

# ICOMOS

## **The International Day for Monuments and Sites Theme for 2010 – “The Heritage of Agriculture” Celebrate the world’s heritage on 18 April 2010!**

A contribution to the United Nations 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

### **About the day**

On the proposal of ICOMOS, 18 April was endorsed as *The International Day for Monuments and Sites* by UNESCO in 1983. This special day offers an opportunity to raise public awareness concerning the diversity of the world’s heritage and the efforts that are required to protect and conserve it, as well as to draw attention to its vulnerability. For several years now, ICOMOS suggests a topic to be highlighted on this occasion. This has allowed our members and our committees to hold activities, conferences, colloquia or other events to raise awareness on this cultural heritage among the public, the owners or the public authorities by linking a global theme to local or national realities.

We thank you in advance for all your initiatives and ask you to inform the ICOMOS Secretariat, as early as possible, of the activities you plan to undertake for 18 April, but also to share their results with us (programme, participation, publications). This will help us to disseminate information and to gather conclusions on all your activities, so as to be able to testify of the vitality of ICOMOS’ network.

For further information on the Day, previous themes, support material and the calendar of activities foreseen in 2010 – consult <http://www.international.icomos.org/18thapril/index.html>. We will post information as it comes in.

### **About the theme**

In the last two decades, the international NGO’s and public administrations in charge of heritage protection have begun to define and characterize the heritage of agriculture as well as to establish the criteria and tools that should guide the assessment of its values, protection and management. Accordingly, ICOMOS, UNESCO and other international organizations have included these objectives in their ongoing research and projects. It is therefore pertinent to evaluate how heritage properties linked to agricultural and livestock rearing practices are taken into account in current heritage practice by examining significant international experiences in this field, such as the listing of such properties in UNESCO’S World Heritage List and in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as well as the Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems Programme (GIAHS), led by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) with other partners such as UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNESCO and its World Heritage Centre, ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), IUCN (The World Conservation Union) and CGIAR (the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research).

### **The protection of the heritage of agriculture: a legitimate social and scientific demand**

These international efforts to implement and assess the values of the heritage of agriculture undoubtedly arise from a legitimate social and scientific demand: the need to protect all

significant natural and cultural heritage properties generated by agrarian activity in the course of history (country houses, orchards, mills, terraces, crops, irrigation channels, wells, farmyards, traditional festivities, gastronomy, indigenous species, landscapes...). However, the establishment of criteria to guide the identification and formal recognition of the heritage of agriculture, in all its meanings and manifestations, is a relatively recent and pressing subject of study. In contrast to what has been achieved for other heritage categories, such as industrial or vernacular heritage, the latter being in fact frequently part of the agricultural heritage, the absence of a particular and appropriate recognition of agricultural heritage, as a multidimensional heritage which embraces different types of tangible and intangible, cultural and natural properties, has led to its underestimation and a lack of consideration.

This lack of consideration strongly contrasts with the objective importance of agricultural heritage for humanity – its subsistence value, its contribution to sustainable development and to the respect for the landscape, its role in the quality of life and the preservation of cultural and biological diversity, etc.-, and the relevance of the values and types of properties associated with it. This relevance is particularly exemplified by the profound integration of these natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) properties within their territory, as well as in the close links between agricultural heritage, cultural landscapes and other heritage types, such as cultural routes and heritage canals, that have already been studied by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees and special working groups.

It is also important to note that the protection of agricultural heritage reflects the development and broadening of the concept of heritage itself, given that its recognition implies:

- the inclusion within the heritage concept of landscapes, artefacts and the traces of the “material cultures” which bear witness to the daily routines, the concerns of the working and middle classes and the efforts of men and women in the context of their work and subsistence, and not only those values traditionally linked to the historic, aesthetic and artistic appreciations of the dominant culture;
- the identification and protection of intangible, living, continuous and contemporary aspects of heritage;
- the fusion of different types of heritage values, such as cultural and natural, tangible and intangible, a constant trend in the development of heritage management and theory worldwide;
- taking into account the spatial dimension of natural and cultural properties and their definitive integration within their territorial, cultural, social and economic scale, which has led to a substantial improvement in heritage theory, protection, management, interpretation and dissemination.

