

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Lijiang (China)

No 811

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The old town of Lijiang
<i>Location</i>	Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County, Lijiang Prefecture, Yunnan Province
<i>State Party</i>	People's Republic of China
<i>Date</i>	26 July 1996

Justification by State Party

Lijiang is an historic and cultural city with comprehensive value and overall importance. It is a unique embodiment of the history and culture of the region and its ethnic customs and habits and an illustration of the essential features of social progress.

It is different from other Chinese historical and cultural cities in several ways, including its townscape, its water system, its coordinated urban structures, its rationally spacious dwellings, its pleasant climate, and its unique artistic styles and contents. The architecture, which responds to nature, emphasizes utility, respects simplicity, and seeks compatibility, represents a crystallization of the creativity and progress of mankind in specific historical conditions. It provides valuable data for the study of the history of urban construction and the development of nationalities.

Lijiang, which is noted for its long history and its simple style, has the beauty both of a waterside town and of a mountain town. As an ethnic city with a long history, Lijiang is a typical illustration of the unique style of the Naxi ethnic group and a condensation of the architectural modes of China's Han, Bai, Yi, and Zang nationalities in terms of both overall layout and specific buildings. Its designation in 1986 as a national historical and cultural city further confirmed its importance among Chinese cities.

Unlike other imperial cities in China, the old town of Lijiang bears no evidence of the regulations governing the building of cities in the Central Plains. It possesses neither a regular street pattern nor city walls. With three mountains as its backdrop, it is

traversed by a system of streams bringing water to every street corner. Its street pattern, land use, and architectural coordination are unique among Chinese towns.

Cities and architecture are essentially manifestations of social life. Compared with government offices and temples, dwellings can better reflect the economy, culture, customs, and religions of a specific nationality in a given region. In terms of layout, structure, and design, the houses in Lijiang incorporate the fine tradition of the old houses in the Central Plains and of the Bai and Zang nationalities. They have, however, developed their own unique style in response to local conditions and tradition. They are innovative in aspects such as design, resistance to earthquakes, protection from the sun, precautions against flooding, ventilation, and decoration. However, the most striking feature is the lack of any uniform pattern: by taking advantage of the terrain, each house is unique in itself, simple yet creative. This style has strongly influenced the Naxi minority over a long period. The houses in Lijiang are important for the study of Chinese architecture and culture.

Built up against three mountains, Lijiang represents perfect organic integration with nature. The tile-roofed houses are disposed in rows on the mountainside. Their simple patterns and exquisite decorations are an epitome of Naxi culture and techniques, demonstrating the wisdom of the Naxi people and their deep understanding of life. They constitute an important component of the architectural heritage of the Chinese nation.

The old town of Lijiang has prospered for more than eight hundred years. It has become an economic and cultural centre in north-western Yunnan Province, providing an excellent environment for the development of ethnic culture. The Naxi and other ethnic groups living there have created a glorious culture. The city's streets, squares, arches, water system, bridges, dwelling houses, courtyards, inscribed boards, and carved tablets all embody the cultural and artistic accomplishments of the Naxi people and the rich cultural heritage of the ethnic religion. The Baisha murals of the Dongba culture in particular constitute a brilliant chapter in the history of human civilization.

Lijiang is an old town in which the town plan, the pattern of domestic housing, the building materials, the artistic decoration, and the protection of the environment are well preserved. The street pattern and water system remain unchanged. The stone pavements, bridges, and the Siangfe market square are all preserved. Houses have been rehabilitated and rebuilt using traditional techniques and materials. The local government has made every effort to protect the landscape and strictly controls all building. The old town of Lijiang was built by the people, who will continue to ensure that elements that clash with the style and features of the old town will be demolished or modified so that the town's artistic and historical values are properly acknowledged.

[**Note** The only criterion for inclusion on the World Heritage List quoted in the nomination dossier is **criterion v**. However, the points made in the justification seem to imply that the State Party wishes other criteria to be taken into account.]

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

There has been continuous human occupation of the Lijiang region since the Palaeolithic period. During the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) it was under the jurisdiction of the Shu region of the Qin State. In the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties it was established as Suijiu County.

