

World Heritage Convention  
Cultural Heritage Nominated by  
the People's Republic of China

# XIXIA IMPERIAL TOMBS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



National Cultural Heritage Administration  
of the People's Republic of China



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







Xixia Imperial Tombs (Mausoleum No. 1 and No. 2) and Helan Mountains





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## State Party

The People’s Republic of China

## State, Province or Region

Yinchuan City, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Ningxia Huizu Zizhiqu)

## Name of nominated property

Xixia Imperial Tombs

## Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

Center point coordinates: 38°24’57” N, 105°58’16" E

## Textual description of the boundary(ies) of the nominated property

### The Nominated Property

#### ● Basis for the Delineation

The nominated property encompasses all artificial remains that convey the proposed OUV of Xixia Imperial Tombs. Its boundary is demarcated based on the transportation network and topography in the surrounding of the nominated property. The boundary of the nominated property is consistent with that of the conservation area of Xixia Imperial Tombs as a National Priority Protected Site.

#### ● Boundary on the Four Sides

Boundary on the east: National Highway 110

Boundary on the south: Yinchuan-Bayanhhot Highway – Yinfa Highway

Boundary on the west: Eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains

Boundary on the north: South of the road on the north side of the tomb area – outside the loop road – National Highway 110

The area of the nominated property covers 3,899.0 hectares.

### The Buffer Zone

#### ● Basis for the Delineation

The buffer zone contains the heritage setting directly related to the property’s values including the Helan Mountains with the proluvial fans in its front, and also allows control of the immediate surroundings concerning its protection and management such as the planned urban area extending westward. The boundary of the buffer zone is consistent with that of the construction control zone of Xixia Imperial Tombs as a National Priority Protected Site.

#### ● Boundary on the Four Sides

Boundary on the east: In response to the pressure of urban development expanding westward from the city center toward the nominated property and based on the landscape conservation needs of the elevated terrain in the tomb area, the eastern boundary is delineated as follows: from Helanshan West Road to the east end of the buffer zone’s southern boundary, along Hongtu Street – Changcheng West Road – Special Railway – Baotou-Lanzhou Railway Line.

Boundary on the south: Considering the vast open Gobi Desert area and farmland south of the nominated property, the southern boundary is delineated based on the landscape protection requirement that there is at least 3 kilometers off the southernmost tip of the nominated property to allow the adequate visibility of the Gobi Desert area. The southern boundary follows the Yinchuan-Bayanhhot Highway –Yinchuan-Bayanhhot Expressway – Helanshen Vineyard Road – the extension of Vineyard Road, passing eastward through National Highway 110 and Shizuishan-Zhongning Expressway to reach the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway Line.

Boundary on the west: It is delineated based on the natural topography of the Helan Mountains ridge line (border of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region).

Boundary on the north: It is delineated based on the Gan Gou gully at the northern end of the tomb area and the mountain drainage area on its west side, and the roads east to the tomb area that includes the Xingan Road – National Highway 110 – Helanshan West Road, and all the way to Hongtu Street.

The buffer zone covers an area of 40,569.5 hectares.

## A3 size map of the nominated property, showing boundaries and buffer zone

(See the following map and the attached larger image)

## Criteria under which the property is nominated

Xixia Imperial Tombs is nominated under criteria (ii) and (iii) for inscription on the World Heritage List as set out in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2023 edition).

## Cultural Landscape

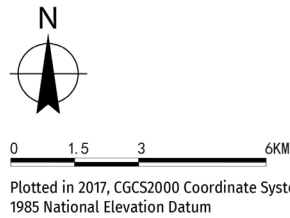
Xixia Imperial Tombs is not nominated as a cultural landscape property.