### **The international approach to the heritage of agriculture**

The recognition and protection of agricultural heritage at the international level has principally occurred within the framework of UNESCO and ICOMOS and in two different directions:

- the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List of agricultural landscapes and mixed cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value;
- the inclusion of agricultural activity itself, and the skills and traditions related to it, within the intangible heritage concept and the instruments developed for its protection and universal appreciation, that is to say the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Heritage and the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The background and origin of both these forms of recognition lie not only in the World Heritage Convention and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, but, even before, in the Italian theory of cultural properties (*Teoria dei beni culturali e ambientali*) and its definition of cultural, environmental and landscape properties, which assumed, as stated in the sixties by the *Commissione Franceschini*, and later by Giannini, that certain territorial features, such as agrarian crops, related infrastructures and buildings, etc., were valuable not only as evidence of civilization (“*testimonio materiale avente valore di civiltà*”), but also because of the immaterial entity they represent and their particular way of shaping and conserving the landscape.

### **a. Agricultural landscapes and mixed sites on the World Heritage List**

The inclusion of agricultural properties in the World Heritage List, mainly under the categories of cultural landscapes and mixed sites, results from four essential orientations in international doctrine:

- the trend of linking cultural and natural properties in relation to the World Heritage concept and through their characterization in wider contexts than those strictly associated with the properties and their buffer zones;
- the relevance of research, programmes and strategies conducted by ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee in the context of the *Global Strategy for a credible, representative and balanced World Heritage List*, in particular the ICOMOS Action Plan and survey *The World Heritage List. Filling the Gaps - an Action Plan for the Future*, and its proposal to identify new categories of World Cultural Heritage, including the properties related to agricultural activity and its landscapes;
- the awareness that all landscapes, even those considered almost unspoiled or pristine, have been to some degree changed by human presence and activity;
- the importance attached to the need for harmonious coexistence with the natural environment, deeply linked to current concepts of sustainable development and cultural and natural diversity. Agricultural landscapes, where such values are still alive, therefore represent a link between the past, the present and the future, and particularly reflect ongoing trends in the development of heritage theory. As stated in Annex 3 (paragraph 9) of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*: "Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. Protection of cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain or enhance natural values in the landscape. The continued existence of traditional forms of land-use supports biological diversity in many regions of the world. The protection of traditional cultural landscapes is therefore helpful in maintaining biological diversity".

Agricultural landscapes particularly correspond to Category ii under cultural landscapes, as defined in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, and referred to as an *organically evolved landscape*: "This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. They fall into two sub-categories:

- a relict (or fossil) landscape is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form.
- a continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time."

With regards to their representation on the World Heritage List, it must be noted that approximately 21 landscapes, mainly from the European continent, have already been inscribed because of their outstanding universal value related to agricultural activities. The first landscape of this type, the spectacular Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, was inscribed in 1995, and, as Henry Cleere has noted, "established an important precedent by identifying the significance of landscapes that evolved in the production of significant staple and economic crops", namely tobacco (Viñales Valley, Cuba), coffee (Archaeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations in the South-East of Cuba), agave (Agave Landscape and Ancient Industrial Facilities of Tequila, Mexico), etc.

In this sense, it is also important to note that, despite the numerous regional and expert meetings organized by ICOMOS, IUCN and the World Heritage Centre over the past twenty years to stress the importance of the traditional landscapes of staple crops in heritage terms, the only other agricultural landscapes to have been inscribed on the List in recent years are

connected wholly or partly to wine production. This is not surprising taking into account that vineyard landscapes are of high scenic and historic value and that they provide significant economic benefits to their communities. Nevertheless, the identification of other agricultural landscapes of outstanding universal value that could be promoted and protected at national or international level should be encouraged.

