

## Shenyang Palace (China)

No 439 bis

### 1. BASIC DATA

<i>State Party:</i>	The People's Republic of China
<i>Name of property:</i>	The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang
<i>Location:</i>	Shenhe District, Shenyang City, Liaoning Province
<i>Date received:</i>	22 January 2003 (Revised text)
<i>Category of property:</i>	

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *monument*. The nomination is an extension to the World Heritage site: 'Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Beijing', inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987 on the basis of criteria iii and iv.

#### *Brief description:*

The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, represents the founding stage of the Qing Dynasty before it expanded its power to central China and moved the capital to Beijing. This palace then became auxiliary to the Imperial Palace in Beijing. It has high architectural and historical importance in providing testimony to the history of the Qing Dynasty and to the cultural traditions of the Manchu and other tribes in the north of China.

### 2. THE PROPERTY

#### *Description*

The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty is located in the historic centre of Shenyang, now one of the large industrial centres in northern China. The palace area is limited by urban quarters of commercial, service and residential functions. The palace consists of 114 buildings, divided in three sections: the eastern, the central and the western sections. The construction started from the eastern section in 1625-26 during the reign of Emperor Taizu, and continued toward the west during the reigns of Emperor Taizong, 1627-37. Part of the central section was rebuilt and extended in 1746-48. The last construction period was during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, 1781-83, concerning a part added to the central section and the western section.

**The eastern section** (190 m by 75 m) served for important ceremonies. The area is surrounded by a fence with a small access gate from the south. Its main feature is the *Dazheng Hall* (1626) in the axis of a lengthy court. This is an octagonal building that is shaped like a nomadic tent. It has wooden pillar structure and a glazed tiled roof with double-eaves, and it stands on a low stepped podium built of carved stone. The carved wooden elements of the eaves have coiling dragons of the Han tradition and other animal figures. There are ten *Banner pavilions* of a square plan,

five on each side of the court lining the way to the Hall. The walls of these pavilions were built in grey bricks; the wooden columns and doors were painted red, and there were colourful decorative features.

**The central section** was the imperial residence during the Qing dynasty. It consists of more than 50 buildings, forming a rectangle of 280 m by 125 m. The construction is made in brick, stone and timber. The layout is symmetrical in reference to the south-north axis. The buildings are mainly one or two stories high. This section can be divided into five parts according to their function.

From the south one enters into the main court, surrounded by palace buildings. The main entrance is through the *Daqing Gate*. On its sides there are court rooms with musical stands, and archways. To the east of the Gate there is the *Shengjing Temple of Imperial Ancestors*. On the north side of the court, the main building is the large *Chongzheng Hall* built in timber. It has five rooms, and it was used by the emperor for state affairs. There is no inner ceiling, and the wooden structures are colourfully painted with patterns of golden dragons in the style of early Qing dynasty. On the east and west sides of the Hall, there are *Zuoyi Gate* and *Yuoyi Gate*, providing entrance to the residential areas, which are located further north. The entrance gates and the Hall represent the main architectural and decorative styles of the early palaces.

The *Qingning Palace* (1627-32) is the main architectural feature in the northern part. It was the residence of Emperor Taizong and his empress, but was also used for sacrificial ceremonies of Shamanism. It is built in grey bricks, with wooden doors and windows painted in red. It stands on a 4-meter high platform, following the tradition of the Nuzhen (Manchu) people. In front of the palace there is the *Fenghuang Tower*, which has 3 rooms in each of the 3 stories. On each side there are other palace buildings for concubines. The eastern residence (*Dongsuo*) was used by the emperor's mother after the Qing Dynasty moved its capital to Beijing. The western residence (*Xisuo*) was the palace where the emperors and empresses lived during their visits to northeast China.

**The western section** (137 m by 55 m) includes 15 buildings, and consists of two parts. The *Jiayin Hall* and performing stage are located in the southern part. This area was used for small banquets and opera performances. The northern part consists of *Wensu Pavilion*, which contained an important library.

#### *History*

The origin of the Qing (Jin) Dynasty, the last of the Imperial dynasties of China, was in Manchuria. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Nuzhen (Manchu) tribes became stronger and gradually unified the lands of Manchuria. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century Shenyang had been a major frontier post between the different parts of this land. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Manchu took control of Manchuria, Shenyang proved a convenient base to prepare for the conquest of all China, governing from 1644 to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the Tianming reign of the late Jin Dynasty, in 1625, Emperor Taizu of the Qing moved the capital to Shenyang, and started the construction of the imperial palace. The eastern section of the palace was completed by 1637. In 1644, the Qing dynasty moved the

capital to Beijing, but Shenyang retained its prestige as the older capital of the dynasty.

Beginning from 1671 the palace became the auxiliary palace of Qing emperors during their visit to northeast China. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1746-48), additional buildings were constructed, and existing buildings were repaired or rebuilt. Special buildings were also provided for the imperial collections. Emperor Gaozong ordered the construction of the *Shengjing Temple* of Imperial Ancestors, as well as the western section of the palace with *Jiayin Hall*, and *Wensu Pavilion*.

