

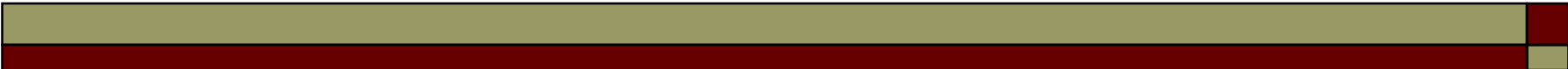
Heritage and Identity – Case Study China

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Modules:

Heritage in the Political World: Communities and
Comparative Aspects (HPHE7001)

Unravelling Heritage History, Theory, Methods (HPHE7002)



MAIN HERITAGE/TOURIST SITES

- Great Wall (north of Beijing)



- Temple of Heaven (Beijing)



- Forbidden City (Beijing)



- Terracotta Army (Xi'an)



- Mogao Grottoes (Dunhuang, Gansu province)



- Temple and Cemetery of Confucius and the Kong Family Mansion in Qufu (Shandong)



- Leshan Giant Buddha (Leshan, Sichuan)



- Lijiang Old City (Yunnan)



- Potala Palace
(Lhasa, Tibet)



- Fujian Tulou
(Yongding & Nanjing,
Fujian province)



World Heritage Sites in China

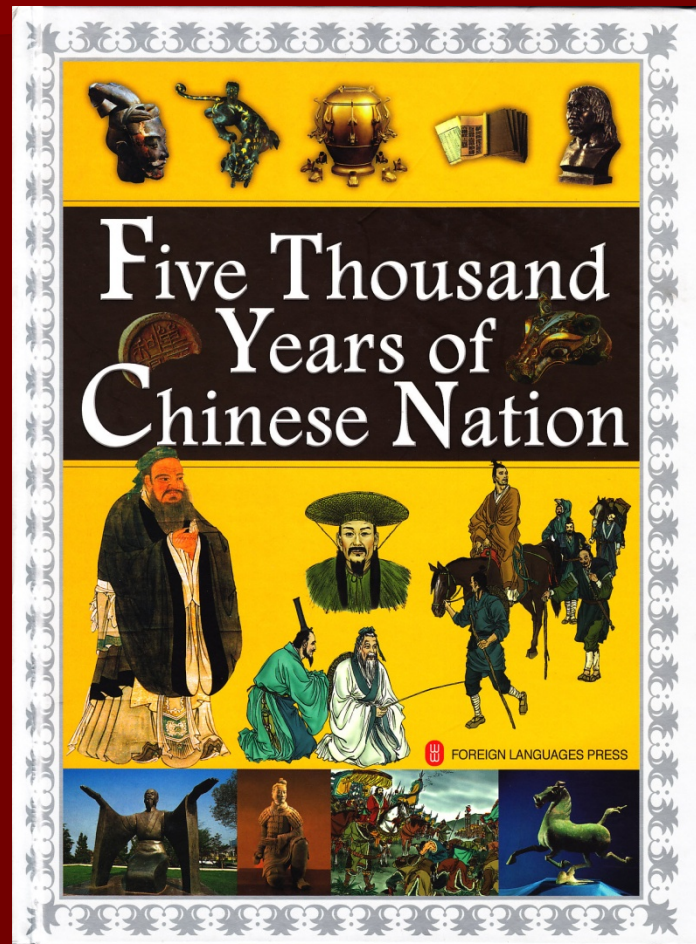




Spiritual values vs destruction of material heritage of the past

CHINESE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PAST

