Red List of West African Cultural Objects at Risk

Emergency

Mali

Red List
Liste Rouge

ICOM

International Council of Museums
Why a Red List?

Throughout history, West Africa has suffered extensive losses of its cultural heritage. ICOM, thanks to the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Home Affairs, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the U.S. Department of State, is publishing the Red List of West African Cultural Objects at Risk. Even though they are protected by national legislation and international agreements, the types of objects on this List are at risk of being traded in the illicit art and antiquities market.

The fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods requires the enhancement – and the enforcement – of legal instruments as well as the use of practical tools.

The purpose of the West African Red List, drafted in close cooperation with a team of national and international experts, is to ensure the right of future generations to this heritage.

Protecting cultural heritage

Museums, auction houses, art dealers and collectors are urged not to acquire objects similar to those presented on the List without having carefully and thoroughly researched their origin and all the relevant legal documentation. Any cultural artefact that could have originated from this region should be subjected to detailed scrutiny and precautionary measures before any transaction is conducted.

We wish to remind everyone that ICOM does not provide certificates of origin or authenticity. Only national government authorities are authorised to issue any type of document related to the export and import of cultural goods.

If you suspect a cultural object from West Africa has been stolen, looted or illegally exported, please contact:

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E-mail: illicit-traffic@icom.museum

IMPORTANT NOTE

A Red List is NOT a list of actual stolen objects.

The cultural goods depicted are inventoried objects within the collections of recognised institutions. They serve to illustrate the categories of cultural goods most vulnerable to illicit traffic.

ICOM wishes to thank all of the institutions and individuals who provided the photographs presented in this Red List.
Main regulations and agreements protecting West African cultural heritage (non-exhaustive list)

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

The Hague Convention of 14 May 1954
for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.
Ratification: Côte d’Ivoire (1980)
First Protocol (14 May 1954)
Second Protocol (26 March 1999)

UNESCO Convention of 14 November 1970
on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

UNESCO Convention of 16 November 1972
concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

UNIDROIT Convention of 24 June 1995
on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.

UNESCO Convention of 2 November 2001
on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

NATIONAL REGULATIONS

BENIN

Decree No. 35/PR/MENJS concerning the protection of cultural property (1 June 1968).


Law No. 2007-20 concerning the protection of cultural heritage and natural heritage of a cultural character in the Republic of Benin (17 August 2007).

BURKINA Faso


CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Law No. 87-806 concerning the protection of the cultural heritage (28 July 1987).


GUINEA-BISSAU

Article 17, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of 16 May 1984.

MALI


Decree No. 275/PG-RM regulating archaeological excavations (4 November 1985).

Law No. 86-61/AN-RM concerning dealers in cultural goods (26 July 1986).

Decree No. 299/PG-RM regulating the prospecting, marketing and export of cultural properties (19 September 1986).


Interministerial Order No. 94-7968/MCC-MAT to regulate the profession of dealers in cultural property, prospecting, marketing and export of cultural property (18 July 1994).

Order No. 96-1591/MCC-SG to repeal and replace Order No. 0003/MSAC-DNAC of 12 January 1989 to set up and define the operating procedures of regional and local Cultural Heritage Protection Commissions (14 October 1996).

Law No. 10-061 amending Law No. 85-40/AN-RM of 26 July 1985 relating to the protection and promotion of the national cultural heritage (30 December 2010).

NIGER

Law No. 97-002 relating to the protection, preservation and enhancement of national cultural heritage (30 June 1997) and Decree No. 97-407/PRN/MCC/MESRT/IA establishing the procedures for its implementation (10 November 1997).


NIGERIA

Decree No. 77 on the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (28 September 1979).

Article 60b of the Constitution of 29 May 1999.

SENEGAL

Law No. 71-12 governing the management of historic monuments and of excavations and discoveries (25 January 1971).

Decree No. 73-746 for the application of Law No. 71-12 of 25 January 1971 governing the management of historic monuments and of excavations and discoveries (8 August 1973).

TOGO

Law No. 90-24 on the protection of national cultural heritage (23 November 1990).


Decree No. 2010-173/PR on the National Commission for Cultural Heritage (15 December 2010).

BILATERAL AGREEMENT

Writing

Steles (12th – 18th c. AD): Stone plaques (marble, sandstone) with Arabic writing. [1]

Manuscripts (13th – 17th c. AD): Parchment, paper. From Timbuktu, Djenné, Gao, Kayes and Ségou. Mostly written in Arabic. Individual pages or entire books, sometimes leather-bound, with or without illuminations. [2–3]

Sculptures

Terracotta statues and statuettes. Tellem/Pre-Dogon or Niger River Valley civilisations.

