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## **Tusi Sites (People's Republic of China) No 1474**

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### **Official name as proposed by the State Party**

Tusi Sites

### **Location**

Hunan Province, Hubei Province and Guizhou Province

### **Brief description**

Distributed around the mountainous areas of south-west China are the remains of tribal domains whose leaders were appointed as rulers of their regions by the central government from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This 'Tusi' system of administrative government was aimed at unifying national administration while simultaneously allowing ethnic minorities to retain their customs and way of life. The three sites of Laosicheng, Tangya and the Hailongtun Fortress comprise the serial property representing this system of governance. Their combinations of local ethnic and central Chinese features exhibit an interchange of values and testify to imperial Chinese administrative methods, while retaining their association with the living cultural traditions of the ethnic minority groups.

### **Category of property**

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of three *sites*.

## **1 Basic data**

### **Included in the Tentative List**

29 January 2013

### **International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination**

None

### **Date received by the World Heritage Centre**

27 January 2014

### **Background**

This is a new nomination.

### **Consultations**

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management and several independent experts.

### **Technical Evaluation Mission**

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the site from 10 to 20 September 2014.

### **Additional information received by ICOMOS**

A letter was sent to the State Party on 21 August 2014 requesting clarification on how each component contributes to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a whole; a timetable for completion of the Conservation Master Plan for the Tangya component; and information on conservation measures at Hailongtun Fortress, protection within the buffer zone and visitor facilities. A second letter was sent to the State Party following the ICOMOS Panel meeting in December 2014 regarding conservation, management and implementation of the monitoring system and requesting further justification of criterion (vi) for the whole series. Additional information on protection, conservation and visitor facilities together with updated information on ownership and staff numbers was provided to the mission expert and received on 11 October 2014. Additional information in response to the mission including lists of intangible heritage items related to each site, archaeological work plans and Villagers' Agreements was provided on 18 October 2014. Additional information in response to ICOMOS' first letter was received on 27 October 2014. A response to ICOMOS' second letter was received on 21 February, 2015. The information has been incorporated below.

### **Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

12 March 2015

## **2 The property**

### **Description**

Three sites are nominated from more than 100 sites of Tusi remains as representative of the Tusi system of administrative government in the mountainous region of south-west China from the 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are Laosicheng Tusi Domain, Tangya Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress, which together total 781.28ha. Each is surrounded by a buffer zone.

The administrative system adopted by the Yuan, Ming and Qing Empires appointed tribal leaders in the south-western cultural minority regions as hereditary rulers of their people called 'Tusi'. This allowed the local social structures to be retained, reinforcing the local chieftain's authority while tying the leadership to the central administration covering inheritance, tribute, taxation, education and other rights and obligations. The nominated series is comprised of the sites of official Tusi residences and buildings set up within the minorities' settlements and the remains of the settlements themselves, which continued to retain their traditional layout, local temples and sacrificial places, handcraft areas and local building styles. Their mountainous locations were difficult to access except by river travel.

### **Laosicheng**

This was the seat of the Peng family from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, who governed Xizhou Prefecture of mainly Tujia people. Representing the highest rank of the Tusi system,

governing a large territory, the residence and administrative area was appropriately large in scale. The property area is 534.24ha and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 1023.93ha. Located on a terraced hillside sloping down to the east bank of a bend in the Lingxi River, the settlement faces south-west across to the Luosiwan Hills. It comprises the walled official residential area and adjoining walled administration area including the extant Peng Ancestral Hall, with the market area lower down, close to the river bank. The local temple is on higher ground along the river to the north-east and the Zijinshan burial ground of the Peng family containing 29 Ming period tombs is along the river to the south, with the Yacaoping burial ground of the Tujia people further south again. The remaining Wenchang Pavilion and the Huangjing Hall of the Patriarch Temple complex represent the characteristics of the Diaojiao Lou as the local Tujia ethnic architectural style. Paving of streets and lanes features decorative geometric patterns similar to Tujia traditional brocade patterns and pebble paving between the tombs in the Zijinshan burial ground is worked with flower patterns typical of the Tujia people. On the other hand, administrative buildings exhibit the central government administrations' five-bay design layout and the extant memorial archway is in the official style of the central government. The Patriarch Temple complex buildings were wooden post and lintel structures as commonly used in Central China.