Most of the agricultural landscapes inscribed on the World Heritage List are continuing landscapes (even though there are also examples of relict or fossil landscapes of outstanding universal value). Based on the criteria for their inscription related to agricultural activity, they could be divided as follows:

- Vineyard landscapes – these have received the most international recognition, as shown by their presence on the World Heritage List and the numerous publications and meetings devoted to them. Up to eight landscapes have been listed, among which the Wachau Cultural Landscape (Austria), the Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape (Hungary), the Upper Middle Rhine Valley (Germany), the Jurisdiction of Saint-Emilion (France) or the Alto Douro Wine Region (Portugal).
- Landscapes related to staple and/or economic crops such as rice, wheat, maize, millet, coffee, tobacco, etc (most are mentioned above).
- Landscapes related to nomadic, pastoral and transhumant societies, among which the outstanding examples of the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape (Mongolia) or the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley (Andorra).
- Fossil landscapes that have conserved historical remains of the use of ancient agriculture and livestock techniques in exceptional conditions, such as the Lopé Okanda Ecosystem and Relict Cultural Landscape (Gabon).
- Landscapes where agricultural activity has produced particularly beautiful scenery, their aesthetic values, rather than the agrarian activity itself, motivating their inscription, as in the Val d'Orcia and Costiera Amalfitana Cultural Landscapes (Italy).
- Agricultural landscapes whose outstanding universal value is mainly related to the vernacular infrastructures and buildings of the agrarian activity, such as the Mill Network at Kinderdijk-Elshout Cultural Landscape (Netherlands).
- Agricultural landscapes significant for conserving all or part of the above mentioned values and features, characteristic for landscapes related to nomadism and transhumance (Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape in South Africa, Laponian Area in Sweden, etc.), and which bear witness not only to the presence of these practices for over 2.000 years, but also to their continuity in the present. This is also the case of the mixed site of Mont Perdu (France-Spain) and the Kuk Early Agricultural Site (Papua New Guinea), which, as its nomination file states, "is one of the few places in the world where archaeological evidence suggests independent agricultural development and changes in agricultural practice over 7.000, and possibly for 10.000 years".

## **b. The agricultural heritage in the Lists of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

The intangible dimension of agricultural heritage is easily visible in two essential, and usually strongly linked, aspects:

- expressions of intangible heritage, such as traditions, rites, ceremonies, skills, craftsmanship, etc., related to agricultural activities whose transmission depends on the continuity of their practice in their original context.
- the intangible meaning present in all agricultural heritage properties, and especially in their landscapes. The transcendence of this meaning or value has only very recently been stressed, considering its fundamental importance not only for the conservation of the authenticity and integrity of this heritage, but also in order to protect cultural identity and diversity.

According to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the intangible cultural heritage is manifested, among other, in domains such as social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship, which of course encompass activities linked to the agricultural heritage and its intangible dimension.

Both the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity contain properties related to agricultural heritage which usually fit under the category of Rituals and Festive events, on the one hand, and under Skills, knowledge and traditional craftsmanship concerning nature and the universe, on the other. A few examples of these are:

**Festive events and agricultural rituals:**

- Akiu no Taue Odori (Japan, inscribed in 2009): in which residents of the town of Akiu in northern Japan pray for a good harvest by simulating in dance the actions involved in transplanting rice. Performed since the end of the seventeenth century in communities throughout the region, the Akiu no Taue Odori today takes place during festivals in the spring or autumn.
- Oku-noto no Aenokoto (Japan, inscribed in 2009): is an agricultural ritual transmitted from generation to generation by the rice farmers of the Noto Peninsula. The twice-yearly ceremony is unique among the harvest rituals of Asia in that the master of the house invites the deity of the rice field into his home, behaving as though the invisible spirit were really present. In December, to express gratitude for the harvest, the farmer draws a bath and begins to prepare a meal, summoning the deity from the field with the sound of pounding rice cakes.
- Ganggangsullae (Republic of Korea, inscribed in 2009): is a seasonal harvest and fertility ritual popular in the south-western part of the Republic of Korea, performed primarily on Korea's Thanksgiving in the eighth lunar month. During interludes, the women playfully mime vignettes reflecting life in a farm or fishing village, including treading on roof tiles, unrolling a mat, catching a mouse or tying herrings.
- Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut (Republic of Korea, inscribed in 2009): is a ritual held in the second lunar month to pray for calm seas, an abundant harvest and a plentiful sea catch. The rites held at Chilmeoridang in the village of Gun-rip are representative of similar ceremonies held throughout the Korean island of Jeju. The Yeondeung Farewell Rite, two weeks later, includes offerings of drinks and rice cakes, a ceremony to welcome the Dragon King, fortune telling with millet seeds, and the launching of a straw boat into the sea by the village's senior men.
- Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao (Philippines, Inscribed in 2008, originally proclaimed in 2001): consists of narrative chants traditionally performed by the Ifugao community, which is well known for its rice terraces extending over the highlands of the northern island of the Philippine archipelago. It is practised during the rice sowing season, at harvest time and at funeral wakes and rituals, and comprises more than 200 chants, each divided into 40 episodes.

