

# Constructing for History

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## Archaeological Parks Through Landscape and Architectural Design

### Introduction

Wild or challenging landscapes have historically represented the obstacle that travelers must overcome in order to access remote archaeological or historical sites. Depicted in travel logs as overgrown jungles or steep terrain by early modern explorers, these landscapes became part of the journey associated with archaeological inquiry—a part of the dramatic story that often led to the liberation of significant cultural wealth. Since these early days of archaeological research and discovery, the ever-increasing affordability of travel and open access to archaeological or heritage sites has reversed the concept of intensive landscape investigation as a mandatory part of the quest for knowledge, and instead replaced exploration with accommodation. As an early trend in making discoveries visually and physically accessible, museums in particular have been developed to ensure the proximity to cultural heritage for the common traveler and comply with necessary regulations to make the facilities as accessible as possible. Open-air or archaeological parks have similarly modified excavations in order to allow the general public entrance to ancient sanctuaries, palaces, battlefields, and other types of existing three-dimensional heritage.

Interventions specifically designed to move visitors through a difficult to traverse landscape have been used as part of the process in establishing universal accessibility but often serve a dual purpose by providing additional educational context for the present archaeological remains. Circulation paths with signage, reconstructions, and other interpretive materials provide historical and cultural context for visual remains while assuring visual and material accessibility. Metaphorically, and at times physically, guiding visitors to, from, and through the archaeological site, these people-moving systems must overcome the landscape in order to successfully circulate

**1** This term is used by Gerard Corsane (2005) and later Simon Knell (2011) as a reference to op-air museums, or museums in the outdoors, as well as in reference to the physical modification (musealization) of existing spaces.

through the material remains. The environment, architectural design, and historical artifacts, therefore, combine to create a hybrid “musealized landscape,”<sup>1</sup> a form of design intended to act as an outdoor museum allowing visitors to experience an ancient site in its landscape context.

**Fig. 1** The archaeological heritage site of Pergamon, Turkey, Photo by author (2011)



**Fig. 2** The archaeological heritage site of Masada, Israel, Photo by author (2009)

For Pergamon (Bergama), Turkey (fig. 1), and Masada, Israel (fig. 2), two popular archaeological complexes in the Mediterranean region, the installation of a gondola tram system provides visitors with a way to circumvent difficult vertical foot paths to reach the ancient complexes, allowing for universal access to the archaeological remains. Deir el-Bahari, Egypt (fig. 3) similarly provides a horizontal tram to transport visitors from the parking area to the ancient site. In each case, the new intervention provides what the ancient material cannot—an accessible journey directly to the archaeological site from other tourism facilities (parking, restaurant, museum, etc.). The process of eliminating a lengthy and arduous journey in an effort to increase modern accessibility, however, introduces a difficult dilemma for the authentic interpretation of the site: whether the removal of the initial journey creates a disconnect between the ancient site and its understandable cultural and physical context.

**Fig. 3** The archaeological heritage site of Deir el-Bahari, Egypt, Photo by author (2010)



## Archaeology and Landscape

Archaeology and landscape have been inherently connected in the research framework since the inception of investigative excavation. The landscape in which the archaeological remains exist is often an integral context for the excavated material culture and can add essential perspective to the timeline of heritage in a particular place. The location of ancient cities and sanctuaries was often carefully chosen, typically because of strategic or sacred qualities. For many archaeologists, the landscape, therefore, becomes an extension of the architecture, creating a hybrid cultural environment that combines man-made and ethereal spaces for research.

The origins of archaeology date back to multiple ancient societies who viewed artifacts from the past as an extension of their current societal understanding. The Ancient Greeks acknowledged the different phases of the past<sup>2</sup> and were known to collect and display objects of interest, often fossils. Evidence of this early acknowledgment is featured most notably on the Monster of Troy vase (ca. sixth century BCE) (fig. 4), currently housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which most scholars believe depicts a prehistoric skull that the artist interpreted as the remains of a monster (for additional information on the vase, please see Mayor 2011: 157–162). The Romans also viewed the Ancient Greek civilization as a culture more ancient than their own and often reproduced cultural imagery from other ancient societies to reinforce their political position.<sup>3</sup>

