

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Summer Palace (China)

No 880

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Summer Palace, an imperial garden in Beijing
<i>Location</i>	Beijing
<i>State Party</i>	People's Republic of China
<i>Date</i>	4 July 1997

Justification by State Party

The imperial gardens are an important branch of Chinese gardening. They were created by bringing together the best of materials, manpower, know-how, craft, and art, and developed into an independent and unique school. As the last imperial garden in China, the Summer Palace fully reflects the theories and practices of Chinese gardening. It has survived intact to the present day and is protected effectively by the Chinese government and people.

The Summer Palace has a unique position and value in world garden history. There are differences between the west and the east; because of its conception the Summer Palace is fully representative of the oriental garden tradition. The relationships between the *yin* and the *yang*, between the genuine and the artificial in traditional Chinese philosophy, and the integration of hills and water are very harmonious. The layout and nature of palace structures in China conform with the feudal system laid down by Confucius. The construction of the three fairy islands in the Kunming Lake reflects the Taoist philosophy of seeking longevity and immortality. The religious structures on the summit of the Hill of Longevity manifest the wish to pray for Buddhist protection. All these elements are integrated into a beautiful landscape of lakes and mountains. The Summer Palace, using natural hills and water as a framework, is an exceptional example of Oriental gardening for the way in which it makes use of and transforms nature, and it serves as the ideal illustration of the differences between east and west.

Over its several thousand years of history the Chinese nation has developed its own unique cultural model. As the last imperial garden created during the feudal period, the Summer Palace epitomizes the architectural

and garden techniques of that long history, making use of many scientific and artistic achievements. Its structure is complete and intact, demonstrating an ideal harmony between the functions of palace buildings and gardening techniques. It inherits the artistic traditions of all the Chinese ruling dynasties and the gardening skills of all the regions of China, from the splendour of the north to the exquisite charm of the south. It combines the magnificence of imperial palaces with the beauties of private residences and the solemnity of temples and monasteries. Its landscapes and views are diversified and constitute a harmonious whole with the natural environment.

For nearly two centuries the Qing rulers used the Summer Palace for their political activities and the daily life of their courts, and it witnessed many important historical events. It thus reflects and epitomizes the social, political, economic, and cultural development and the modern history of China. Its wealth of history and culture is a rich source for research into the modern history, garden technology, architecture, aesthetics, religion, social life, humanities, and environmental protection of China.

The Summer Palace, constructed using traditional Chinese methods, illustrates the technical achievements of the Chinese nation in architecture and in the cultivation of plants in the landscape. The engineering technique used bear witness to the skills of the craftsmen of ancient China. Even today, the creativity shown in the handling of many buildings, hills, and stretches of water within the garden is the source of worldwide admiration. Complete engineering records and technical standards used in the creation of the Summer Palace and its predecessor, the Garden of Clear Ripples, have been preserved and constitute the most important testimony to the art of Chinese gardening.

Criteria i, ii, iii, and iv

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

During the reigns of the Qing Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong (1663-1795) several imperial gardens were created around Beijing, the last of them being the Summer Palace, based on the Hill of Longevity and Kunming Lake in the north-western suburbs of the city.

Kunming Lake (known earlier as Wengshan Pond and Xihu Lake) had been used as a source of water for irrigation and for supplying the city for some 3500 years. It was developed as a reservoir for Yuan Dadu, capital of the Yuan Dynasty, by Guo Shoujing, a famous scientist of the period, in 1291. Between 1750 and 1764 Emperor Qianlong created the Garden of Clear Ripples, extending the area of the lake and carrying out other improvements based on the hill and its landscape. It was to serve as the imperial garden for

him and for his successors, Jiaqing, Daoguang, and Xianfeng.

During the Second Opium War (1856-60) the garden and its buildings were destroyed by the allied forces. Between 1886 and 1895 it was reconstructed by Emperor Guangxu and renamed the Summer Palace, for use by Empress Dowager Cixi. It was badly damaged in 1900 by the international expeditionary force during the suppression of the Boxer Rising, in which Cixi had played a significant role, and restored two years later.

The Summer Palace became a public park in 1924 and has continued as such to the present day.

