

The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang: The Production of Theatre Spaces in the Revitalization and Utilization of Chinese Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

This study takes The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang as a case study to explore how artistic intervention transforms the original site ruins into a multidimensional public cultural “theatrical” space. Guided by Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, the study adopts descriptive analysis and combines literature review, field investigation, interviews, and questionnaire surveys to examine the regeneration of material, social, and mental space. The objectives of the study are: 1) to sort out the historical evolution of The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang; 2) to investigate the “theatrical” space produced through the combined action of the material, social, and mental dimensions of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis under artistic intervention; and 3) to study the social functions and artistic expressions of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis as a theatrical space in the contemporary cultural context, thereby constructing a research model from “ruins” to “heritage site.” The study finds that art is not an accessory decoration, but a key mechanism driving the transformation of the site from ruins to archaeological space and then to a public cultural field. This experiential mechanism created through artistic intervention is further transformed into a chain of social functions, explaining how the site shifts from static viewing to interactive participation and providing a path for archaeological site parks to achieve the coordination of conservation, educational communication, and cultural-tourism consumption in the contemporary era. At the same time, it also expands the interpretation of the construction and production of three-dimensional space in Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space from an artistic perspective, thereby contributing to interdisciplinary research.

Introduction

The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang, located in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China, is currently the largest, best-preserved, most complete, and richest-in-content settlement site of a Han-dynasty marquis state capital so far discovered in China(Zhao, M. ,2020). It is a cultural treasury and an important landmark that provides material evidence of the flourishing civilization of the Western Han Dynasty. Over the past decade, the activation of cultural heritage has shown a rising trend. Some scholars have paid attention to the social and environmental benefits of heritage activation and their contribution to economic growth (Xu, J. ,2020). Other scholars have argued that cultural heritage revitalization can improve the qualities of young people, promote the teaching of traditional customs, and help maintain cultural identity amid modern influences and technological progress (Barahan, C. F. C., 2023). In Malang, Indonesia, the revitalization and utilization of cultural heritage have been used to create new spatial functions that reconcile community conservation with cultural values, highlighting the importance of revitalizing cultural heritage (Antariksa, A., Santosa, H., Ernawati, J., & Yasmin, A. P., 2024). Polish scholars have assessed the role of cultural heritage capital in regional sustainable development, emphasizing its importance in enhancing regional resilience, especially in response to political and environmental challenges, and arguing that improving awareness of cultural heritage can strengthen the resilience of sustainable development (Li, Y., Du, Y., Yang, M.,

Liang, J., Bai, H., Li, R., & Law, A., 2023). As a valuable asset and an element of identity, the sustainability, inclusiveness, and continuity of cultural heritage are crucial to economic and social prosperity.

In summary, scholars have conducted in-depth research on archaeological site parks from multiple fields, including heritage conservation, economics, and regional studies, providing the theoretical and practical foundation for this study. However, existing studies mostly analyze mechanisms of protection and display, or explore paths for value realization from a single disciplinary perspective, and have not yet examined, from the dimension of artistic intervention in the production of space, the value and significance of artistic practice in the construction of archaeological site parks for cultural heritage. Therefore, grounded in the contemporary context of the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage, this study takes Lefebvre's theory of the "production of space" as its core analytical tool and focuses on the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis as a cultural field, revealing the regenerative process and construction of art in spatial terms. The study will revolve around three core objectives. First, it will systematically sort out the overall and continuous historical evolution of The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang and explore the physical basis of its transformation from ruins into a heritage space. Second, from the perspective of artistic intervention in the production of space, it will analyze how, as a typical modernized heritage site, the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis, through art in such multiple dimensions as physical design, architectural structural characteristics, form and representation, and social function, generates material space and mental space, and gradually forms the distinctive theatrical space of the archaeological site park and its artistic role. Third, it will examine how the integration of multiple art forms in this archaeological site park, including architectural art, landscape art, dance, music, costume, and literature, enables the site to transform into an attractive and interactive theatrical space, and the value of this transformation in connecting contemporary society with history and in strengthening local cultural identity.

Literature Review

The production of space is a theoretical framework first proposed in 1947 by the renowned French Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre. In a number of his works, he explored the concept of space and criticized the traditional view that regarded space merely as a container of production (Liu, H., 2020). On this basis, he put forward the core proposition that "space is a product" and explained this theory through a triadic framework. He argued that urban space is both a major product of capitalist production and consumption and the core of the production process (Du, R., 2018). Lefebvre's theory of the production of space is not only an extension of traditional Marxist political economy, but also a profound revelation of the spatial logic of twentieth-century capitalist society (Zhang, Y., Harvey, D., & Yang, Q. (2017). The Swiss critical geographer Fuchs focused on the dynamic process of the production of urban space, emphasizing the dialectical relationship between social relations and spatial form. Methodologically, he advocated the cyclical testing of theory and empirical research, as well as comparative urban studies and typological analysis, in order to reveal spatial practices in different contexts (Fuchs, C., 2019). In terms of architectural translation and interdisciplinary expansion, Pierre Filion, proceeding from

architectural and planning history, emphasized the architectural implications of the proposition that “space is a social product.” He proposed that “theory is not a ready-made method,” advocated a problem-driven research design, and called for the introduction of critical theory into the evaluation of concrete projects and design thinking. At the same time, he stressed the differences between the context of the French original texts and their dissemination through English translation, thereby correcting the reduction of Lefebvre to a single reading of the “spatial triad” (Filion, P., 2019). In terms of ideological critique and the politics of perception, Kanishka Goonewardena placed Lefebvre in dialogue with traditions associated with Althusser and Gramsci, proposing the genealogy of the problem of the “urban sensorium” and exploring how ideology and everyday experience are organized and reproduced in the production of urban space. Methodologically, he advocated combining Marxist spatial theory with methods from cultural geography, such as textual and image analysis and discourse critique, in order to reveal the mediating chain among space, ideology, and power (Goonewardena, K., 2005). The production of space is a major factor in understanding the complexity of urban society, and the production of urban space is of central importance to environmental issues in contemporary cities around the world (Rocha, A. A., 2020). In the urban environment, the production of space involves the interaction of social relations, mobility, and accessibility shaped by economic and ideological factors. It reflects how urban environments are created and transformed through human behavior, interaction, and the organization of labor and resources, and addressing social exclusion can strengthen urban planning and community development (Mondardo, M. L., 2009). Since the production of space involves social groups, it is characterized by spatial diversity and agency, and when the space they perceive is infringed upon, they will take political action (Meir, A., & Karplus, Y., 2018). For example, due to the lack of land records in India, the country will need to produce 31 million hectares of urban land by 2050. In exercising the power of eminent domain to develop urban land without implementing social protection provisions, the state must rely on the use of eminent domain and legislation to promote land assembly and development, which often neglects social protection (Panickar, V., 2022). The production of urban space in Quito, Ecuador, from a village into a modern city, emphasizes the complex interactions among actors such as landowners, the construction industry, dominant groups, and the state. Urban expansion has led to different physical forms as well as differences in service distribution and living conditions. This reflects social relations and has resulted in urban transformation, disparities in service provision, and the emergence of different urban central areas based on population needs (Villacis Taco, L. H., n.d. 2018). The production of space is a complex and non-hierarchical process involving spatial practice, representations of space, and lived space. Influenced by social change and digital technology, these dimensions are interconnected and continuously evolving (Capener, D., 2020). It is worth noting that the production of space is not merely the reuse and transformation of existing space, but also includes the interweaving and operation of cultural, social, political, and economic forces in space. This is particularly evident in the process of spatial construction at heritage sites. As an important form for the inheritance, protection, and artistic display of heritage sites, the archaeological site park represents an important achievement in the cumulative development of archaeological resource management in China since the 1950s. The archaeological site park is a composite concept. Through “site,” it qualifies “park”; it possesses both the characteristic attributes of a “site” and the functional attributes of a “park,” and

