resulting in numerous accomplishments. This paper mainly emphasizes the latest development in the utilization of museum relics with respect to legislation and policy. The results indicate that first, laws and policies concerning museum relics are re-amended, readjusted and established to encounter the new phenomenon in the complex field of museum relics; second, the Chinese government's attitude towards cultural relics has changed qualitatively, from absolute protection to rational utilization, and the cultural value and economic value of museum relics are stressed.

Keywords: museum relics, China, protection and utilization, cultural development

I. INTRODUCTION

China's scholars have long concentration upon relic protection and utilization due to embodied national spirit and their multi-faceted value in history, culture, archaeology, science and economical studies (Wang 1990; Duan 2017). Technology has remarkably enhanced access to museum relics and provided the way to make protection and rational use of cultural relics. International efforts have been constant with respect to relics, endangered or damaged, and those extant. As a big player, China never misses its role. Museums are a main platform of collection, protection, exhibition and utilization for cultural inheritance and museum relics are paramount priority for relic protection and utilization in China (Wang 1990; Ouyang 2008).

In current literature, scholarly discussions of relic-related policies are few, highlighting free-of-charge access policy of museums (Ouyang 2008; Li 2022; Song 2012; Wang 2017; Liu 2019). To our knowledge, this paper is in unique to address the latest development in the utilization of museums relics, including legislative improvements.

II. RELEVANT HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PROTECTION AND UTILIZATION OF MUSEUM RELICS IN CHINA

Chinese people have a long tradition of cultural legacy, which can date back to Shang Dynasty (between 1045 B.C. and 1700 B.C.), when specialized officials collected and managed national classics (namely, inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells), and religious utensils (Wang 1990). The year of 1905 witnessed the history-making foundation of the first public museum in China by Zhang Qian, who is a renowned educator, politician and businessman in modern China. As a milestone in China's museum history, his museum housing 2,900 items covering nature, history and fine arts, is titled as "Nantong Museum" while Nantong is an eastern coastal city (China Cultural Relics Bureau 1985). During Anti-Japanese War, two significant cultural relic rescue incidents occurred, namely "southward relocation of ancient relics" and "westward relocation of ancient relics". Chinese people traveled more than 20,000 kilometers in mountains and waters, and covered more than 10 provinces and cities for 15 consecutive years (Feng 2013). The sole purpose is just protecting millions of national treasures. These two events are called National Cultural Heritage Defense War, marking the beginning of the protection of cultural relics in modern China.

After the founding of New China, the central government has adopted a series of measures including financial investment, training of cultural relic protection

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experts, and the establishment of a legal framework to protect valuable cultural relics. It has achieved great success in the past few decades. Legally, the Central Government Office (1949-1954) issued a series of orders and instructions, including *Interim Measures on Prohibiting the Export of Precious and Cultural Relic Books*, and *Law on the Protection of Historic Sites, Precious Cultural Relics, Books, and Rare Creatures*. These regulations prohibit the export and smuggling of revolutionary documents, revolutionary objects, ancient creatures, ancient paintings, and ancient currencies. These laws and regulations have effectively prevented the destruction and overseas outflow of cultural relics and specimens. At the same time, the Central Government also promulgated *Administrative Measures on the Protection of Local Cultural Relics and Historic Sites* and *Order on Collecting Revolutionary Cultural Relics*. This is China's earliest laws and regulations on the protection of cultural relics.

Later, the Chinese government officially incorporated the legal provisions of "State protection of places of interest, precious cultural Relics, and other Important historical and cultural heritage" into *the Constitution of the People's Republic of China*. The State Council promulgated the *Interim Regulations on the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection* in accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, laying a foundation for the establishment of a system of Chinese cultural relics protection regulations. The State Council also announced the first national list of key cultural relic protection institutions. China has begun to implement a system of "approved and announced cultural relic protection institutions" to protect historical and cultural heritage (Hua and Zhang 2014, p.74).

With the development of China's economic construction and the expansion of the city's scale, people's lack of awareness of cultural heritage protection in the process of urban planning and construction has led to the destruction of ancient buildings, sites, tombs, monuments, and places of interest to varying degrees (Wang 1990; Zhang 2019). Therefore, the Chinese government has been working to take effective measures to curb the continued destruction of cultural relics and historic sites. The Twenty-Fifth Session of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress passed *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics* in 1982. This became China's first law on the protection of historical and cultural relics and cultural heritage, marking the formation of a cultural heritage protection system emphasizing the protection of cultural relics in the state.