#### Tangya

This was the seat of the Qin family from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who ruled the south-western region of Shizhou Prefecture, where Tujia people were the major ethnic group. Representing a Tusi rank several grades lower than at Laosicheng, Tangya's administrative centre is of corresponding smaller scale. The property area is 86.62ha and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 973.61ha. This site is located on a natural triangular terrace surrounded on three sides by rivers and backed by hills to the north and west. The settlement is surrounded by the remains of walls with nine gates. Remains of the Zhangwang and Yuhuang temples and six tombs as well as garden remains are located outside the walls on higher ground to the north-west. Another six tombs are located in the forest to the west and south. Building remains within the walls follow a street and drainage system on the terraced hillside sloping down to the Tangya River on the east. The excavated areas of the administration area include the Guanyan Hall and Da Yamen (main government office) while the memorial archway is the only standing element. As at Laosicheng, this is an official-style structure and carries Central Chinese decorative themes but the frieze portraying the Tusi's tour of inspection displays local Tujia motifs. The settlement contains remains of barracks buildings, an execution stand, and at the Zhangwang Temple site stone statues of soldiers and horses on a platform commemorate a famous general. These are protected by a pavilion erected in 1983. There are also remains of 17 wells, quarries and artefacts which testify to a stone carving industry and fragments of ceramics and porcelain.

#### Hailongtun Fortress

This was the seat of the Yang family from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and became a dedicated mountain defensive fortification of Bozhou Prefecture of Sichuan rebuilt in 1595-1600. Like Laosicheng, Hailongtun represents the highest rank of the Tusi system and the administrative area is correspondingly large. Located at the strategic junction of Sichuan, Guizhou and Huguang the site was both a military and administrative centre where Gelao and Miao people were the major ethnic groups. It has a property area of 160.42ha and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 1288.21ha. The stone fortress is spectacularly located on a mountain surrounded by ravines with an extensive walled defensive system including elaborate gateways, watchtowers and barbicans still standing. The stone gateways followed the design of those in central China but the window with perforated diamond pattern in the Feilong gate reflects local decorative patterns. The remains of the walled Xinwanggong official residence and temple, the Laowanggong official residence, administrative buildings, wells quarry and kiln remains, barracks and drilling ground all accessed by stone-paved paths and steps are located on the flat top of the hill. Recovered artefacts include decorated ceramic roof tiles, porcelain and ceramics, some marked with imperial motifs, and inscribed stele. Documentary records mention the copper drums captured by the Ming army which were important in the culture of the Gelao people.

#### History and development

The Tusi system derived from earlier systems of ethnic minority government by dynasties going back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE which were increasingly standardized over time. The title 'Tusi' appeared for the first time in the Ming period. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Tusi were replaced by administrative bodies of Central China under the Gaitu Guiliu policy in many areas and the system ceased with the end of the feudal period in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Laosicheng retained the system until the administrative seat was relocated to Kesha Domain in 1724 and the site was abandoned. The Patriarch Temple complex was repaired and maintained by government authorities from 1960 and it and the Zijinshan burial ground were designated as Provincial Protected Heritage Sites by the People's Government of Hunan Province in 1983. The whole Laosicheng Tusi Domain was designated as a National Cultural Heritage Site in 2001.

With the enforcement of the Gaitu Guiliu policy the Tangya Tusi presented the domain to the central government in 1735. At that time, the administration moved to Xianfeng and the site was abandoned. In 1978 the domain was registered as immovable cultural heritage by Xianfeng County; in 1992 it was designated a Provincial Protected Cultural Heritage Site by Hubei Province and in 2006 it was designated as a National Cultural Heritage Site.

Following defeat in a battle against the Ming emperor in 1600, Hailongtun was surrendered in 1601. Officials of the Ming dynasty subsequently built the Haichao Temple. The

extant building remains in the centre of the Xinwanggong official residence date from 1929. In 1982 the fortress was designated a Provincial Protected Cultural Heritage Site by Guizhou Province and in 2001 it was designated as a National Cultural Heritage Site.

