

From Emperor's Paradise to Public's Garden

The Vicissitude of Spirit of ChengDe Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples

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Abstract. This paper introduced the General Situation, Background in History, Evaluation of the World Heritage Committee, Evolution in History of ChengDe Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples. Point out it is the most typical Emperor's garden survival today. But there are some trouble in both heritage and Setting of historic Sites because of natural forces, society Vicissitudes and economic rapid growth. We hope through the master conservation plan, the spirit of the place can be reestablished, and a harmony relationship between the creator and users can be achieved.

Mountain Resort and its outlying Temples were the objectification of traditional China world view and art spirit. Moreover, it remains a vivid memory of the vicissitude of China from 18th century. After Qing Dynasty perished, Mountain Resort and its outlying Temples were destroyed by different politic force. Since 1950s, a lot of restorations has been done. Today, it confronts some problems about its physical context, and the different of spirit between its creator in the past and current users, some history scene have disappeared and spirit of place has changed. Now, we are drafting a master conservation plan about the world heritage, we hope through the plan, the spirit of the place can be reestablished, and a harmony relationship between the creator and users can be achieved.

General Situation

The Mountain Resort of Chengde, a key national cultural protection unit, was listed in the World Cultural Heritage Directory in 1994. It was built in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and took about 90 years (1703-1792) to construct.

The Mountain Resort lies in a long-narrow valley along the bank of Wulie River, 230kilometers from Beijing. It covers an area of 564 sq meters. When compared with the Forbidden City, the mountain resort is characterized by its simplicity and elegance. It is a grand architectural complex that consists of numerous palaces, the largest royal garden in China and wonderful scenery, combined with a pleasant climate.

The Mountain Resort is divided into four parts: the Palace

Area, Lake Area, Plain Area and Mountain Area. The Palace Area lies in the south part of the Mountain Resort and is a concentration of palaces where the Qing emperors handled the political affairs and where the royal families lived. The Lake Area lies in north of the Palace Area. Eight islets dotted in the lake, dividing the Lake Area into several fields of different sizes. The Plain Area is located at the foot of the mountain, north of the Lake Area. The plain is a vast area, and is covered with thick grass and trees. The Mountain Area, located in the northwest of the Mountain Resort, accounts for 80% of the total area. The mountain area is formed by four valleys. Various pavilions, temples and other structures dot the mountain slopes and valleys. It is an emperor's paradise.

In the outlying area, 11 magnificent temples stand on the hills in a semi-circle. As they were divided into eight sections under the administration of Beijing, they were usually referred to as the "Eight Outer Temples". Only seven temples remain intact. They comprise the largest temple building complex existing in China. They were used by nobles of various ethnic minority groups who came to have an audience with the Qing emperors, and to reside and conduct religious activities. These temples, built on the elevating hill slopes, look grand and splendid.

Background in History

In the early years of Qing Dynasty, Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, Tibet was powerful and people there were very religious, so Buddhist sutra teachings is the spiritual pillar of Mongolians and Tibetans. Lamaism elites were in the effective control of the local political regime, together with a large number of economic wealth and all the temples. In order to strengthen its control of the northern land and consolidate national unity, Qing Dynasty carried out conciliatory policy to the minority of China, to respect their beliefs and customs while ruling them.(figure 1.)

Since the Mountain Resort was completed in 1708, the emperors would come and stay here long to escape the summer heat and handle government affairs. Therefore a great number of Minority chiefs of Mongolian and Tibetan as well as foreign embassies came to Chengde annually to have an audience with the emperor and attend the celebrations. Temples were built where the political and religious figures could pay homage to Buddha.

Evaluation of the World Heritage Committee

The Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples in Chengde was included in "the World Heritage list" in 1994 (No.200-011) according to the selection criteria for cultural heritage C(II) (IV).

Proposed as follows: " Chengde Mountain Resort and its outlying temples represent the great achievements of art in ancient architecture and garden building. It is a typical example of perfect combination of royal palace and royal temples in ancient China. The site embodies the ruling ideology of the emperors of the Qing Dynasty

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(1644-1911) and relevant practices, and thus they are of social, political and historic significance. With explicit characteristics of Eastern gardens, it has an important impact on the world's garden art.”