During the European Renaissance, the practice of collecting increased with the formation of Cabinets of Curiosity, private collections, and the ‘rediscovery’ of the past as influential in the present. A rediscovery of ancient architecture and texts initiated a general surge in interest in classical societies and their material culture and later influenced contemporary architectural design, which revisited these classical principles. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century scholars, such as early garden designer William Stukeley, again boosted interest in archaeological remains by documenting conspicuous landscapes, later named Stonehenge and Avebury, helping to prove that the formations were not created by ethereal creatures, but were, in fact, manmade. He published his findings in *Stonehenge: A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids* in 1740, making the information available to a wide audience. Stukeley’s investigations into the ancient landscapes underscored the connection between archaeological material and contemporary design. His interest developed in part as a result of his work in the design of English gardens in Stamford where he made purposeful aesthetic connections to the ancient landscapes (Smith 2013). In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, archaeological practice evolved with the discovery of several important ancient complexes and the interest of influential researchers like Thomas Jefferson who studied American Indi-

**2** Hesiod, a Greek writer who lived around the 8th century BCE described the different ages of mankind created by Zeus, suggesting that time passed between them, and placing the contemporary population into the fifth and last generation (Hine translation, 2004).



**Fig. 4** The Monster of Troy Vase, photo by Lady Erin, (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/erint/4732476819>) (2010)

**3** The reuse of older civilization’s imagery can be seen in the forum of Caesar Augustus, where the architecture features caryatid sculptures imitating those found on the acropolis in Athens and medallions with depictions of Jupiter Amun, a representation of a hybrid Roman-Egyptian deity.

an cultural remains. In the eighteenth century, full scientific excavations began at the site of Pompeii, Italy and less than a century later, Heinrich Schliemann began excavations at Hisarlik, Turkey believing it to be the site of the myth-historical Trojan War. These discoveries helped catapult archaeological sites into modern media, and consequently increase archaeological tourism as leisure travel for elite society.

Many archaeologists like Stukeley, Jefferson, and Schliemann relied on an interpretation of the landscape in order to identify anomalies and scout potential historic or archaeological sites. Knowledge of current and former architectural and landscape traditions was integral in understanding the context of the discovery and also its potential impact on ongoing history and society. Stukeley and Jefferson in particular represent a subset of early archaeologists who were interested in the architecture and landscapes of the past, but also in contemporary design, and where the two concepts met in visual culture. Stukeley's modern homages to the ancient landscapes and Jefferson's land planning helped to integrate ancient concepts into contemporary design trends.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Alongside Jefferson, William Bartram also discussed American Indian architecture as influential on 18th century American development, but treats the remains as something to be viewed as an artifact—Duncan Faherty (2007) suggests that to Bartram they are “picturesque relics,” meant to be left and seen as in the past (43).

The landscape may have acted as inspiration for many antiquarians turned designers but was also considered a significant burden that many early archaeologists had to overcome when seeking artifacts from the ancient world. Those investigating Greek sanctuaries, such as Delphi or the Athenian Acropolis, were often required to climb high into the mountains or up a plateau in order to begin excavation, as these complexes were purposefully located in difficult to access but naturally significant locations. Archaeologists working in Central and South America were sometimes similarly forced to navigate overgrown jungles or climb steep mountains in order to reach some of the most significant archaeological sites. The landscape was a metaphorical and physical barrier through which many researchers had to proceed in order to make these significant discoveries.

Many of the artifacts excavated by these archaeologists were sent back to the home country of the expedition and often became a source of national pride, signifying the far-reaches of explorer. When excavated, the artifacts were taken from their physical context and placed in an accessible collection, generally representative of a particular theme. Those that went to private collections were housed and displayed as deemed appropriate by the owner, at times resulting in a broad assortment of unrelated artifacts. Public and private museums initially sought to bridge the gap between archaeological or cultural artifacts and the general public, providing some additional written information for their discovery alongside the displayed artifact to reconstruct some context for the objects and help visitors understand their significance. Institutions such as the Pergamon Museum in Berlin and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York even displayed an-

cient buildings removed from their original context and reconstructed as completely as possible in galleries for public consumption. Although this was a typical occurrence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the mid twentieth century, archaeologists and heritage professionals shifted focus to preserving or reconstructing buildings *in situ*, allowing visitors to engage with architecture in its original environmental context, increasing awareness of the ancient setting in which it was created. This involved the integration of excavated archaeological material and new construction intended to interpret the material and provide facilities for the public as a newly-formed open-air museum.