In the 13th century AD, during the later Southern Song Dynasty, the ancestors of the ruling Mu family moved their main centre from Baisha to the foot of the Shizi Mountains, to a new town known as Dayechang (later Dayan), where they began building houses surrounded by a city wall and moat.

After Azong Aliang submitted in the 1250s to the authority of the Yuan Emperor Hubilie, Dayechang became an administrative centre. The Lijiang Junmin prefecture was established when the region came under Ming rule in 1382. The prefect of the time, Ajia Ade, was awarded the honorific surname "Mu" and made an hereditary prefect, a title that was confirmed by the Qing Dynasty rulers in 1660. The successive Mu prefects were responsible for enlarging and embellishing their centre throughout this period.

In 1723 the Imperial court changed its policy and the native prefect was replaced by an Imperial appointee. The first non-native prefect, Yang Bi, arrived the following year and began building prefectural offices, barracks, and educational facilities at the foot of the Jinhong Mountain.

Lijiang County was created as part of Lijiang Junmin Prefecture in 1770, and survived when the prefecture was abolished by the Republic in 1912. Lijiang has continued to function as an administrative centre ever since, now for the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County.

The region is subject to earthquakes, and the town suffered on several occasions - 1481, 1515, 1624, 1751, 1895, 1933, 1951, 1961, 1977, and most recently on 3 February 1996. Damage to property and loss of life has been severe, particularly in the 1951 quake.

Description

The old town of Lijiang is built on a mountain slope running from north-west to south-east, facing a deep river. The Shizi mountain protects it from the cold

north-west winds; the great plain stretching out to the south-east helps to dispel the heat of summer. The town is sited where a series of strategic passes give access to the plain - Tacheng to the north, Shimen to the west, Jiuhe to the south-west, Taizi to the north-east, and Qiantang to the south.

The northern part of the city was a commercial district. The main streets in this part of the old town radiate from the broad street known as Sifangjie, which has traditionally been the commercial and trading centre of the north-western part of Yunnan Province. On the west side of the Sifangjie is the imposing three-storeyed Kegongfang (Imperial Examination Archway), which is flanked by the Western and Central Rivers. A sluice on the former uses the different levels of the two waterways to wash the streets, a unique form of municipal sanitation. The streets are paved with slabs of a fine-grained red breccia.

Lijiang's remarkable water system stems from the 40,000 m² Heilongtan (Black Dragon Pool), which is fed by dozen of springs on the mountainside. Water flows from here to the Shuangshi Bridge, where it branches into three tributaries, known as the Eastern, Central, and Western Rivers. These subdivide into a network of channels and culverts to supply every house in the town. This water supply is supplemented by many springs and wells within the town itself.

A system of watercourses of this complexity necessitates a large number of bridges of varying sizes. There are 354 bridges altogether; they take several forms, including corridor bridges, giving shelter from wind and rain, stone arch bridges, stone slab bridges, and wooden plank bridges. It is from these structures that Lijiang derives its name, the "City of Bridges."

The feature of Lijiang that is most representative of the Naxi minority culture is its wealth of domestic dwellings. The basic timber-framed structure known as *jinggangsshi* developed into a unique architectural style with the absorption of elements of Han and Zang architecture.

Most of the houses are two-storeyed and 7.5m high (there are a few three-storeyed structures). The *chuandoushi* wooden frames are walled with adobe on the ground floor and planks on the upper floors; the walls have stone foundation courses. The exteriors of the walls are plastered and lime-washed, and there are often brick panels at the corners. The houses have tiled roofs and an external corridor or veranda. There is a number of variants on the basic form and layout, two of which are the most common. The *sanfangyizhaobi* pattern consists of a main house, two side buildings, and a screen wall facing the main house. The *sihewutianjing* pattern consists of the main house and houses on each of the other three sides. In both cases a compound is formed, within which there are four courtyards - a main one in the centre and a small one in each of the four corners.

The wooden frames are built to be flexible, so as to resist earthquake shock. Special techniques have

been developed for the load-bearing points and joints so as to ensure that the frame survives even if the walls collapse. The upright timbers are canted slightly inwards, to increase structural stability.