“Chengde Mountain Resort and its outlying temple are a large-scale ancient architecture group that combines a royal garden with royal temples. They were a witness to a united and consolidated Chinese nation of many ethnic groups. They have epitomized the achievements of the ancient Chinese art in aspects of garden construction, architecture and religion, and at the same time embodied the achievements in many areas of ancient Chinese culture. Therefore, they have an outstanding universal value. (figure 2,3,4,5)

Evaluation of the World Heritage Committee: Chengde Mountain Resort is a summer palace of Qing Dynasty, which is located in Hebei Province, and was constructed from 1703 to 1792. It is a huge architectural complex composed of a large number of palaces and other buildings where government affairs were handled and ceremonies were held. Temples of various architectural styles and the royal garden are artfully integrated with the surrounding lakes, forests and pastures. The mountain Resort not only has high aesthetic value in research, but also reserved the rare historical monuments of the late period of China's feudal society.

Evolution in History

On the way northward to inspect his land, Emperor Kangxi found Changde was an ideal place with good local topography, pleasant weather and beautiful scenery, especially on the right way to the cradle of Qing Dynasty, really an entrance to the emperor's hometown. Right here, the emperor could easily control the whole China inside Great wall as well as handling every part of Mongolia, so The Mountain Resort was decided to be built on this land. In 1703 (the 42nd year after Kangxi's enthronement), the construction began. In 1713, Kangxi 36 Scenes and the enclosing wall were completed. Its construction stopped during Yongzheng ruling period. The construction was resumed in 1741 and in 1792 the Mountain Resort was completely finished with the added Qianlong 36 Scenes and the other more than 36 Scenes and outlying temples. So the Mountain Resort became a unique royal garden with magnificent scale, a precious landscape architectural masterpiece. (figure 6,7,8,9,10,11,12)

After Jiaqing ascended the throne, the Qing Dynasty began to decline. In 1861, the Emperor Xianfeng escaped to the Mountain Resort, As the Qing Dynasty was on the wane, the Mountain Resort declined, until 1950s, including of republic of China period and Japan puppet government ruling period.

From 1950s to now, especially from the late of 1970s, it has carry out many restorations and conservation in the Mountain Resort and its outlying temples, a lot of Scenic spots has been restored.

Spirit changes of heritage and setting

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Values and authenticity/integrity were well preserved totality. But there are several changes of heritage and setting. Today, it confronts some problems about its physical context, and the different of spirit between its creator in the past and current users.

Inside the Mountain Resort, pattern and some important topography were changed in the core area. there are some lakes were filled up by earth to built road for the convenient of later users, so some history scene have disappeared and spirit of place has changed. In the Mountain Resort hinterland, a children playground was built in the site that was princes' dwelling place in history. The clamors of the modern machine break the silence of classical imperial garden. In the Mountain Area, there are many pavilions, temples and other structures dot the mountain slopes and valleys, but most of them only ruins left now. We can not experience the most graceful garden space of mountain dwelling in China garden design theory, and the spirit of site that reflect the emperor' literary feelings. (figure 12.)

Outside the Mountain Resort, A lot of high buildings surrounding Mountain Resort have been built for rapid economic development and urbanization. Cheng De city district has enlarged 10 times than 1950s. From north shore of lake in the Mountain Resort, several tall building about 100 meters are very irritating to visitor, they have change the skyline and corrupt the landscape of the Mountain Resort. In recent years, in the core area of world heritage between the Mountain Resort and Outlying Temples, on east bank of Wulie river, a giant residential district has finished. The huge dimensions has changed the landscape and setting. (figure 14,15,16,17,18)

Millions tourist visit the Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples every year, 150,000 residents bought yearly tickets, and about 20,000 do morning exercises in the resort. Moreover these visitor usually move about in the Palace and Lake Area, not be enough of 1/5 total area of the Mountain Resort. Like a lively public garden, its spirit complete difference to past.

Crucial Reason and Strategy

Nature force destruction, unsuitable artificial change, and rapid urbanization by economic development are Crucial Reason of the Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples faced now.

We are drafting a master conservation plan about the world heritage, we hope through the plan, the spirit of the place can be reestablished, and a harmony relationship between the creator and users can be achieved.

To nature force destruction

There are 3 types in the conservation of historic gardens in the Mountain Resort. The first type is restoration of existing historic garden, such as the buildings at RuYiZhou island. Next is the conservation of archeological sites, such as some Mountain Area garden sites. The third is the historic garden reconstruction, such as WenYuan ShiZiLin garden.

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In all of the above types, conservation must be directed by the principle of authenticity and integrality.