In practice, according to the requirements of *State Council's Notice on the First National Census of Mobile Cultural Relics*, China conducted the first

national census of movable cultural relics. The census targets state organs, institutions, state-owned enterprises, and state-controlled enterprises, the People's Liberation Army and the Armed Police Force in China, excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions, at all levels. Removable cultural relics kept by various state agencies, include state-owned movable cultural relics that have been identified before the census and newly identified in the census. There were 108,154,907 movable cultural relics across the country as of October 31, 2016 (State Administration of Cultural Heritage¹ 2017). Through the census, the government has fully grasped the quantity distribution, preservation status, custody rights and usage management of existing state-owned removable cultural relics in China, which is conducive to better protection and utilization of cultural relics.

In recent years, there has been a new change in the field of museums. In 2004, the National Bureau of Statistics published *Classification of Culture and Related Industries (CCRI)* and included museums in the core layer of the cultural industry and classified them as cultural and art service projects. This industry classification was revised twice in 2012 and 2018. In the latest version, the cultural and related industries refer to the collection of production activities that provide cultural products and cultural related products to the public (CCRI 2018). Relevant production activities are divided into two levels. The first level is the production of cultural products (including goods and services) such as creation, manufacturing, dissemination, and display that directly meet people's spiritual needs with culture as the core content (ibis). The second is activities such as auxiliary production of cultural and intermediary services, production of cultural equipment, and production of cultural consumer terminals (including manufacturing and sales), which are required to realize the production of cultural products (ibis).

According to the latest classification, cultural industries are classified into cultural core areas and cultural related (auxiliary) areas. Museums belong to the category of content preservation services under the core area of culture. This indicates that museums, as important institutions for public cultural services, have always been a core component of China's cultural industry and marks that museums have dual attributes of cultural undertakings and cultural industries. In the "planned economy" era, museums once regarded as economically insignificant have now entered the spotlight of cultural industry development, and their status has continued to rise, and their economic role has become increasingly prominent. Since then, the rational use of cultural relics has become a hot topic of discussion in academic circles and the industry.

¹ http://www.sach.gov.cn/art/2017/4/7/art_722_139374.html

In fact, there are two ways to better promote the proper usage of cultural relics. One way is to use advanced technology. For example, the documentary "If National Treasure Talks" is representative of advanced technology. For the first time, it uses the latest holographic digital acquisition technology and holographic storage technology in the television field. Besides it presents 100 cultural relics in an all-round and personal way, making into a 100-episode documentary, 5 minutes each. The multi-modal work tells a piece of cultural relic in the way of "micro-record" and "micro-TV-series". It makes strange cultural relics familiar to ordinary people in terms of their characteristics and cultural values. It has become an example of digital cultural creativity

Another approach is to develop creative cultural products. For example, the Palace Museum has witnessed constant expansion in creative cultural products from 195 categories in 2013 to over 10 thousand categories in 2017. The sales volume of the Palace Museum's creative cultural products reached 1.5 billion yuan in 2017. The added value from China's creative cultural industry reached about 3.5 trillion yuan in 2017, accounting for 4.2 percent of the country's GDP (National Bureau of Statistics² 2018). This case is a success. After that, many activities related to the development and utilization of cultural relics are undertaken in first-tier cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shengzhen, and Guangzhou, and ancient capital cities, such as Xi'an. The year of 2016 is important for the transformation and utilization of cultural relics, because more policies concerning the utilization of cultural relics are issued below.

III. LAWS AND REGULATIONS

A. *Constitution of the People's Republic of China (CPRC) Amendment in 2018*

The first law mentioning cultural relics and museums is the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which is the fundamental law of China and provides for the highest legal effect. After four amendments in 1988, 1993, 2004 and 2018, the latest version of the Constitution consists of 4 chapters and 143 articles. Only Article 22 refers to cultural relics and museums, stating that:

"The country develops the literature and art cause, serving the people, the socialist cause, the news broadcasting and television cause, the publishing and distribution cause, the library, the museum, the cultural center, and other cultural undertakings, and develops mass cultural activities. The state protects places of interest, precious cultural relics, and other important historical and cultural heritage. (CPRC 22)"

² <http://www.stats.gov.cn/>

The most fundamental nature of museums is stipulated in CPRC for the first time, stating "serving the people and serving socialism". It reveals that the state's attitude towards cultural relics is absolute protection, and there is no content citing the development and use of cultural relics.