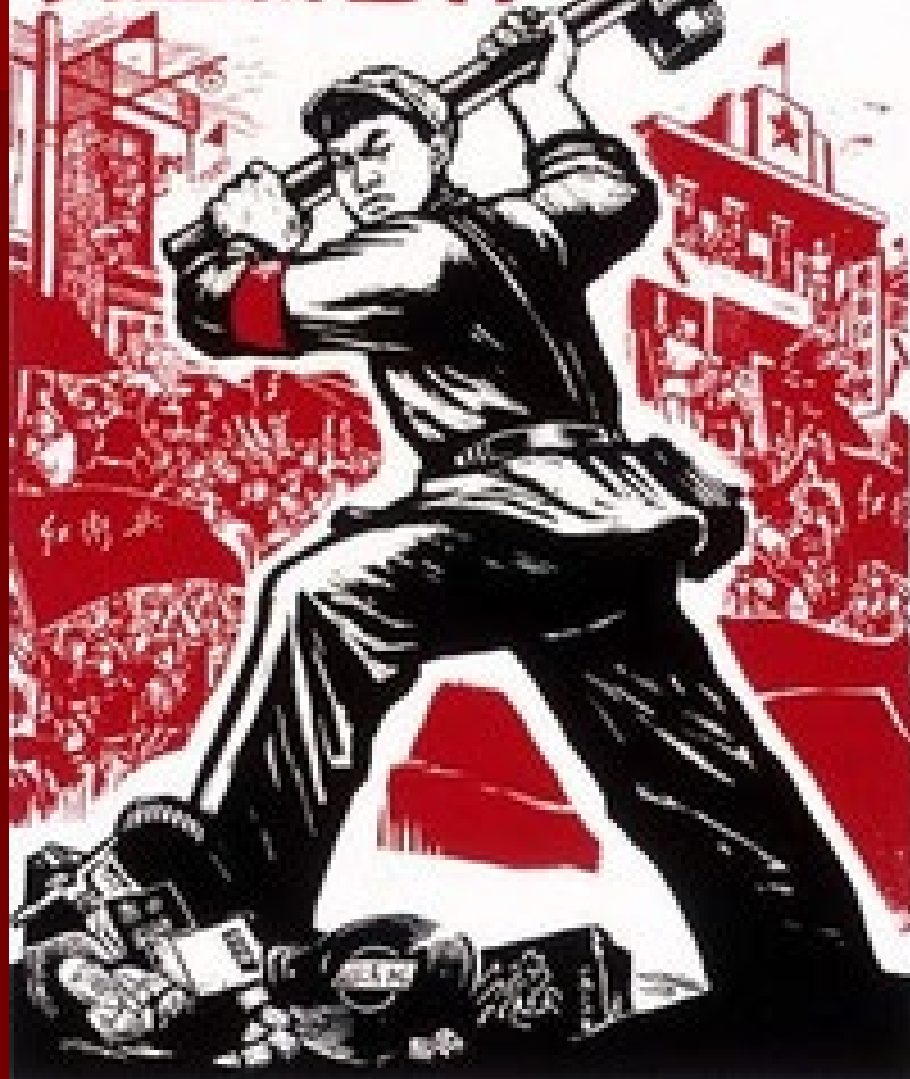
Cultural Continuity



Material Destruction



打碎旧世界
创立新世界





Paradox

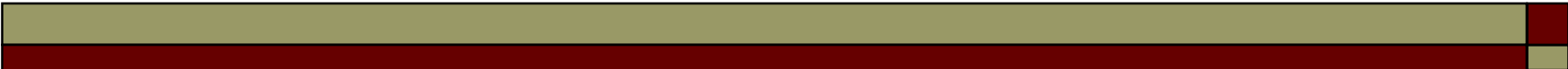
- ❑ Neglect of the material heritage of the past;
“the very past which seems to penetrate everything ... is also strangely evading our *physical* grasp” (Leys 2011, p. 286)
- ❑ Cultural longevity
 - China is the oldest living continuous culture
 - strong sense of historical memory



Approaches towards preservation of the past

- overcome erosion of time
 - use strongest possible materials to achieve maximum resilience

- yield to time and its erosion of artefacts
 - use perishable and fragile materials but re-build periodically
 - transfer preservation of past from material object to producer → not the building preserves eternity but the builder
 - strong cultural memory



“The only truly enduring embodiments of the
eternal human moments are the literary ones.”

