

## WORLD HERITAGE LIST

### Ping Yao (China)

No 812

#### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The ancient city of Ping Yao
<i>Location</i>	Ping Yao County, Shanxi Province
<i>State Party</i>	People's Republic of China
<i>Date</i>	26 July 1996

#### Justification by State Party

Several thousand urban complexes like Ping Yao were built over the course of Chinese history. However, only a very few have been preserved to the present day. Ping Yao has the integrity and the typical characteristics of an ancient Chinese city, and is outstanding because of the degree of preservation of its historical features. It is representative of the development of Han structures and constructional techniques during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1911) in the central plains of China and illustrates the development of the society, economy, culture, art, science, technology, and industry.

#### Criteria ii, iii, and iv

A large number of densely packed remains from the 2700-year history of Ping Yao are still in evidence. They play a significant role in the built heritage of China, representing not only the different styles of building over that time but also the artistic and aesthetic evolution, with contributions from different nationalities and other parts of China.

#### Criterion v

Ping Yao accurately and comprehensively reflects the town-planning and building traditions of the Han people over the period from the 14th to the 19th century.

#### Criterion ii

In the second half of the 19th century Ping Yao was the centre of banking in China, and as such had a profound effect on the modern economic development of the country.

#### Criterion vi

#### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention Ping Yao is a *group of buildings*

#### History and Description

##### *History*

The Ping Yao region has been settled by humankind since Neolithic times. There has been an urban settlement on the site of the nominated property since at least the Western Zhou Dynasty, since it was fortified with earthen ramparts during the reign of King Xuan (827-782 BC). With the implementation of the system of prefectures and counties in 221 BC, Ping Yao became the seat of a county administration, and continues to play that role.

In 1370, during the reign of the Ming Emperor Hong Wu, the city was greatly extended. It was fortified with a massive new defensive wall in masonry and brick and the internal layout was greatly altered, reflecting the strict rules of planning of the Han peoples.

Since that time it has evolved steadily as a Han city during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It emerged as one of the leading commercial cities in northern China during the 16th century, and retained that status well into the present age. In the second half of the 19th century the banking community of Ping Yao dominated Chinese financial life.

##### *Description*

Ping Yao city is located at the end of the alluvial fan resulting from the confluence of the Hui Ji and Liu Gen rivers. The land slopes slightly from south-east to north-west.

The circuit of walls built in the late 14th century measures 6km in length, the precise dimension for a city of this grade according to Han prescriptions. It is 10m thick at the base and tapers to 3-5m at the top; the height varies from 6m to 10m. There are six fortified gates and 72 massive bastions along its length.

The area enclosed is 2.25km<sup>2</sup>, comprising six large temple complexes, administrative offices for county and municipal administrations, and other public buildings, as well as office buildings, especially those of the draft banks for which Ping Yao was famous, shops, and domestic architecture from all the periods of the city's six centuries of history.

The internal street layout is symmetrical and rectilinear: there are over a hundred streets and lanes in the city. The main cross-streets are lined with shops built in the 17th-19th centuries which effectively preserve the historic townscape.

Ping Yao contains a number of cultural monuments protected by national, provincial, or county designation. The 10th century Ten Thousand Buddha Hall of Zhen Guo Temple is a fundamental reference

for the study of early Chinese painted statues, as well as for its architecture. The 12th century Main Hall of the Confucian Temple is a classic example of this form of structure, where large oblique beams are used to bear the main roof timbers, instead of the more conventional technique using brackets. The Shuang Lin Temple, founded in the 6th century, is also renowned for its collection of over two thousand decorated clay statues dating from the 12th-19th centuries. The Qing Xu Daoist Temple, founded in the 7th century, consists of ten main buildings covering nearly 6000 m<sup>2</sup>. Its Dragon Hall is noteworthy for the rare constructional technique used, a system of suspension beams and pendant columns.

There is also a group of more recent temples, of equal architectural value and quality. These include the 19th century Temple of the Town God, the Auspicious Temple, and the Temple to General Guan Yu.

The County Administrative Building is a complex that contains elements from the 14th to the 19th centuries. The two-storey wooden City Tower is, at 18.5m, the highest structure within the historic city. It owes its present appearance to a reconstruction in 1688. From the same period comes the Hui Ji Bridge, built in stone with stone balustrades on either side.