Conventionally, restoration is a piece of work concerning the distribution, landscape, building, material, arts and crafts, and so on, and it should be based on original status. Most of conservation of historic gardens in present China belongs to the type. Because the buildings, not plant, dominate the scenery and attract one's attention, it is the major work in buildings restoration. Restoration must be carried out under the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in Chinese guidance,

The conservation of archeological sites should be directed by the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage sites in China, and carried out strictly according to the procedure. The assessment must be proceeded at first, including the assessment of heritage values with historical, artistic, and scientific and social values. Based on them, the idea of conservation will be adopted. We must emphasize the principle of reversible, readable and landscape preservation. It is necessary to clear a site of accumulated debris, surviving building footings that should be subject to minor restoration; excessive replacement of missing fabric is not permitted.

The reconstruction materialized the principles of Principles for the Conservation of Heritage sites in China:

- When a structure has been destroyed in recent years and the public still has a strong memory and connection with it, and there exists reliable documentation.
- When a small number of buildings existed in gardens or cultural landscapes and were intimately associated with the setting.
- When a small number of buildings of secondary importance have been destroyed within a complex of buildings in which the overall configuration remains largely intact.
- When heritage sites have particular commemorative functions.

As conclusive documentary evidence, there are three kinds of information : documentation, ancient paintings and old photographs, and the Designers must make sure if these information is believable or enough for reconstruction work.

To unsuitable artificial change

Restore history original state of the hill, lake and road, conservation the general space pattern of the Mountain Resort. Restore the style of bridge, vegetation and revetment by original state. The restoration must be directed by the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage sites in China, and carried out strictly according to the procedure.

To destruction of rapid urbanization

Strictly control the urban construction in the area between the Mountain Resort and its outlying temples or the east and north of the Mountain Resort. Above mentioned area are key and focus of landscape, and bear the spirit of the site.

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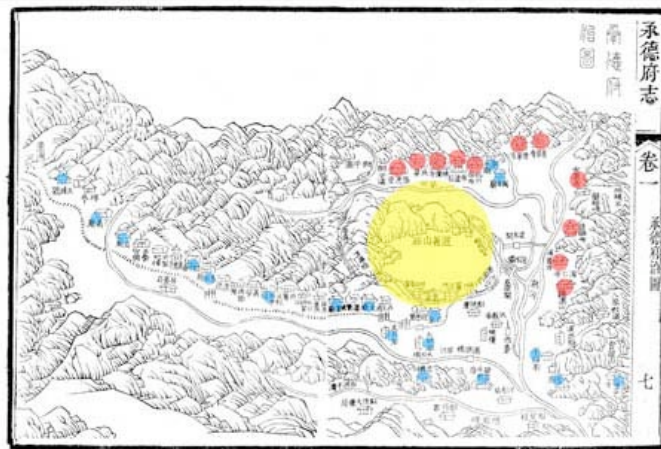
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New construction in the south of the Mountain Resort should not be catch sight of on the north of the lake in the Mountain Resort, to conserve the spirit of Emperor's Paradise.

Based on the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics, we delimited the area of protection and the area for control of construction (buffer zone). The area of protection involves both present and historic boundaries of Mountain Resort and its outlying temples, while the area for control of construction (buffer zone) involves most of ChengDe downtown district. In addition, considered the peculiarity of ChengDe, we delimited a environment harmonic zone, to control the landscape in large area. (figure 19)

According to the law, no construction of additional projects or such operations as blasting, drilling and digging are allowed or conducted within the area of protection. No construction of a project conducted in an area for control of construction may deform the historic features of the site protected for its historic and cultural value; while the design for the project will, in correspondence with the protection level of the site for keeping its historic and cultural value, be subject to the consent of the relevant administrative department for cultural relics before it is submitted to the department for urban and rural construction planning for approval. No facilities that will pollute the sites for protecting their historic and cultural value or their environment can be put up in the area of protection or the area for control of construction, and no activities that may affect the safety and environment of these sites can be conducted.