In 1926, when the last emperor was dethroned, the local authorities converted the palace area into a museum, and made some minor repairs and changes. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, in 1949, this imperial museum was opened to the public. In 1961, it was included in the first list of protected national relics by the State Council.

### ***Management regime***

#### *Legal provision:*

The Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is owned by the central government and protected as a national cultural heritage site by the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics (listed in 1961).

#### *Management structure:*

The local authorities in charge of the daily management of the site are the Shenyang City and the Shenyang Imperial Palace Museum.

The following plans have been approved and are being implemented:

- 2002-2005 Plan on ancient architecture maintenance projects using World Bank loans of Shenyang Imperial Palace.
- Plan on comprehensive environmental improvement in the vicinity of the Shenyang Imperial Palace Museum.
- Tourism development plan of Shenyang Imperial Palace.

#### *Resources:*

The main sources of finance come from the State budget, from the fiscal associations of the Shenyang city, and from self-raised funds by the Shenyang Imperial Palace Museum.

### ***Justification by the State Party (summary)***

*Criterion i:* The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is the highest artistic achievement in imperial palace construction prior to its entry into the Shanhaiguan Pass and its establishment as a national regime, and is a masterpiece in imperial palace architecture.

*Criterion ii:* The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is an imperial palace of the Manchu style, blends the cultural elements of the Han and other minority groups and has a far-reaching significance for architectural arts and design.

*Criterion iii:* The major layout and utilization system of the Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang carries the traditional cultural features of the Manchu already disappeared.

*Criterion iv:* The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang represented the then highest achievement of architectural culture in Northeast Asian region at that time, and was an outstanding example blending the geographical culture and imperial palace culture.

*Criterion v:* The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is the exemplary model of traditional residential buildings in Northeast China.

*Criterion vi:* The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is closely associated with traditional Chinese thinking and literature and arts.

## **3. ICOMOS EVALUATION**

### ***Actions by ICOMOS***

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the property in September 2003.

### ***Conservation***

#### *Conservation history:*

In the past, the site has been managed by the Imperial Household Department. In 1926, it became a museum and was taken care of by the museum affiliated to the provincial department of education. After founding of the People's Republic of China, the site has been managed by the Imperial Palace Museum of Shenyang under the Shenyang Bureau of Culture.

#### *State of conservation:*

The state of conservation varies from one building to another. Most major buildings of high historical value have been repaired and are basically in good condition. However, there are still a certain number of buildings which need repair and maintenance.

#### *Management:*

Management structure and plans exist for the conservation of the nominated property, as well as for the improvement of its urban context, and for the visitor management. These are considered appropriate for the property. The Central Government will provide the criteria and the coordination of the management of this and the already inscribed palace complex in Beijing.

The ICOMOS expert visiting the site recommended special attention to be given to the presentation of buildings that are used for multiple purposes in addition to being part of the museum display (such as exhibition halls, offices, storage or visitor facilities). Careful consideration is also needed in the design and selection of materials as well as in the methods of installation of new facilities (e.g. new interior fittings, lighting fixtures, fire prevention equipment, air conditioning and others). The involvement of experts well trained in the concerned field is essential for these works.

For the future, rigorous control by the authorities of the urban development in the buffer zone is recommended in order to avoid any further disturbance of the environment of the property. Considering that the palace is a property located in the urban centre and a popular tourist destination, the introduction of well established risk-preparedness and the further development of visitor management programmes are a necessity.

#### *Risk analysis:*

The major challenge for the site is in urban development and tourism control. The appropriateness of the size of the buffer zone is difficult to judge for a site such as this which has always been located in an urban centre. The authority has already made efforts to remove encroachments in the immediate vicinity of the site. While recognizing that the authorities already have a fire protection system, it is important to continue protecting the site from fire spreading from the surrounding neighbourhoods. There is need to pay special attention on risk prevention and tourism control programmes.

#### *Authenticity and integrity*

The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang is considered to meet the test of authenticity. The complex has also maintained its historical integrity.

The palace obviously is no longer used for the original purposes but rather as a museum. The major buildings of high historical value are well maintained. The repair works have been carried out in conformity with the international standards and there have been no major additions or alterations. The original site extent as well as the original building layout for all compounds essential to describe the history and the function of the palace have been well maintained.

Being located in the centre of a major city, the administration is facing the challenge of the control of the surroundings. In the past, there have been encroachments with a negative impact on the context of the palace. The authorities should however be complimented for having removed some of these problems, such as relocating a shopping centre and other buildings in the vicinity, and converting that zone into a green belt. They have also removed the upper floors of some apartment buildings behind the property which were harming the landscape. There remains the problem of a commercial building behind the site which overwhelmingly dominates the setting. The authority is aware of this and there is a plan to improve the building's design.