Special attention is paid to the decoration of the houses, especially in the arches over gateways, the screen walls, the external corridors, the doors and windows, the courtyards, and the roof beams. Wooden elements are elaborately carved with domestic and cultural elements - pottery, musical instruments, flowers, birds, etc - and gate arches take several elegant forms. The courtyards are paved with stone, the patterns often depicting flowers, birds, fishes, or folklore themes.

The Lijiang Junmin Prefectural Government Office and Mujia Compound was established in 1368, during the Ming Dynasty, in the eastern part of the city. The 286m long government office was a complex of halls, towers, bridges, terraces, pavilions, and palaces. To the north was the official residence, known as the Mujia Compound. It was largely destroyed by war during the Qing Dynasty and only the Yizi Pavilion, the Guagbi Tower, and a stone archway survive.

The group known as the Yuquan architectural structures are in the Heilongtan Park and date from the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Most notable is the Wufeng Tower (1601), moved from the Fuguo Temple, of which it formed part, and now designated as one of the major historical sites in Yunnan Province.

In addition to the Dayan old town, established in the Ming Dynasty, the earlier Baisha quarter, the centre during the preceding Song and Yuan Dynasties, survives 8 km to the north. The houses here are arranged on a north-south axis, with a terraced square in the centre from which four lanes flanked by shops radiate. Among the important historic buildings in the Baisha religious complex are the Liuli Hall (1417), the Dabaoji Palace (1582), the Dading Pavilion (1573, rebuilt 1743), and the Jinjang Hall (1573). They are especially important because of the murals that they contain. Over forty of the paintings executed in the early 13th century survive, depicting religious subjects relating to Buddhism and Daoism; they also contain valuable information relating to the life of the Naxi people.

There is another small urban settlement 4km north-west of the Lijiang old town known as Shuhe, now an educational and craft centre.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The obligation of the state to protect "scenic places, and historical sites" is set out in Article 22 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. This obligation is reinforced and enlarged upon in the 1982 Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics (amended 1991).

A series of statutory instruments have been promulgated by Yunnan Province. The 1992 Urban Plan Administration Regulations and the 1993 Measures to Implement the Laws of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics in Yunnan Province provide the regulatory context for the protection of the old town of Lijiang. Local legislation for the protection of Lijiang was adopted by the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Yunnan Province in June 1994.

Currently, 24 historical and cultural sites within the Dayan old town have been placed under provincial (3) and county (21) protection.

Management

The entire area nominated for the World Heritage List is State property. It comes directly under the management of the Bureau of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection and the Bureau of Culture of the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County. Their work is coordinated with that of the equivalent bodies at Provincial and State level, and also with the Dayan Town Government of Lijiang County, which handles a number of infrastructural aspects of protection.

The master plan for Lijiang City, first approved in 1958, has been revised three times since that time. It is based on the premise that the town should be "a national-level historical and cultural city, one of the main scenic spots of the Yulong snow mountain, and a developing tourist city." To this end, careful attention is given to the preservation of the old town, which involves routing roads outside it and directing new development to the west.

The Old Town Protection Plan, drawn up in 1988, contains more detailed specification and regulations. Three protection zones (I, II, and III) are designated, of 51.73ha, 70.08ha, and 26.1ha respectively. There is an absolute ban on all development in the first (the nominated property) and strict controls over height and appearance in the other two.

A short-term engineering plan is in force to permit action on the most pressing problems. This includes work on a new drainage and sewerage system, installation of tourist facilities (toilets, landscaping, etc), the restoration of the main streets, and the demolition of certain buildings whose size and appearance is not commensurate with the historical and cultural character of the old town. There is also an emergency Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Plan to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake of 3 February 1996.

The legislative protection of the old town and the administrative system at present in force are currently being studied intensively, with a view to eventual modification and improvement.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

A concern for the appearance of Lijiang can be discerned from documents going back to the early

Qing Dynasty. Local regulations to preserve it were enacted in the 18th and 19th centuries. During the period of the Republic of China (1911-49) a construction bureau was set up by the County Government to take charge of the protection, construction, and administration of the old town.