### 3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

#### Comparative analysis

The sites that comprise the series have been selected from 101 identified sites of Tusi domains in South-west China on the basis of their protected status, and the nature, pattern, scale and value of the remains as the most representative of the Tusi system. A detailed comparative table of these has been provided in the nomination dossier, as well as a comparative evaluation table of those protected at national or provincial levels.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analyses demonstrate that the selected sites complement each other in terms of the different aspects of the Tusi system. As confirmed by the additional information provided by the State Party, the selected sites share common attributes such as a central administration area on the imperial model surrounded by topographically arranged local habitation, with its cultural and religious features. The selected sites also carry some site-specific elements including that: the size of the administrative areas corresponds to the highest Tusi rank at Laosicheng and Hailongtun and to the lowest but one at Tangya; each site contains different expressions of the relevant local decorative traditions and motifs; burial traditions are attested at Laosicheng and Tangya; mountain fortification and military aspects are demonstrated at Hailongtun and to a lesser extent at Tangya; ethnic communities still reside within the property at Laosicheng and still practise their cultural traditions there.

The property has been compared by the State Party with the World Heritage listed properties of Chief Roi Mata's Domain in Vanuatu (2008, (iii), (v) & (vi)) and Sukur Cultural Landscape in Nigeria (1999, (iii), (v) & (vi)), which are not considered particularly relevant by ICOMOS. It was concluded that these are clearly different in terms of attributes and values. It has also been compared with a number of other administrative centres ruled by minorities of a unified multi-ethnic country including the Inca Empire's Curaca system, which lacks physical remains; the Roman Empire's appointment of local governors at various sites, which do not reflect an inheritance of minority cultural diversity; and, the Russian Empires of the Kievan Rus and Tsarist Russia, the duchies and vassal states of which do not demonstrate an evident central administration but rather exhibit dominant local ethnic features.

ICOMOS notes that Qhapaq Ñan (2014, (ii), (iii), (iv) & (vi)), the transboundary Andean Road System of the Inca empire that includes Bolivia, Argentina, Chile,

Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru illustrates similar accommodations as the Chinese with local and regional tribal and state level societies and incorporated them into their network of roadways, trading settlements, and administrative nodes. The ancient Inca Tambu located along the roadway incorporated an Inca administrative plan with local and regional cultural flavour. ICOMOS also considers that the Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu in Japan (1999, (ii), (iii) & (iv)) has some commonalities with the Tusi sites. However ICOMOS considers that the physical remains of the three Tusi administrative centres with their mountainous landscape among otherwise dispersed highland villages express a distinctively Chinese administrative and socio-political system for interacting with ethnic minorities and preserving cultural diversity in peripheral zones which cannot be constructively compared with other sites having broadly similar values.

The property has also been compared with others inscribed on the World Heritage List that are associated with cultural minorities in South-west China, including the Old Town of Lijiang (1997, (ii), (iv) & (v)); the Cultural landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces (2013, (iii) & (v)); and on the Tentative List including the Dong Villages; Diaolou Buildings and Villages for Tibetan and Qiang Ethnic Groups; Miao Nationality Villages in South-east Guizhou Province; Ancient Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er. The State Party concludes that the physical remains of these properties reflect primarily the production and living conditions of the ethnic groups and do not reflect the administrative strategy of the Tusi system.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated sites differ from the others in China in that they contain extensive remains of the central administrative buildings and official residences. In terms of the proposed justification of Outstanding Universal Value, it is the ability to demonstrate the centralised system of governance that is important. Thus ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies the selection of these sites.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List.

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#### Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- It is a representative series of sites representing the exchange of human values between national identity as expressed by the central government, and local ethnic cultural minorities;
- The sites represent Chinese administrative strategy from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century;

- The sites are associated with typical living customs and cultural traditions of the ethnic groups of Southwest China.

The serial approach enables a representative selection of attributes of potential Outstanding Universal Value to demonstrate a fusion of regional ethnic traditions with Central Chinese forms and patterns within the rugged mountainous landscape of southwest China.

ICOMOS considers that this justification is appropriate because the physical remains of the three sites combine to demonstrate the Chinese Imperial government's system of management of minorities over several centuries through the formal, symmetrical layout and imperial architectural style of the Tusi's domain and administrative buildings, while at the same time retaining the character of the dispersed village life ways of the Tujia and Miao peoples as exemplified in the adaptation of the ethnic settlements to the topography of the area, and the locations and architectural features of temples. The incorporation of local ethnic decorative patterns and motifs into the paving of streets and roads at Laosicheng, in the Tusi's frieze on the memorial gateway at Tangya and in the fortified Feilong gateway at Hailongtun are specific examples of the influence of the local minorities on decorative treatment. The Tusi system of government is well documented in historical records and genealogies as well as in the poems, legends and customs of the extant Tujia, Gelao and Miao Ethnic Peoples. The traditional cultures and cultural practices of these ethnic minorities are still present in the region of the Tusi sites and form a backdrop of traditional culture. Tujia dances and ceremonies are still performed at Laosicheng.

