

Identification

<u>Nomination</u>	The complex of Hue monuments
<u>Location</u>	Province of Thua Thien-Hue
<u>State Party</u>	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
<u>Date</u>	29 September 1992

Justification by State Party

The Hue complex represents unique architectural, sculptural, and aesthetic achievements and highly creative labour by the Vietnamese people over a long period of time, particularly in monumental arts, town planning, and landscape design.

History and DescriptionHistory

Hue served as the administrative centre of southern Vietnam (Dang Trong) in the 17th century and again in the 18th century. Gia Long, first ruler of the Nguyen dynasty, made it the national capital of united Vietnam in 1802, a position that it held until 1945. It was selected because it is situated in the geographical centre of the country and with easy access to the sea.

The new capital was planned in accordance with ancient oriental philosophy in general and Vietnamese tradition in particular; it also respected the physical conditions of the site, especially the Perfume River and Ngu Binh mountain (known as the Royal Screen). The relationship between the five cardinal points (centre, west, east, north, south), the five natural elements (earth, metal, wood, water, fire), and the five basic colours (yellow, white, blue, black, red) underlies the conception of the city, and is reflected in the names of a number of its most important features. The Perfume River is the main axis, dividing the capital into two.

The detailed planning was entrusted to Nguyen Van Yen, commander of an army unit specializing in the construction of citadels. Four citadels or defended enclosures made up the city - Kinh Thanh (Capital City), for official administrative buildings; Hoang Thanh (Imperial City) for Royal palaces and shrines; Tu Cam Thanh (Forbidden Purple City) for the Royal residences (the two last-named are known collectively as the Dai Noi or Inner City); and Tran Binh Dai, an additional defensive work in the northeast corner of the Capital City, designed to control movement on the river. A fifth fortress, Tran Hai Thanh (Coastal Bastion), was constructed a little later to protect the capital against assault from the sea.

Planning lasted two years, from 1803 to 1805, and it was not until 1832 that construction was complete. The new capital was much larger than its predecessor, Dong Trang, and encompassed several villages as well. Over 30,000 workmen and soldiers were involved in the work, which involved filling in two small tributaries of the Perfume River and digging new moats and canals. The fortress itself was modelled on the European style of Vauban, the first of its type in southeast Asia.

The complex suffered considerably as a result of military operations in 1885, 1947, and 1968.

Description

The main enceinte, the Capital City (Kinh Thanh), is square in plan, each side measuring 2235 m; the total area enclosed is 520 ha. The defensive walls, originally 21 m thick and 6.6 m high, have six projecting bastions on each side; there are ten gates. The external defensive works comprise a berm, ditch, and glacis. The Fishes Gill Bastion (Tran Binh Dai) projects from the northeast corner of the defences. It is an irregular hexagon in plan, in Vauban style. The buildings inside the Capital City (excluding those in the Inner City) include various former ministerial buildings, the Royal College, and the Hue Museum.

The Inner City (Dai Noi) is rectangular in plan (622 m by 604 m) and defended by brick walls 4.16 m high and 1.04 m thick, supplemented by a moat and wide berm; there is a single entrance on each of the walls. Inside it is divided by walls into a number of zones - the Great Ceremonies Zone, the Worshipping Zone, the residential zone of the King's Mother and Grandmother, the storage and workshop zone, the garden and school zone for Royal Princes, as well as the Forbidden Purple City (Tu Cam Thanh).

The palaces within the Inner City are similar in style and design, set on a raised podium, with wooden trusses (usually ironwood), gilded and painted pillars and rafters, brick walls, and roofs of yellow- or blue-glazed cylindrical tiles. Roof edges are straight, not curved, as in northern Vietnam, and the decoration, both internally and externally, is abundant.

Among the most important buildings in the Inner City are the Palace of Supreme Harmony (Dien Thai Hoa), the Royal reception hall; the Mieu Temple, the Royal place of worship; the Queen Mother's Palace (Cung Dien Tho); and the Pavilion of Dazzling Benevolence (Hien Lam Cac).

At the heart of the complex is the Forbidden Purple City (Tu Cam Thanh), measuring 324 m by 290 m and surrounded by brick walls 3.72 m high by 0.72 m thick. There is a single gate in the front wall, reserved for the use of the King, and the other walls have several entrances, each with a specific purpose. Originally there were over 40 buildings within the walls, but most are now in ruins and only their foundations survive.

The Coastal Bastion (Tran Hai Thanh) is at the former mouth of the Thuan An River, 10 km north-east of the Capital City. It

is also built in Vauban style, but its base is round, as protection against waves and storms. Its perimeter is 285 m and it is defended by stout brick walls and a moat. Coconut trees were planted and stakes driven into the shore to prevent erosion by the sea.