As the archaeological focus became more context-specific and educational throughout the twentieth century, the landscape surrounding the sites became integral to the understanding of the cultural environment, helping visitors to understand the space, time, and history of a particular artifact or location when interpreted. Since the mid-twentieth century, the increasing availability and affordability of travel has amplified the number of visitors traveling to archaeological sites to experience cultural environments *in situ* (Weil 1990: 4). Partly spurred by a shared connection felt to ancient peoples, Marie-Françoise Lanfant writes: “those peoples who previously remained behind their frontiers are now invited to consider themselves part of great multi-cultural units” and demonstrate this shared connection through experiencing “ancestral” sites (1995: 5). Increasing international tourism also justified increased development of open-air sites, as additional visitors often brings added national or private funding.<sup>5</sup> The broader cultural and educational range of people visiting historic sites also suggests that increased interpretation is needed to meet the needs of a more diverse audience.

The necessary relationship between these interpreted landscapes and excavated cultural artifacts remained fluid only until 2007 when the *International Council of Museums* (ICOM) acknowledged the evolving role of the museum in encompassing exterior spaces, intangible heritages, and preservation. The organization redefined the museum as:

[...] A non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM 2007)

This broad definition confirms that modern museums can exist within hybrid architectural landscapes such as those at archaeological open-air museums, suggesting that the context that they provide is integral to the educational agenda of the museum as an additional piece of information.

<sup>5</sup> Increasing international tourism has been criticized at times alongside globalization, with heritage professionals concerned that individual heritages, traditions, and memory will be clouded or modified by tourism development (Lanfant 1995: 8). Sites of mass cultural tourism such as Chichén Itzá, Mexico have been the subject of extensive study to ascertain what effects international tourism has had on cultural traditions of the local population. The studies suggest that many cultural sites are seeing artisans abandon traditional artistic practices or sites be modified specifically to produce art and souvenirs for tourism, changing long-standing identities and visual culture for national commercialism. For additional information, please see Pratt 1992.



**Fig. 6** View from the Masada cable car down to the visitor centre and parking area, Photo by author (2009)



**Fig. 7** View of the Snake Path leading from the visitor centre to the plateau, Photo by author (2009)

The newly designed musealized space, consisting of natural landscape and constructed landscape (either ancient or modern), informs an interpreted circulation strategy that leads visitors through the site and history, where ancient remains act as interactive and intensive galleries.

## Designing for Accessibility in Difficult Landscapes

Creating these types of culturally and aesthetically interpreted spaces presents a challenge to heritage professionals since many of the spaces are obligated to meet world accessibility standards similar to traditional museums. The circulation of visitors, flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic to and from the site, and security of the ancient material are all concerns that must be accounted for when opening an archaeological site to the public through one of these hybridized designs. When intended sites include atypical landscape challenges such as steep or difficult terrain, mechanical people-moving strategies can be employed to help ease accessibility constraints. The more difficult the terrain in which the site exists, however, the more invasive these strategies often become in order to ensure that sites are user-friendly. For many heritage sites, this means modifying the original landscape in order to facilitate traveling through it or circumventing it through the addition of people-moving vehicles in order to transport visitors to and from the site. Each provides a way for visitors to gain access to the site but changes the context in which visitors approach and experience the remains, therefore potentially altering the understanding of the site in an ‘authentic’ way.



**Fig. 5** View from the Masada plateau to the surrounding desert and Dead Sea, Photo by author (2009)

Masada, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2001) sits high on a plateau in the Judean near the Dead Sea (fig. 5) and once acted as the leisure palace for Herod the Great. The first century BCE fortification also included

a small town and religious structures designed on the plateau to meet the needs of the palace. Purposefully secluded and secure with limited access due to its steep cliffs, Masada is most known through the Roman historian, Josephus Flavius, who described it as the location of a revolt and holdout of Jewish citizens during the first Jewish-Roman War in the first century CE. According to Josephus, the resistance culminated in the Roman siege of the palace and town and a mass suicide of the participants as the Romans finally reached the area by way of a constructed siege ramp. The site has been used as an integral piece of Israeli and Jewish heritage,<sup>6</sup> and, until 1991, factions of the Israeli army climbed to the site in order to swear oath never to let Masada fall again (Ben-Yehuda 1995: 147).