### Integrity and authenticity

#### Integrity

According to the State Party, the three sites were selected to bring together a series of attributes to illustrate criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi). The State Party considers that each site is needed in order to include all elements necessary to express the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS notes that at both Laosicheng and Tangya later layers of habitation and agriculture have occurred over the Tusi period remains; a modern concrete stairway leads to the Patriarch Temple at Laosicheng; and at Tangya the modern road runs over historic street pavements. Power transmission/communications towers have a visual impact on all three sites. At both Laosicheng and Tangya the tombs have been raided in the historic past, removing original relics. Structures at Hailongtun are overgrown with vegetation in many places, making it difficult to discern different periods of construction and allowing walls to decay. At all three sites pre-Tusi and post-Tusi remains could be more clearly identified.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of Laosicheng is high, although the Left Street group (Laosicheng Village) within the property overlays the Tusi period habitation, and it is not clear to what extent this impacts on the below ground remains. At Tangya the limited extant remains and relatively early stages of archaeological excavation (compared with the other two sites), together with the present state of the remains and the coverage of almost all the Tusi period courtyard housing by later layers of fields and dwellings, as well as later additions/alterations like the street paving, compromise the integrity as compared with Laosicheng and Hailongtun. However some elements of Tangya, particularly the intact Memorial Archway and the remains of the excavated remains of the administration area, have good integrity and are key to the justification of criteria (ii) and (iii). Hailongtun has the most extensive extant remains but they are in a poor state of conservation.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated serial property contains elements of good integrity necessary to demonstrate the proposed values; and that the integrity of Laosicheng and Hailongtun is demonstrated (particularly for Laosicheng), but is less well demonstrated for the Tangya component.

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#### Authenticity

ICOMOS considers that overall the authenticity of material remains at the three nominated sites in terms of function, form and layout, materials and style of construction, location and setting is retained, although vulnerable due to the variable state of conservation of some of the elements of the property. ICOMOS considers that authenticity of spirit and traditions is high in Laosicheng due to the presence of Tujia ethnic minority groups in the property area.

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ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the whole series and that of the individual sites that comprise the series, has been demonstrated.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity are less well demonstrated for the Tangya component, but are demonstrated for the series overall, given that the key elements of Tangya have good integrity. Conditions of authenticity of the whole series and for the individual components have been justified, although vulnerable due to the variable state of conservation of some of the elements.

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### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Tusi sites clearly exhibit the interchange of human values between local ethnic cultures of Southwest China, and national identity expressed through the structures of the central government.

ICOMOS considers that the sites convey a sense of their use and function in these remote settings far from the core of dynastic administration, reflecting the interchange between the cultures represented by the central government and the tribal villages.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

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Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the sites bear a unique testimony to the cultural traditions of central China in administering the culturally diverse regions of Southwest China through the Tusi system of governance that allowed retention of local cultural traditions while incorporating them into national administration systems.

ICOMOS considers that the sites are evidence of the Tusi system of governance in the South-western region of China and thus bear exceptional testimony to this form of governance, which derived from earlier systems of ethnic minority administration in China, and to the Chinese civilisation in the Yuan and Ming periods.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated.

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Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the sites are directly associated with the typical living customs and cultural traditions that are still alive amongst the ethnic groups in Southwest China, due to the Tusi system.

ICOMOS notes that the Tujia and Miao peoples retain their traditional culture and social and economic integrity within the former Tusi regions, although apparently only the Tujia at Laosicheng still use the site for performances and ceremonies. The continuity of these cultures is attributed in part to the policies of the former Tusi system. ICOMOS also notes the lists of performances, crafts and ceremonies associated with each site in the additional information provided by the State Party in response to the mission. The links can be discerned today at Laosicheng as documented in the report provided to the mission "Laosicheng and Surrounding Villages Investigation and Survey Report" commissioned by the Western Hunan Autonomous

Prefecture Cultural Heritage Administration and Yongshun County Cultural Heritage Administration (2013).

In response to ICOMOS' query regarding the direct association of all nominated component properties with events or living traditions, the State Party has provided additional information on the rituals associated with "chief worship" at Laosicheng and Tangya, but notes that due to the nature and history of Hailongtun as a fortress, rituals were not continued at the site, although they do continue in the surrounding area.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated at Laosicheng and Tangya.