The prosperity deriving from trade, and later from the draft banks, resulted in Ping Yao being endowed over the centuries with many high-quality, well built private houses, and these have survived to a large extent. They follow the feudal and hierarchical Han tradition closely, with distinguishing local features. They are built round four sides of an open courtyard, and fall into three main groups.

The first are conventional single-storeyed structures in wood and brick, with tiled roofs. Next come the below-ground structures in brick with corridors lined with wood and extended eaves. The third group are two-storey buildings, in which the underground structure is surmounted by a wooden second storey. These underground structures owe their origins to prehistoric caves dug in the *Loess* of the middle reaches of the Yellow River basin.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The entire area of the historic town is subject to the 1982 Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics (amended 1991).

This general protection is defined in greater detail in the Implementation Measures on the Protection of Historical Relics of Shan Xi Province of 11 January 1987. Specific to Ping Yao are the Protection Regulations of Ping Yao Ancient City, issued by the People's Government of Ping Yao County on 20 December 1994.

It was designated a National Historical and Cultural City by the State Council in 1986.

### *Management*

Ownership of the entire city, including all the buildings, is vested in the People's Republic of China.

Strict control is exercised over all forms of construction, restoration, and use of buildings in the ancient city. In conformity with Chinese practice, responsibility is devolved down from the State Bureau of Cultural Relics to the Shanxi Provincial Government and then to the Ping Yao County Government, operating through its Historical Relics Administrative Bureau and Urban and Rural Construction Bureau.

In 1982 the Construction Administration and the Planning and Design Institute of Shanxi Province, in association with the Ping Yao County Government, commissioned Tongji University (Shanghai) and the Ping Yao Construction Bureau to draw up the General Plan for Ping Yao City. This was approved in 1985, and as a result Protection Regulations for the Famous Historical and Cultural City of Ping Yao were prepared in 1989.

These Regulations divide the city into an ancient urban protection zone and a new construction zone. The former is sub-divided into absolute, first-, second-, and third-grade protection zones, for each of which planning conditions are laid down. To protect the setting of the ancient city, provisions are made for a green belt and ring road (thus constituting an effective buffer zone).

A new residential zone has been created away from the ancient city, the population density of which is being progressively reduced, starting at the end of 1995. County administrative bodies are also relocating there.

There is strong local support for the protection and rehabilitation measures for the ancient city. Several non-governmental organizations are now in existence and playing an active role: these include the Research Association for the Famous Historical and Cultural City, the Friendship Association for Cultural Relics, and the Association for Taking Care of Our Ancient City.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

Ping Yao has a long history of conservation. Historical records show that restoration campaigns took place in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 19th centuries.

After the creation of the People's Republic of China, protection and restoration measures were put in hand in 1979, starting with a major campaign for the restoration and conservation of the city wall and towers which was not completed until 1993. Other projects have included the rehabilitation of the Southern Avenue and its historic shops and houses.

The Protection Plan has three phases. During the first (1990-95), a dozen government offices and factories have been removed from the historic city and

restoration work has been carried out on the Qing Xu Temple, the City Tower, and the Draft Bank of Ri Sheng Chang (Everlasting Prosperity), as well as the walls and the Southern Avenue. The second five-year period will concentrate on renovation of the streets, water and drainage facilities, and immediate surroundings. The third stage (2000-2010) will see the overall project brought to completion.

religious development during one of the most seminal periods of Chinese history.

ICOMOS, September 1997

#### *Authenticity*

The plan and defensive line of the city have not changed significantly since 1370. As with any city that has continued in its function continuously over many centuries, there have been restorations and modifications to remedy deterioration or to suit current changes in fashion.

The residential buildings date principally to 1840-1911, and these have been scrupulously maintained and conserved. The overall authenticity of Ping Yao may therefore be deemed to be high.

#### **Evaluation**

##### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Ping Yao in February 1997.

##### *Qualities*

Ping Yao is an exceptionally well preserved example of a Han Chinese city founded in the 14th century and occupied continuously since that time which has undergone no radical changes in form or material since the 19th century.

##### *Comparative analysis*

No comparative analysis is provided in the nomination dossier, and none has yet been carried out by ICOMOS or any other scientific or professional organization.