Description

The Summer Palace covers an area of 2.97km², three-quarters of which is covered by water. The main framework is supplied by the Hill of Longevity and Kunming Lake, complemented by man-made features. It is designed on a grandiose scale, commensurate with its role as an imperial garden.

It is divided into three areas, each with its particular function: political and administrative activities, residence, and recreation and sightseeing.

The political area is reached by means of the monumental East Palace Gate. The central feature is the Hall of Benevolence and Longevity, where matters of state were dealt with by Guangxu and Cixi; it is an imposing structure with its own courtyard garden.

This area connects directly with the residential area, which is made up of three complexes of buildings. The Hall of Happiness in Longevity was the palace of Cixi and the Hall of Jade Ripples that of Guangxu and his Empress, whilst the Hall of Yiyun housed his concubines. They are all built up against the Hill of Longevity, with fine views over the lake, and are connected to one another by means of roofed corridors. These communicate with the Great Stage to the east and the Long Corridor (728m), with more than 10,000 paintings on its walls and ceilings, to the west. In front of the Hall of Happiness in Longevity there is a wooden quay giving access by water to their quarters for the imperial family.

The remainder of the Summer Palace, some 90% of the total area, is given over to recreation and sightseeing. The steeper northern side of the Hill of Longevity is a tranquil area, through which a stream follows a winding course. From the gentle slopes of the southern side there is a magnificent view over the lake and the rest of the Garden.

There are many halls and pavilions disposed within the overall frame provided by the lake and the low hills around them, in accordance with the basic principle of Chinese garden design - "man-made yet natural."

The Tower of the Fragrance of Buddha forms the centre of the structures on the south side of the hill. It is octagonal in plan and its three storeys rise to a height of 41m. It is supported on eight massive pillars of *lignum vitae* and roofed with a great variety of glazed tiles. East of the Tower is the Revolving Archive, a Buddhist structure with a pillar on which is carved an account of the creation of the garden. To the west are the Wu Fang Pavilion and the Baoyun Bronze Pavilion, the latter

7.5m high and constructed entirely in bronze. Between the Tower and the lake is the complex known as the Hall that Dispels the Clouds. Other pavilions and halls cluster around these main features.

Kunming Lake has many of the features of the natural scenery of the region south of the Yangtze River. It contains three large islands, corresponding with the traditional Chinese garden element, the "fairy hill within the sea." The South Lake Island is linked to the East Dike by the stately Seventeen Arch Bridge. The West Dike consciously follows the style of the famous Sudi Dike built in the West Lake at Hangzhou during the Song Dynasty in the 13th century; six bridges in different styles along its length lend variety to the view as seen up against the background of the West Hill, which is an essential feature of the overall design of the Garden.

Other notable features are the temples and monasteries in Han and Tibetan style on the north side of the Hill of Longevity and the Garden of Harmonious Pleasure (familiarily known as "The Garden within a Garden"), built in imitation of private gardens in Wuxi, in the north-eastern part of the Garden. There are more than three thousand buildings within the total area of the Garden.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Summer Palace is protected by various legislative measures, notably the 1982 Law on Protection of Cultural Relics (amended 1991); this is elaborated in the 1992 Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics. Certain provisions of the Laws on Environmental Protection and on City Planning are also applicable. Violations are punishable under the provisions of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China.

On 4 March 1961 the Summer Palace was included by the State Council of the People's Republic of China on the first group of important monuments and sites to be protected at national level. It had already been declared a key cultural monument under protection by the Beijing National Government on 20 October 1957.

At municipal level, the Regulations of Beijing Municipality of the Protection of Cultural Relics (1987) reinforce the national protection. In 1987 the Summer Palace was specifically mentioned and its boundaries defined in the Notice of Beijing Municipal Government on Endorsing the Report submitted by the Municipal Bureau of Construction Planning and the Bureau of Cultural Relics concerning the Delimitation of Protection Ranges and Construction Control Areas of the Second Group of 120 Cultural Relics under Protection (1987).

Management

The Garden is owned by the People's Republic of China. Overall management is the responsibility of the State Bureau of Cultural Relics and the Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China. At local level, management is in the hands of the Summer

Palace Management Office (created in 1949), an agency of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Parks and Gardens, which works in collaboration with the Municipal Bureau of Cultural Relics. The Management Office, which employs over 1500 people, 70% of them professional and technical staff, has a number of departments covering, *inter alia*, relics protection, gardening, park administration, construction and protection, and archives.