neither can be absent. The establishment of the U.S. National Park Service in 1916 had national significance for the protection of natural resources and historical heritage, and archaeological site parks were an important component within it. In Europe, according to data from the Istituto nazionale di statistica, by 2015 as many as 282 archaeological site parks and archaeological conservation areas had been opened to the public. With an emphasis on preserving the original appearance, the Guidelines for the Construction and Activation and Utilization of Archaeological Site Parks were issued, summarizing the current legal attributes, definitions, planning, conservation and utilization, and management schemes of archaeological site parks (He, Q. ,2024). The model of archaeological site parks in the United Kingdom places great emphasis on the protection of authenticity, carrying out authentic restoration according to the craftsmanship of unearthed cultural relics (Zhang, D. ,2025). In China, archaeological site parks can be classified, according to the site body itself, into six types: palace type, tomb type, ruin type, cave type, porcelain kiln type, and composite type (Tao, L., & Zhao, Y. ,2020). Some scholars have also divided them into urban site type, natural remains type, historical event type, and cultural site type (Zhang, L. ,2009). With the gradual advancement of the protection and utilization of large archaeological sites in China, a spatial production mechanism and model for urban large-site areas has been proposed (Wu, C., Zhu, H., & Peng, B. ,2020). Using a trinity spatial production efficiency framework of “spirit–material–life,” it provides a new analytical method for spatial production efficiency and opens up new ideas for research on the governance of spatial production in related areas (Che, Z., & Rong, L. ,2025). For example, regarding the spatial planning of large archaeological site areas, some scholars, combining field investigations of large archaeological sites in the Yellow River Basin with multidisciplinary theories, have proposed a conceptual design for the compilation model of territorial spatial planning in large archaeological site areas. As for the path of spatial production in heritage tourism, some scholars have proposed promoting the multiple integration of heritage space, recreational space, and perceptual space, thereby providing a new perspective for the development of heritage tourism (Zhang, Y., & Li, R. ,2024); (Springer, C. ,n.d.2025). In the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage, “bringing cultural relics to life” has received great attention from national leaders, and was incorporated into the guiding principles for cultural relic work in the new era at the National Conference on Cultural Relics Work in 2022 (Yu, B. ,2024). From ancient times to the present, heritage has exhibited various differences in levels of authenticity. These may generally be divided into five levels: those well preserved, those basically well preserved, those almost completely destroyed, those surviving only as ruins, and those surviving only in documentary records (Yu, X. ,2010). “Activation” refers to the process of interpreting, integrating, and reconstructing the culture embodied in both the material and value dimensions of heritage. Heritage activation mainly includes two aspects: first, the activation of the heritage body itself; second, the activation of viewers’ activities (Xie, Y., Guo, Y., & Zhang, Y. ,2015). The activation of the heritage body itself refers to enhancing the value of heritage by increasing its visibility and interpretability. This may be achieved by increasing the visibility of heritage through exhibition, restoration, and reconstruction, or by building museums and exhibition halls to integrate relevant historical information, decode cultural elements, and create interpretive approaches capable of resonating with visitors, so as to meet tourists’ needs for appreciation and reflection. The activation of viewers’ activities, by contrast, enhances the participatory and entertaining dimensions of heritage

tourism, provides high-quality products and services, and promotes better visitor experience, understanding, and protection of heritage (Gao, J. ,2021). Since the excavation of the Haihun Marquis site in Nanchang in November 2015, archaeologists' spirit of dedication and archaeological commitment have continuously advanced field excavation, data compilation, cultural relic protection, research interpretation, and activation and utilization, while actively participating in the protection and activation of cultural heritage, in line with the new requirements placed on archaeologists in the new era (Bai, Y. ,2024). Since the commencement of construction of the archaeological site park in May 2018, the site has been designated as a seventh-batch Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the National Level, and is currently the largest, best-preserved, most complete, and richest-in-content typical settlement site of a Han-dynasty marquis state capital discovered in China (Li, X., Wu, F., & Li, W. ,2020). As a cultural tourism project, the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis has become an important cultural emblem of Nanchang and even Jiangxi Province. Drawing on the framework of narrative theory, it takes the historical story of the Haihun Marquis, its cultural background, and archaeological research achievements as its content, and by telling historical and personal stories with unique appeal, attracts the attention of tourists and the public, thereby enhancing the image of Nanchang's urban brand (Peng, Z. ,2022). Through such means as value excavation, thematic interpretation, spatial layout, and exhibition design, the archaeological site park applies research results on the value of archaeological sites to exhibition design, and proposes a spatial planning path based on the principle of value interpretation, emphasizing the central position of site value research and interpretation in the display of archaeological sites (Liu, X., & Chen, T. ,2025). On this basis, this study selects The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang as an empirical case to analyze how the archaeological site park, through art, constructs its material, social, and mental spaces, thereby forming the distinctive theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis and ultimately forming a cultural site and constructing a sustainable operational model.

Data and Methods

Research scope and data sources. The study area, The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang, is located in the northeastern part of Xinjian District, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China (Fig. 1), and was the enfeoffed territory granted to Liu He, the ninth emperor of the Han Dynasty, after his demotion (Xin, L. ,2016). The protected planning area of the site covers approximately 53.97 square kilometers, including a core protection zone of 6.06 square kilometers, a construction control zone of 11.63 square kilometers (including the core protection zone), and a background environmental coordination zone of approximately 42.34 square kilometers, which together constitute the scope of this study. The research data cover multiple sources, including National Archaeological Site Park policies and planning documents, such as relevant literature, historical materials, books, journals, newspapers, theses, archaeological reports, and databases. Among these, dissemination and publicity materials include the official website of the archaeological site park, its public account, brochures, and news reports, while documentary materials are sourced from the site museum. Social media data were

collected through the Octopus Data Collector from user-generated content (UGC) on platforms such as Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Ctrip, and Mafengwo, including comments, travel notes, photographs, and short videos, in order to analyze public narratives and spatial perception. Field investigation data mainly include visitor routes, visitor flow, and ritual activities. These data were mainly obtained through interviews with staff and the distribution of sample questionnaires to visitors in order to verify and supplement the existing data.

