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RELIGIOUS SITES

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Preface

As a world-renowned country with an ancient civilization, China boasts a wealth of cultural relics and historical sites, such as the ten thousand-li Great Wall, the Imperial Palace in Beijing, the Dunhuang Grottoes, and the Potala Palace in Lhasa. In particular, the Great Wall has been called one of the Wonders of the World.

It has become the common responsibility of all mankind to preserve the natural and cultural wealth created by our ancestors. Moreover, people are becoming more aware of the importance of looking after these priceless treasures so that we can hand them down to later generations. Over the past few decades, people throughout the world have made efforts to various degrees to preserve their cultural and natural heritages. In the third century BC, the Ramses Dynasty in Egypt established a mouseion, from which the English word "museum" is derived, in the imperial palace in Alexandria. It was a special temple for housing valuable cultural relics. The pyramids of Egypt and ancient structures of many other countries in the world have been preserved by the authorities. China boasts a collection of inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells which date from the Shang Dynasty (18th-11th centuries BC). In the Zhou Dynasty (C. 1100-221 BC), a great number of famous articles and valuables were kept in special collection rooms, and registered in the *Records*. Besides collecting valuable cultural relics, the local authorities in China throughout history made efforts to preserve special palaces, cemeteries and ancestral temples, mountains, rivers, trees, historical sites, gardens and ponds. There was also a solid folk tradition of preserving public buildings, ancestral temples and guild halls, irrigation works, mountains, rivers and trees through local rules and popular conventions. The details of such preservation measures were inscribed on tablets.

With the development of communications, information transmission and tourism, people have become more aware of the importance of protecting their cultural and natural heritages, especially from damage resulting from industrialization in the modern era. Therefore, some experts, scholars and far-sighted personages of various countries have made appeals for joint protection of the common wealth of mankind, and passed the Athens Charter, Venice Charter, Washington Charter, Lausanne Charter, the Europe and American conventions to preserve archaeological and historical heritages, the Suggestions on the Protection of the Landscape and the Styles, Features and Characteristics of Relics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), etc. To further strengthen the protection and management of cultural relics, and get national governments to pay more attention and extend more support to these endeavors, the Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritages was adopted at the 17th UNESCO Conference in Paris in November 1972, explicitly regulating the definition and standards of the world's cultural and natural heritage sites, and setting the guiding principle of its implementation, which is a standard interna-

tional document of far-reaching influence promulgated and carried out by UNESCO throughout the world. One of its main tasks is to determine items of cultural and natural heritage of prominent significance and universal value generally accepted by the whole world, and list them in the World Heritage List as the common heritage of mankind, to promote cooperation and mutual support among people of all countries and ethnic groups, and make active contributions to the protection of this heritage.

To guarantee that all the regulations of the Heritage Convention win the support and cooperation of all countries, the World Heritage Committee (WHC), an organization of international cooperation between governments was founded in 1976, supported by 21 of the signatory states to the Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage. The organization's headquarters is the UNESCO Center for the Protection of the World Heritage. The WHC holds a meeting every year, to mainly engage in three items of work: First, discussing and determining the projects to be proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage List and submitting them to the representative conferences of the signatory states for adoption and promulgation. Second, supervising the World Heritage Fund, and examining and approving the financial and technical support put forward by the signatory states. The fund is composed of one percent of the regular membership dues of UNESCO member states and voluntary contributions from the governments of the signatory states and other organizations and individuals. Despite its small size, the fund has played an active role in promoting the protection of some important items of cultural and natural heritage in many countries, especially the developing countries and underdeveloped regions. Third, monitoring the protection and management of the cultural and natural heritage projects listed in the World Heritage List.

To improve the quality of the work of protection, evaluation, survey and technical support, UNESCO and the WHC consult the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Union for the Protection of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), which assist with research and publicity work, as well as offering the services of experts.

Definitions of cultural heritage:

1. Cultural relics: Viewed from the historic, artistic or scientific angle, the buildings, sculptures and paintings of prominent and universal value, components and structures of archaeological significance, inscriptions, caves, residential areas and various combinations of the above.
2. Buildings: Viewed from the historic, artistic or scientific angle, independent or associated buildings of prominent and universal value due to their style, structure or position in the landscape.
3. Ruins: Viewed from the historic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological angle, artificial projects or common masterpieces of man and nature, and archaeological ruins of prominent and universal value.

Evaluation standards for cultural heritage sites:

1. Masterwork representing a unique achievement or creative talent.
2. Work that has had a significant influence on the development of architecture, urban construction or landscape designs during some period or in some cultural region in the world.
3. Work that can offer a unique or at least special evidence for a lost civilization or cultural tradition.
4. Work that shows one or several important stages of human history as an example of the masterwork of a kind of building or landscape.
5. Vulnerable site as an example of the human residential area or usable land of one or more cultural traditions, especially if an irreversible change threatens.
6. Material object of special universal significance, directly or substantially associated with modern current traditional ideas, beliefs or literary or artistic works. (According to experts, this article can be considered as a standard for a cultural heritage site listed in the World Heritage List only under some special situation or when it is jointly considered with other standards.)