(Quote from F.W. Mote, “A Millenium of
Chinese Urban History”)

Antiquarianism in China

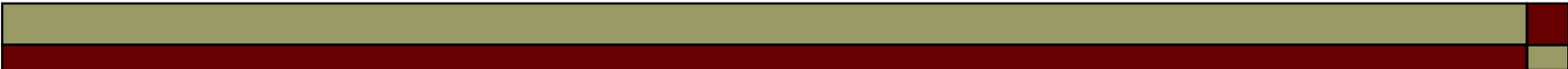
- ❑ beginnings 11th century (Song dyn.); comparatively late
- ❑ collection and study of ancient bronzes and epigraphs
- ❑ cultural escape backwards in time; search for spiritual shelter and moral comfort
- ❑ narrow focus on calligraphy, i.e. the written word

Antiquarianism

- ❑ legitimises political authority; precious objects collected in imperial collections
- ❑ → restricted access;
- ❑ → concentration of art treasure in palaces exacerbated losses in times of war or rebellion

Wang Xizhi's (303-361) *Lanting ji xu* ("Preface to the poems composed at the gathering at Lanting")

永和九年歲在癸丑暮春之初會
于會稽山陰之蘭亭脩禊事
也羣賢畢至少長咸集此地
有峻領茂林脩竹又有清流激
湍映帶左右引以為流觴曲水
列坐其次雖無絲竹管絃之
盛一觴一詠亦足以暢叙幽情
是日也天朗氣清惠風和暢仰
觀宇宙之大俯察品類之盛
所以遊目騁懷足以極視聽之
娛信可樂也夫人之相與俯仰
一世或取諸懷抱悟言一室之內
或因寄所託放浪形骸之外雖
趣舍萬殊靜躁不同當其欣
於所遇暫得於己快然自足不
知老之將至及其所之既倦情
隨事遷感慨係之矣向之所欣
俯仰之間以為陳迹猶不能不以之興懷況脩短隨化終
期於盡古人云死生亦大矣豈
不痛哉每攬昔人興感之由
若合一契未嘗不臨文嗟悼不
能喻之於懷固知一死生為虛
誕齊彭殤為妄作後之視今
亦猶今之視昔悲夫故列
敘時人錄其所述雖世殊事
異所以興懷其致一也後之攬
者亦將有感於斯文



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Cultural Heritage – modern understandings



Cultural Heritage – modern understandings

- ❑ link with tourism and leisure economy
- ❑ Immaterial cultural heritage list (ICH list)
- ❑ tool for regional development, esp. rural areas
- ❑ polit. achievement for local officials
- ❑ cultural heritage revival in wake of re-evaluation of religion ('superstition')
- ❑ trad. folkways = "healthy cultural activities"

China's official cultural heritage discourse

- almost exclusive focus on the revolutionary heritage in the Mao Zedong period (1949-76)
- a more culturally based patriotic heritage narrative in the 1980s
- 1990s, inclusion of vernacular and industrial heritage
- since 2003: adoption of the concept of intangible cultural heritage (China signed UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention in 2003); *feiwuzhi wenhua yichan* 非物质文化遗产 (Nonphysical Cultural Heritage)

Immaterial Cultural Heritage China

- Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- China has 42 ICH practices listed by UNESCO → highest number in the world (USA = 0; UK=0)
- Stronger representation of minority cultures than in material heritage list
- National lists of ICH 國家級非物質文化遺產名錄 – 10 categories, approx. 1,400 entries
(<https://www.culturalheritagechina.org/national-list-fourth-batch>)

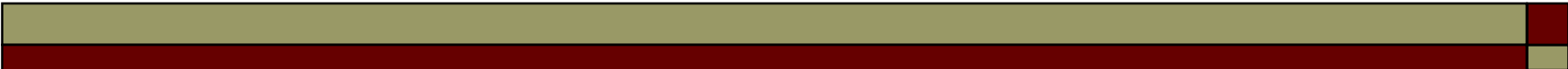
Political uses of ICH 中國非物質文化遺產

- ❑ ICH law of 2011 states in Article 4 that: ‘[t]he protection of ICH [...] is conducive to enhancing the Chinese national cultural identity, to safeguard national identity and national unity and to protect social harmony and sustainable development’.
- ❑ How does that work?
- ❑ What is the connection to the Chinese Dream?

