Main regulations and agreements protecting West African cultural heritage (non-exhaustive list)

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

Ratification: Côte d'Ivoire (1980)

First Protocol (14 May 1954)

Second Protocol (26 March 1999)


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.


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).

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

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:

International Council of Museums (ICOM)
22, rue de Palestro - 75002 Paris - France
Tel.: +33 1 47 34 05 00 - Fax: +33 1 43 06 78 62
E-mail: illicit-traffic@icom.museum

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.
**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]

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**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]

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**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-Koulakoro, 46 cm. © Musée national du Mali

BENIN - BURKINA FASO - CÔTE D’IVOIRE - GUINEA BISSAU - NIGER - NIGERIA - SENEGAL - TOGO

Vessels and containers

Terracotta. Human- or animal-shaped vases; oval-shaped body and decorations resembling a pregnant woman, with elongated necks and/or topped by a statuette or head. Phallic-shaped funerary urns. Vessels decorated with geometric incisions. Measurements: 10-80 x Ø 10-60 cm. [16–17–18–19–20–21]

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, Ebrié people, 17th c. AD, 32 x 16 cm. © Musée des Civilisations de Côte d’Ivoire / Alecian Frédéric Djamel
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 Djamel
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 W’m’a 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 commemorative head of an oba (king), 18th – 19th c. AD, H 40.5 cm. © National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria
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]

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]

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]
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 40,000 members in 138 countries and territories (2018), 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

For the "Mali Emergency" section:

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, D.C.