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ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is justified and ICOMOS considers that the selection of sites is appropriate.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that criteria (ii) and (iii) have been justified for the series but criterion (vi) has not been demonstrated for the whole series. Conditions of authenticity and integrity have been met for the whole series, but conditions of integrity are less well met at Tangya.

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#### **Description of the attributes**

ICOMOS considers that the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value are the archaeological sites and standing remains of Laosicheng Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress, being domains of highest ranking Tusi that display values of the Tusi system and philosophy of governance; the Memorial Archway and remains of the Administration Area, boundary walls, drainage ditches and tombs at Tangya Tusi Domain, representing the domain of a lower ranked Tusi together with the cultural traditions and practices of the Tujia communities of Laosicheng.

## **4 Factors affecting the property**

Being located in remote mountain areas and containing only a small number of inhabitants, the nominated component properties are not considered to be under development pressure from large scale urban development. Environmental pressure is considered negligible. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and landslides are considered rare; major risks are from storms, flash floods and forest fire. Most parts of the property are not open to visitors and visitor pressure is currently negligible, although this could become a significant pressure following World Heritage listing if visitor levels and the development of tourism infrastructure were to increase. ICOMOS notes that in all three property components there are sections of masonry walls shrouded with thick vegetation; in some cases trees have taken root in the masonry.

#### Laosicheng

There are 6 villages with 502 inhabitants within the property and 333 inhabitants in the buffer zone. The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) controls construction of dwelling houses, village development and visitor facilities. Flood control measures and contingency plans are in place to mitigate flood disaster. Fire prevention and contingency plans are in place. A visitor carrying capacity study has been undertaken. ICOMOS notes that some village houses within the property date from the Qing dynasty (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) and in some cases are located over areas of archaeological potential. Laosicheng Village, built over Tusi period remains in the centre of the property is recognised at the provincial level as a Historic Village. Cultivation over the remains of the market area is being addressed by control of plant species to types with limited root depth and no extension of the current area is permitted. The issues of building/cultivation over areas of archaeological potential are addressed in the CMP. The telecommunications tower opposite the Zijinshan Temple impacts visually on the property. At present artefacts from the site are displayed in a museum 45 minutes drive away in Yongshun but they will be exhibited in the new visitor centre currently being constructed across the river from the main site but still within the property boundary.

#### Tangya Tusi Domain

There are 305 inhabitants within the property and 9,853 in the buffer zone. Planning policies are in place to control development of Jianshan Town (north) and the three villages within the buffer zone, as well as agricultural production and activities including environment pollution controls. The property has good drainage and is not considered to be subject to flood. Contingency plans are in place. A visitor carrying capacity study is being undertaken and a presentation strategy is being developed. ICOMOS notes that the terraced plantations within the property are built over areas of archaeological potential and in some cases over building foundations. The site management office and visitor facilities including a small site museum are provided in traditional buildings within the property, some of which have been built over the remains of earlier courtyard houses. The additional information provided by the State Party indicates a new visitor centre and exhibition building are planned within the buffer zone. Modern residential buildings and transmission towers in the buffer zone impact visually on the property.

#### Hailongtun Tusi Fortress

The property component is remote, accommodates 143 inhabitants and is not under development pressure. However there are three villages containing an agricultural population of approximately 1394 in the buffer zone. Houses date from the 1950s. Restrictions on location, scale and appearance of new dwelling development and controls on use of agricultural land are in place. Storms and floods are the main hazards. Warning systems have been installed, rock faces consolidated and counter-disaster contingency plans are in place. A visitor carrying capacity study has been undertaken and new visitor facilities and a site management office have been

constructed in the buffer zone. ICOMOS notes that vacated timber houses have been re-used to accommodate tourist facilities, a museum on ethnic culture and archaeological work station as well as accommodation for researchers. High tension power transmission lines have a visual impact on the site.

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ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are erosion impacts of heavy rainfall. Tourism could also be a factor if visitor levels and the development of tourism infrastructure were to increase following World Heritage listing.