Outside the Capital City there are several associated monuments of importance. These include the tombs of the Nguyen Dynasty to the south of the Perfume River, which are of interest not only for their architectural qualities but also for their landscaping, set in gardens surrounded by enclosure walls. Among these are the tombs of Gia Long, Minh Mang, Thieu Tri, Tu Doc, Duc Duc, Dong Khanh, and Khai Dinh. Other structures along both banks of the river are buildings related to the spiritual life of the dynasty, including the Temple of Literature (Van Mieu), the Esplanade of the Sacrifice to the Sun and Earth (Dan Nam Giao), the Royal Arena (Ho Quyen) and the Temple of the Roaring Elephant (Den Voi Re), and the Celestial Lady Pagoda (Chua Thien Mu).

Management and Protection

Legal status

The whole complex is owned by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It is classified by the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Sport as a Grade AII Historical Property as defined by successive ordinances in 1945, 1957, 1973, 1984, 1985, and 1986. The Council of Ministers has approved management and conservation projects for all protected monuments.

Management

Overall responsibility for the Hue monuments rests with the Department for Conservation of Historical Monuments and Museums of the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Sport, which operates through the Culture and Information Service of the People's Committee of Thua Thien-Hue Province. Direct management is in the hands of the Service for the Management of Historical and Cultural Monuments of the City of Hue.

The last-named organization includes among its functions the conducting of research, management and protection of movable and immovable cultural property, supervision of repair and presentation activities, and the use of the monuments for cultural purposes. Its work is funded by the central Government, revenues from visitors, and contributions from UNESCO, individual countries, and international bodies.

Hue is designated as one of the most important sites for tourist development in the National Platform for Socio-Economic Development, and figures as a priority in the 1990-2000 plan for promoting tourism. The Province has approved guidelines for managing the complex, which it considers to be a central task in its strategy for cultural and socio-economic development.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

During the 19th century, such conservation as was needed was carried out by the Royal Ministry of Public Works. During the 1920s a branch for the preservation of monuments was established by the French authorities, and this was later incorporated into the Hue Museum (founded in 1923). All funding for this work came from government, first the Vietnamese Kingdom and later the French authorities.

With the abdication of King Bao Dai and the end of the feudal period in 1945, responsibility passed to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which placed the Hue Museum under the Archaeological Institute of the Ministry of Education in 1955. In the next two decades 15 monuments were reconstructed and urgent repairs carried out on 80 others; all this work was government-funded. Since 1975 the Hue complex has been managed by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Between 1975 and 1988 major restoration projects were carried out on 15 monuments and urgent repairs on 30 others. Another 15 monuments were restored between 1989 and 1991, with shoring on 35 in imminent danger of collapse.

In accordance with the plan of action proposed by UNESCO experts, the competent authorities are committed to the following measures:

- Maintaining the complex in its present state, without further deterioration;
- Repairing those monuments in danger of collapse;
- Requesting continuing contributions from its Plan of Action;
- Increasing research, completing survey and inventory, and making use of display materials to increase revenue from visitors.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity is overall high, in view of the fact that a large proportion of the original structures are in ruins and that interventions on those that survive have been relatively limited.

Evaluation

Qualities

The Hue complex is a remarkable example of the planning and construction of a complete defended capital city in a relatively short period in the early years of the 19th century. The integrity of town layout and building design make it an exceptional specimen of late feudal urban planning.

Comparative analysis

Hue is unique in its region of southeast Asia. The only comparable examples of a completely unified planned capital city are to be found in China, but Hue was conceived in a different cultural tradition.

Additional comments

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Hue in March 1993 and spent three days visiting the monuments and discussing the nomination with Vietnamese officials. The mission was impressed by the dedication and high professional competence of the staff of the Service for the Management of Historical and Cultural Monuments and by the quality of the conservation work carried out to date in terms of authenticity of materials and techniques and of respect for the principles of conservation and restoration as set out in the 1964 Venice Charter.

The mission pointed out the absence from the nomination dossier of evidence for buffer zones around the Kinh Thanh (Capital City) and the outlying monuments. These do in fact exist and details have been supplied to support the nomination.

One problem of the nomination is the fact that almost the entire area within the Kinh Thanh and outside the Dai Noi (Inner City) is occupied by relatively recent buildings of low architectural quality. The suggestion that the nomination should be confined to the defences of the Kinh Thanh and the area of the Dai Noi was accepted by the competent Vietnamese authorities.