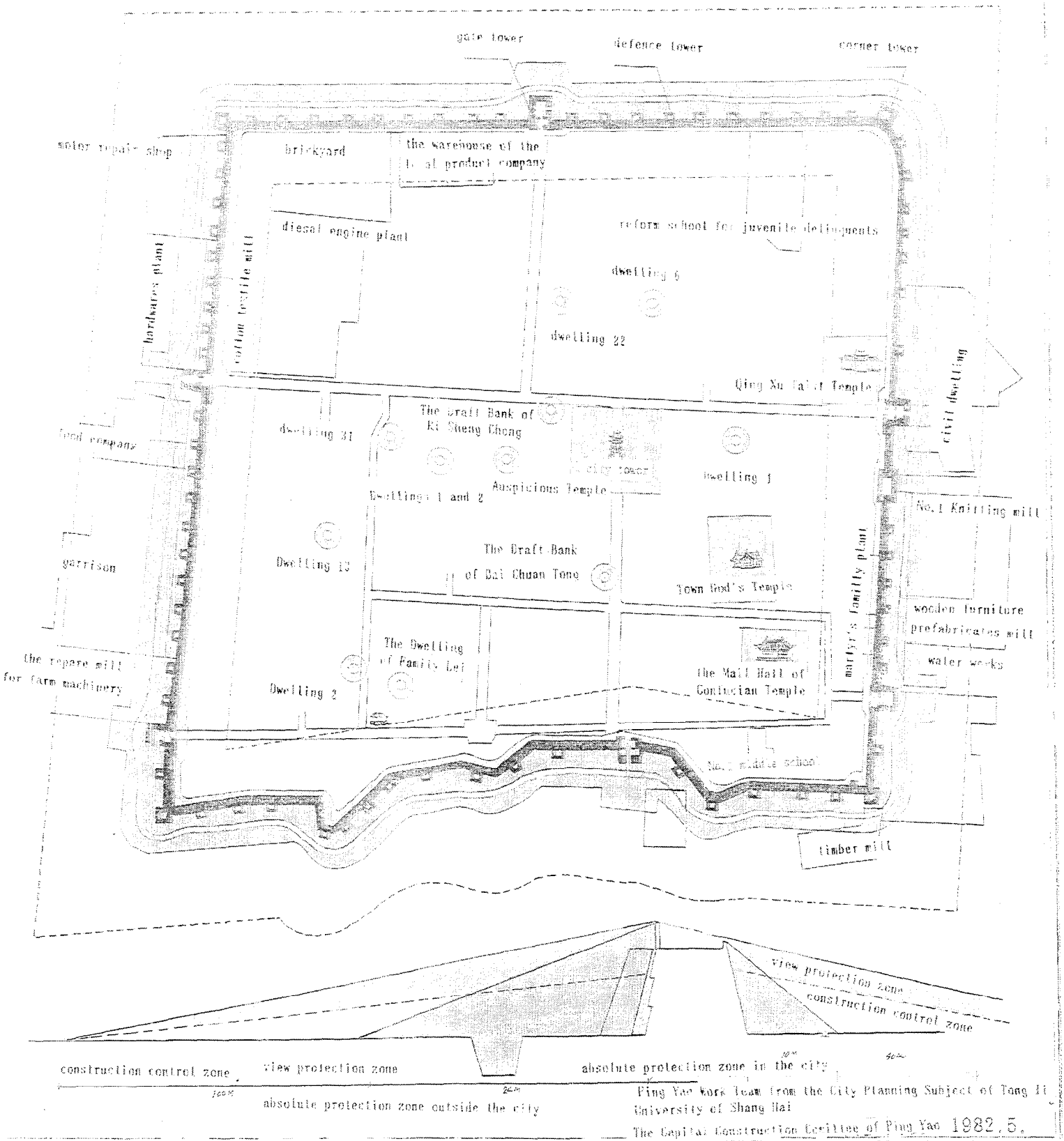
##### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

In view of the number of ancient towns in the tentative list of the People's Republic of China (including Ping Yao, also nominated in 1997), ICOMOS recommends that the State Party be requested to provide a comparative study of Chinese historic towns, indicating the reasons why those on the tentative list have been selected, and also the criteria under which it is proposed that they should be included on the World Heritage List.