In 1979 the Lijiang County Government set up a Bureau of Urban Construction with similar responsibilities, and a Bureau of Culture followed in 1983, to manage all the major historical sites and cultural relics in the town.

Authenticity

Authenticity of site and of appearance are not at issue in the case of the old town of Lijiang: the historic quality of the ensemble has been the object of regulation for several centuries. Successive severe earthquakes have resulted in the destruction of much of the building stock, however, although there has been a policy of rebuilding in traditional style using traditional materials which has preserved the historic townscape.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Lijiang in April 1997.

Qualities

Lijiang is an historic town of considerable interest by virtue of its siting in relationship to the natural features of the region and its blend of indigenous Naxi and external forms of architecture and design.

Comparative analysis

No comparative analysis is provided in the nomination dossier, and none has yet been carried out by ICOMOS or any other scientific or professional organization.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

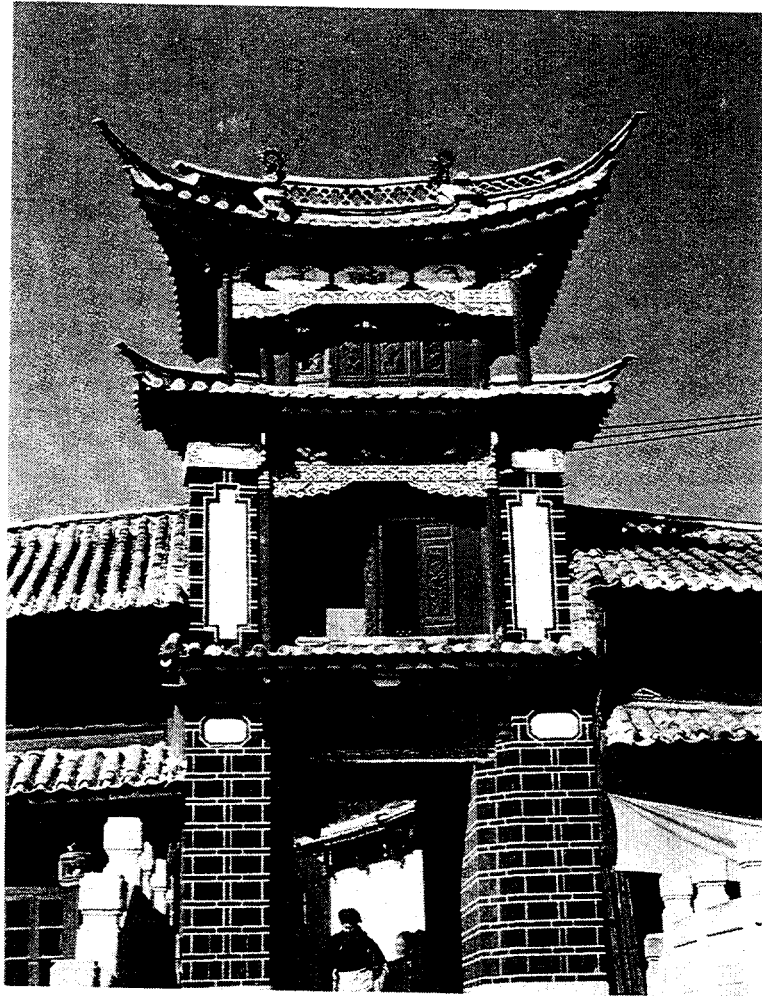
In view of the number of ancient towns in the tentative list of the People's Republic of China (including Ping Yao, also nominated in 1997), ICOMOS recommends that the State Party be requested to provide a comparative study of Chinese historic towns, indicating the reasons why those on the tentative list have been selected, and also the criteria under which it is proposed that they should be included on the World Heritage List.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iv, and v*:

Lijiang is an exceptional ancient town set in a dramatic landscape which represents the harmonious fusion of different cultural traditions to produce an urban landscape of outstanding quality.

ICOMOS, September 1997



Lijiang :
Porte Kegong, place Sifang /
Kegong Gate, Sifang Square



Lijiang :
Rue typique de la ville /
Typical streetscape in Lijiang