Research methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method. The historical review section is addressed through literature analysis. Through surveys, observation, and semi-structured interviews, All participants provided their consent to participate via an informed consent statement at the beginning of the questionnaire, and no images capable of identifying individual participants were published in the paper. 381 online questionnaires and 55 offline questionnaires were collected from seven groups, including archaeologists, researchers of Haihun Marquis culture, museum staff, park managers, government regulators, cooperating tourism development companies, performers, and practitioners. Field investigations of the site were also conducted, and data were collected through observation of its geographical environment, architectural layout, and social functions. The study explores the practical value of artistic intervention in the material, mental, and social spaces of the site, providing multidimensional empirical evidence for the activation and sustainable utilization of cultural heritage.

The Regenerative Historical Dimension of the Haihun Marquis State Site from “Site Ruins” to “Cultural Site Space”

The transition of the Haihun Marquis State site from “site ruins” to “cultural site space” lies not in whether the site has been preserved, but in how it re-enters contemporary society within a new institutional framework and the context of heritage activation, and acquires the capacity to continuously produce meaning. In this sense, site regeneration is not simply a process of material restoration, but a historical transformation jointly driven by historical structure, archaeological confirmation, institutional intervention, and spatial reorganization. The Haihun Marquis State site did not naturally exist in the form of a “park,” but gradually completed its transformation from underground remains into a public cultural space through the political and institutional evolution of the Western Han kingdom, modern archaeological discoveries, and the policy-driven construction of National Archaeological Site Parks.

From the perspective of historical development, the Haihun Marquis State site is a spatial remnant of the Western Han enfeoffment system and the evolution of centralization, rather than a local ruin in the ordinary sense. Through a systematic review of the elimination of non-imperial kings in the early Han, the establishment of the imperial-clan king system, and the logic of clan-based power distribution represented by the “White Horse Oath,” it is shown that the formation of Haihun Marquis State was embedded in the overall process of imperial power moving from enfeoffment toward integration. Thus, what the Haihun Marquis State site carries is not only the historical information of a local marquis state,

but also the structural memory of changes in Han state governance, political order, and ritual culture (Chen, W., & Li, W., 2024). With dynastic change and the loss of its actual political function, this historical site gradually withdrew from social operation and settled into site ruins that had lost their practical function. However, ruins do not mean the end of historical value; rather, their value remains in a latent state that has not yet been activated, organized, or disseminated. The primary mechanism through which the Haihun Marquis State site entered the stage of regeneration was archaeological discovery and its process of knowledge production. The sequence of “historical background–archaeological confirmation–park construction–spatial form transformation” shows that archaeology in this study is not merely a technical excavation, but a key link through which the site acquires public visibility and interpretive legitimacy. Through the discovery of the site, the confirmation of the tomb occupant’s identity, and the publication of the findings, the Haihun Marquis State site was transformed from silent underground remains into a historical object that could be named, interpreted, and disseminated, thereby completing its first historical regeneration in terms of meaning. However, archaeological confirmation does not automatically generate cultural site space. The true spatial regeneration of the site still depended on subsequent institutional protection, park construction, and the formation of a management system. Under the principle of protection priority, the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis gradually formed a composite protection model centered on the “archaeological site park, museum, and cemetery,” and through scientific planning, functional zoning, visitor management, and community coordination, entered a new stage of sustainable display and activation of cultural heritage (Xu, C., 2017). What occurred here was not simply the addition of display functions, but a redefinition of spatial attributes. The site no longer existed merely as an object to be protected, but was incorporated into the comprehensive practices of exhibition, education, visitation, dissemination, and public cultural service. Changes in spatial form further explain the specific path of this transformation. The overall layout of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis underwent a continuous transformation from a “closed archaeological zone” to an “open cultural park” (Lei, X., 2018). In the early stage, the core area centered on the protection of the excavation site and emphasized enclosure and control. With the advancement of protection work and the improvement of the display system, the space gradually expanded its openness and introduced landscape corridors, thematic exhibition areas, multimedia interaction, and cultural exchange functions, enabling visitors to shift from passive viewers to participants capable of immersive experience (Zhang, T., & Xu, H., 2021). In this way, the site space began to transform from an archaeology-controlled place into a cultural site space that integrates display, experience, and dissemination (Fig. 1).

Therefore, in the historical dimension, the regeneration of the Haihun Marquis State site lies in its regaining practical functions and public effectiveness under new social conditions (Wu, F., & Tan, X., 2024). The formation of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is the result of the combined action of historical remains, archaeological discoveries, protection systems, planning implementation, infrastructure construction, and dissemination systems. This process not only changed the spatial form of the site, but also promoted the institutionalization of the site’s value within the structure of contemporary society (Liu, D., 2018). It is precisely in this sense that the evolution of the

Haihun Marquis State site from “site ruins” to “cultural site space” reflects the shift of cultural heritage from a logic of static preservation to a logic of dynamic production, and constitutes the historical premise for the subsequent discussion of the production of theatrical space.

The Regeneration of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis as “Theatrical Space”

The fundamental transformation of the site’s spatial function. The Haihun Marquis State site was not naturally a public cultural space, but underwent a continuous transformation from underground remains, to an archaeology-controlled space, then to an open cultural park, and further into a theatrical field with the capacities for display, experience, interaction, and public participation. That is to say, the “regeneration” of the site is not a simple restoration of its historical appearance, but a process through which the originally static, closed, and preservation-oriented site space is transformed into a composite public cultural space that is accessible, able to accommodate lingering, capable of organizing events, and able to generate meaning, under the combined of archaeological discovery, protection systems, park construction, artistic intervention, and dissemination systems (Fig. 2).

This regeneration is first manifested in the theatrical reconstruction of material space. Landscape and site art, architectural art, exhibition narrative, stage installations, and digital media installations together translate the Haihun Marquis State site from visible remains into a stage-like site that can be entered, stayed in, and used to organize events. Among these, landscape is no longer merely an auxiliary means of beautification; rather, through the width of paths, the arrangement of nodes, the opening and closing of sightlines, and the transformation of interfaces, it writes the behavioral logic of entering–staying–gathering–dispersing–looking back into the site, embedding the process of understanding into the process of walking. Architecture is no longer merely a container of content, but through thresholds, scale, and path organization, transforms the process of arrival into a constructed process of “entry” (Fig. 3). Exhibition display and digital media further transform historical knowledge into scenes that can be bodily experienced and perceived through spatial narrative, immersive installations, and substitute presence (Yu, K. ,2019). In this way, site space is no longer merely a place for the placement of historical remains, but becomes a real stage on which historical narrative can unfold in space. This regeneration is manifested in the theatrical organization of social relations. The theatricalization of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis depends not only on the staging of material space, but also on the rhythmic, normalized, and scheduled organization of public practice under art. Welcoming ceremonies, parades, scattered interactive activities, study-tour courses, and festival events, as artistic mechanisms, organize different subjects such as visitors, performers, volunteers, and managers into repeatable public practices, transforming the site from an object merely to be visited into a public cultural field to be collectively experienced (Fig. 4). Here, visitors are no longer merely viewers in the museum sense, but are gradually transformed, under artistic guidance and institutional organization, into participants,

experiencers, and even temporary members of a community of action. That is to say, the regeneration of theatrical space is not only a change in spatial form, but also a reconstruction of the relationship between people and space, the relationship between people and people, and the mode of public practice. The regeneration of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis as “theatrical space” is also manifested in the generation of mental space, that is, the transformation of the site from historical evidence into a triggering mechanism for cultural identity, emotional resonance, and historical imagination. Mental space is formed through the interaction of artistic narrative, symbolic systems, immersive situations, and ritual structures. Space is not only used and organized, but also experienced and internalized. It is precisely at this level that the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is no longer merely a physical place for preserving the past, but becomes a perceptual medium through which the public can re-understand Han ritual civilization, local historical memory, and Chinese cultural tradition. History no longer remains in exhibition-panel texts or artifact descriptions, but is “activated” in scene experience, bodily movement, festival rituals, and cultural performance into a kind of real experience that can be triggered, felt, and shared.

