

Lhasa (China)

No 707bis

Identification

Nomination The Potala Palace and the Jokhang Temple Monastery (extension of the Potala Palace)

Location Lhasa City, Tibet Autonomous Region

State Party People's Republic of China

Date 27 July 1999

Justification by State Party

Construction of the Jokhang Temple Monastery and the Potala Palace began in the reign of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po in the 7th century CE. They remain to the present day one of the most typical areas of the country in terms of their ancient buildings and their role as the political, economic, cultural, and religious centre of Tibet. Since the time of the 5th Dalai Lama both the Palace and the Temple Monastery have been within the Outside Path for Circumambulation (*Lingkor*).

Like the Potala Palace, the Jokhang Temple Monastery occupies a prominent position in the history of the development of Buddhism in the world, and in particular in the creation and development of Tibetan Buddhism. It has been very influential in the history, society, and culture of Tibet. More than 1350 years ago the Tibetan regime in ancient China built the Temple Monastery on marshland in ancient Lhasa with the purpose of promoting religion. As such it has played an important role in the promotion and the development of Buddhism in Tibet. This role is manifested not only in the building itself, but also in the arrangement of the Buddhist and sutra halls, statues, and paintings in the monastery.

Because the main statue worshipped in the monastery is the lifesize representation of the twelve-year-old Sakyamuni (Jowo Sakyamuni), brought there by Princess Wen Cheng, a personal visit to this state has been seen by all Buddhists as the greatest blessing and *vimukta* in their lives. At the same time, the Jokhang Temple Monastery had attracted pilgrims from the Tibetan, Mongolian, Tujia, Qiong, and Yugu nationalities in China and from Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, India, and many other countries. As a site of religious activities registered at the national level, the Jokhang Temple Monastery remains today one of the most celebrated sites of religious activities by virtue of the large numbers of pilgrims that visit it and its ceaseless religious ceremonies.

Barkhok Street has developed along with the Jokhang Temple Monastery. It was created when the 5th Dalai Lama enlarged the entrance to the Temple Monastery. The two

have retained the essence of ancient Lhasa. There is a concentration here of conserved buildings and streets in the national style; it is the centre of the traditional culture of ancient Lhasa.

The cultural heritage of the Jokhang Temple Monastery and the many cultural relics and ancient buildings that survive in the historic centre are worthy of permanent conservation for all humankind because of their high historical, scientific, cultural, research, and associative value.

[**Note** The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier concerning the criteria under which it considers this property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List. However, the Potala Palace was inscribed in 1994 under **criteria i, iv, and vi.**]

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

Building of the Jokhang Temple Monastery began in the reign of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po XXXII in the 7th century CE, during the Tang Dynasty in China. This ruler united Tibet and moved his capital to Demon (present-day Lhasa). The Tibetan imperial court eagerly espoused Buddhism when it was introduced, and this process was intensified when Princess Bhikruti of Nepal and Princess Wen Cheng of the Tang Dynasty came to Tibet as royal consorts.

The site of the Temple Monastery was selected, according to legend, when the cart in which Wen Cheng was bringing the statue of Sakyamuni sank into the mud by Wotang Lake. The Princess used divination to identify this as the site of the Dragon Palace, the malign influence of which could only be counteracted by the building of a monastery. The foundation stone was laid in 647 and the foundations were completed within a year.

In 823 the Tibetan regime and the Tang Dynasty entered into an alliance. To commemorate this event a stone was erected outside the monastery, known as the Stone Tablet of Long-Term Unity.

The first major reconstruction of the Jokhang Temple Monastery took place in the early 11th century. The Jokhang Buddhist Hall was extensively renovated and the Hall of Buddha Sakyamuni was added to its eastern side. The circumambulatory corridor around the hall was added around 1167, when the mural paintings were restored. Upward curving tiled eaves were added in the early 13th century.

During the century following the reunification of the Tibetan kingdom by the Sakya Dynasty in the mid 13th century, a number of new developments took place. These included extension of the Hall of Buddha Sakyamuni, construction of a new entrance and the Hall of Buddha Dharmapala, and the introduction of sculptures of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po, Wen Cheng, and Bhikruti Devi. Buddhist halls and golden tiled roofs were added on the third storey on the east, west, and north sides.

Tsongka Pa founded the reforming Gelugpa School of Tibetan Buddhism in the early 15th century, initiating the Great Prayer Festival. At his instigation part of the inner courtyard of the main Jokhang Hall was roofed.

Tibet was formally included in the Chinese domain during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). In 1642 the 5th Dalai Lama, who had received an Imperial title from the Qing rulers of China, began a project of restoration that was to last thirty years. It was continued during the regency of Sangyetgyatso (1679-1703). The main entrance of the Temple Monastery, the Ten Thousand Buddha Corridor (*Qianfolang*), the Vendana Path, and the third and fourth storeys of the main Buddhist Hall all date from this period.

Description

The Jokhang Temple Monastery, which covers an area of 2.5ha, is in the centre of the old town of Lhasa. It comprises essentially an entrance porch, a courtyard, and a Buddhist hall, surrounded by accommodation for monks and storehouses on all four sides. The buildings are constructed of wood and stone. The walls are of coursed stone, with Tibetan-style windows with black frames set into them.