The Management Office has a general management plan which includes a number of management rules and regulations for different aspects of its work. These measures are kept under constant review. The plan provides for the active involvement of three centres, for computer networks, research and training, working in collaboration.

The Summer Palace itself, which is the area nominated for inscription, forms the centre of three protection zones. Outside this there is a second protection zone, which provides the green landscape background for the Summer Palace and within which no buildings may be altered or constructed with authorization. In the outermost zone there is control over the height and colour of any new constructions. The two outer zones constitute an effective buffer zone, as required by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (1997).

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The Summer Palace was administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Qing Dynasty government from 1750 to 1924. During this period it was twice severely damaged by foreign military expeditions, both times being reconstructed and restored with scrupulous respect for its original design. From 1924 to 1949 by the Government of the Republic of China, which continued the policy of meticulous conservation and restoration. The effects of a period of neglect during World War II were remedied after 1949 when the Management Office was set up. Since that time there has been an ongoing programme of systematic conservation of the buildings, the lake and the associated water systems, and the vegetation of the Palace. Research and development projects are continuing for improving the protection of stone and metal components and monitoring techniques for climatic conditions and water quality.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the ensemble of the Summer Palace - the overall landscape and the relationships between its topographical and man-made components - is high, since the original design has been faithfully preserved over more than two centuries despite the severe damage resulting from the foreign incursions of the 19th century.

Most of the buildings were destroyed following the repression of the Boxer Rising in 1900. However, the detailed archives maintained over the preceding century made it possible for these to be rebuilt to the original design using appropriate materials and techniques. This

is keeping with the traditional Chinese conservation policy which may be expressed as “not altering the original appearance.” Against this cultural background, therefore, and in keeping with the Nara Declaration, the buildings and other structures may be adjudged to possess a high level of authenticity.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the property in February 1998.

Qualities

Chinese garden design is universally recognized to be one of the most significant manifestations of this form of art. It may be divided into two groups. The first is the urban garden, in which natural landscapes are created in miniature. This type is already represented on the World Heritage List by four of the historic gardens in Suzhou (No 811, inscribed 1997).

The second type of Chinese garden is the large-scale “imperial” garden, in which an existing landscape is adapted so as to harmonize with manmade elements such as temples, palaces, pavilions, bridges, etc, and plantings of trees, shrubs, and flowers. The Summer Palace falls within this category of Chinese garden.

Comparative analysis

The nearest comparative garden of this type is the West Lake Scenic Zone (Xihu) at Hangzhou. This is considerably larger than the Summer Palace (70km²), the West Lake itself stretching over an area of 33km by 2.8km. It was also subject to human intervention earlier, since it was originally embellished with manmade features in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1267). It is acknowledged to have been used as the model for the Summer Palace by the Qing Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong, who also made important additions to the West Lake.

The West Lake Scenic Area is on the Tentative List of the People’s Republic of China. It may be argued that its qualities are in some ways superior to those of the Summer Palace. However, ICOMOS is of the opinion that there is a case for the inscription of the latter, since its smaller size and the concentration of buildings gives it a greater quality of artificiality than Hangzhou West Lake. It epitomizes more explicitly the principles of Chinese garden design and in many ways may be seen as being more representative.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The ICOMOS expert mission recommended an extension of the buffer zone, so as better to protect the ambience of the site. This proposal was accepted by the Chinese authorities, and a revised map was handed to a second ICOMOS expert mission to the property in September 1998.

Brief description

The Summer Palace in Beijing, created in the 17th century and extended and embellished for over two hundred years, is a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design, integrating the natural landscape of hills and open water with manmade features such as halls, palaces, temples, and bridges into a harmonious and aesthetically outstanding whole.