Therefore, the regenerative manifestation of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis as theatrical space can essentially be summarized as the unity of three levels: first, the transformation of material space from static remains into a stage-like site; second, the transformation of social space from dispersed visitation into the organization of public practice; and third, the transformation of mental space from knowledge display into the generation of meaning and the construction of identity (Lefebvre, H., 2014). Together, these three dimensions show that the theatricalization of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is not a form of external packaging added onto the site, but a comprehensive result of the site’s realization of spatial reproduction in the contemporary context of cultural heritage activation. It is precisely in this sense that the regeneration of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis should not be understood as the end point of heritage conservation work, but rather as the starting point for historical heritage to re-enter contemporary society and continuously generate public cultural value (Liu, Q., 2020).

The Social Functions and Artistic Expressions of Theatrical Space in Archaeological Site Parks in the Context of the Activation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage

In the context of the activation and utilization of cultural heritage, the value of theatrical space in archaeological site parks lies not only in the fact that the space has been constructed, but also in how this space continues to operate and, in the course of its operation, translates heritage value into a cultural experience that is accessible, understandable, and participatory for the public (Du, Y., 2023). Once the theatrical space of the archaeological site park has been formed through the coordination of material space, social space, and mental space, artistic expression is no longer merely a surface-level means of presentation, but becomes a key medium connecting heritage conservation, public cultural services, educational communication, local identity, and long-term operational mechanisms. Accordingly, the social functions of the archaeological site park should not be regarded as externally added

objectives, but should be understood as structural spillovers generated in the process of the operation of theatrical space.

Here, the so-called artistic expression does not refer narrowly to stage performance or visual decoration, but to a whole set of artistic translation mechanisms adopted by the archaeological site park at the operational level, including performing arts, environmental theater, participatory projects, exhibition narrative, public art interfaces, interdisciplinary art, and digital immersion. The key issue is not “what kinds of art forms there are,” but how these arts are organized into a performance system capable of sustainable operation, and how they further function in public cultural service, educational communication, and the construction of local identity. In other words, the core of artistic expression does not lie in whether its forms are rich, but in whether it can steadily translate the value of the site into a repeatedly occurring experiential structure and maintain effective operation within the boundaries of protection priority. From the perspective of operational mechanisms, the theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis mainly organizes cultural experience through three types of mechanisms: public events, paths of understanding, and participatory action. The function of music festivals, themed performances, and fixed-time performances does not lie in simply creating liveliness, but in organizing the time of the archaeological site park into a public cultural schedule, transforming one-time visits into appointment-like participation, and thereby gathering dispersed visitor flows into a shared public presence with a common rhythm. The significance of exhibition design also does not lie merely in displaying more cultural relics, but in translating archaeological evidence into a walkable path of understanding, writing interpretation into space, and enabling audiences to gradually build an overall understanding of the history of the Haihun Marquis through stopping, moving, and stopping again. Participatory activities further transform audiences from viewers into participants, making queuing, rotation, onlooking, and rule-following themselves become the very site where social relations are generated. Thus, cultural experience is not a psychological result that arises naturally, but is continuously produced within a chain of mechanisms involving spatial scheduling, action organization, situational triggering, and communicative continuation. It is precisely for this reason that the theatrical space of the archaeological site park embodies the function of public cultural service. The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis does not simply regard the public as homogeneous tourists, but, through stratified provision, offers multi-level paths of entry for groups with different cultural capital, lengths of stay, and willingness to participate. For example, threshold activities such as welcoming ceremonies and parades at the entrance provide the lowest-threshold mode of cultural entry; projects such as pitch-pot, liubo, and poetry interaction provide participatory experiential entry points; museum exhibitions and guide systems provide evidence-based paths of understanding; and special digital immersive exhibitions, without touching the site itself, provide a substitute experience of presence. This shows that the public cultural service of the archaeological site park is not equivalent to open visitation or tourist reception, but refers to whether it can organize different groups, in a low-threshold and sustainable way, into a public cultural life that is understandable and shareable.

At the same time, educational communication and cultural inheritance constitute another important spillover path in the operation of theatrical space. The site not only needs to be seen, but also needs to

be understood, remembered, and retold. Unlike traditional museums, which emphasize linear knowledge transmission, the educational communication of archaeological site parks relies more on spatialized, contextualized, and experiential mechanisms of translation (Luo, D., Li, K., Chen, R., & Hu, F., 2012). Through curatorial narrative, scene restoration, digital images, study-tour courses, and participatory activities, abstract archaeological achievements, historical institutions, and cultural values are transformed into learning processes accessible to the public. Particularly important is that the educational communication of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is built on the basis of continuously updated knowledge production. Cultural relic restoration, bamboo-slip, and the release of research results continuously enter the exhibition and communication system, so that the site is no longer merely a place for displaying the past, but becomes a cultural system in which knowledge production, artistic translation, and public understanding continuously circulate. In addition, the theatrical space of the archaeological site park also has significant functions of social participation and identity construction. Welcoming ceremonies, parades, scattered interactive activities, and ritual events repeatedly take place in the front plaza of the visitor center, along walking routes, in nodal spaces, and in fixed performance venues, forming a cycle of gathering–onlooking–participating–reflowing, so that the site is no longer merely an object to be visited, but becomes a cultural event space that can be collectively experienced. Local identity and the city’s cultural image are gradually generated precisely through this shared rhythm, shared rules, and shared memory. The introduction of digital technology and interdisciplinary art further strengthens the accessibility, intelligibility, and communicability of the theatrical space of the heritage site park. Taking the digital immersive special exhibition Exploring the Haihun Marquis State as an example, VR/AR spatial roaming and dramatized narrative reorganize highly specialized archaeological materials into an interactive narrative system that can be experienced, operated, and collaboratively engaged with, transforming history from textual and visual explanation into a spatial experience that can be walked through, explored, and shared. However, the generation of social functions does not mean the stabilization of social functions. Whether functions can be transformed from event-based manifestation into structural existence depends on whether artistic expression can be supplied in a rhythmic manner, supported by a governance system, and sustainably operated under the constraint of protection priority. The success of the theatrical space of the heritage site park cannot simply be measured by the idea that “the livelier, the better,” but should instead be judged in terms of the balance among heritage authenticity, publicness, and commerciality. Only when artistic provision, carrying-capacity governance, backstage systems, and knowledge updating form a coordinated structure can the archaeological site park truly become long-term effective public cultural infrastructure (Fig. 5).

