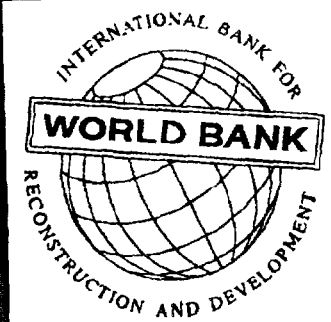


# Findings

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## Cultural Property Conservation and the Development Process

For nearly two decades, the World Bank has included cultural heritage conservation components in projects. However, opportunities to improve site security and sustainability may still be missed for lack of information and institutional coordination. Cultural heritage concerns are included in the World Bank's environmental assessment of investment projects in order to ensure that significant cultural resources are protected from the negative impacts of development projects. The process can also promote more effective use of cultural assets through increased access and better public understanding of their value to society.

This handbook, **Cultural Property and Environmental Assessments in Sub-Saharan Africa**, is intended to assist World Bank staff, consultants, and borrowers to plan for cultural heritage conservation in project environmental assessments. It provides an overview of cultural property issues in Africa, complemented by individual data sheets for each country. The data sheets identify in-country institutions and experts and give basic bibliographic information. They also summarize available information on specific sites, which unfortunately is very limited.

Africa's rich and varied cultural heritage finds expression in a wide variety of arts and crafts. Cultural property is preserved in paleontological, archaeological, historical, and sacred sites, as well as in museums, residences, and the daily life of the people. African archaeology traces the history of human evolution from its very beginning, recording such significant cultural achievements as the development and use of tools, the independent invention of agriculture, long distance trade, fine arts as illustrated by early rock paintings, metalworking, and urban settlements. Contemporary architecture, paintings, sculptures, textiles, and other cultural artifacts draw on a rich variety of traditions, many of which are still an integral part of daily life.

Many thousands of cultural sites have been identified in Africa, often clustered along coastal areas,

river basins, or major transportation axes. Many others may exist unknown to the outside world. Archaeological studies conducted as part of project environmental assessments can provide valuable information concerning the nature and distribution of human activity in the area in ancient times. Such surveys have been conducted, for example, in the Volta Basin, in the area to be flooded by the Kafue Dam in Zambia, as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, and for the Tuli Block Roads Project in Botswana.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention has been ratified by 28 African countries, listed in the handbook. Under the convention, international assistance can be secured by governments to facilitate the protection of sites that have been registered as World Heritage Sites. Currently listed World Cultural Heritage sites in Africa include the royal palaces of Abomey, Benin; the rock churches of Ethiopia; Ashante traditional buildings in Ghana; the ancient towns of Djenné and Timbuktu and the cliff of Mandiagara in Mali; the island of Mozambique, Mozambique; Goree Island in Senegal; the ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, Tanzania; and Great Zimbabwe and Khami Ruins National Monuments in Zimbabwe. Several African countries with important cultural resources, such as Kenya and Togo, have yet to ratify the Convention.

Bank policy is to assist in protecting and enhancing cultural property and to avoid as much as possible its destruction or disturbance. However, this policy is difficult to apply in Africa because many countries have little experience in evaluating the impacts of projects on cultural property, lack the institutional capacity to ensure effective protection, and fail to take cultural consequences into account in development decision-making. Systematic inventories, an essential tool for cultural property evaluation, are largely missing in Africa. Few countries have appropriately trained staff to carry out the assessment of cultural property impacts.

### **Colonial legislation**

Cultural heritage legislation in Francophone Africa is largely based on a 1956 French law which applied to French overseas territories. It provides for classification of monuments and sites as well as moveable property of cultural significance, and for government licensing of all excavation activities. Although no general statute was applicable throughout the British colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, most of these states reached independence with cultural heritage laws in effect. These laws generally conformed to a standard pattern of protecting all objects made before a certain date. Although finds are to be reported and excavations are subject to permission, there is generally no provision for the authorities to undertake or take over excavations themselves as there is in most French-based legislation.

### **Present policy and related issues**

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa tend to be mainly concerned with cultural artifacts, and often to a lesser degree with site protection. An important element in national policy on cultural heritage is the gazetting of cultural property. Making gazetting an explicit legal requirement helps assure the protection of sites, whether in private or public ownership. A major problem for Africa today is finding the resources to enforce current legislation in the face of strong international demand for African art. Social and economic incentives to curb illicit traffic in antiquities are often lacking. Another problem is the unregulated expansion of urban and agricultural activities. Many gazetted sites are built over or farmed. Historic stone buildings are demolished to provide building materials. Only as awareness grows of the value of cultural heritage to the society at large will protection and preservation become feasible.

Although most countries have laws to protect cultural property, these laws cannot be effective unless there is political will or public pressure to enforce them. As in other parts of the world, there may be a conflict between local and state attitudes toward cultural conservation. Changes in current practices, for example, by creating "museums" that are responsive to local community aspirations, are needed to bridge the gap between local interests and national policy.

Within each country, responsibility for cultural heritage may rest in one of a variety of ministries that may combine culture, education information, tourism, natural protection, youth, sports, and museums. In some countries, there is no specific agency assigned to protect cultural heritage. National institutions in most cases do not have the necessary financial and human resources to protect cultural property. The institution charged with the protection of cultural heritage is often one of the weakest governmental agencies. In Africa, it is often the museums that have taken the lead in instituting conservation programs and raising awareness of the need to protect the continent's cultural heritage. The National Museum of Kenya provides a good example of how a museum can provide leadership in this area.

In many countries, records on cultural heritage are difficult to locate as they are filed away in dusty museum storage areas. Rarely are they used by other line agencies in their project planning. A comprehensive inventory of cultural heritage is perhaps the most essential tool in conservation. Maps are essential in any cultural heritage information system. But many countries have poor or outdated maps and Departments of Culture rarely have the funds to obtain complete sets and to store them properly. An important contribution to improved conservation would be to assist in improving gazetting, inventory techniques, and accessibility of data.

Universities play a decisive role in many African countries in disseminating, training, and carrying out research on cultural heritage. Archaeological training is available in Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the Republic of South Africa. Countries where university courses were established thirty to forty years ago now have a cadre of trained specialists. Other countries are only now developing local experts (Mali, Madagascar, and many others). In some countries there are still no local experts in archaeology, museum work, and architectural conservation. International training programs help create cadres of museum conservators and archaeologists apart from establishing links between museums in industrial and developing countries.

## **The project cycle**

In planning development projects, potential cultural property issues should be taken into account at each stage in the project cycle. In the earliest stages of project design, background research should be carried out to determine whether there are cultural heritage issues to be addressed. Cultural heritage institutions in the country should be contacted at this stage to inform them of the project and to identify any concerns they may have. Particular attention should be given to UNESCO World Heritage sites. In cases where cultural property is likely to be affected, a cultural property specialist should take part in the appraisal mission. The concerned government and the Bank need to agree on an action program for cultural heritage conservation. The implementation of this action program should be supervised by an expert and the project should make provision for the possibility of "chance finds" -- the unanticipated discovery of material remains of archaeological or historical significance.

By taking cultural issues into account from the beginning, Bank-financed projects can help African

countries build capacity to manage cultural property in a sustainable manner and strengthen the base of local knowledge on cultural heritage issues

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June Taboroff and Cynthia C. Cook. 1993. **Cultural Property and Environmental Assessments in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Handbook**. Environmental Assessment Working Paper No. 4. Technical Department, Africa Region. Washington, D.C.: World Bank

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