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## 5 Protection, conservation and management

### Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

Property component boundaries follow natural topographical lines including hills, rivers and streams and are physically marked on the ground. In response to ICOMOS' request, revised maps have been provided by the State Party showing the names of the individual peaks/ hills marking the ridgeline. Buffer zone boundaries pick up the peaks of surrounding hills/ mountains in order to enclose the contiguous landscapes of each component and follow natural topographical lines such as hills, rivers and streams where appropriate, and are marked on the ground. The south-west boundary of Tangya Tusi Domain's buffer zone coincides with Zhaojiahe Tourism Road. Property and buffer zone boundaries of Tangya Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress coincide with the protection boundaries defined for the sites as State protected Cultural Heritage Sites. Laosicheng's boundaries coincide with protection boundaries defined in the Conservation Plan for Laosicheng Site, Yongshun County, Hunan Province.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are adequate.

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### Ownership

According to new information provided to the mission expert, the nominated property components Tangya Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress are now completely owned by the State. At Laosicheng Tusi Domain, around 12% is owned by the State, the remainder is in Collective ownership.

### Protection

The nominated property components are designated as State Priority Protected Cultural Heritage Sites under the Law on the Protection for Cultural Relics 1982, amended 2007. They are also protected under relevant provincial legislation. Laosicheng and Tangya Tusi sites are within designated National/Provincial Scenic Areas and protected by the Regulations on Scenic Areas 2006. On inclusion in China's Tentative List in 2006 they became subject to additional administrative protective measures relating to China's World Heritage Sites. The buffer zones

are protected in accordance with regulations relating to the Protected Area and Construction Control Zone of State Priority Protected Cultural Heritage Sites.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is adequate. ICOMOS considers that the protective measures for the property are adequate.

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### Conservation

Inventories prepared for the purpose of assessing and monitoring the state of conservation of the three properties have been provided in the Conservation and Management Plans attached to the nomination dossier as Annex II. Records of research, surveys and archaeological investigations are listed in the nomination dossier. ICOMOS notes that archive centres have been established at all three sites which contain a digitised catalogue of published archaeological reports and inventories of artefacts discovered during excavations. Original manuscripts of County Annals or family genealogies are kept at the county archives. Digital photo archives are kept at the respective Institutes of archaeology working at the three properties.

According to the State Party the sites are well-maintained and conserved. Conservation Master Plans have been approved by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) for Laosicheng and Hailongtun and one has been submitted to SACH for Tangya. ICOMOS notes that while many elements of the sites are in good or moderate condition, there are also some elements at each site in poor condition including the Dezheng Stele platform at Laosicheng; wall section remains, the Memorial Archway and Tomb M9 at Tangya; and several passes/gates at Hailongtun. Proposed interventions at the sites include some practices such as the use of cement mortar which need to be technically evaluated. Active conservation works at Laosicheng include stabilisation of the Dezheng Stele platform with a temporary buttress; backfilling and covering of archaeological areas; cleaning and grouting of walls and timber and roof repairs to the Patriarch Temple. At Tangya the Memorial Arch is being monitored following insertion of a metal tie to prevent movement, and buttresses have been provided to prevent collapse of the terrace boundary walls of the Administrative Area. At Hailongtun metal scaffolding has been inserted at the Erdao Pass to prevent collapse and repair work is scheduled to start later this year. Archaeological investigation is continuing at each site.

In response to ICOMOS' second letter regarding the need for conservation work plans detailing methods and materials for each component property, the State Party has provided satisfactory additional information.

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ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is variable and potentially vulnerable, but considers that appropriate measures are now being taken to conserve the value of the property.

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### Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

Management of the three sites is co-ordinated at the provincial level under the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) by a steering group created by the Joint Agreement Concerning Protection and Management of Tusi Sites. This comprises representatives of Hunan, Hubei and Guizhou Provinces in which the component properties are located. Management offices at each of the sites relate through their relevant county administration and People's Government and Autonomous Prefectures to the People's Government of their relevant provincial administrations. The Steering Group is led by the Cultural Heritage Bureau of Hunan Province to establish common standards for management of the sites including joint research projects, meetings and training courses for staff. Staff numbers given below are the updated figures provided to the mission.

Laosicheng site management office has access to county departments including Cultural Relics, Water Resources, Meteorology, Land and Resources, Tourism, and Forestry personnel for monitoring and other assistance and employs 28 staff responsible for exhibitions, archives, cultural relics protection and maintenance together with 2 invited experts for professional guidance on archaeology and conservation. In addition 160 villagers are employed to participate in site works including road, visitor and river cleaners; security staff, antiquities guards, forest protectors, 75 in the cultural and art group and 35 boatmen.

Tangya site management office has access to county department personnel as required for monitoring and other assistance and employs 11 staff responsible for conservation, exhibitions and presentation, monitoring, and security. In addition 19 local residents are employed as guides, security guards, and cleaners.