Intangible Cultural Heritage in China briefly defined

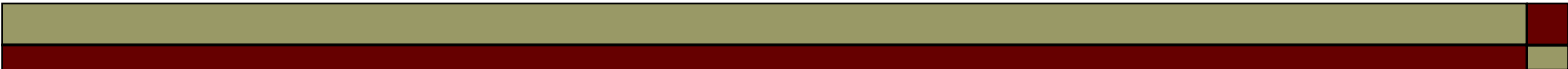
- Famous transmitters (Masters) 杰出传承人
- Transmission between living persons 活态传承
- Long history (100 years min.) 悠久历史 (百年)
- Concrete form of expression 具体的表现形式
- Precious object of ethnic culture 民族文化财富

- Danger of ‘materialisation’ *wuzhihua* 物质化
→ All tools, materials and finished products are not considered part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



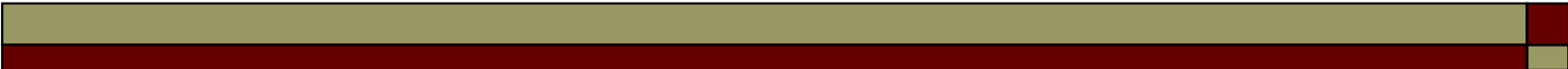
Heritage and Governmentality

- State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) 国家文物局
- Intangible Cultural Heritage Department (Ministry of Culture)
- <https://www.culturalheritagechina.org/>



ICH and Governmentality

“Several scholars ... have pointed out that the use of culture and intangible cultural heritage can be a softer and less visible way of ‘rendering individuals governable’. The listing, reification, and celebration of certain cultural practices can thus be a tool of governance, especially when individuals and communities are excluded from decision making but still come to internalize the validation of the selected practices and behaviours. In the context of China, ICH could be seen as a new form of governance and a way to control religious and ethnic communities in particular.”
(Maags/Svensson 2018: 20)

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- ❑ Is the distinction between ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘immaterial cultural heritage’ sensible?
 - ❑ What does immaterial cultural heritage add conceptually?



Case Study

YUANMINGYUAN (GARDEN OF PERFECT BRIGHTNESS)

China Global Television Network (CGTN)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAeVYL3ywYA>

The imperial rural retreat, Yuanmingyuan, was situated about eight kilometers (five miles) from the northwest gate (Xizhimen) of Beijing's city wall. It was another four kilometers (2.5 miles) from the gate to the Forbidden City.

