

ASIA / PACIFIC

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF HONGHE HANI RICE  
TERRACES

CHINA

## WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN COMMENTS TO ICOMOS

### CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF HONGHE HANI RICE TERRACES (CHINA) ID No. 1111

The area of nominated property is 16,603.22 ha, with a proposed buffer zone of 29,501.01 ha.

IUCN considered this cultural landscape nomination based on a desk review of the nomination and considered the comments of three external reviewers. IUCN also communicated with ICOMOS regarding the content of its reviews.

IUCN makes the following brief observations:

Reviewers note the important natural values in this area. The Ailao mountains stretch along the Red River (Honghe) valley, and are home to the large virgin subtropical montane evergreen broadleaf forest in China, with a highly significant population of the Endangered Black Gibbon (*Nomascus concolor*), whose population is assessed in the IUCN Red List as decreasing. Population estimates for the Chinese portion of this species range from about 200 to 260 groups (Jiang *et al.* 2006). Using an average group size of 5.0 individuals, this would translate into 1,000 to 1,300 individuals. Perhaps the most important subpopulation in China resides in the Wuliang Mountains and numbers about 100 groups (Jiang *et al.* 2006). There are 98 groups of *N. c. jingdongensis* (Jiang *et al.* 2006), with a total of about 490 individuals, if an average groups size of 5 individuals is used. For *N. c. fuvogaster* there are about 26-42 groups remaining (Jiang *et al.* 2006), which would represent about 130-210 individuals, if an average groups size of 5 individuals is used. A survey in the northern part of Ailao Mountain National Nature Reserve found approximately 45 groups of *N. c. concolor*, with around 200-250 individuals.

According to a recent survey, the majority of the region's gibbon population occurs in the areas north of the nominated property while there are several isolated small populations surviving in the areas south of the nominated site. Reviewers suggest endangered plant species in the forest in or near the site, e.g. include *Manglietiastrum sinicum* (not assessed on the Red List at present, but suggested by reviewer as endangered) and up to 4 endangered endemic *Cycas* species. The Honghe valley is the dividing line for the geographical units, flora as well as fauna of the Southwest Mountains (Hengduan Mountains) and Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. The river may also be important for the largest and most critically endangered freshwater turtle in the world, *Rafetus swinhoei*.

As mentioned in the nomination file (P50-100), the four landscape elements of the nominated property, forests- water systems- terraces- villages, are organically integrated. The water flows down from the headwater forest and runs into the terrace through a

well managed water system. The flow of physical matters and energy from hilltop down to the valley is well described and interpreted in the file. However, the inverse flow of matter from the valley up to the hilltop is insufficiently elaborated. Reviewers noted the scenic beauty that occurs during the dry season, results from moisture coming from the valley which ascends along the mountain slope and finally forms dense fog at altitudes over 1,000m. From an ecological perspective, the water cycle between the Ailao Mountains and the Red River is noted by reviewers as significant in endowing the Hani Terrace outstanding scenic value and productivity in biodiversity and agricultural civilization. Awareness of this should be raised and should be emphasized in future landscape conservation and management.

The nomination document offers little information on the biodiversity of global importance in and around the nominated site, only a simple vegetation table and a few descriptive texts cited from the folk poem were presented (P65-66). There is also a gap in monitoring requirements related to biodiversity and ecosystem service, according to Table 6.1 of the nomination (P243-244).

The nomination makes clear there are a wide range of interactions between people, notably the Hani ethnic group, and the landscape including both tangible and intangible aspects of this relationship. IUCN notes that ICOMOS will assess the global significance of that interaction in relation to the cultural criteria under which the property is nominated. IUCN's World Heritage Panel considered that the nomination clearly outlines the types of long standing, traditional interactions between people and nature that characterise this type of landscape as a cultural landscape in the terms defined in the World Heritage Convention: "a combined work of man and nature". The magnitude of the continuity of balance between mosaic anthropogenic landscape and natural system is notable in both temporal and spatial scale. However, it is also a fact that the current landscape of the Hani Terrace is sustained at the expense of montane rain forest with the same extent. There are therefore intrinsic relationships between the property, as part of the human impacts on the landscape of this part of China, and the numbers of endangered species in and around the site. These natural values should therefore be considered both within the property, and in relation to the wider landscape in which it sits.

## Boundaries

The boundary of the property includes four elements, forest-water system-village-terrace. However, from a natural perspective, the boundary does not account for the ecological processes which maintain the run of water system and productivity of forest and terrace.

IUCN notes that the nominated property is not currently recognised as a protected area although it may potentially qualify as an IUCN Category V or Category VI protected area. IUCN noted that the nomination indicates that a National Wetland Park has recently been declared, which comprises 5 components, including 3 in the nominated property, one in its buffer zone, and one elsewhere. The relationship of the National Wetland Park and the nominated property is discussed in the nomination, but the reasoning for the differences between these boundaries is not made clear and it might therefore be practical to consider greater harmonisation of boundaries.

Regarding forests, the paramount headwater forest in Yuanyang county comprises the virgin forest in the West Guanyin Mountain and the East Guanyin Mountain, which is under the protection of the provincial Guanyin Mountain Nature Reserve. The nominated property is located between the two and includes only small patches of virgin forest. (There is no map illustrating the relationship between the nominated site and the boundary of the Guanyin Mountain Nature Reserve). The diversity of vegetation zones is a prominent feature of the nominated site, but the boundary is biased to higher altitudes, and fewer lowland vegetations are included. In contrast the lowland habitat accommodates more species and is fragmented to a much larger extent.

The nominated property includes some land patches of the National Wetland Park of Hani Terrace and the Provincial Nature Reserve of Guanyinshan. A further integration of the national wetland park (which is discussed in the nomination), the provincial nature reserve (which is not discussed) and the nominated property should be considered to enhance the integrity of the nominated property.

## References used

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