Therefore, in the context of the activation and utilization of cultural heritage, the social functions and artistic expressions of the theatrical space of the archaeological site park are not separate from each other, but are two aspects of the same operational structure: artistic expression provides the public with experiential pathways for entering the value of heritage, while social functions are continuously generated and reinforced through the repeated occurrence of these artistic public practices. The case of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis shows that the activation of heritage does not take

the completion of spatial form as its end point, but takes whether public value can be continuously produced and stably supplied as its measure. It is precisely in this sense that theatrical space becomes the key mechanism through which the activation and utilization of cultural heritage moves from “spatial production” to “spatial operation.”

Research Results

This study takes The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang as its object, and introduces Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space into the context of the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage. It proposes and demonstrates that the theatrical space of the archaeological site park is neither naturally given nor merely an additional effect of performance activities, but a contemporary cultural site and public value apparatus continuously generated in operation, with art as the key mediating force. From the perspective of diachronic transformation, the study explains how the site moved from archaeological remains and a state of ruins into the structure of contemporary public culture, and then reveals the generative mechanism of theatrical space within the framework of the threefold spatial structure (Fig. 6). At the level of material space, architecture, landscape, exhibition display, image interfaces, stage settings, and digital media installations together organize thresholds, circulation routes, nodes, and modes of viewing, providing the conditions for accessibility, lingering, and occurrence. At the level of social space, artistic mechanisms such as welcoming ceremonies, parades, scattered interactive activities, study-tour organization, and festival schedules organize visitors, performers, volunteers, managers, and artists into repeatable public practices. At the level of mental space, symbolic systems, situational construction, bodily immersion, and narrative structure trigger historical imagination, emotional resonance, and the generation of identity. These three dimensions are coupled into theatrical space through the chain and feedback loop of “support–organization–signification.” Furthermore, the study extends the analysis to the operational stage, summarizing the social impacts that spill over after the formation of theatrical space, including the enhancement of public cultural services and stratified provision capacity, public participation (a layered path from onlooking to participation and then to learning-oriented participation, as well as the reproduction of visiting communities), and cultural influence (the sedimentation of Han-style symbols and local narratives into urban cultural image and local identity through public events and communicative spillover). It also proposes a “sustainable theatrical space model” (Fig. 7). Through the closed loop of “heritage conservation–cultural programming–visitor management–economic support,” the study explains the conditions under which theatrical space can achieve long-term stable operation and value reinvestment under the constraint of conservation priority. In this way, it theoretically expands the applicability of the theory of the production of space in research on archaeological site parks, methodologically forms an interpretive path from “generative mechanism” to “operational effects,” and provides a discussable and verifiable mechanistic framework and model for the activation and utilization of archaeological site parks.

Discussion

1. Propose the theoretical supplement of “art–the coordination of the threefold spatial framework–theatrical space.”

This study enriches the applicability of the theory of the production of space in the context of archaeological site parks, and also provides a new theoretical entry point for art studies, with transferable significance. Art is not merely aesthetic presentation or the content of activities, but a structural mechanism capable of organizing spatial practice, mobilizing social actors, and generating meanings of identity. The study emphasizes the operational logic of theatrical space after its formation, and proposes and demonstrates that theatrical space is neither naturally given nor an additional effect layered by performances, but a contemporary cultural site formed through art’s production of material space, social space, and mental space and through their coordinated interaction. Art translates the value of the heritage site into an experiential structure accessible to the public, and further spills over into such social functions as public cultural service, educational communication, local identity, and academic feedback. This advancement enables the theory of the production of space not only to explain how such space is constructed, but also how it continues to occur and why it can remain effective over time, thereby expanding the applicability of Lefebvre’s theory in research on archaeological site parks and the activation and utilization of cultural heritage. At the same time, it is also applicable to art-constructed spaces in different types of archaeological site parks, providing a more explanatory theoretical paradigm for the study of the activation and utilization of contemporary Chinese cultural heritage.

2. Constructed a sustainable operational model.

The sustainable theatrical space model proposed in this study is a closed-loop model composed of heritage conservation, cultural programming, visitor management, and economic support. The conservation module provides red lines and disturbance thresholds to ensure that authenticity and integrity are not depleted; the cultural programming module completes value translation through rhythmic provision and evidence-based narrative, avoiding content homogenization and the covering over of heritage value by entertainment; the visitor management module transforms experience into orderly carrying capacity through route organization, node-based occurrence, visitor diversion, and event-management systems, preventing the dilution of site spirit and conservation pressure caused by high visitor flows; and the economic support module guarantees content development, facility maintenance, and interpretive updating through diversified return flows and reinvestment, so that operation does not rely on a single short-term highlight. The managerial significance of this framework lies in the fact that archaeological site parks can, on this basis, establish scheduling rules of node–activity–intensity–time period–carrying capacity, and clearly assign functions to spatial nodes such as the front plaza of the visitor center, the entrance hall of the museum, the entrance to Duidun Garden, and the Haihun Theater. At the same time, an evaluation system can be established with conservation indicators, order indicators, interpretive quality indicators, and reinvestment indicators at its core, thereby transforming more activities into more orderly and continuously occurring ones. This can not only improve the quality of public experience in archaeological site parks, but also reduce value conflicts and governance costs in

long-term operation, providing an operational path for archaeological site parks to move from project-based popularity to mechanism-based operation.

3. Provide an institutional reference path of protection–utilization–public value–sustainability for contemporary Chinese archaeological site parks.

The cultural policy value of this study lies in providing a clearer public value orientation and a coordinated governance approach for the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage, especially emphasizing that the theatrical space of archaeological site parks should be incorporated into the system of public cultural governance, rather than being managed merely as cultural tourism projects (Luo, J., Jian, Y., Qian, Y., Chen, W., & Chen, H., 2021); (Lin, B., Wei, F., & Zhao, J. (2021). First, the study points out that the legitimacy of heritage theatrical space is grounded in the simultaneous establishment of conservation priority, evidential constraints, and public value orientation. This means that policy evaluation should not look only at visitor flow and revenue, but should also incorporate interpretive quality, the coverage of public services, the effectiveness of educational communication, the structure of local participation, and low-disturbance implementation into a comprehensive indicator system. Second, this paper emphasizes the foundational role of knowledge production in the long-term operation of theatrical space; academic interpretation and content updating should become one of the key priorities of policy support. Especially in the context of the continuous expansion of digital immersion, short videos, and cross-media narratives, it is necessary to establish clearer hierarchies and narrative norms in order to prevent the logic of dissemination from forcing pseudo-historical and spectacularized expressions, and to maintain the credibility of public heritage communication. Finally, the closed-loop sustainable theatrical space model proposed in this paper provides a structured point of leverage for policy coordination: cultural relic protection departments are responsible for red lines and disturbance thresholds; cultural departments are responsible for linking public cultural projects with the educational system; culture and tourism departments are responsible for the rhythmic organization of activities and the governance of communicative spillover; and fiscal and special funding mechanisms are responsible for institutional arrangements for reinvestment. Only through coordinated governance can archaeological site parks achieve the stable provision of public cultural services under the premise of conservation priority, and advance activation and utilization from short-term projects into a long-term cultural mechanism. In this way, this paper not only provides an explanation for the Haihun case, but also offers a policy-level reference path for contemporary Chinese archaeological site parks to establish an institutional balance among protection, utilization, public value, and sustainability.