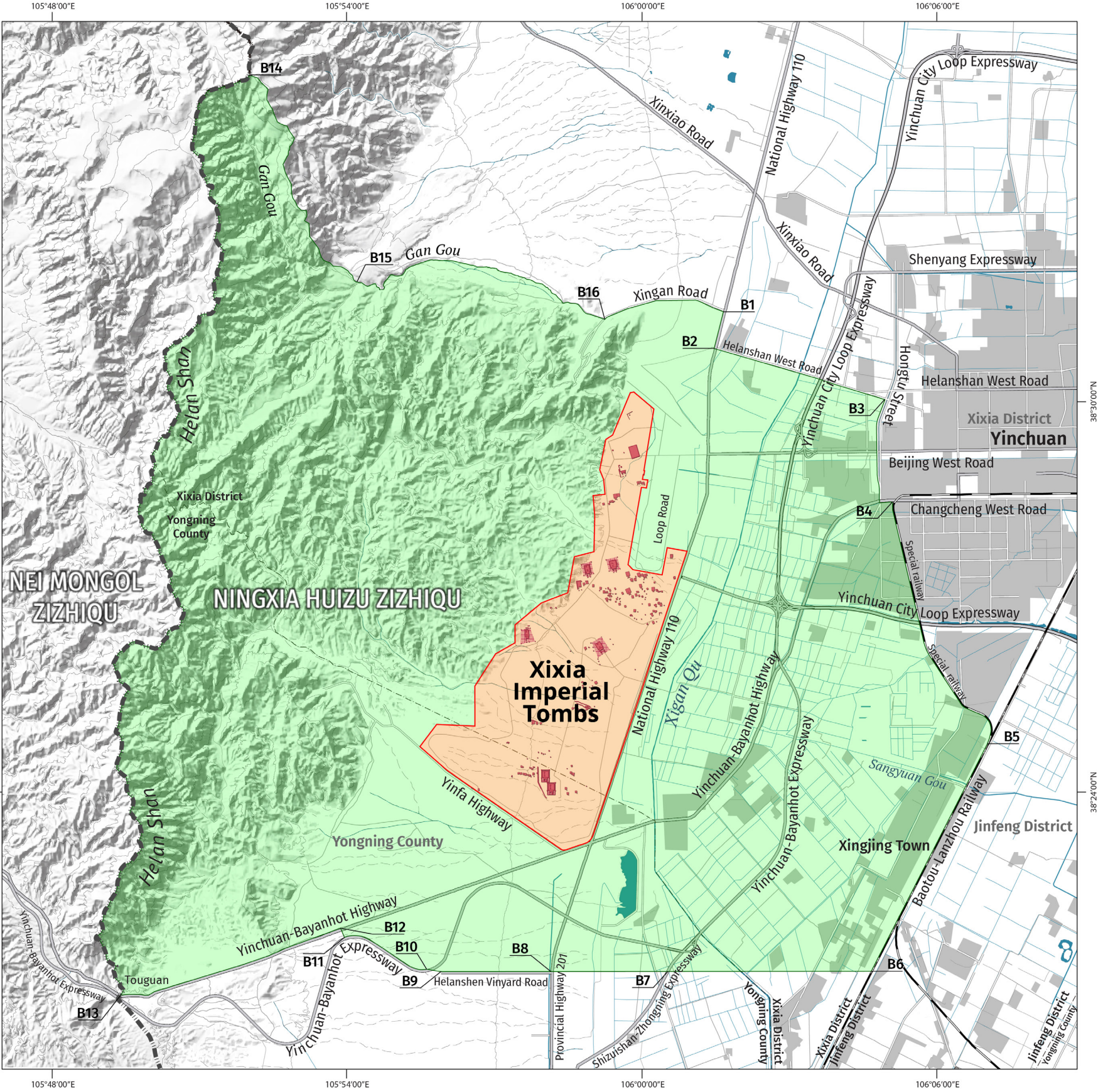
Topographic Map Showing the Boundaries of the Nominated Property and Buffer Zone (A3 Size)

- Legend
- Nominated Property (3899.0 ha.)
  - Buffer Zone (40569.5 ha.)
  - Remains of Xixia Imperial Tombs
  - Current Land for Urban Construction
  - Province Boundary
  - District/County Boundary
  - Canal/Flood Storage Area
  - Road
  - Railway
  - Coordinates of Buffer Zone Boundary Markers for Key Locations



Coordinates of Buffer Zone Boundary			
B1	38° 31' 16" N	106° 01' 49" E	
B2	38° 30' 41" N	106° 01' 37" E	
B3	38° 29' 53" N	106° 05' 02" E	
B4	38° 28' 18" N	106° 05' 12" E	
B5	38° 24' 33" N	106° 07' 04" E	
B6	38° 21' 03" N	106° 04' 39" E	
B7	38° 21' 05" N	106° 00' 30" E	
B8	38° 21' 06" N	105° 58' 10" E	
B9	38° 21' 07" N	105° 55' 56" E	
B10	38° 21' 10" N	105° 55' 37" E	
B11	38° 21' 40" N	105° 53' 58" E	
B12	38° 21' 48" N	105° 53' 54" E	
B13	38° 20' 49" N	105° 49' 25" E	
B14	38° 34' 59" N	105° 52' 12" E	
B15	38° 31' 47" N	105° 54' 24" E	
B16	38° 31' 25" N	105° 58' 32" E	

审图号：宁S[2024]第001号  
Map Approval No. 宁S[2024]第001号







# Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

## a) Brief Synthesis

### Factual Information

Xixia Imperial Tombs is a group of imperial burial sites from the Xixia Dynasty (Western Xia, 1038-1227), founded by the Tangut people in northwestern China during the 11th and 13th centuries. It is located at the eastern foothills of the southern section of the Helan Mountains, which is a significant natural geographical demarcation. It is under the jurisdiction of Yinchuan City, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of China.