What made Masada difficult to access for the invading Romans, however, continues to complicate tourism to the site as the surrounding landscape is still difficult for the average visitor to effectively traverse. The archaeological site is now part of the Masada National Park with a visitor center and parking located at the base of the plateau (fig. 6). Tourists wishing to see the archaeological remains have three options for access: the ‘Snake Path,’ a four kilometer hike from the base of the mountain up to the 290 meter site (about an hour’s hike) (fig. 7); the Roman Ramp trail (fig. 8), which is less strenuous but also very steep; or a 900 meter cable car ride (fig. 9) which lasts about three minutes. During the hottest hours of the day, the cable car is the only option for visitors; the pedestrian paths close to avoid serious harm to hikers from the lack of shade or shelter in the excessive heat.

The cable car was initially designed and installed by the Karl Brändle company (Switzerland) in 1971 to create accessibility for the site that was previously lacking. The Snake Path and Roman Ramp are not traversable for individuals in wheelchairs or needing assistance, and the cable car provided a way for all visitors to visit the site in a safe way. The tramway and upper station were replaced in 1997 by Von Roll (Switzerland). The new design eliminated the original support pillar for the tramway resulting in less visual clutter from the windows of the cabin and less intrusion on the natural landscape. The architecture of the upper station and visitor center (opened since 2000) are both visible from the ancient site, but the design of both seeks to blend into natural colors of the landscape to be as unimposing as possible (see fig. 6).

The acropolis at Pergamon in western Turkey, which was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014, presents similar accessibility concerns to Masada. The town and surrounding area was a significant religious and political center in Hellenistic Greece and later, leaving behind significant archaeological material. Consisting of multiple architectural complexes both at the base of a mountain and at the top (fig. 10) and an

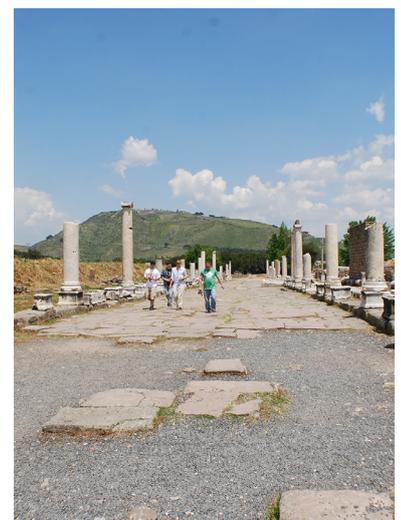
<sup>6</sup> Josephus’ account of the Siege of Masada has been integral to Israeli and Jewish collective memory and identity, but within the last thirty years has been highly debated. It has been used to represent the defense of the Jewish religion against the Romans, but the mass suicide in particular has more recently been seen by some as ‘extremist.’ For additional information, please see Sasson and Kelner 2008, Cockburn 1997, and Zerubavel 1995.



**Fig. 8** View of the Roman Seige ramp path from the secondary parking area to the plateau, Photo by author (2009)



**Fig. 9** The unobstructed cable car path from the visitor centre to the plateau, Photo by author (2009)



**Fig. 10** View from the Asclepieion (lower sanctuary) to the acropolis at Pergamon, Photo by author (2011)



**Fig. 11** The Pergamon cable car system, Photo by author (2011)



**Fig. 12** The Pergamon cable car station located at the base of the hill, Photo by author (2011)



**Fig. 13** The Pergamon cable car station located at the acropolis, Photo by author (2011)

archaeology museum in town, the ancient site features reconstructed or interpreted temples, theaters, and a library. Until 2011, access to the acropolis was controlled by a winding road along the hillside that terminated in a small parking area for vehicles but was also open to foot traffic for those wishing to make the steep five kilometer hike. A cable car system similar to that of Masada was added in 2011 (fig. 11), connecting the lower sites to the archaeological complex of the acropolis. As one of the most popular historic sites in Turkey for both domestic and cruise ship tourism, the cable car allowed for a quicker journey to the summit, which already had limited area for parking tour buses.