Recommendation

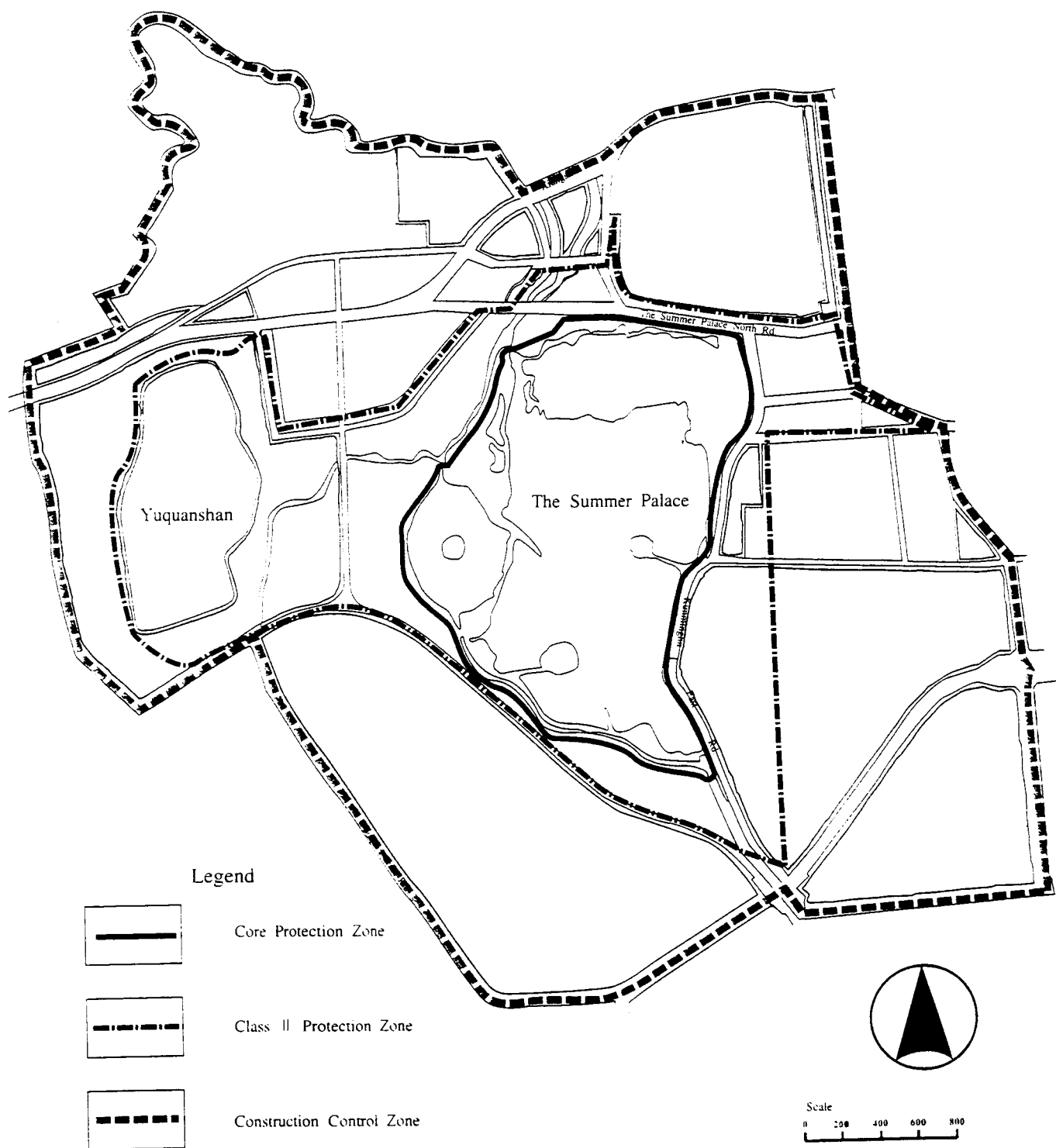
That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, ii, and iii*:

Criterion i: The Summer Palace in Beijing is an outstanding expression of the creative art of Chinese landscape garden design, incorporating the works of humankind and nature in a harmonious whole.

Criterion ii: The Summer Palace epitomizes the philosophy and practice of Chinese garden design, which played a key role in the development of this cultural form throughout the east.

Criterion iii: The imperial Chinese garden, illustrated by the Summer Palace, is a potent symbol of one of the major world civilizations.

ICOMOS, October 1998



Le Palais d'Eté, jardin impérial de Beijing / The Summer Palace, an imperial garden in Beijing :
Carte de la zone de protection et de la zone tampon autour du Palais d'Eté /
Map of the protection area and buffer zone around the Summer Palace