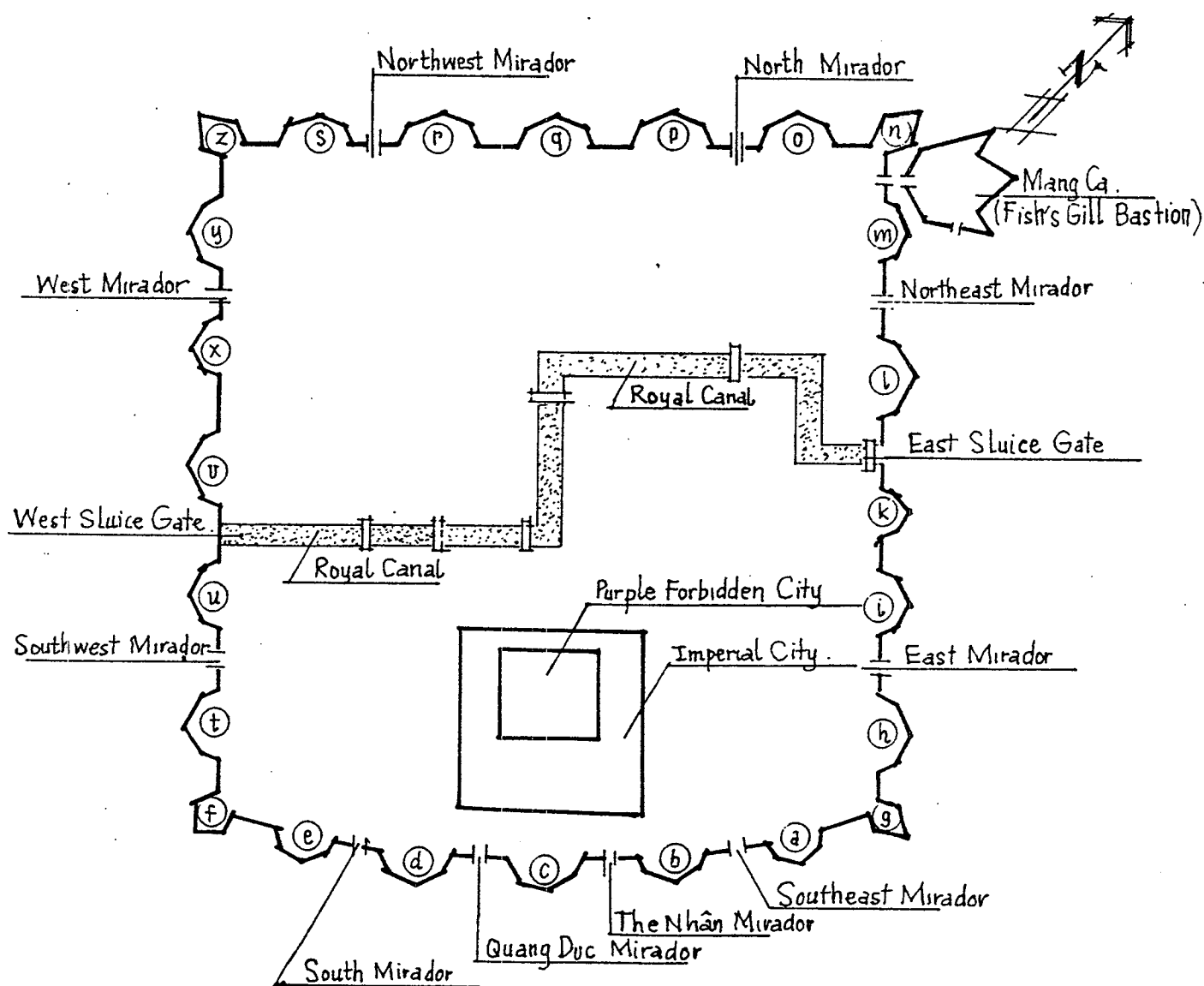
With respect to the outlying monuments, the cultural value of the Tomb of Khai Dinh, the most recent of Nguyen Dynasty tombs, is not high since it is an unhappy fusion of traditional forms with modern materials and techniques, notably the use of concrete. However, it would be invidious to omit this monument, which should be seen as one of a series, representing the last stage in the evolution of royal tomb design.

Recommendation

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

- Criterion iii Hue represents an outstanding demonstration of the power of the vanished Vietnamese feudal empire at its apogee in the early 19th century.
- Criterion iv The complex of Hue monuments is an outstanding example of an eastern feudal capital.

ICOMOS, October 1993



Hue : plan de la citadelle / map of the citadel