11th – 15th c. AD: Geometrically-shaped; elongated body; square shoulders; pointed breasts; sculpted and/or incised stomach; long, slender, parallel arms and legs. Height: 30-50 cm. [4–5]

12th – 16th c. AD: Anthropomorphic, may have almond-shaped eyes, incised eyelashes, eyelids with concentric engravings, elongated nose and neck. Figurines with long, slender bodies, either seated or standing. Bodies may be smooth or covered in round pastilles or snake motifs. Measurements: 10-60 x 10-40 cm. [6–7–8]

Miscellaneous objects

Jewellery (8th – 17th c. AD): Metal (copper, brass, bronze, iron, silver), copal, coral, stones (granite, quartz), shells, glass. Sculpted and/or braided. Rounded or oval pearls, in various colours, often pierced and sometimes shell-shaped or decorated with human, floral or geometric motifs. [9]
Tellem bed legs and headrests (10th – 14th c. AD): Terracotta, wood. Small columns with a concave neck. Concave platforms, either rectangular or square. Often decorated with incisions, crosshatching and/or parallel bands. Measurements: 10 x 20 cm. [10–11]

10. Terracotta bed legs, Zone Lacustre, 10th – 12th c. AD, 34.5 x 25 cm.
© Musée national du Mali

11. Wooden Tellem headrest, Sangha caves (Dogon Country), 11th – 14th c. AD, 10.5 x 19.5 cm.
© Musée national du Mali

Vessels and containers


12. Terracotta bottle, Inner Niger Delta, 8th – 13th c. AD, 34 cm.
© Musée national du Mali

13. Carinated cup, Mema region, 9th – 14th c. AD.
© Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

14. Terracotta vase with zoomorphic motif (snake), Natamatao (Thial - Inner Niger Delta), ca. 12th – 14th c. AD, 35 cm.
© Musée national du Mali

15. Terracotta globular vase with anthropomorphic head, Banamba-Koulikoro, 46 cm. © Musée national du Mali

16. Terracotta vessel, Diorom Boumak, AD 300 – 1500, 20.5 x 0.9 x Ø 28.5 cm.
© Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

17. Terracotta funerary vessel with a human figure, Bura culture, Niger, ca. 4th – 13th c. AD, 57.15 x 23.5 x 17.78 cm. © Yale University Art Gallery, USA

18. Terracotta bowl decorated with concentric circles and parallel lines, Calabar (Cross River State), 6th – 7th c. AD, Ø 33.5 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments / Old Residency Museum, Nigeria

19. Terracotta chalice, Sinthiou Bara, 9th – 12th c. AD, 11.5 x 0.9 x Ø 8 cm.
© Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

20. Terracotta funerary vase with ringed neck, belly and a hole in the base, Ebiè people, 17th c. AD, 32 x 16 cm.
© Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire / Alecian Frédéric Djamal

21. Human-shaped terracotta funerary vase with arm-shaped handles and a hole in the base, Akyé people, 17th c. AD, 33.5 x 20 cm.
© Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire / Alecian Frédéric Djamal
Sculpted objects  

Terracotta, clay, stone, metal. Monoliths, plaques, statues and statuettes. Standing or seated figures. Possible traces of patina or paint. Round or oval heads, often large compared to the rest of the body. Prominent eyebrows. Well-defined, sometimes open, mouths. Large ears. Ringed necks. Bearded men. Women with smooth or sculpted hair, with chignons or braids. Arms extended alongside the body, bent or folded across the chest. Drooping breasts. Scarified body. Prominent navel. May be wearing jewellery or accessories, sometimes sculpted on the material itself. [22–23–24–25–26–27–28–29–30–31]

22. Terracotta human head, Nok culture, Nigeria, ca. 900 – 300 BC, 21 x 16.5 x 14.6 cm. © Yale University Art Gallery, USA

23. Terracotta male figure (fragment), Sokoto culture, Nigeria, 500 BC – 200 AD, 46.4 x 30.5 x 20.3 cm. © Yale University Art Gallery, USA

24. Terracotta Owo oba (king) figure (fragment), Igbolaja (Ondo State), 15th c. AD, H 25 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

25. Clay M’ma statuette covered with plant tar representing a figure with raised arms and elongated eyes, Agni and Akan peoples, 17th c. AD, 35.5 x 19 x 19.5 cm. © Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire / Alecian Frédéric Djamel