The site management office for Hailongtun Fortress has access to county and provincial department staff as required for monitoring and other assistance and has 20 staff in 5 sections: protection and management (4); exhibitions (4); monitoring (3), museum (4) and administration (5). In addition 148 local villagers are employed as interpreters, routine inspectors, and cleaners.

According to the Comprehensive Management Assessments in the Conservation and Management Plans for the three properties, staff training and professional capacity could be improved.

ICOMOS considers that given the large scale of the three sites, regular monitoring and maintenance would appear to be challenging. Monitoring relies heavily on cameras installed across the three sites.

Funds are provided through annual appropriations of national and local governments to the Conservation and Management Fund of the Tusi Sites. This is considered to meet basic requirements for heritage management and protection. ICOMOS notes that the funds are spread across many areas including requisition of land, relocation of residents as part of tourism proposals, surveying, and archaeological excavations and it is not clear how much is available for the implementation of conservation works. ICOMOS considers that the relocation of inhabitants is not necessary to sustain the conservation of the property.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

Master Plans, Land Use Plans and Tourism Plans exist for the cities/counties in which the nominated properties are located and relate to protection and management of the sites with a focus on potential tourism. ICOMOS notes that the Mengdong River National Scenic Area Tourism Plan for Laosicheng aims to project Tujia culture and the Tusi system and proposes relocation of the remaining residents out of the property area, at the same time proposing a new tourism village. At Tangya, the Tourism Master Plan for Xianfeng County proposes a "Tangya Tusi Domain Folk Cultural Tourism Zone" connected to Jianshan town by a bridge and rebuilding the two gardens located within the property area. ICOMOS considers that these tourism plans need to be considered by the overall Steering Group in terms of the conservation and management measures needed to retain Outstanding Universal Value. Additional information provided by the State Party in response to ICOMOS' second letter sets out the process for tourism development at the component properties but did not specifically address how this would retain Outstanding Universal Value.

Conservation and Management Plans have been prepared for each of the sites for the period 2013-2030 using essentially the same model for each in terms of content structure. They include visitor management and presentation and monitoring of factors relating to natural disasters.

Currently only Hailongtun is open to the general public. It has a visitors' route guided by signs and maps. Laosicheng is open to small groups for special purposes. Tangya Tusi Site is not yet open to the public. At all sites it is proposed that visitors will arrive at the visitor centres from where they will be taken to the site by golf carts. They will then follow marked visitor routes with timber viewing platforms provided over fragile remains. Detailed plans showing tourism arrangements at each property component have been included in the additional information provided by the State Party. ICOMOS notes that Hailongtun, having very steep access, could be considered dangerous in wet weather. There is also a risk to the remains of tourists climbing over partially collapsed and structurally unstable passes or boundary walls at Hailongtun and at Tangya for the lower boundary wall remains and tombs in the forested area.

The State Party has provided a statement regarding measures to be taken to deal with this issue.

Involvement of the local communities

The Management Plans for the properties require involvement of local communities and a considerable number are employed by the local site management offices in maintaining the sites

ICOMOS considers that management of the sites has not yet reached the level projected in the CMPs. However it appears to be reasonably effective at present given that Laosicheng and Tangya are yet to be opened to the public.

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ICOMOS considers that the management system for the serial property is adequate; however, the management system and plans should be strengthened to ensure overall control of tourism projects to ensure retention of Outstanding Universal Value.

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## 6 Monitoring

Monitoring systems are set out in the Management Plans in accordance with the joint provincial agreement. These cover indicators, periodicity and responsible agency. ICOMOS notes that a monitoring system using security cameras is in place at all sites which is providing high quality baseline data on both the archaeological and standing remains, although the presence of extensive vegetation cover on some standing structures must inhibit this. According to the Comprehensive Management Assessments in the Conservation and Management Plans, the system is not yet fully implemented. In response to ICOMOS' query, the State Party provided further detailed information on the monitoring system and how it will be implemented.

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ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system will be adequate when it is fully implemented.