#### *Comparative evaluation*

In China, today, there are only two comparable imperial palace complexes, i.e. those in Beijing and in Shenyang. The proposed extension, together with the imperial tombs that are nominated separately, represents the founding stage of the Qing Dynasty before the dynasty expanded its power to central China and moved its capital to Beijing, a stage that is currently not represented on the World Heritage List.

The Shenyang palace is smaller in scale and less gorgeous compared to the sites which were built later during the highest stage of the Qing Dynasty in and around the capital

city of Beijing. However, it has high historical importance in defining the founding history of the Qing Dynasty, in regard to the geographical location and the dynasty's cultural identity with the Manchus. The architectural style of the Palace in Shenyang, containing features of the Manchu style of architecture, represents a range of applications from the residential style of the living quarters to the architectural decoration of official buildings which are not yet found in other World Heritage sites. Among the buildings of the Palace, the *Dazheng Hall* is a particularly spectacular wooden structure both in design and scale. It was modelled on the shape of a tent used by the Manchu emperors and khans when they went hunting. This architecture differs considerably from the Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing dynasties in Beijing.

#### *Outstanding universal value*

##### *General statement:*

The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang represents, on the one hand, the achievements of the late Jin (Qing) dynasty, who had their origins in northeast China with the Nuzhen (Manchu) as the core. On the other hand, the architecture of the palace is based on the elaboration of the various traditions relevant to this region. It blends elements of the Manchu political system, living customs and religious beliefs, as well as forms and motifs from the Han, Mongolian and Tibetan ethnic groups. The palace, while recognizing its specific identity and value, also has a functional and political association with the Imperial Palace complex of the Ming and Qing dynasties in Beijing, of which it became an auxiliary after the Qing capital was transferred to Beijing.

The Shenyang Palace is culturally closely associated with the Three Imperial Tombs of the Qing Dynasty in Liaoning, considering that these represent the same culture regionally and chronologically. Consequently, it would have been fitting to propose them together as a new nomination rather than as extensions to existing properties.

##### *Evaluation of criteria:*

*Criterion i:* The Imperial Palace complex in Shenyang undoubtedly represents a masterpiece and crucial component in the development of imperial palace architecture in China. It is a highly significant achievement, making a creative integration of the various elements that had been developed by the different ethnic groups and the Manchu in particular.

*Criterion ii:* The architecture of the Imperial Palace complex introduced elements that refer to Manchu traditions, as well as to forms and motifs from the Han, Mongolian and Tibetan ethnic groups. The palace is a significant evidence of the development, which led to later creations in and around Beijing at the national level.

*Criterion iii:* The nomination refers this criterion to the lost traditional cultural features, of which the Imperial Palace complex carries an exceptional evidence. Such evidence includes the sacrificial places for the emperors inside Qingning Palace, which are testimony to the customs of Shamanism practised by the Manchu people for centuries.

*Criterion iv:* The Imperial Palace complex of Shenyang is indeed an outstanding example of Manchurian palace

architecture. It presents evidence of the evolution of this architecture from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the same time, this complex presents exceptional evidence from various local traditions with the Manchu, and the other ethnic groups in the region.

*Criterion v:* The nomination document refers to the palace complex as an exemplary model of traditional residential buildings in northeast China. This justification however is already covered by criterion iv. Criterion v should be referred to traditional human settlement or land-use, which is not necessarily the case here even though it may have been influenced by traditional habitat.

*Criterion vi:* The nomination refers to association with traditional Chinese thinking and literature and arts. The nomination document however does not provide specific evidence of the direct association of the palace complex with such artistic and literary works that would justify its outstanding universal significance on the basis of this criterion.

#### **4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### ***Recommendation for the future***

While recognizing the efforts already made by the authorities in the management of the palace complex and in removing some of the problems in the surroundings, it is recommended that special attention be given to risk preparedness, sensitive presentation of the site and tourism control programmes. Rigorous control is recommended on land-use control in the buffer zone in order to avoid any further disturbance in the environment of the property.

##### ***Recommendation with respect to inscription***

That this extension be approved on basis of the existing *criteria iii and iv*, and that the *criteria i and ii* be added to the justification:

***Criterion i:*** the Imperial Palace complex of the Qing Dynasty in Shenyang represents a masterpiece, and a significant component in the development of imperial palace architecture in China.

***Criterion ii:*** the architecture of the Imperial Palace complex exhibits an important interchange of influences of traditional architecture and Chinese palace architecture particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

***Criterion iii:*** The Imperial Palace complex carries exceptional evidence to the living traditions and the customs of Shamanism practised by the Manchu people for centuries.

***Criterion iv:*** The Imperial Palace complex of Shenyang is an outstanding example of Manchurian palace architecture, and presents evidence on the evolution of this architecture in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It is suggested that the name of the property be changed to reflect the serial nature of the nomination, e.g. 'Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties'.