26. Stone Akwanashi (monoliths), Bakor people, Ikom (Cross River region), AD 200, H 113 and H 174 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria

27. Laterite Taha (sculpted head) with flat top, nose and mouth sculpted in relief, Gohitafla, pre-17th c. AD, 26.5 x Ø 19 cm. © Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire / Alecian Frédéric Djamel

28. Soapstone Esie statue of a seated human figure, Igbomina (Kwara State), 19th c. AD, H 75.5 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria


30. Brass plaque depicting an oba (king) with attendants, Edo people, Kingdom of Benin - Nigeria, 16th c. AD, 43.5 x 41 x 10.7 cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum, UK

31. Brass commemoractive head of an oba (king), 18th – 19th c. AD, H 40.5 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria
**Miscellaneous objects**

**Jewellery and ornaments:** Metal (copper, bronze, silver, gold, alloys) or ivory. Bracelets and anklets, necklaces and goldweights. Helmets and hair ornaments. May be human-shaped or bear geometric motifs. [32–33–34–35–36–37]

32. Iron bracelet, Bura culture, Niger River Valley (Niger), 3rd – 11th c. AD, Ø 9.53 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA

33. Copper alloy torque (necklace), Bura culture, Niger River Valley (Niger), 3rd – 11th c. AD, Ø 18.73 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA

34. Bronze human pendant head, Igbo Isaiah (Igbo-Ukwu, Nigeria), 9th – 10th c. AD, 7.6 x 4.10 x 5.5 cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum, UK

**Weapons and tools:** Terracotta, wood, bone, stone, iron. Neolithic hunting and fishing tools and axe heads (polished stone). Arrowheads, possibly serrated. Metal daggers. Braiding discs, may be decorated with geometric incisions. Triangular wooden pulleys, topped by a head or sculpted scene. [38–39–40–41]

38. Bone axe, Khant Neolithic site (St. Louis), 5000 – 3000 BC, 8.1 x 3.7 x 2 cm. © Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

39. Bone harpoon and fishhook, Khant Neolithic site (St. Louis), 5000 – 3000 BC, harpoon: approx. 10 x 1.5 cm; fishhook: 5 x 3 x 0.8 cm. © Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

40. Terracotta braiding disc, Aroundou (Tambacounda), 10th – 11th c. AD, 2.4 x Ø 8.6 cm. © Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

41. Iron Eben (ceremonial sword), Edo people, Kingdom of Benin - Nigeria, 19th – mid-20th c. AD, 96.52 x 17.78 x 20.32 cm. © Yale University Art Gallery, USA

**Miscellaneous items:** Terracotta, wood, metal. Copper bells, may be decorated with motifs. Pillars, doors and other pieces of traditional furniture. Carved or moulded pipes and other terracotta objects. [42–43–44]

42. Cupreous metal bell, Sinthiou Bara, 9th – 12th c. AD, 6.3 x 0.8 x Ø 5.4 cm. © Laboratoire de Préhistoire-Protohistoire de l’IFAN/UCAD, Senegal

43. Wooden agba (ceremonial stool) for an oba (king) with metal tacks, Edo people, Kingdom of Benin - Nigeria, 19th c. AD, 36.8 x 63.5 x 34.3 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA

44. Traditional wooden door, village of Barsologo (Moaga), mid-19th c. AD, 124 x 83.5 cm. © Musée National du Burkina Faso
The International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946 to represent museums and museum professionals worldwide, is committed to the promotion and protection of natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. With a unique network of over 36,000 members in 138 countries, ICOM is active in a wide range of museum- and heritage-related disciplines.

ICOM maintains formal relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and has a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as an expert in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods. ICOM also works in collaboration with organisations such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to carry out some of its international public service missions.

The protection of heritage in the event of natural disaster or armed conflict is also at the core of ICOM’s work, carried out by its Disaster Risk Management Committee (DRMC) and through its strong involvement in the International Committee of the Blue Shield. ICOM has the ability to mobilise expert networks in the field of cultural heritage from all over the world thanks to its numerous programmes.

In 2013, ICOM created the first International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods in order to reinforce its action in fighting illicit traffic.

The Red Lists have been designed as practical tools to fight the illegal trade in cultural objects. ICOM is grateful for the unwavering commitment of the experts and institutions who generously contribute to the success of the Red Lists.

The Red Lists can be consulted at the following address: http://redlist.icom.museum

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