B. *Cultural Relic Protection Law (CRPL) Amendment in 2017*

Guided by the principles of Article 22 of CPRC, the Law on the *Protection of Cultural Relic of the People's Republic of China* was adopted by the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress on November 19, 1982. This is the first special law concerning the field of Chinese cultural relics and museums, and it is also the basic law for the construction and development of the entire cultural heritage, including museums. After five revisions in 1991, 2002, 2007, 2013, 2015 and 2017, the latest edition consists of 8 chapters and 80 articles.

Article 4 of Chapter 1 is the core of the CRPL. It proposes four measures for cultural relics work: "Protection as a main task, rescue as priority, rational use and strengthened management" (CRPL 4). More specifically, "Protection as a main task" is the central task of cultural relics work; In any case, cultural institutions must adhere to the principle of protection; This is the basis for the existence of cultural relics and the development of the cultural relics industry. "Rescue as priority" is the most urgent task at this stage because the special nature of the cultural relic determines that it will never be regenerated once it is damaged. "Rational use" is the ultimate purpose of protection. "Strengthening management" is an effective guarantee for protection and reasonable utilization. This policy is a main line for implementing the CRPL, and is the basic guideline for cultural relics work.

Chapter 4 is the most relevant to the protection of cultural relics, containing 14 articles. It mainly stresses the following aspects, including the classification of the collections, the methods of obtaining the collections, the borrowing procedures and period of the collections, the donation, rental or sale of the collections, the restoration of the collections, the security measures of the collections, the damages, theft or loss etc. However, there is no mention of how to use cultural relics for education, scientific research and commercial activities.

Although the CRPL is a protection-focused law and not a usage-driven law, protection does not mean that relics cannot be utilized. The key lies in its rationality. This can be interpreted from two aspects. On the one hand, strengthening protection is the basic premise of development and utilization, and on the other hand, development and utilization is an effective way to protect and inherit. Compared with the past relevant laws that emphasized absolute protection of cultural

relics, the revised CRPL proposes the rational use of cultural relics on the basis of protecting cultural relics, which is a major breakthrough.

C. *Museum Regulations (MR) in 2015*

In 2015, the State Council promulgated *Museum Regulations*, marking the first national regulatory document of the Chinese museum industry, which is of great significance for the development of Chinese museums into the track of rule of law. The MR has 5 chapters, including 47 articles. Several articles relate to the use of museum cultural relics, such as Articles 5, 6, 19, and 34. Article 34 is most relevant to the use of museum cultural relics, providing that:

“The State encourages museums to develop derivative products by exploiting the richness of collections in collaboration with the cultural, creative and tourism industries, so as to improve their capacity of development.” (MR 34)

This article is in response to "encourage public cultural institutions with conditions to tap unique resources, strengthen the development of creative cultural products, and innovate cultural products and service content" as proposed in the document of *the Proposal on Accelerating the Construction of a Modern Public Cultural Service System*. It also makes it clear for the first time that museums can carry out business activities on the premise that they do not violate their non-profit attributes and do not deviate from their purposes and missions. The MR provides institutional guarantee for the legality of museums to develop creative cultural industries.

IV. CENTRAL POLICIES

A. *State Council 2016 recommendations: Recommendations on Further Strengthening the Work of Cultural Relics (RFSWCR) in 2016*

The RFSWCR is a programmatic document that guides the protection and utilization of cultural relics at present and in the future. It revolves the outstanding problems existing in the work of cultural relics, and makes arrangements for implementing responsibilities, strengthening protection, expanding utilization, and strict law enforcement. It has seven parts, namely important significance, overall requirements, clear responsibilities focus on protection, expansion and utilization, strict law enforcement and perfect guarantee. Among them, the first two parts are about the importance and urgency of cultural relics work, the guiding ideology, basic principles and main goals of cultural relics work in the new period. The last five parts focus on measures to strengthen cultural relics and cover 24 aspects of policy measures. Only the fifth part underscores the expansion and use of cultural relics from six facets and puts forward specific measures.

