

# CHINA (PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF)

## Potala Palace in Lhasa



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### II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1994

#### Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Potala Palace Management Office in Lhasa, Tibet  
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### II.2 Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C ii, iii, v

#### Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:  
“The Potala Palace is the largest and the most complete ancient palace architectures now exist in Tibet. In terms of the palace layout, wood, earth and stone structure, metal smelting, sculpture, frescoes and cultural relics housed in the palace, they all prove the hard work and wisdom of the Tibetans people in ancient times and the great achievements in Tibetan architectural art. It is a condensation of the Tibetan history, a treasure house and material evidence for the study of Tibetan history and the cultural and artistic achievements. It meets the standards about the value and conditions for inscription on the World Heritage List.”

*“The demarcation line and buffer zone are not sufficient to protect the heritage values. It is necessary to make new plans about the protective zone and construction control zone, and to expand the scope of these zones.”*

#### Status of Site Boundaries

- The demarcation line and buffer zone are not sufficient to protect the heritage values. It is necessary to make new plans for the protective zone and construct a control zone and to expand the scope of these zones.
- The site management plan aims to define the protective and buffer zones of the Potala Palace.

### II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

#### Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- No change to authenticity and integrity.
- In the near future: commercial streets of the city will expand, the surrounding environment will change. Outside the protective zone and buffer zones, high-rise buildings of various kinds will be built, and this will seriously obstruct the perspective views of this WH Site.