In sum, the contribution of this paper lies not only in supplementing the description of the Haihun case, but in providing new knowledge about how a heritage site is produced by art as theatrical space and continues to generate public value in operation. Theoretically, it proposes a mechanistic framework; methodologically, it forms a transferable path; and practically, it provides an executable model and governance tools. Taken together, these contributions provide discussable, verifiable, and applicable academic resources for contemporary Chinese archaeological site parks to achieve a balance among

cultural communication, social participation, and long-term operation under the premise of conservation priority.

Conclusion

This study takes The Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis of the Han Dynasty in Nanchang as its object. In the practical context of the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage, it introduces Lefebvre's theory of the production of space as its analytical framework, and centers its discussion on the core question of "how the theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is produced." Different from research approaches that regard the archaeological site park as a static container for display or merely a tourist site, this study understands it as a composite space generated through the interweaving of historical remains, artistic practice, social participation, and cultural identity. On this basis, it proposes that the theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is neither naturally given nor an additional effect of a certain kind of performance activity, but is a contemporary cultural site gradually formed through artistic intervention that produces material space, social space, and mental space. Through architecture, exhibition display, images, stage, digital media, and other means, art constructs the heritage space and promotes its transformation from a state of ruins into a multidimensional space for the dissemination of social, cultural, and artistic experience that is perceptible, participatory, and narrative.

1.1 Studying the Historical Evolution of the Cultural Site of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis

This study systematically reviews the development process of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis and points out that the formation of the site park is not the result of a single act of construction, but a phased outcome produced through the combined of historical remains, archaeological discoveries, protection systems, planning implementation, infrastructure construction, and exhibition and dissemination systems. The contemporary form of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis has obvious diachronic characteristics of formation. On the one hand, with historical remains and archaeological findings as its value foundation, it preserves the core attributes of the site as cultural evidence and historical witness. On the other hand, under the advancement of National Archaeological Site Park construction, local cultural governance, and public cultural service systems, it has been reorganized into a cultural space open to the public. It can thus be seen that the transformation from a historical site into an archaeological site park is not only a change in spatial form, but also an institutionalized process through which the value of the site enters the structure of contemporary society.

1.2 Studying the Composition and Production Mechanism of the Theatrical Space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis

The theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is not composed of a single physical site, but is a composite social space jointly generated in material space, social space, and

mental space through artistic construction. At the level of material space, architectural art, landscape and site art, exhibition design, image interfaces, stage art, and digital media installations together construct the accessibility, visibility, and stayability of the heritage space, guiding and changing the audience's routes, sightlines, and bodily rhythms, and transforming the site from archaeological remains to be viewed into an artistic spatial site of circulation that can be experientially organized. At the level of social space, through such mechanisms as welcoming ceremonies, parades, participatory projects, festival schedules, study-tour organization, and everyday performances, art organizes multiple types of subjects, including visitors, performers, volunteers, study-tour groups, managers, and artists, thereby producing the interactive order and visiting community within the archaeological site park. At the level of mental space, art, through symbolic systems, situational construction, bodily immersion, and narrative structure, provides historical experience with projectable emotional forms, making possible the connection between individual experience and collective memory (Wei, L., & Wang, C., 2023). These three types of space are not parallel and juxtaposed, but are transformed into and support one another through the continuous intervention of art, jointly completing the production of the theatrical space of the archaeological site park.

1.3 Studying the Social Functions and Value Significance of the Theatrical Space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis in the Activation and Utilization of Chinese Cultural Heritage

The significance of the theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis lies not only in enhancing the attractiveness of heritage display, but also in the fact that, as a result of spatial production driven by art, it can continuously generate public value in the context of the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage. Specifically, theatrical space transforms the site from a historical object to be viewed into a cultural site that can be entered and participated in, thereby more effectively undertaking such functions as public cultural service, educational communication and cultural inheritance, the construction of urban cultural image and local identity, and academic interpretation and knowledge transformation. At the same time, through the analysis of sustainable utilization, this study points out that the key to the activation and utilization of heritage lies not in the increase in the number of activities, but in whether art can continuously organize spatial experience, social participation, and meaning production within the boundaries of protection, and form a relatively stable coordinated relationship among cultural value, social publicness, and operational resources. Therefore, the production of the theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is essentially a dynamic process which, within the framework of the activation and utilization of Chinese cultural heritage, produces the threefold spatial structure through art and generates a cultural site. The theatrical space of the Archaeological Site Park of the Haihun Marquis is neither a pre-established spatial type nor the result of the superimposition of individual artistic activities, but a cultural site that, on the basis of historical remains, is continuously produced and reproduced in contemporary public cultural practice through art's organization of space, subjects, and meaning.

Declarations

Author information

KH: contributed to the conceptualization, research methodology, drafting of the original manuscript, as well as investigation, data collation, and analysis. AK: corresponding author. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Ethical approval

This study received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Thepsatri Rajabhat University. Code: TRU-EC 4/2026. Approval Expiry Date: 10 January 2027. All research presented in this article was conducted in compliance with the relevant NAMAD standards and regulations. The research has obtained ethical and moral justification. The materials used in this study were obtained from legally and publicly released government documents, historical records, academic journal articles, and officially published scholarly books. All interview participants took part in the study voluntarily with informed consent and had a clear understanding of the research content, objectives, and the intended use of the information they provided, as well as any potential risks and benefits associated with their participation. During the research implementation and data processing stages, all interview and questionnaire data were anonymized to ensure participants' privacy and to prevent any form of personal identification. The study adhered to established ethical standards in the collection, analysis, and presentation of data and posed no substantial risk to participants.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. Funding This research did not receive any financial support.

License Statement

The data presented in this article agrees to be revised according to the requirements of the journal. The dataset and supporting materials provided in this study, including de identified survey data and related supporting documents, are agreed to be shared with the journal for editorial and peer review purposes. All participants obtained informed consent and agreed to use anonymized data for research and publication.