《光緒朝重訂承德府志》承德府治圖空間分析

figure 1. the pattern of ChengDe Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples , 19th late



figure 2. the Mountain Resort

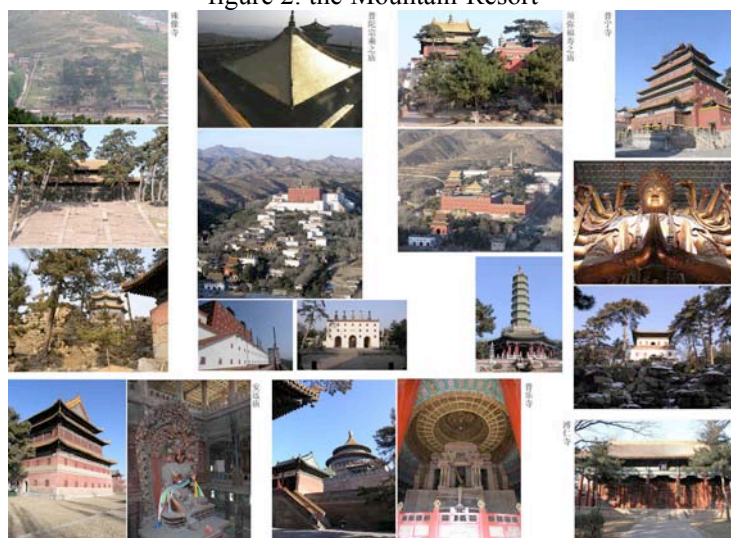


figure 3. Outlying Temples



figure 5. the pattern in 1707

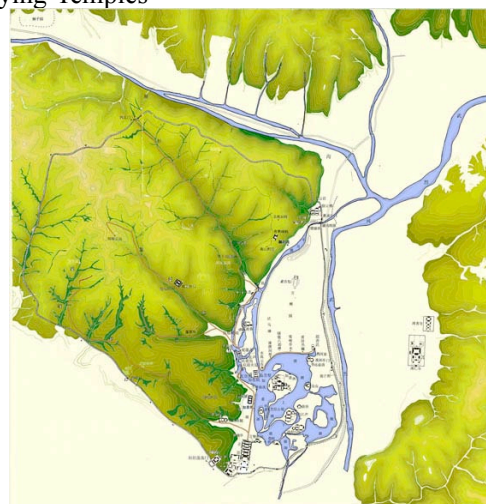


figure 6. the pattern in 1713

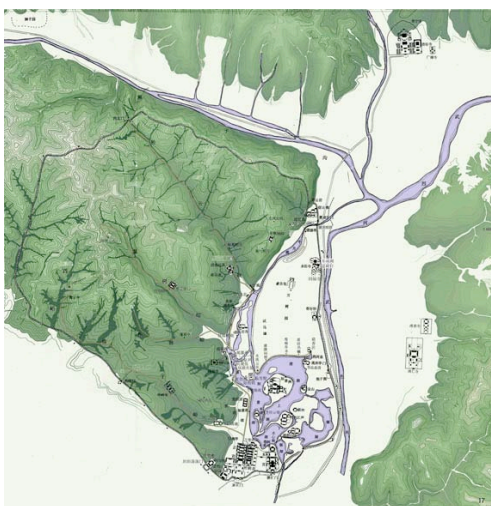


figure 7. the pattern in 1755

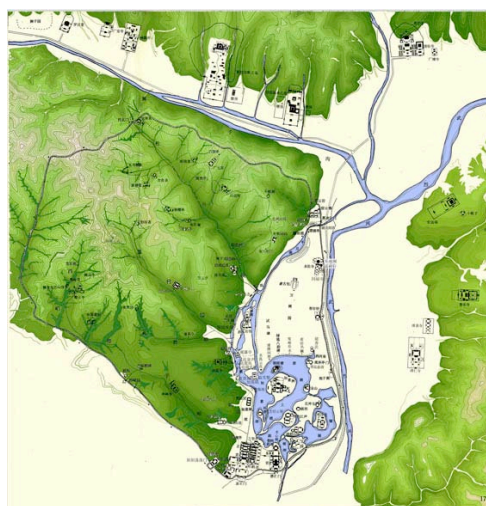


figure 8. the pattern in 1792



figure 9. painting in 1707 figure 10. bird's-eye view, after 1810, the Mountain Resort Museum



figure 11. bird's-eye view, before 1810, Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage