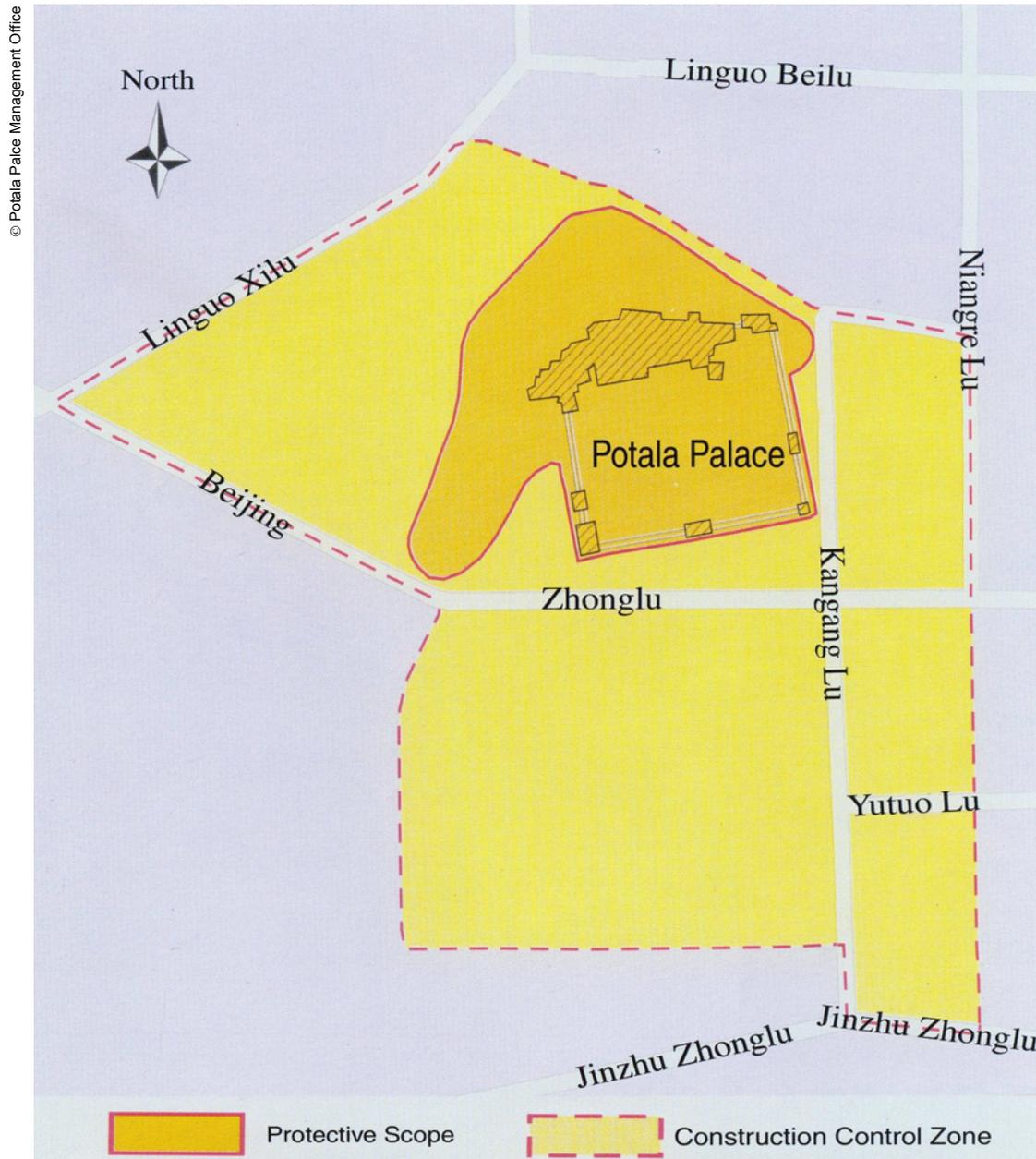
### II.4 Management

#### Administrative and Management Arrangements

- The report cites 3 major legal instruments, among which the Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics.
- For effective protection, both legal and traditional arrangements are in place.
- No need to revise actual arrangements, the site is under the responsibility of both the Government and the local autonomous region's administration of cultural heritage.
- Since 1997, promulgation of the Rules on the Protection and Management of the Potala Palace.
- Future actions: implementation of laws, rules and the WH Convention.

#### Present State of Conservation

- Since the Potala Palace was inscribed on the List of World Heritage, it has been protected and managed according to the WH Convention and Chinese legislation.
- The authenticity and integrity of the Potala Palace has been maintained and preserved.
- The Potala Palace Management Office has been working continuously on the registration, protection and restoration of this WH Site. “In order to completely protect the cultural relics housed in the palace, special cabins, shelves and boxes have been made, thus creating a favourable environment for their protection.”



Core and Buffer Zones of Potala Palace

### Staffing and Training Needs

- Total staff number: 195, including 12 with technical education.
- Staff numbers are not sufficient, compared to other sites.
- Training needs: ancient architecture and frescoes maintenance, preservation and reparation techniques.

### Financial Situation

- Sources of funds: tickets, local finance and State finance. Tickets income 2001: 7.886 million Yuan (US\$952,700), while spending amounted 5.68 million Yuan (US\$686,200).

- Available funding not sufficient, the State should complement to improve the situation.
- \* No International Assistance from WHF, UNESCO, UNDP, WB. Hong Kong donation in 1998.

### Access to IT

- 23 sets of computers with Internet and email access.
- No use of GIS.

### Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics provided since 1994, with 340,443 visitors in 2001.
- Existing facilities: very basic facilities exist.
- Facilities needed: Pre-recorded tour guiding equipment.

- No plan, but arrangements to handle the flow of visitors.
- WH values communicated through laws, publicity or brochures.
- Education: no education programme.
- Role of the inscription to the WH List: increased tourism, enhanced research plans and better awareness of construction activities.

### II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

#### Threats and Risks

- The urban expansion projects pose a threat to the WH Site's surrounding environment and landscape.
- Tourism pressure worsens hygienic conditions.
- 303 inhabitants within the protective zone.
- Due to climatic changes, thunder-strikes increased causing the safety and monitoring system serious damage. Furthermore, rainfalls cause roof leakages and seepage in walls.
- Rats have always been posing a certain threat.
- Cracks and bulging sections appear in the architectural walls, roofs and mural paintings.

#### Counteractive Plans

- Detailed plans for preventing dangers and eliminating the dangers to be completed in 5 years and special funds allocated for this purpose.
- Further improvement: better preservation of the historical landscapes, restoration of walls; and buildings, and address other problems listed above.
- Factors affecting the property: some are increasing such as the impact of urban construction and commercial activities; climatic changes affecting the site are also increasing.
- Action taken or to be taken in the future: extension of protective and buffer zones; implementation of plans and specific measures to address roof leakage and seepage.