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## 7 Conclusions

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List. ICOMOS considers that criteria (ii) & (iii) have been justified for the series but criterion (vi) has not been justified for the whole series. Conditions of integrity have been met for Laosicheng Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress and for key elements of Tangya Tusi Domain. Conditions of authenticity have been met for the whole series. ICOMOS considers that the whole series is required in order to fully express the Tusi system.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are erosion impacts of heavy rainfall. The boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are adequate. ICOMOS considers that the legal protection is



adequate and protective measures for the property are adequate. ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is variable and potentially vulnerable, but that measures now being taken are appropriate. Management appears to be reasonably effective at present given that Laosicheng and Tangya are yet to be opened to the public but has not yet reached the level projected in the Conservation and Management Plans. The property could be very vulnerable to visitor pressure and development associated with tourism infrastructure following World Heritage listing. The monitoring system will be adequate when it is fully implemented.

## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that Tusi Sites, People's Republic of China, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (ii) and (iii)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

Distributed around the mountainous areas of south-west China are the remains of tribal domains whose leaders were appointed by the central government as 'Tusi', hereditary rulers of their regions from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This system of administrative government was aimed at unifying national administration while simultaneously allowing ethnic minorities to retain their customs and way of life. The three sites of Laosicheng, Tangya and the Hailongtun Fortress combine as a serial property to represent this system of governance. The archaeological sites and standing remains of Laosicheng Tusi Domain and Hailongtun Fortress represent domains of highest ranking Tusi; the Memorial Archway and remains of the Administration Area, boundary walls, drainage ditches and tombs at Tangya Tusi Domain represent the domain of a lower ranked Tusi. Their combinations of local ethnic and central Chinese features exhibit an interchange of values and testify to imperial Chinese administrative methods, while retaining their association with the living cultural traditions of the ethnic minority groups represented by the cultural traditions and practices of the Tujia communities at Laosicheng.

**Criterion (ii):** Tusi sites of Laosicheng, Tangya and the Hailongtun Fortress clearly exhibit the interchange of human values between local ethnic cultures of Southwest China, and national identity expressed through the structures of the central government.

**Criterion (iii):** The sites of Laosicheng, Tangya and the Hailongtun Fortress are evidence of the Tusi system of governance in the South-western region of China and thus bear exceptional testimony to this form of governance which derived from earlier systems of ethnic minority administration in China, and to the Chinese civilisation in the Yuan and Ming periods.

#### Integrity

The property contains all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value and is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance. Later layers of occupation overlay parts of the Tusi period remains at Laosicheng and Hailongtun but there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value. Parts of the property at Hailongtun and Tangya are vulnerable to vegetation growth. The property is vulnerable to erosion impacts of heavy rainfall, and could become vulnerable to pressure due to visitor numbers and the development of tourism infrastructure.

#### Authenticity

The authenticity of material remains at the three nominated sites in terms of function, form and layout, materials and style of construction, location and setting is retained. ICOMOS considers that authenticity of spirit and traditions is high in Laosicheng due to the presence of Tujia ethnic minority groups in the property area.

#### Management and protection requirements

The property components are designated as State Priority Protected Cultural Heritage Sites under the Law on the Protection for Cultural Relics 1982, amended 2007. They are also protected under relevant provincial legislation. Laosicheng and Tangya Tusi sites are within designated National/Provincial Scenic Areas and protected by the Regulations on Scenic Areas 2006. The buffer zones are protected in accordance with regulations relating to the Protected Area and Construction Control Zone of State Priority Protected Cultural Heritage Sites.

Management of the three sites is co-ordinated at the provincial level under the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) by a steering group created by the Joint Agreement Concerning Protection and Management of Tusi Sites. This comprises representatives of Hunan, Hubei and Guizhou Provinces in which the component properties are located. Management offices at each of the sites relate through their relevant county administration and People's Government and Autonomous Prefectures to the People's Government of their relevant provincial administrations. The Steering Group is led by the Cultural Heritage Bureau of Hunan Province to establish common standards for management of the sites including joint research projects, meetings and training courses for staff.

Conservation and Management Plans have been prepared for each of the sites for the period 2013-2030 including visitor management and presentation and monitoring of factors relating to natural disasters. The management system and plans will be strengthened to ensure overall control of tourism projects directed at retention of Outstanding Universal Value.

**Additional recommendations**

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- Strengthening the management system and plans so as to ensure overall control of tourism projects directed at retention of Outstanding Universal Value;
- Fully implementing the monitoring system.



Map showing the location of the nominated properties



The Site of Tangya Tusi Domain



The Domain and Lingxi River





Chaotian Pass



Exterior of Tomb M1



Aerial View of Xinwanggong Remains



Excavated Tomb of Zijinshan Burial Ground