This feasible but controlled access was intended to be in line with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism's management practices for archaeological site development, which suggest that "suitable balance can be established between the site's protection, access and sustainable development, with the needs of the local community" (Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2005). It has since been criticized however, for its economic impact on the local community by diverting visitors and reducing spending in local Bergama (Orbaşlı 2013: 240). Whereas Masada's cable car provides transport directly from the museum to the site in an otherwise uninhabited area, Pergamon's new transportation strategies circumvent the local economy altogether to facilitate tourism to specific periphery archaeological sites. Additionally, the design of the Pergamon cable car stations significantly stand out from the surrounding natural landscape. Featuring modern spider glass and metal trusses, the stations both at the base and at the acropolis (figs. 12 and 13) detract from the historic architecture and landscape through their size and design. As the location for the ancient sanctuary was chosen in part for its views of the surrounding landscape, the size and location of the acropolis station diminishes the effect of the cultural interpretation due to its impact on the view and sensitive landscape.

### Accessibility vs. Authenticity

The Masada and Pergamon cable car systems highlight the difficulty and design discretion faced when planning for accessibility within extreme landscape constraints. The differences in style and intention not only show potential interpretation discrepancies that new transportation can emphasize, but how impactful new design for accessibility can be to an historic site. The alternative forms of journeying to the site can also impact the cultural context presentation of the remains by emphasizing accessibility over authenticity of the interpretation. By bypassing the original or traditional ancient paths — those ingrained on travelers to the site for centuries — part of the historical context of arriving at the complexes is lost and the integral immersive learning through experience truncated. The circulation to,

from, and through the site is part of the landscape environment created in which the patron will learn about the context of the archaeological material. Roeland Paardekooper (2013) writes that:

Archaeological open-air museums are not about artefacts with their specific story ... but about presenting a story in a physical setting using fitting (replica) artefacts. The buildings, artefacts, animals and environments are life size models or props, which can be used in ways similar to how they would have been used in the past. (28)

The full interpretation of the sites including pedestrian and vehicular circulation, (re)construction or display of archaeological remains, and any additional interpretive materials provide a comprehensive engaged experience for visitors, leading them through historical places or key points imperative to the understanding of site context. When part of this journey is bypassed without attention paid to the connection that the new journey has to the archaeological remains, there may be a disconnect in the visitor's understanding of the full context of the site.

Presenting historical and archaeological sites authentically and with cultural and temporal sustainability can also be problematic when adding significant infrastructure to an existing interpretation or environment. Landscapes, and how inhabitants have created, used, and manipulated them over time, provide important information for how ancient peoples engaged with their environment. Early archaeological inquiry initially saw the landscape as a *setting* for the archaeological material, not a part of it. Following in the footsteps of Jefferson or Stukeley, more recent archaeologists have been interested in the landscape for its symbolic and integrated relationship with the archaeological remains themselves, where the environment plays a significant role in the understanding of the site as a whole (please see Knapp and Ashmore 1999). For sites with extreme environments, in which both Masada and Pergamon can be categorized, the difficulty of reaching the site through the harsh environment is integral to understanding the symbolic significance of their respective locations.

Masada was purposefully exclusionary in its location to protect Herod and his palace, as well as offer extensive views of his expansive empire. Roman historian Josephus describes Masada as "... a well-nigh impregnable fortress built by the kings of long ago for the safe keeping of their treasures and their personal security in the hazards of war" (Josephus 1976: 255). Although there has been much debate about the general accuracies of Josephus' descriptions (please see Cohen 2010), the account of the location and purpose of Masada is plausible and essential to the understanding of site context.

Pergamon's inclusion of temples for multiple deities commanded a beautiful and private location in which to conduct religious practices. Vincent Scully (1979) writes that:

All Greek sacred architecture explores and praises the character of a god or a group of gods in a specific place... The landscape and the temples together form the architectural whole, were intended by the Greeks to do so, and must therefore be seen in relation to each other (1–2).