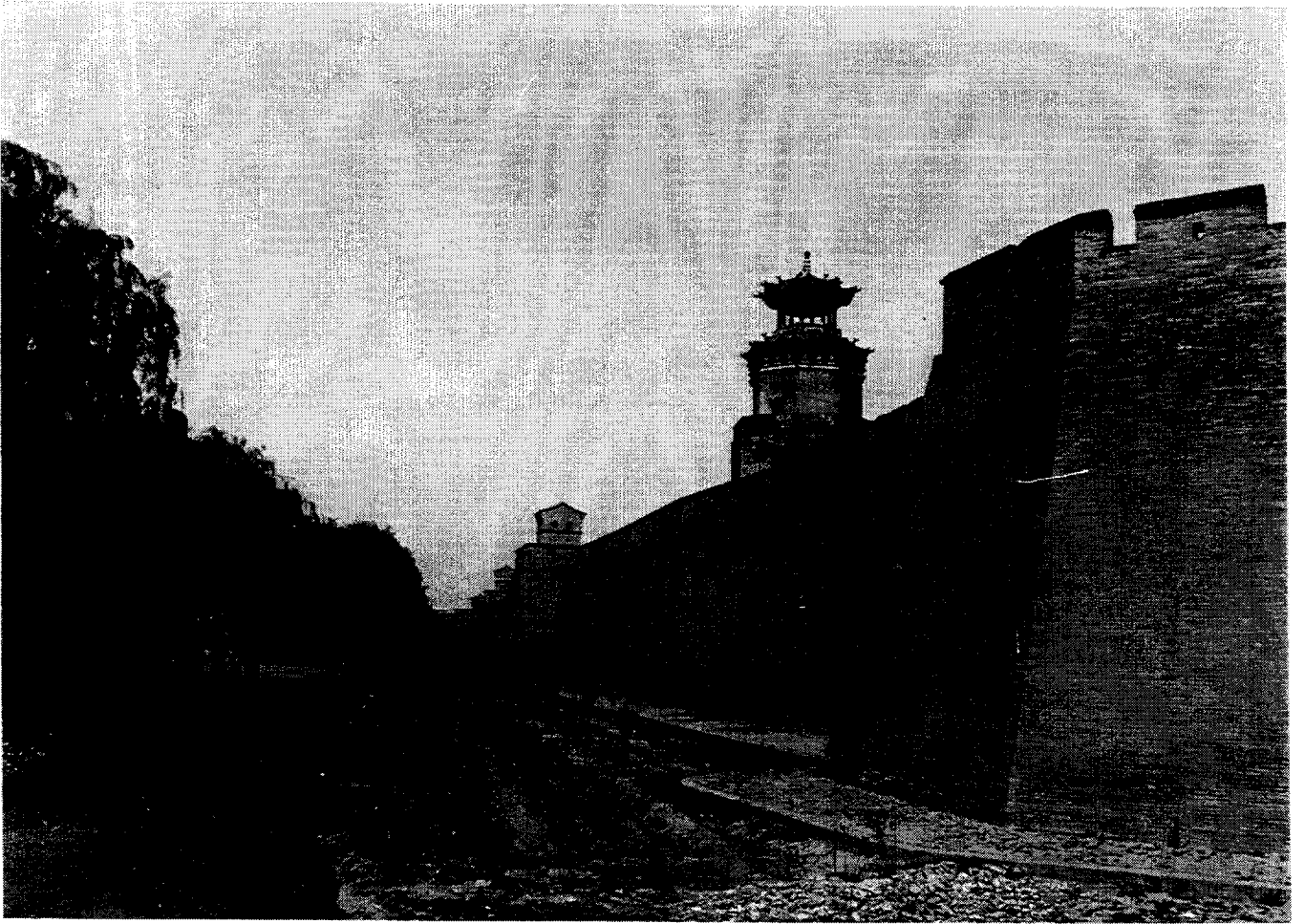
#### **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, and iv*:

The ancient city of Ping Yao is an outstanding example of a Han Chinese city of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (14th-20th centuries) that has retained all its features to an exceptional degree and in doing so provides a remarkably complete picture of cultural, social, economic, and



**Ping Yao :**  
**Monuments et zones protégées de Ping Yao /**  
**Protected monuments and zones in Ping Yao**



**Ping Yao :**  
**Les remparts de la ville /**  
**The City Walls**



**Ping Yao :**  
**Temple de Shuanglin /**  
**Shuanglin Temple**