### II.6 Monitoring

#### Monitoring Arrangements

- No formal monitoring system. Security systems have been installed.
- Partners: the company which installed the security systems.
- Improvements: in monitoring technology, method and equipment.

#### Monitoring Indicators

- No monitoring indicators existing.

### II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

#### Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- Values: The authenticity/integrity is protected and preserved; the significance is also widely cherished. Protection work is conducted soundly and well.
- Management and factors affecting property: to actively control the impact of urban construction and expansion projects, to actively use scientific methods so as to prevent damage caused by natural disasters.
- Future actions: strengthen co-operation and exchange with domestic and foreign research organisations; improve the service level and better co-ordination between tourism development and protection of the cultural heritage.
- The World Heritage Committee should publicize and stress the importance of protecting the site's historic landscape site and surrounding environment.
- Timetable for the implementation of actions: end of \* 2003.

#### \* State of Conservation Reports

1996 Committee, WHC-96/CONF.201//7B - Reconstruction work with demolition of historic structures and rebuilding in Shol with irreversible changes. Mural painting deteriorated by humidity and lacquer varnish, which causes flaking of surface and decolouration. Authenticity of paintings threatened by alteration and by smoke from yak-butter lamps. A training course on mural painting proposed and still pending will use the mural painting in Lukhang Temple as a pilot project.

"The Bureau encourages the strengthening of co-operation with UNESCO WHC's Programme for the Historic Cities of Asia, in the re-evaluation of the Lhasa Urban Master Plan to integrate the preservation of the historic urban fabric as part of overall urban development plan, and develop technical guidelines on conservation practice of historic buildings; urges the undertaking of the training course on mural painting; encourages to consider the extension of the protected area to cover Jokhang Temple and the historic centre of Barkor."

1998 Committee, WHC-98/CONF.203//8 rev – A July 1998 report, indicated that the Tibetan Autonomous Region will request the inclusion of Jokhang Temple within the site, and that the responsible authorities will proceed accordingly. To protect the setting of the site, modern residences and shops have been removed. The use of traditional building materials and methods in the restoration work has been promoted. Publications concerning the contents of all the cultural properties have been issued.

"The Bureau took note of the concerns on the demolition of historic buildings and new construction activities in the Barkhor historic area, and requested the authorities for information".

The World Heritage Committee, at its 22<sup>nd</sup> session held in December 1998, noted the Bureau's request to the State Party.

1999 Bureau, WHC-99/CONF.204//5 - On April 1999, the Centre once again requested the authorities for information concerning the possible extension of this site. To date, no additional information has been received. The Secretariat may briefly report to the Bureau on the progress made in extending this property, if the nomination is submitted by 1 July 1999.



*Yearly application of earthen materials outside the walls of the Potala Palace*

1999 Committee, WHC-99/CONF.209//14 - In anticipation of the extension of the boundaries, the national and local authorities enhanced efforts in documentation and conservation of the heritage of the extension area. Collaboration with international NGOs, international universities and local authorities has increased co-operation and links. The active participation of the Lhasa Municipality in the Suzhou International Conference is noteworthy. A delegation from the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) visited Norway in October 1999 and the organization of a technical activity has subsequently been proposed. In view of continued incidents of illegal demolition and inappropriate reconstructions in the Barkhor historic area, the Centre and State Party are discussing awareness measures for local population.

"The Bureau expresses appreciation for enhanced international co-operation. The Bureau takes note of the proposed training activities. The Bureau expresses its readiness to consider international assistance from the WH Fund to support national and local efforts and requests the WH Centre to work in collaboration with the State Party".

2000 Bureau, WHC-2000/CONF.202//5 - Eyewitness accounts received on demolition of traditional buildings in the Shol part: on-going demolition of original buildings important to the historic understanding of the area in its relation to the Potala Palace. Beautification of prominent buildings for conversion, and clearing of land for a green zone are reportedly carried out by expelling inhabitants and demolishing homes to develop tourism facilities.

"The Bureau notes the efforts for public awareness to use traditional material and conservation methods to preserve the architectural features of the site. The Bureau expresses concern over the transformation of the historic characteristics of Shol. Whilst recognizing the importance of tourism and the need for adequate facilities for visitors, the Bureau requests the State Party to maintain the authenticity and provide a report on the renovation plan of Shol for examination by the 24th extraordinary session of the Bureau."