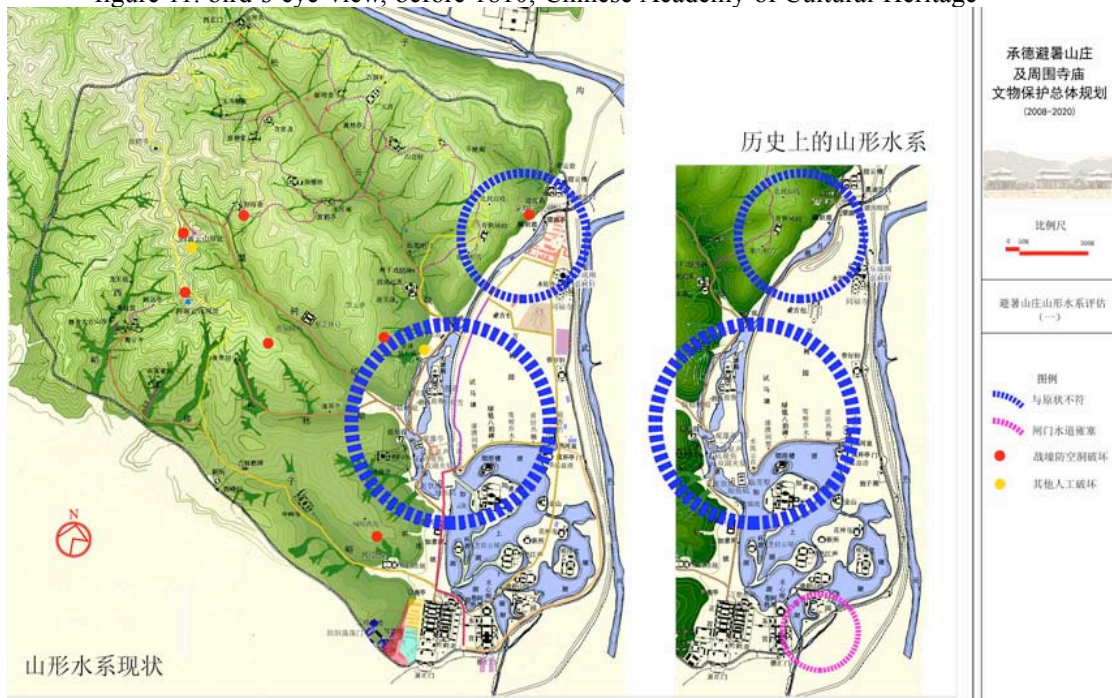


figure 12. pattern and some important topography were changed

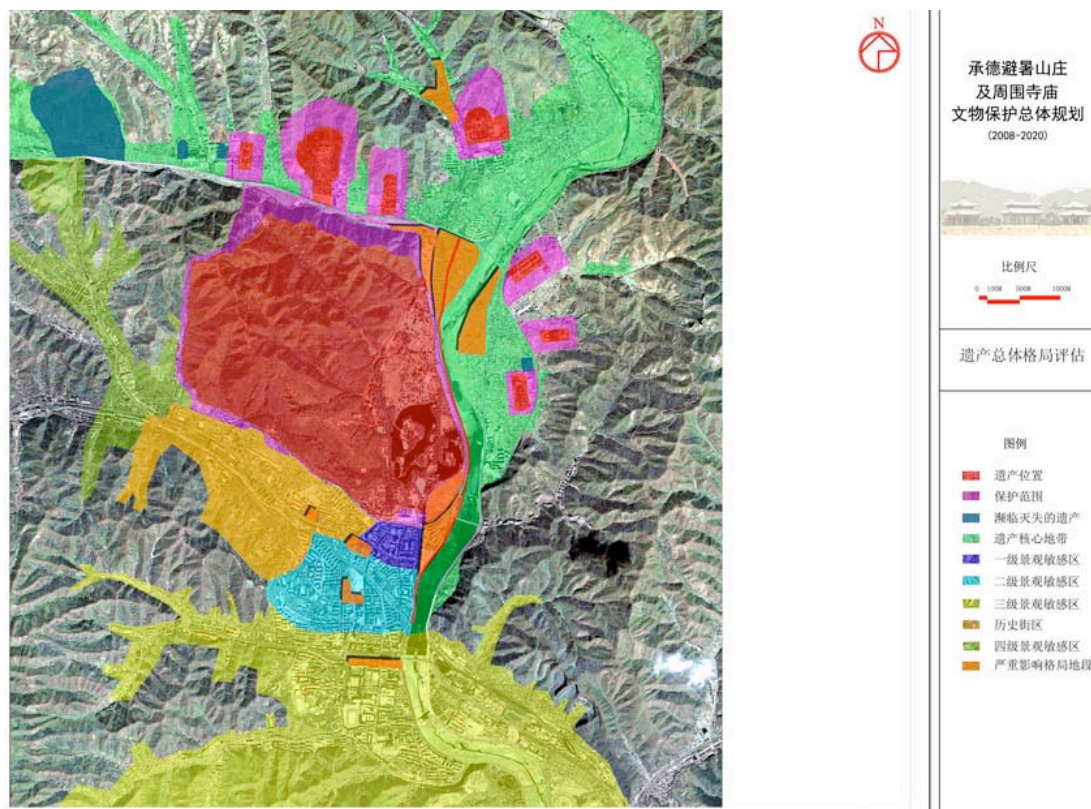


figure 13. the assessment of total pattern of ChengDe Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples