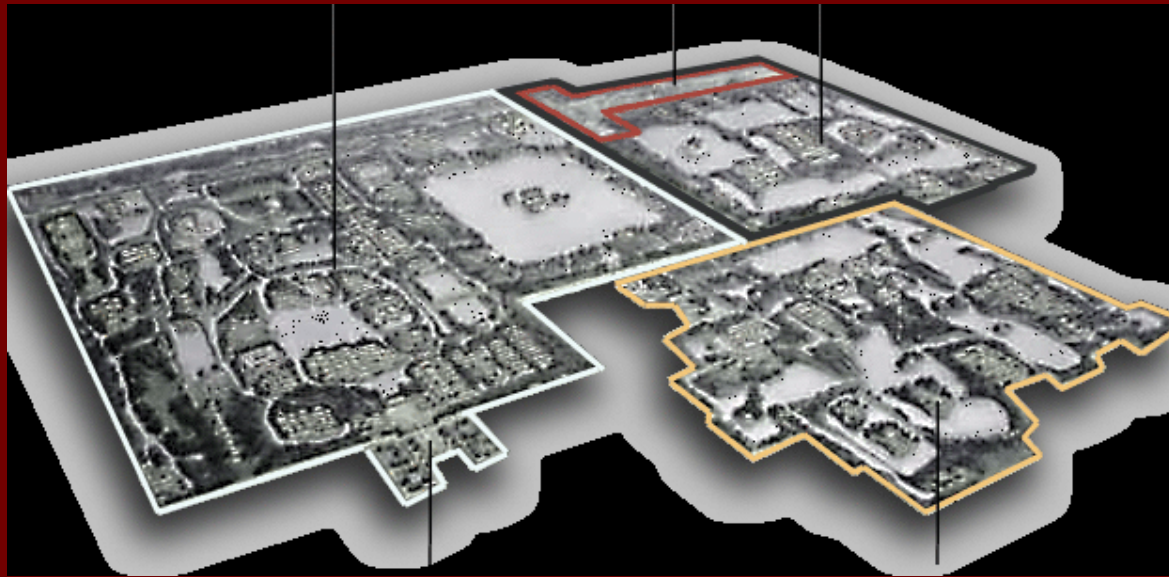


The gardens of the Yuanmingyuan

Yuanmingyuan 圓明園
(Garden of Perfect
Brightness)

Xiyanglou
西洋樓
(European
Palaces)

Changchunyuan
長春園
(Garden of
Eternal Spring)



Main entrance

Qichunyuan 綺春園
(Garden of Elegant
Spring)

40 scenes within Yuanmingyuan



The Burning of the Imperial Palace (1983)

Director: Li Han-hsiang,
Hong Kong

Story of Empress Dowager
Cixi's rise to power

States the seduction of the
Xianfeng Emperor by the
young Cixi

Romantic nostalgia
(“libidinal-aesthetic
signification of
Yuanmingyuan)



Yuanmingyuan, Xiyanglou

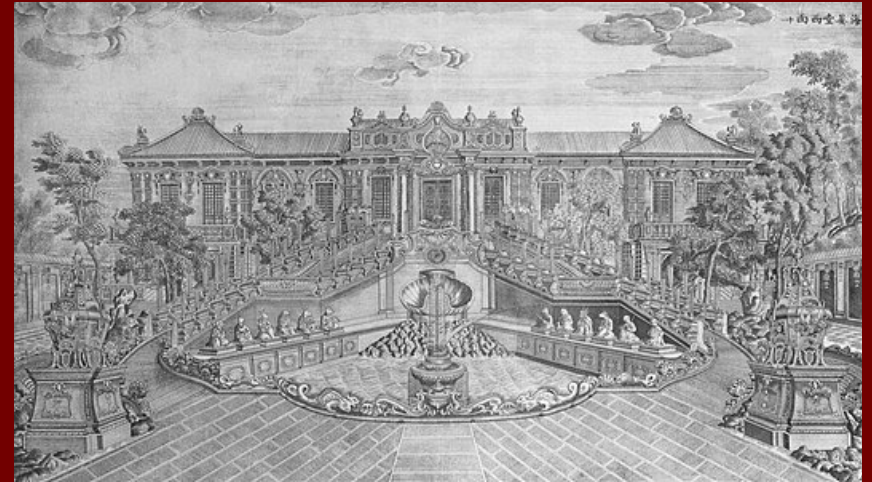
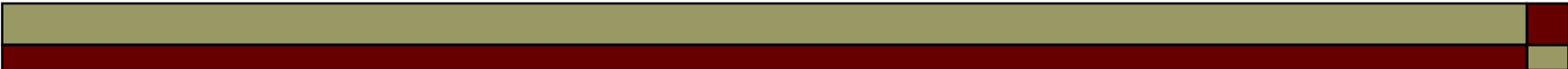


Photo by Ernst Ohlmer, 1873



Old Summer Palace Zodiac Heads





Yuanmingyuan Debates

Debates in China centred on the question of whether Yuanmingyuan should be

- a memorial to the injury inflicted on the body politic by imperialism
- a tribute to a crowning achievement of the Chinese people