Xixia Imperial Tombs lies on the vast proluvial fan in front of the Helan Mountains, covering an area of nearly 40 square kilometers. It comprises architectural sites of four types: 9 imperial mausoleums, 271 subordinate tombs, the northern architectural complex site totaling 5.03 hectares, and 32 flood control works sites. It forms a magnificent landscape together with the panorama of the Helan Mountains. In addition, the property also contains 7,100 excavated objects in the collection of museums and numerous remnants of architectural components preserved in situ.

### Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

At the foothills of the Helan Mountains, Xixia Imperial Tombs is the largest, highest-ranked, and most intact archaeological site from the Xixia period that has survived to the present day. It bears a unique testimony to the Xixia Dynasty and its imperial lineage, which were established by the Tangut people and lasted for almost 200 years in the history of China. It witnesses the crucial role of Xixia as a key distribution center on the Silk Roads during the 11th and 13th centuries. At the same time, the characteristics as reflected by Xixia Imperial Tombs, in terms of site selection, spatial layout, mausoleum burial system, tomb architecture, construction techniques, and funerary customs, fully exhibit the cultural fusion and innovation resulting from interactions among different ethnic groups, modes of livelihood, and cultures from this period of time that occurred in a region situated between the Mongolian Plateau and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and centered on the Ningxia Plain.

In summary, Xixia Imperial Tombs is a product of multiethnic fusion and multicultural interaction in the agro-pastoral interlaced region in northwestern China during the 11th to 13th centuries. It has preserved its authenticity and integrity to this day, providing a unique testimony to the “pluralistic and integrated” pattern of Chinese civilization and the formation process of a unified multiethnic state. It thus holds an irreplaceable and significant position in the history of world civilization.

## b) Justification for Criteria

Xixia Imperial Tombs is nominated under criteria (ii) and (iii) for inscription on the World Heritage List as set out in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2023 edition).

### Criterion (ii)

Xixia Imperial Tombs, as a group of imperial burial sites from the Xixia Dynasty established by the Tangut people, manifests distinctive features in terms of site selection, spatial layout, mausoleum burial system, tomb architecture, construction techniques, and funerary customs. It fully exhibits the cultural fusion and innovation resulting from interactions among diverse ethnic groups, modes of livelihood, and cultures during the 11th to 13th centuries in the agro-pastoral interlaced region situated between the Mongolian Plateau and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and centered on the Ningxia Plain in northwestern China.

### Criterion (iii)

Xixia Imperial Tombs bears a unique testimony to the Xixia Dynasty and its imperial lineage, which were established by the Tangut people and flourished for nearly 200 years during the 11th to 13th centuries in the history of China, and attests to Xixia’s crucial role as a distribution center on the Silk Roads during this period. This is evidenced by its vast and diverse architectural sites of four types distributed over the vast proluvial Gobi Desert at the east foothills of the Helan Mountains, including imperial mausoleums, subordinate tombs, flood control works sites, and the northern architectural complex site, all enjoying a high degree of authenticity and integrity to this day; the magnificent tomb area landscape formed together with the panorama of the Helan Mountains; and a great wealth of artifacts excavated at the site including stele fragments in the Tangut script.

## c) Statement of Integrity

The nominated property of Xixia Imperial Tombs covers a total area of 3,899.0 hectares, containing all the carriers of the property’s value attributes, including the imperial mausoleums, the subordinate tombs, the northern architectural complex site, the flood control works sites, unearthed objects, as well as elements of the historic setting within the tomb area, such as the proluvial fans before the Helan Mountains and the Gobi Desert, gullies, and desert vegetation. It also includes the spatial relationships between different sites. The nominated property is large enough to ensure its effective protection.

The buffer zone covers an area of 40,569.5 hectares, fully containing the historic setting related to the proposed OUV, such as mountains and Gobi wilderness. It encompasses the inherent spatial connections between the tombs and the surrounding mountainous terrain. It also contains the urban and rural development area that pose potential pressures on the conservation of the property’s values.