This is the first detailed statement of policies and regulations on the reasonable use of cultural relics.

For a long time, China always suffers from two views on how to treat cultural relics. The first view is that the cultural relics can only be protected and cannot be exploited, and once they are exploited, they will cause damage (Cultural Relics Bureau of the Ministry of Culture 1985). Another view is that cultural relics can be better protected through development and utilization (Xie and Wang 2018). There are also two undesirable phenomena in the practice of cultural relics. A pernicious and persistent phenomenon is inadequate protection (Hua and Zhang 2014). For example, some ancient buildings and ancient sites are dilapidated and rendered unattended. Another negative phenomenon is excessive utilization (Zhang 2019). For instance, large demolition and construction, and excessive commercial development result in the destruction of many cultural relics.

The RFSWCR has provided new enlightenment that protection and utilization are not actually contradictory in terms of cultural relics. The key is to find the balance between the two and realize the unity of protection and utilization. The protection and utilization of cultural relics are unity of opposites. To deal with this contradiction, the key is to grasp the "degree": neither excessive development can make cultural relics difficult to survive, nor can excessive protection make them lose vitality. Only by combining protection and utilization can sustainable cultural relics be achieved. The RFSWCR points a reliable way for the development and utilization of cultural relics. i.e. cultural institutions promote the rational and appropriate use of cultural relics on the basis of earnestly increasing the protection of cultural relics, aiming to strive to find a way to protect and utilize cultural relics in line with national conditions.

B. *Derivative recommendations aforementioned: Recommendations on Promoting the Development of Cultural and Creative Products of Cultural Relic Institutions (RPDCCPCRI) in 2016*

According to the relevant requirements of RFSWCR, *Recommendations on Promoting the Development of Cultural and Creative Products of Cultural Relic and Cultural Institutions* was proposed, which is the first policy document on the development of creative cultural products by cultural relic and cultural organs. It includes three parts: general requirements, main tasks, and supporting policies and measures, which provide policy guarantees for promoting the development of creative cultural products by cultural relic departments.

The RPDCCPCRI makes some new achievements as followings. Firstly, the functions of cultural and cultural relic institutions have been expanded. For example, it states that relevant departments at all levels

should promote various cultural and cultural relic units such as museums, art galleries, and libraries to explore cultural resources in the collection and develop creative cultural products. This expands the functions of cultural relic organs, if compared with its previous positioning of 'relying on cultural resources in the collection and providing public cultural services'. The development of creative cultural products by cultural relic institutions is an international trend. Compared with the development of cultural and creative products by cultural and cultural relic branches such as museums and art galleries in developed countries, although some cultural relic units such as the Palace Museum of China have also successfully explored, relevant institutions are still in their infancy (Li 2016).

The second achievement is to advocate to establish an innovative evaluation mechanism. For example, this proposal incorporates the development of cultural and creative products into the grading assessment, and increases the weight of indicators. This is a major breakthrough in contrast to China's traditional "iron rice bowl" system. At the same time, it is stressed that qualified non-state cultural relic units fully explore cultural resources, develop cultural creative products, and enjoy

The third achievement is to encourage deep cooperation with social forces. For instance, it suggested the form of cooperation of social forces. The form of cooperation of social forces are suggested. For example, it encourages the development of cultural and creative products and the creation of cultural and creative brands by means of crowd creation, crowd sourcing, crowd helping, and crowdfunding; Companies are encouraged to participate in the development of cultural and creative products by means of limited copying, franchising, and agency; these are brand-new challenges for cultural and cultural relic units.

The fourth achievement is concerning the income distribution of creative cultural products. The new provision states that the business income and operating income obtained from the development of cultural and creative products by cultural and cultural relics institutions are included in the unified management of the unit's budget in accordance with regulations and can be used to strengthen public welfare services, collection, continued investment in development, and personnel performance rewards etc.