Author Contribution

KH: contributed to the conceptualization, research methodology, drafting of the original manuscript, as well as investigation, data collation, and analysis. AK: corresponding author. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The data presented in this article agrees to be revised according to the requirements of the journal. The dataset and supporting materials provided in this study, including de identified survey data and related supporting documents, are agreed to be shared with the journal for editorial and peer review purposes. All participants obtained informed consent and agreed to use anonymized data for research and publication

Data availability

The datasets generated during and analyzed in the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Figures

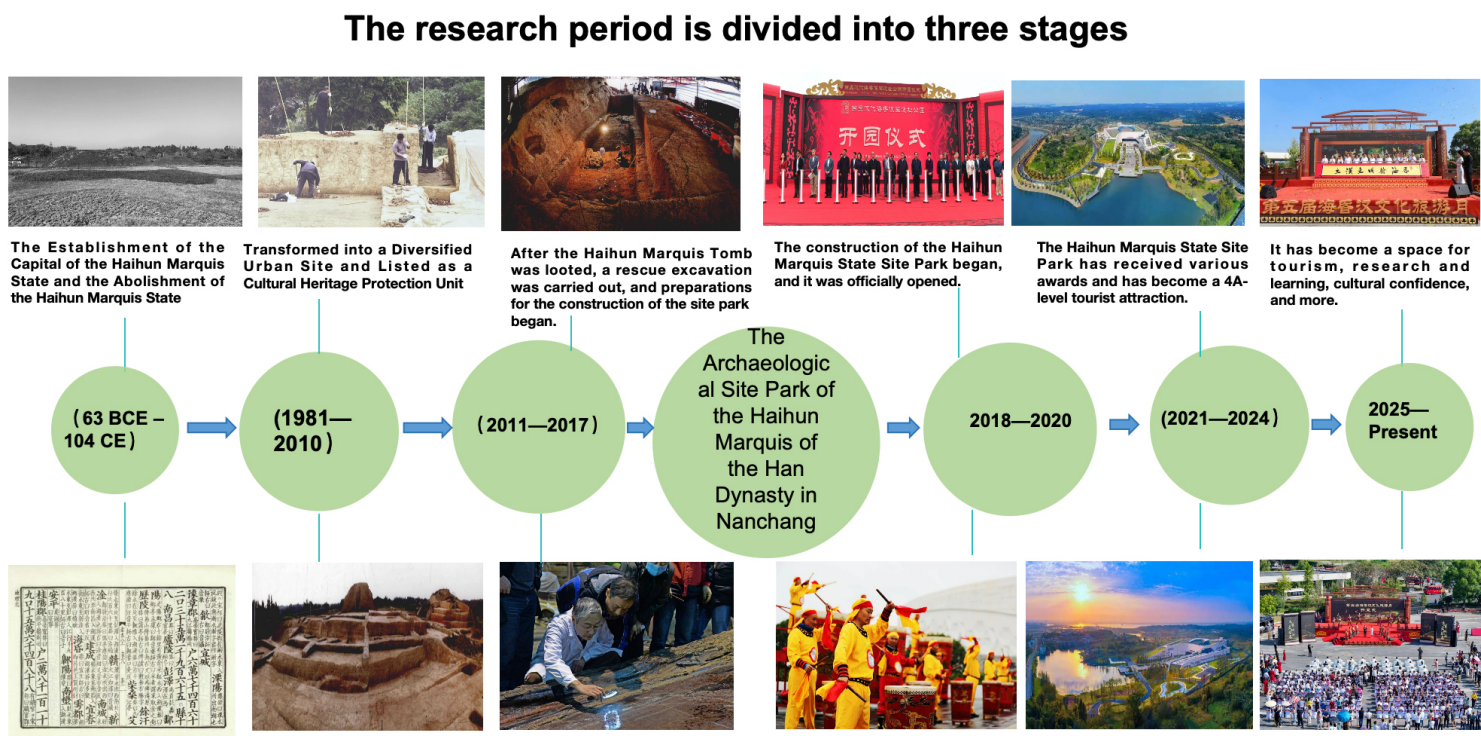


Figure 1

Research Timeline

Source: the author, 2026

Before



Now



Figure 2

Comparative Diagram of Site Space and Architectural Space

Source: the author, 2026



Figure 3

Architectural Art of the Archaeological Site Park

Source: the author, 2026

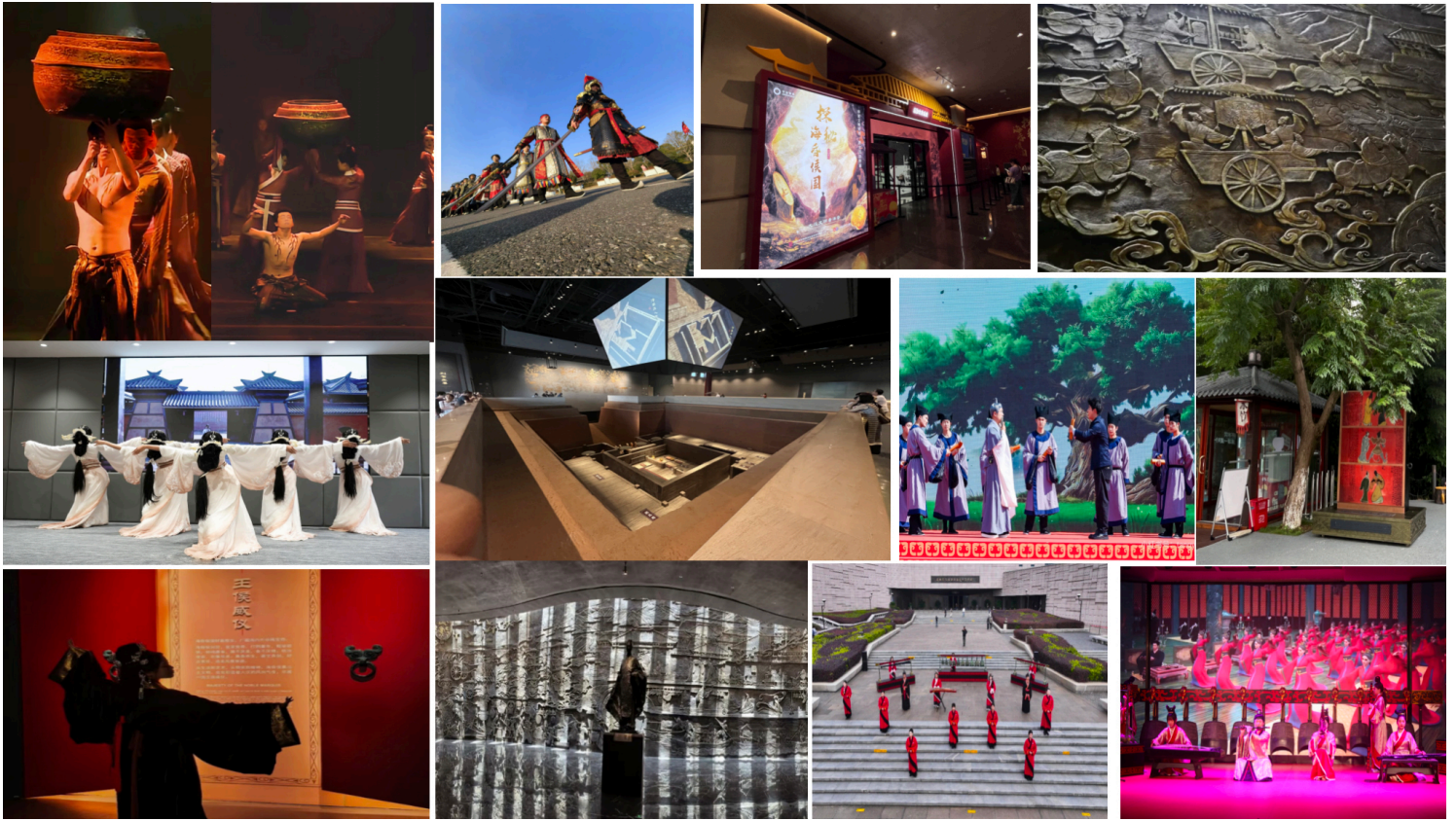


Figure 4

Exhibition Display, Stage, Costume, and Other Arts in the Archaeological Site Park