The landscape is integral to the religious practice of the ancient Greeks who used the sanctuary, and therefore integral to visitors understanding the context of the exposed archaeological material. Much of the context can be interpreted from standing within the acropolis and observing the surrounding landscape (recently marred on one side by the cable car station), but the process of journeying to the site provides additional framework for the specificity of the natural location.

In each case, there is some authenticity lost in the presentation/interpretation of the sites by visitors who bypass the journey to the archaeological site in favor of the more universally accessible option. Designing open-air archaeological parks and their circulation, however, is about striking a balance between the new interpretation and the ancient material so that the site is both traversable and contextually educational. For Masada and Pergamon, some authenticity was sacrificed in order to allow more visitors to experience the archaeological remains in a safe way. As each site still allows visitor access on foot, those wishing to experience the site in as much ancient context as possible can still do so, while the cable cars provide access to those unable.

In situations where accessibility begins to overtake authenticity, much of the educational value of the monuments could be lost in the invasive interpretation. At Deir el-Bahari, construction intended to make the site accessible for patrons has encroached on the archaeological material and environment, confusing the interpretation and cultural context. The Supreme Council of Antiquities designed an asphalt paved road (fig. 14) over what was once a processional path to the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut to allow for trams to transport visitors from the car park to the temple entrance. The addition was part of a major project undertaken with support from Zahi Hawass, at that time secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, to redesign the complex to include a new visitor's center and enhance other tourism features and local sites (El-Aref 2009). What was initially a walking path for visitors is exposed to the sun with little shade, making the walk to the main temple from the car park difficult for some visitors but part of the religious context of the site, which is built as a series of processional spaces along the road axis. The carefully planned



**Fig. 14** The Deir el-Bahari paved road and tram system, Photo by author (2010)

ancient path was used for pilgrims participating in a funerary procession, and features strict symmetry, intending for both ancient and modern to experience the site in a carefully controlled vision and sequence. The addition of the asphalt not only prevents a walking approach to the site in this manner but exacerbates the heating condition through dark surface radiation, while the traffic of trams on the path prevents pedestrians from safely walking the path along the purposeful central axis. The asphalt also creates a contextual disconnect with the temple because the ancient architecture and path were constructed using limestone, which allowed much of the heat to reflect, keeping the area as cool as possible. As the ancient path would have been lined with palm trees and pools to cool the area, the new design does not take advantage of these sustainable landscape strategies, which would have been less invasive and culturally and contextually appropriate and informative.

At Deir el-Bahari, the accessibility design has unnecessarily overtaken the authentic interpretation of the archaeological site. The path is flat, complying with universal standards of accessibility, and the ancient Egyptians were able to overcome the harsh environment with passive cooling solutions, which could have been utilized in the modern design of the site. By adding the tram and its circulation requirements, the presentation of the site suggests that the educational and authenticity value is weighed less than convenience, which calls into question the role of the open-air site as a museum. By further utilizing the natural landscape in the way that the ancient Egyptians did, site organizers could add additional cultural context and create an authentic representation of original site while still providing an accessible space.

## Conclusions

For many archaeological sites interpreted for public consumption, the landscape and ancient architecture come together to create an integrated and engaging tourism experience. The journey through the landscape to understand significant sites, or the overcoming of the landscape to access hidden sites is part of the history of archaeological practice and often interpreted for visitors well after the initial discovery has taken place. When too much emphasis is placed on overcoming challenging landscapes to access the ancient material, the cultural context of the remains could be lost in the invasive interpretation. As these hybrid musealized spaces provide environments in which visitors can experience 'place' in a three-dimensional way, they offer insight into civilizations that is difficult to replicate in a material way.

By working *within* the constraints of the natural landscape, archaeological spaces can be interpreted to be both accessible and authentic, as design cues are given by the ancient people who once controlled the sites. By working together, designers, site organizers, archaeologists, and researchers can create balanced open-air archaeological museums that utilize the landscape, instead of overcoming it. Allowing accessibility or authenticity to overreach the other could present consequences for tourist understanding or revenue, eventually leading to the failure of the archaeological site financially. As new technologies continue to advance, there is significant potential for new forms of interpretations to enhance the archaeological tourism experience even further.

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