The 44,468.5-hectare demarcated area composed of the nominated property and buffer zone **can provide a sufficiently large area for the integrated conservation of all the value attributes of Xixia Imperial Tombs and its setting that bear testimony to the history of the Xixia Dynasty and exhibit the cultural fusion and innovation among diverse cultures during the dynasty.**

Meanwhile, the impact of urban development and construction in Yinchuan City on Xixia Imperial Tombs and threats from natural factors in the arid region have been comprehensively addressed through the implementation of the measures for the conservation of Xixia Imperial Tombs as a National Priority Protected Site, including the *Conservation Plan of Xixia Imperial Tombs (2019-2035)* and the *Conservation and Management Plan of Xixia Imperial Tombs (2023-2035)*. These planning documents set out a series of targeted programs and projects, such as the conservation of the earthen sites, the urban flood control infrastructure, the site safety and security system, and the environmental improvement in the tomb area. These efforts effectively adhere to the regulations and requirements of the national cultural heritage administrative agency and the governments at various levels, including Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Yinchuan City. They align with the relevant provisions of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2023 edition).

In summary, **the nominated property contains all the value attributes of Xixia Imperial Tombs and the buffer zone has a sufficiently large area. In general, the nominated property enjoys sound integrity.**

## d) Statement of Authenticity

Xixia Imperial Tombs is a group of imperial burial sites belonging to the ruling class of the Xixia Dynasty, established by the Tangut people. Since the conquest of the Xixia Dynasty by the Mongol Empire in 1227, this group of imperial burial sites has been preserved in the form of ruins until today. The primary value attributes of the nominated property include architectural remains representing four different functional types: 9 imperial mausoleums, 271 subordinate tombs, the





northern architectural complex site totaling 5.03 hectares, and 32 flood control works sites. These sites have been preserved as archaeological remains and have retained credible historical information from the 11th to 13th centuries. This information encompasses site selection, space and setting, location and layout, forms of remains, materials and techniques, historical uses and functions, as well as intrinsic relationships between the overall layout of the property and its various elements, and the historic setting of the landscape where the property is distributed. The 7,100 excavated objects in the collection of museums and numerous remnants of architectural components preserved in situ maintain their forms, categories, patterns, functions, and materials, reflecting the intricate processing techniques and exquisite craftsmanship of the time. Together with the archaeological sites of the tomb clusters, they faithfully and credibly embody the development features of the cultures and civilizations in the agrarian-nomadic overlapping region of northwestern China during the 11th to 13th centuries. This includes fusion and innovation related to multicultural exchanges in the region. At the same time, Xixia Imperial Tombs and the majestic Helan Mountains together create a magnificent tomb area landscape.

Therefore, **the information on the values of the nominated property carried by four categories of architectural sites, namely the imperial mausoleums, the subordinate tombs, the northern architectural complex site, and flood control works sites, as well as numerous and diverse unearthed artifacts, is authentic and credible, in terms of form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions, techniques and management systems, and spirit and feeling.**

## e) Requirements for Protection and Management

### Overall Framework for Protection and Management

Xixia Imperial Tombs was designated as a National Priority Protected Site in 1988, receiving the highest level of national protection. Xixia Imperial Tombs is state-owned and protected by relevant laws and regulations. They include the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural artifacts*, the *Regulations for the Implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural artifacts*, and the *Measures of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region for the Implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural artifacts*. Specialized regulations and plans for the conservation of the nominated property have also been announced and implemented, including the *Regulations for the Conservation of Xixia Imperial Tombs* (revised in 2016) and the *Conservation Plan of Xixia Imperial Tombs (2019-2035)*, which has strengthened the monitoring of the property and its surrounding setting. The nominated property’s specialized protection and management agency, the Yinchuan Xixia Imperial Tombs Management Office, has a clear division of labor, a well-defined mandate, a wholesome professional technical and management personnel team, sufficient protection and management funds, and well-equipped management and operation facilities. The above conditions provide legal, institutional, and managerial guarantees for protecting the authenticity and integrity of Xixia Imperial Tombs.

### Long-term Framework for Protection and Management

The comprehensive conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of Xixia Imperial Tombs involves formulating and implementing the *Conservation and Management Plan* and specific measures for the conservation and maintenance of the property, the conservation of the ecological environment, and environmental improvement. These actions aim to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the nominated property.

Strict implementation of conservation and management regulations is essential to control development and construction activities within the property area effectively. Coordinating and collaborating with stakeholders is crucial for collectively protecting and managing Xixia Imperial Tombs.

Strengthening the research, interpretation, and promotion of the property’s OUV is vital. The values of the property as cultural resources shall be reasonably leveraged to protect Xixia Imperial Tombs while promoting the harmonious and sustainable development of Yinchuan City and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

## Name and contact information of official local institution/agency/organization

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