Source: the author, 2026



Figure 5

Social Functions of the Archaeological Site Park in Education, Culture, Knowledge, and Related Areas

Source: the author, 2026

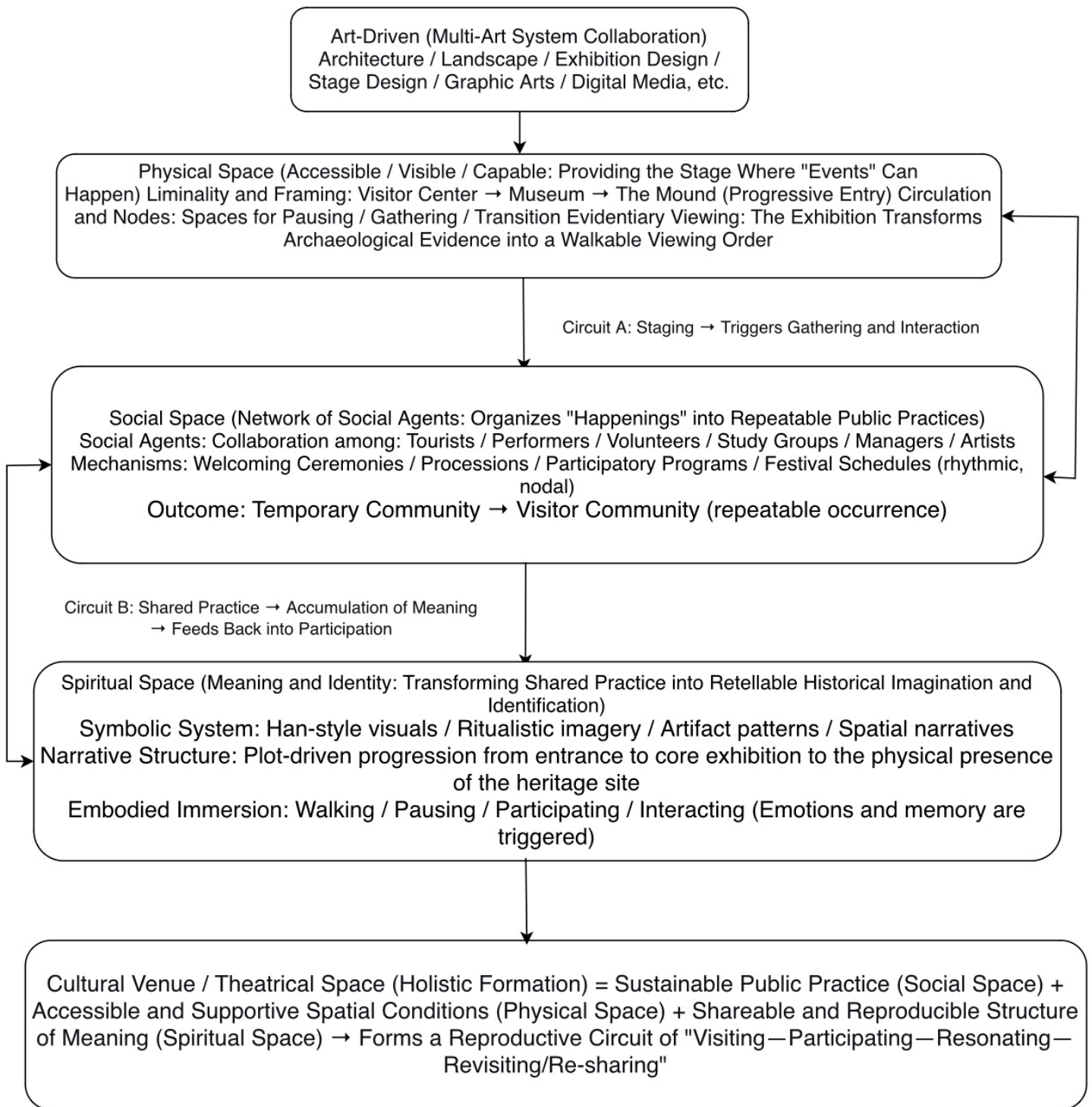


Figure 6

Diagram of the Production Mechanism

Source: the author, 2026

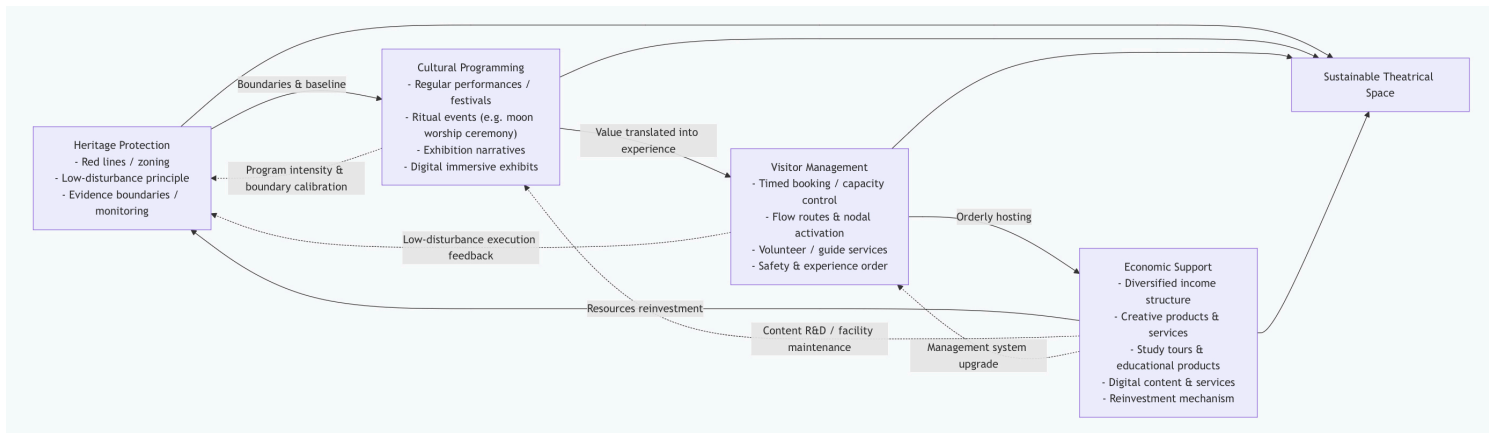


Figure 7

Sustainable Theatrical Space Model

Source: the author, 2026