The fifth achievement is concerning funding guarantee for creative cultural products. The new provision requires that the central and local governments at all levels increase their support for the development of cultural and creative products through existing funding channels. It is suggested that, in accordance with the principle of piloting first and gradual advancing, pilots should be conducted in some

national, some provincial and some sub-provincial museums, art galleries, and libraries. The innovation mechanism of the experimental system is even greater: for example, allowing the experimental unit to invest in the establishment of enterprises through intellectual property rights and other methods to engage in the development and operation of cultural and creative products.

The purpose of this proposal is to deeply explore the cultural resources held by cultural and cultural relic units, develop cultural and creative industries, develop cultural and creative products, promote coordinated economic and social development, and enhance the country's soft power. Little content proposes to prevent the destruction of cultural relics and prevent the loss of cultural relics and other state-owned assets when developing cultural and creative products.

C. Latest recommendations in 2018: Recommendations on Strengthening the Reform of the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Relics in 2018

This is a guiding document for comprehensively strengthening the reform and protection of cultural relics in the new era, meaning that cultural relics work has been incorporated into the overall strategic deepening reform. The protection of cultural relics has ushered in a new era. This is the first central policy document specifically issued for the protection and utilization of cultural relics since the founding of the People's Republic of China and issued in the name of the General Office of the State Council and the State Council.

The purpose is to strengthen top-level design, system innovation and precise management, combine development with protection, and strive to find a way to protect and utilize cultural relics in line with national conditions.

V. 5. LOCAL POLICY IMPROVEMENT: FIRST RECOMMENDATIONS AS MUNICIPAL CULTURAL GOVERNANCE IN 2018

In 2018, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and other 8 departments issued a notice on Implementation Suggestions on Promoting the Pilot Work of Cultural and Creative Product Development in Beijing Cultural and Cultural Relics Units, making Beijing the only city in China to promulgate policy documents on cultural and creative product development. This document consists of 5 parts and identifies 25 pilot institutions for the development of cultural and creative products, including 22 museums including Art Museum of Beijing Fine Art Academy, Capital Library of China, Capital Museum of China,

Military Museum of Chinese People's Revolution as well as National Centre for the Performing.

The purpose of these suggestions is to guide and promote the development of cultural products by Beijing cultural relic institutions, activate those cultural resources in Beijing's collections, strengthen the protection of cultural relics and cultural heritage, enhance the market system of modern cultural industries, and promote the development of cultural industries. These measures have directed Chinese scholars, museum practitioners, policy makers, and educators to focus their attention on the transformation and utilization of cultural relics in Beijing Museums.

VI. LATEST SCHEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *National Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan for National Cultural Relics (2006-2011)* emphasizes the importance of the protection and use of museums and cultural relics in four aspects. Firstly, the role of cultural relic protection in economic and cultural construction is strengthened. Secondly, Section 8 of Chapter 6 stresses the museum's various tasks, including establishing a sound museum system, grading collections, archiving records, optimizing cultural relic protection measures, and improving the physical conditions of collections. Chapter VI also proposes to formulate the "Museum Management Regulations" to continuously improve the legal system of cultural relics. Thirdly, Section 13 of Chapter 7 pinpoints the application of technical protection in museum collection of relics. Fourthly, Chapter 8 mentioned that in accordance with the requirements of the market economy, museums were encouraged to develop and sell featured relic-derived cultural products and services to enhance their self-sustainability.

The *Twelfth Five-Year Plan" (2011-2015) for the National Cultural Relics Museum Development* has four outstanding points. The first is to emphasize the exchanges and cooperation between cultural relic museums covering Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. For instance, the Chinese government encourages cultural exchange implementation plans with foreign governments. China has also promoted the signing of bilateral agreements, memorandums of understanding and inter-agency cooperation agreements between governments to prevent theft and illegal export of cultural relics with other countries, which can form an international cooperation mechanism for protection of cultural relics. The second point is to strengthen the promotion and application of modern information technology, especially the Internet of Things technology in the cultural relic museum industry, and improve the level of informationization in various aspects of museums. The third point is to promote the integration of cultural relic museums into economic and

social development. The fourth point is concerning the Museum Regulations which had been issued and implemented.