The porch is set back and flanked by buildings supported by pillars, which form a spacious exterior courtyard. To the right is a single-storey building covered with gilded prayer wheels; on the back of this building there is a huge mural depicting the Four Heavenly Kings. Curtains woven from ox hair or cotton are suspended from the eaves of the buildings flanking the entrance.

There are two doors beneath the arch of the entrance, with a passage hall between them. On either side are statues of the Four Heavenly Kings, dressed as generals wearing helmets and coats of mail. The porch gives access to an open courtyard 32m wide and 39.3m deep. It is surrounded by a corridor, the walls of which are covered with murals comprising thousands of representations of Buddha (hence its name, the Ten Thousand Buddha Corridor). The corridor is supported on many square wooden pillars; the pillars taper upwards and are borne on stone bases. The pillars, beams, rafters, and ceiling are painted in red, with painted images and decorative floral motifs on them in blue, green, and gold.

This courtyard opens out on the Buddhist Hall, the main feature of the monastery. It rises to four storeys and in plan measures 82.5m north-south by 97m east-west. There is an interior courtyard, surrounded by many Buddhist halls.

The earlier structures are on the two lower floors, distributed regularly along the four sides. In the centre of the side facing the entrance is the Sakyamuni Hall, with the Amitabha Buddha Chapel and the Maitreya Chapel on either side. For these halls, and also the other large Buddhist halls in the lower storeys, the structural style is a blend of elements of the Tibetan and Han traditions, but with the eaves of the inner corridor decorated with painted wooden carvings of animals and sphinxes with Nepalese and Indian characteristics.

The roofs of the later third and fourth storeys are covered with gilded copper tiles. In the middle and at either end of each ridge are carved gilded finials in the form of pagodas. There are buttresses in Han style under the eaves. The roof of the Sakyamuni Hall is given exceptionally lavish treatment, and the ridge ornaments show both Tibetan and Han stylistic influences.

The Temple Monastery houses 3299 images of Buddha, *bodhisattvas*, deities, *dharmapalas*, and historical figures in different materials and from many periods, along with many other treasures and manuscripts. They come from India, Nepal, and China as well as Tibet itself. The walls of the different halls are covered with high-quality mural paintings, depicting both religious and historical scenes.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Article 22 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) lays down that "The state protects sites of scenic and historic interest, valuable cultural monuments and relics and other significant items of China's historical and cultural heritage." Under the provisions of the Law on Protection of Cultural Relics, the Jokhang Temple Monastery was a major site to be protected for its historical and cultural value by the State Council of the PRC in 1961.

In addition, the property is protected by the Criminal Law of the PRC. The Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Protection of Cultural Relics also apply to the Jokhang Temple Monastery.

Management

The Jokhang Temple Monastery is owned by the People's Republic of China.

It is managed according to an integrated set of rules relating to the conservation and protection of the Barkhok Street area of Lhasa. There is a Detailed Plan for this area, promulgated in 1992, which is integrated into the Urban Plan for Lhasa City. The area of 7.5ha surrounding the Temple Monastery, which constitutes the buffer zone, is under the highest level of protection, and no interventions are permitted that may affect the setting of the monument. Beyond this are three further zones of protection covering 130ha, in all of which controls are in force to prevent undesirable or inappropriate construction or demolition. Permission must be obtained from the relevant authority for activities coming within the scope of the protection regulations.

Overall responsibility for conservation is vested in the State Administration for Cultural Heritage of the PRC, working in cooperation with the State Bureau of Religious Affairs. Within the Tibet Autonomous Region responsibility is with the corresponding bodies: Bureau of Culture Affairs, Administration of Cultural Heritage, Management Committee of National and Religious Affairs, and Bureau of Construction. They in turn work through the appropriate agencies and bureaux of Lhasa City administration.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The Jokhang Temple Monastery has been under continuous extension and restoration for some thirteen centuries, by virtue of its important role in the religious life of Tibet and the wider Buddhist world.

In recent years, conservation and restoration projects were carried out in 1971 and 1974, using central government funding. A major project, with funding from central and local government, began in 1991 and continued for three-

and-a-half years. This paid special attention to the repair and restoration of the early mural paintings and general restoration and conservation work on the fabric of the buildings. There is now regular monitoring, accompanied by irregular spot checks on specific components of the monument.

Authenticity

The Jokhang Temple Monastery is a complex of religious structures that has formed by agglomeration over many centuries. It has played a significant role in the religious life of the Buddhist community, both in Tibet and further afield, throughout that long period. Its authenticity in that context must therefore be considered to be unassailable.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Lhasa in March 2000.

Qualities

The Jokhang Temple Monastery is one of the most important Buddhist monuments in the world. Its architecture and layout are outstanding examples of the Tibetan style, with influences from China, India, and Nepal.

Comparative analysis

It is superfluous to compare the Jokhang Temple Monastery with other religious monuments in this region, since its importance lies more in its association with the Potala Palace than in any intrinsic qualities (though these are unquestionably irreproachable).

Brief description

The Jokhang Temple Monastery is an exceptional Buddhist religious complex, founded in the 7th century. Its buildings and decoration reflect the high quality of Tibetan art in the 7th century and again in the 15th-16th centuries, and also demonstrate cultural interchange between Tibet and its neighbouring countries.

Recommendation

That this extension and change of name be *approved*.

ICOMOS, September 2000