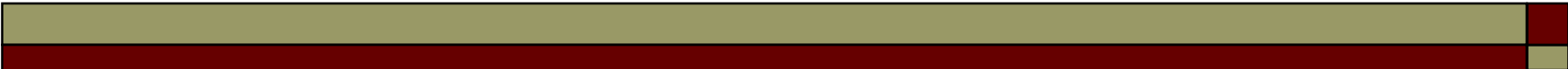
First, how can we harmonize patriotic education with the need for recreation and relaxation? How can we make visitors remember that this is the former Yuanmingyuan when they are rowing a boat on the lake or gazing at the flowers on the shore? Second, how can a few broken stones enable people to call to mind the magnificence of Yuanmingyuan two hundred years ago? How can they call to mind the savagery committed by foreign imperialists one hundred years ago in these resplendent gardens? (Wang, 1999: 765)

Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Brightness)

- “garden of all gardens” (*wanyuan zhi yuan* 萬園之園)
- Connected to all other places by virtue of assembling “all the variety and components of the universe” (Saussy 2006: 159)
→ garden as “self-image of empire” (*tianxia*, All under Heaven), an actually realized utopia (‘heterotopia’)
- First and most important modern ruin in China – “a structure is beautiful only when it is new; once [the decorations] have faded and especially once the structure has collapsed, the beautiful turns into the ugly because the harmony with the environs has been destroyed” (Wang 1999: 769)
- Until late 1980s – Yuanmingyuan integrated into daily life (occupied by farmers and ordinary people)

Approaches

- Restorationists: “First, how can we harmonize patriotic education with the need for recreation ... gardens?” (Wang 1999: 765)
- Anti-restorationists: “[R]estauration would amount to eradicating the evidence of the destruction and covering up the crimes of the imperialists; tinkering [with the ruins] and altering their present state is tantamount to tampering with history” (Wang 1999: 673) → “Only a ruinscape (canjing) can inspire the imagination and arouse passion.” (681-82) → merged with environmental discourse

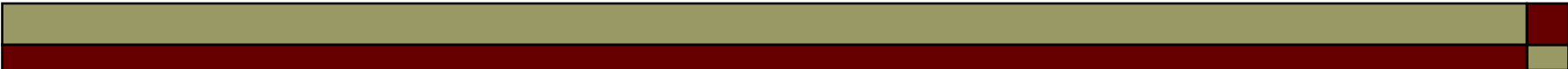


Yuanmingyuan and tourism

- Can Yuanmingyuan's emplacement as garden- or ruinscape be reconciled with the demands of modern tourism? If so, how?

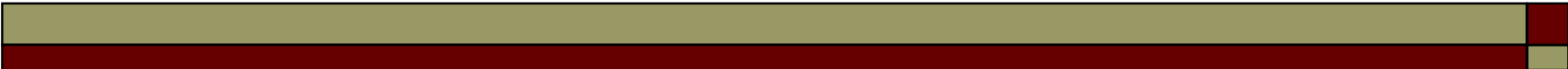
Questions

- What meanings are imparted to heritage sites?
- How does tourism influence the spatial signification of heritage spots? (Does tourism matter?)
- What does “authenticity” mean in these contexts?



Key themes

- ❑ Yuanmingyuan a “place of both profound alienation and irreducible Chineseness” (Lee 2006: 175)
- ❑ Native aesthetic of renewal vs important aesthetics of brokenness/decay (Disneyland vs ruinscape)
- ❑ Official lessons vs personal experience
- ❑ Authenticity



Summary

“no one group has hegemonized the field of spatial signification”

→ “The heterotopia of Yuanmingyuan juxtaposes seemingly incompatible emplacements to the consternation of many critics, but it is in many ways a most apt spatial metaphor of contemporary China and a schooling ground for the art of socialist neoliberal citizenship: of being able to reconcile authoritarianism and freewheeling capitalism, patriotic loyalty and cosmopolitan sensibility, self-righteous rage and aesthetic and sensual enjoyment.”

(Lee 2006: 185)

Thank you for your attention!