2000 Committee, WHC-2000/CONF.204//10 - A Report on the Protection of the Sho| Area and related Plans received on 09/2000, transmitted to ICOMOS. Local authorities terminated activities for the conservation of traditional building in the Barkhor area. This area is proposed as an extension to the WH site. The report stated, "according to reports, there were schemes to demolish ancient buildings or set up tourist facilities at the Sho| Area. However, the authority stopped the projects. The future plan is to move out the residents not original dwellers of the area, to better reserve the traditional buildings in their

true and integrate conditions. Also the Tibetan Archives, with financial support from a foreign NGO, started the restoration of the ruins of an ancient building without permission." The protection area has been redefined according to Measures issued by the No 10 Order of the People's Government of the TAR. The protection area circled by the surroundings walls is the core area as well as the Northeast Corner of the Red Hill where the Potala Palace stands. The buffer zone is clearly indicated on a Map attached to the report.

"The Bureau may wish to examine the information provided above and request the State Party for clarifications regarding the Government policy on the involvement of international NGOs, multilateral and bilateral development co-operation agencies in the conservation of cultural heritage in Lhasa".

2001 Bureau, WHC-2001/CONF.205//5 - A March 2001 ICOMOS Mission reported on the protection of the WH areas by the Urban Development Plan of Lhasa and noted that; (i) the weakness in co-ordination resulted in inappropriate construction, but these problems were solved by a system of clearance; (ii) a newly constructed television tower, outside the buffer zone, interferes with

visual angles of the Palace; (iii) as part of the City Development Plan, the lakes and parks to the south and the west within the buffer zone will be redeveloped to provide relaxation and leisure areas; (iv) in the protected area (Shol Area), a large number of historic buildings which previously served the integrated functions of the Potala and in which additions and alterations were made in the past, have been included in a conservation project aiming to provide alternative accommodation to inhabitants prior to the conservation of the buildings. Plans have been made to accommodate specific activities compatible with the site's functioning; (v) the Potala Palace Protection Plan and Jokhang Monastery Protection Plan had been prepared. They focus on conservation, maintenance and monitoring and include annual programmes to enhance religious activities and maximize the use of staff and funding; (vi) the proposal for improvements and modifications of the lighting and special flood lighting of the Jokhang Monastery public piazza; (vii) regarding the murals painted on clay-lime plaster, preventive measures taken due to the lack of trained personnel. The authorities requested ICOMOS Scientific Committee on Wall Paintings to propose a training activity for mural conservators in Tibet; (viii) no scientific documentation and conservation work is planned for silk paintings neither are they planned for the scripture books documenting Mahayana Buddhist doctrine; (ix) the poor management of documentation; (x) termites, rats, humidity and fire are major threats to the cultural property; (xi) the authorities indicated their wish to collaborate with international organizations to preserve the WH areas, but reiterated the need for all international projects to be cleared by them and be integrated into the overall conservation plan.

“The Bureau recalls having encouraged the authorities to submit a training request for the organization of a training Workshop on the conservation of mural paintings. The Bureau also requests the authorities to provide information concerning the current policy regarding movable cultural heritage of the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. Furthermore, the Bureau expresses its readiness to consider international assistance and requests the World Heritage Centre to work with the State Party to prepare a plan of action to address the conservation issues raised in the Reactive Monitoring Mission Report of ICOMOS.”

2002 Committee, WHC-2002/CONF.202/17 - Numerous independent reports received concerning continued demolition of traditional historic buildings within the protective buffer zone of the Barkhor Historic Area, which is part of the World Heritage property. Information concerning the construction of a new 13-storey concrete building in the Public Security Bureau Compound in Lhasa, underlines the disruption to the architectural skyline and traditional urban environment of the World Heritage protected areas, due to the large scale of the building which is visible from all central points in Lhasa. On 2 May 2002, the Director of the World Heritage Centre requested the Chinese authorities to provide a full

report on the state of conservation of this World Heritage property, including information on the development activities being carried out within the World Heritage core and buffer zones, as well as the areas immediately surrounding these protective zones.