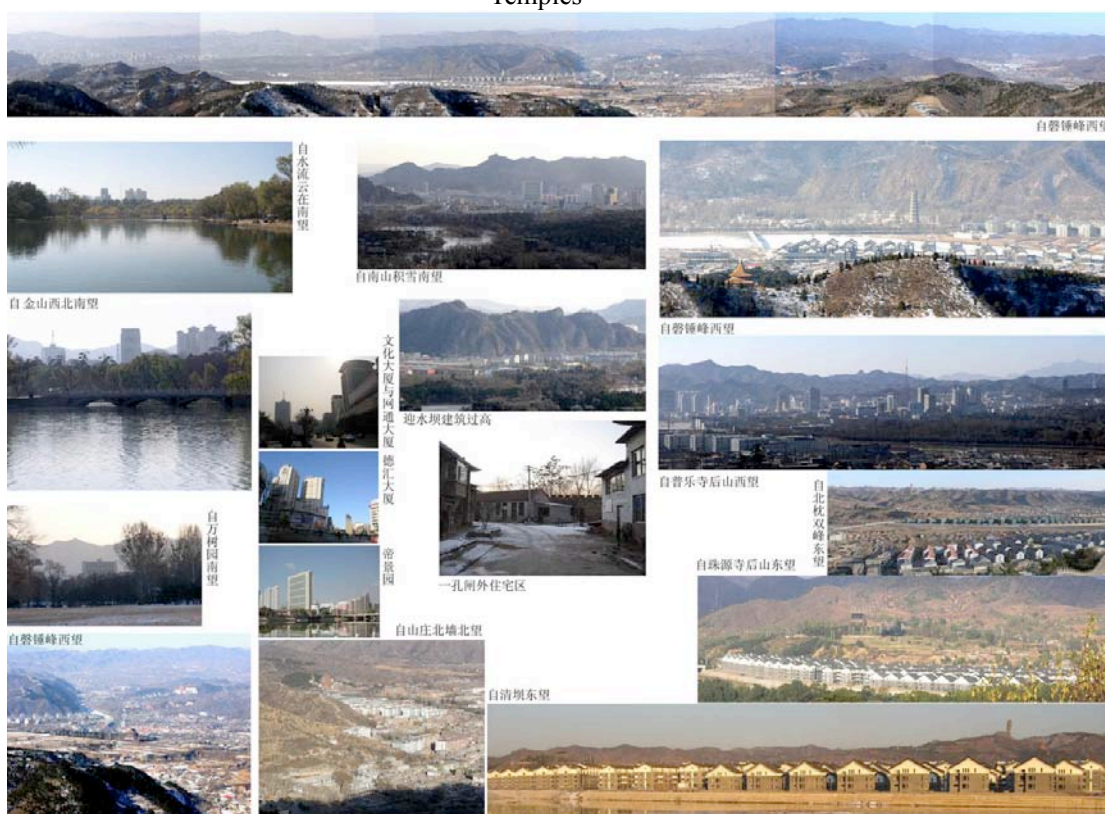


figure 14. rapid economic development and urbanization

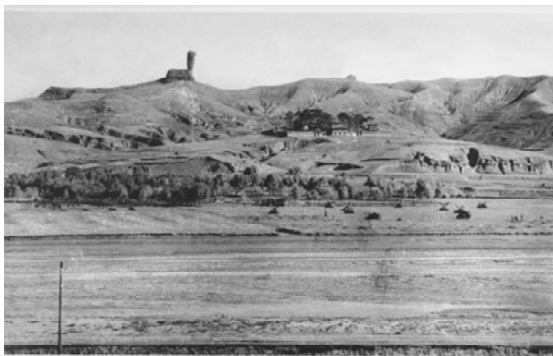


figure 15. photo in 1934

figure 16. photo in 1904



figure 17. the area of protection , the area for control of construction (buffer zone) and environment harmonic zone

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