The *Outline of the Museum's Medium- and Long-Term Development Plan (2011-2020)* provides a blueprint for museums. It is an action plan for the development of national museums in the next decade and an important basis for the development of museums in various regions and departments. The blueprint includes a scientific and reasonable legal system for the protection of cultural relics with Chinese characteristics, a group of high-end talents and advanced technology, and a modern museum system. This system focuses on the co-construction of national museums by the central and local governments, and attempts to build clear public welfare goals, perfect investment mechanisms, sound regulatory systems, standardized governance structures, and efficient micro-operations.

The *Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for National Cultural Relics Development (2016-2020)* requires that cultural relics protection should realize two transformations:

- from the emphasis on salvage protection to both salvage and preventive protection;
- from the emphasis on the protection of cultural relics to the overall protection of cultural relics and the surrounding environment and cultural ecology keep cultural relics safe.

According to the rational utilization of cultural relics, the plan puts forward some suggestions below. First, it is to build an innovative mode of rational utilization of cultural relics. For example, the promotion of the protection and utilization of cultural relics should be combined with new urbanization and new rural construction, with poverty alleviation and economic development, and with the construction of a beautiful China. At the same time, it is necessary to carry out classification and grading of cultural relics, formulate tourist load standards for cultural relic scenic spots, and cultivate exquisite tourism, research, and leisure tourism routes with museums and cultural relic protection institutions as medium. Second, attention should be paid to promoting the development of cultural and creative products. In this plan, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage also proposed development goals for 2020, namely 50 museum-related cultural product brands, 10 museum-related cultural product R & D bases, and more than 50 cultural relic institutions and enterprises with annual sales of more than 10 million Yuan. Those should include at least 20 institutions with annual sales of more than 20 million Yuan. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to expand cultural exchanges and cooperation with foreign countries and build a "Belt and Road" cultural heritage corridor.

The *Recommendations on Strengthening the Scientific and Technological Work of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan* (2017) emphasizes the application of technology in the protection and utilization of cultural relics. For example, the use of modern information technology, such as the Internet of Things, big data, cloud computing, and mobile internet to promote the construction of the Smart Museum, build the Smart Palace Museum, Smart Dunhuang, and the Smart Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Park.

At the policy level, the protection and use of cultural relics in China have been incorporated into the national economic development plan, which indicates that the government has made great efforts to protect and use cultural relic resources. Analysis of these policies indicates that the activities of protecting and using cultural relics are forming a system, including the mutual coordination of technological development, financial investment, personnel training, and state exchanges. These developments have allowed cultural relics to reach a new level of qualitative change and have contributed to China's economic, cultural, and social development. However, sufficient resources, including human resources and investment, are needed to ensure that the protection and utilization of cultural relics proceed smoothly. Otherwise, the protection and utilization of cultural relics will deteriorate if the investment is insufficient.

VII. CONCLUSION

China has a long and rich history, and museums, as a place where 'Chinese history' is preserved and displayed, should be better protected and utilized (Wang 2017). After about 40 years of the development of cultural relic protection, China has established a new cultural relic protection management mechanism (Xie and Wang 2018). These mechanisms include the relevant legislation discussed above, which have made significant contributions to the protection and utilization of cultural relics. Recently, the Chinese government has made adjustments and developments to better protect and use museum relics, such as improvements to laws in the utilization of cultural relics, large-scale national cultural relics investigations, the establishment of protection areas and research bases, international cultural relic exchanges and cooperation.

One of the most obvious changes is that the Chinese government's attitude towards cultural relics has changed qualitatively, from absolute protection to rational utilization. The rational use of cultural relics can be interpreted from two facets: keep sustained survival of cultural relics and utilize cultural relics to make the profit. The cultural value and economic value of cultural relics are stressed. Despite the many achievements, the protection and utilization of cultural relics remains urgent. Destruction of cultural relics and

smuggling of cultural relics, over exploitation of cultural relics are active threats. It remains a core issue for the Chinese government to provide protection.

Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go in improving the policies concerning the protection and utilization within the changes in society. As O'Connor (2009) states that 'creative China must find its own path', and cultural institutions must find their own path in preserving and utilizing cultural relics. The path for the protection and rational utilization of cultural relics might be described by a Chinese traditional saying 'crossing the river by feeling the stones — step steadily and take another step'³ (mozhe shitou guohe — caiwen yibu, zaimai yibu).

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³ 摸着石头过河 in Chinese