

THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CHINA

China boasts an illustrious and long history. Its cultural heritage is the prime testimony of the country's distinguished past and the bearer of its rich civilization. Great attention has been paid to the protection of cultural heritage and remarkable progress has been attained. To date, a comprehensive legal system with at its core the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Heritage* accompanied by series of special laws and regulations has been established. China is also State Party to four important international conventions in the field of cultural heritage protection, which are of increasing importance to the preservation of the cultural heritage shared by all humankind. This article presents some of China's achievements in the protection of cultural heritage, in particular in archaeology and site protection, maintenance and restoration, and conservation science and technology so that our colleagues can gain a basic appreciation.

Archaeological surveys, excavations and research are well organized and much importance is attached to their scientific management. Work on the protection of archaeological sites has been strengthened and steady progress has been achieved in the field of archaeology in general. Field archaeology, particularly in remote frontier areas, underwater archaeology and the use of aerial photography projects are being implemented step by step according to established plans and are accompanied by the creation of appropriate infrastructure. These efforts have led to a series of important academic successes. Chinese archaeology has entered into a new phase.

1271 cultural heritage sites have been placed under national protection, nearly 7000 under provincial protection, and over 60 000 under city or county protection. A total of 101 cities, including Beijing, Xi'an and Luoyang, are listed by the State Council as Cities of Recognized Historical and Cultural Value. Over 6000 restoration projects have been carried out across the country resulting in fundamental achievements that have ensured that the major monuments and sites listed at the national level are protected against all kinds of threats.

The country possesses over 2200 museums which organise up to 10 000 exhibitions each year, receiving 150 million visitors. Museums play a major role in social education.

China has achieved remarkable results in the field of science and technology applied to the conservation of cultural heritage. Steady scientific and technological progress has been made in the field of conservation and some techniques have reached the highest international standards.

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