Definition of natural heritage:

1. Viewed from the aesthetic or scientific angle, geological or biological structures of prominent and universal value or the natural features of similar structures.
2. Viewed from the scientific or protection angle, geological or natural geographical features of prominent and universal value, and explicitly designated habitats of endangered species of animals and plants.
3. Viewed from the scientific or natural aesthetic angle, natural scenic spots of prominent and universal value, or explicitly designated nature reserves.

Evaluation standards for natural heritage sites:

1. Outstanding examples of the important stages of the history of global evolution.
2. Important phenomena occurring during the process of geological or biological evolution, and important examples of the relations between man and the natural environment.
3. Unique, rare or ingenious natural phenomena or topographic features, or locations of rare natural beauty.
4. Habitats of rare or endangered animals or plants.

In addition, the WHC may list seriously threatened or endangered sites of cultural and natural heritage in the World Heritage List so as to adopt emergency measures to save and protect them after investigations and discussions by experts.

Always attaching great importance to the protection of items of cultural and natural heritage, the government of the People's Republic of China actively takes part in activities designed to protect the

world's cultural and natural heritages carried out by UNESCO and the CWH. In November 1985, at the proposal of relevant experts, scholars and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress gave China approval to become one of the signatory states to the Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritages of UNESCO. In 1986, China requested that the Great Wall, the Imperial Palace in Beijing, the relics of Peking Man at Zhoukoudian, the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor and the terracotta army and Mount Taishan be included in the World Heritages List. The request was approved by the WHC in 1987, after careful examinations. China was elected one of the members of the WHC at the Eighth Conference of the Signatory States to the Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritages in October 1991. China's representative was elected vice-president of the committee at the 16th and 17th conferences of the WHC in 1992 and December 1993, respectively.

The culture and traditions of the Chinese nation have had an unbroken history of several thousand years. As a country composed of many ethnic groups since ancient times, China has created a brilliant multi-ethnic culture in the process of its long historical development, represented by many masterpieces, such as the Potala Palace and the Chengde Mountain Resort and Its Outlying Temples. The murals and painted sculptures in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, and the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor and his terracotta army are also world-famous cultural treasures. In the realm of natural heritage, scenic areas such as those of Jiuzhaigou and Wulingyuan are characterized by unique geological and topographical features, animals and plants, and beautiful scenery. Many sites with both natural and cultural heritage features, including Taishan, Wuyi and Emei mountains, and the Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area, reflect the integration of China's long history and culture with its natural environment, which is rarely seen in other countries. Meanwhile, the cultural scenic spot of Mount Lushan has been approved for putting on the List as "an ingenious work integrating a beautiful natural environment with excellent human artistry."

As a contribution to protecting, studying and giving publicity to the world's cultural and artistic heritages, the Foreign Languages Press has produced this small album which introduces sites in China which have been recognized by UNESCO as being worthy of inclusion in its list of the common cultural and artistic wealth of mankind.

Luo Zhewen
Vice-President of China ICOMOS



Chinese architecture, art and culture have been greatly influenced by a variety of religions throughout China's history. The World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had approved seven Chinese religious sites for inclusion in its World Heritage List by November 2003. Those listed include key Buddhist sites such as the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, the Leshan Giant Buddha near Mount Emei, the Dazu Rock Carvings and the Yungang Grottoes, which have blended carving, mural painting, colored sculpture and architecture into one to become outstanding representatives of ancient Chinese art. The ancient Taoist architectural complex on Mount Wudang is an important site of the indigenous Chinese religion Taoism, and is a treasure house of traditional Chinese architecture. In Tibet, politics and religion are combined in the majestic and splendid Potala Palace — a group of buildings devoted to Lamaism, a form of Buddhism practiced in Tibet. The palace represents the pinnacle of Tibetan art in terms of architecture, sculpture and painting. It is the crystallization of the wisdom of the Tibetan, Han, Mongolian and Manchurian peoples, among others.



① Mogao Caves

② Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace

③ Ancient Building Complex in the
Wudang Mountains

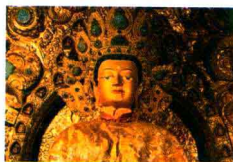
④ Mount Emei and Leshan Giant Buddha

⑤ Dazu Rock Carvings

⑥ Longmen Grottoes

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Yungang Grottoes

Mogao Caves (UNESCO cultural heritage site since 1987)

The Mogao Caves are located on Mount Sanwei, 25 km southeast of Dunhuang City in Gansu Province. There are over 750 grottoes with 40,000-50,000 sq m of murals and more than 3,000 colored sculptures on the 15-30-m-high cliff. Work on the grottoes started in 366 BC, but as commerce along the nearby Silk Road declined in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the area became neglected, and no more grottoes were cut after the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

The art treasures of the Mogao Caves range from a statue of Buddha over 30 m high to a colored sculpture only 10 cm high. The murals and statues here are a rich storehouse of Buddhist lore and provide data for the study of the dress, beliefs and customs of the people of several dynasties. More than half of the works were produced during the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties.



A procession of Zhang Yichao and his troops (late Tang Dynasty).





The painting "Deva Musician" in Cave 290 (Northern Zhou Dynasty, 557-581).




The painting "The Life Story of King Sivi" in Cave 275.



Outside the Mogao Caves.



A Tang Dynasty statue of a Bodhisattva in Cave 328.



A statue of a guardian in Cave 55 (Five Dynasties, 907-960).