**Skills, knowledge and traditional craftsmanship concerning nature and the universe:**

- Ox herding and Oxcart Traditions in Costa Rica (inscribed in 2008 and originally proclaimed in 2005): dating from the mid-nineteenth century, oxcarts were used to transport coffee beans from Costa Rica's central valley over the mountains to Puntarenas on the Pacific coast in a journey requiring ten to fifteen days. Originally, each region of Costa Rica had its own particular design, enabling the identification of the driver's origin by the painted patterns on the wheels.
- Sericulture and silk craftsmanship of China (inscribed in 2009): based in Zhejiang and Jiangsu Provinces, near Shanghai and Chengdu in Sichuan Province, it has an ancient history and an important role for women in the economy of rural regions. Silk-making encompasses planting mulberry, raising silkworms, unreeling silk, making thread, and designing and weaving fabric. The life cycle of the silkworm was seen as representing the life, death and rebirth of human beings.

- Traditions and practices associated to the Kayas in the sacred forests of the Mijikenda (Kenya, inscribed in 2009 on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding). Encompass oral traditions and performing arts related to the sacred forests, which are also sources of valuable medicinal plants whose use is regulated by traditional knowledge and have contributed to the conservation of the biodiversity.
- Irrigators' tribunals of the Spanish Mediterranean coast: the Council of Wise Men of the plain of Murcia and the Water Tribunal of the plain of Valencia (inscribed in 2009): both are traditional law courts for water management that date back to the al-Andalus period (ninth to thirteenth centuries) and are still nowadays recognized under Spanish law. In addition to their legal role, the irrigators' tribunals play a key part in the communities of which they are a visible symbol, as apparent from the rites performed when judgments are handed down and the fact that the tribunals often feature in local iconography.

Finally, the Register of safeguarding programmes, projects and activities (Article 18 of the Convention) also includes the following programmes and action plans concerning intangible expressions of agricultural heritage: The Programme for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Aymara Communities in Bolivia, Chile and Peru, The Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Traditional Medicine Kallawayá in Bolivia, and the Project for the Safeguarding of Oxherding and Oxcart Traditions in Costa Rica.

### **Emerging trends and challenges**

Besides these initiatives, and in order to achieve a comprehensive recognition and characterization of the heritage of agriculture, it would also be important to expand research on an innovative principle within this heritage field: the study of agrarian activity, in its condition of human activity inserted in history, as the most important defining and shaping element of the agricultural heritage.

This approach will allow specialists and actors involved to overcome the current fragmentary approximations with regards to heritage properties linked to agricultural and livestock rearing practices: as rural heritage (which implies an inappropriate confrontation with the urban environment, where the presence of the agrarian is also important); as ethnological heritage (which excludes or minimizes the indispensable productive continuity of agrarian activities in the present); as industrial heritage (where the agrarian aspect appears as a mere supplier of the industrial activity, the latter frequently being considered to be at a higher stage than the agrarian activity in the context of humanity's socio-economic development); as vernacular heritage (whose frequent focus on landscape and architectural properties of agricultural heritage calls for a deeper study of other dimensions, such as intangible aspects), etc. In this sense, it is especially important to overcome the present gap between the cultural and natural, or biological, dimensions of agriculture, given that, in order to properly protect the heritage dimension of agricultural activity, we must incorporate all the aspects that, as a whole, enable and enrich it with values and authenticity.

In conclusion, the study of the heritage of agriculture as a multidimensional, emerging, living and productive heritage represents an important and emerging scientific challenge, where disciplines from different fields of knowledge should be brought together in order to offer society a set of criteria and tools that enable the preservation of cultural heritage resources indispensable to human development, and our own subsistence, and which for this particular reason represent a truly universal world heritage.

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### **ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage**

CIAV, the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee of Vernacular Architecture works on matters that pertain to all aspects of the management of rural areas, village settlements and vernacular architecture – see <http://ciav.icomos.org>.

It developed the **ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage** ratified by the 12th ICOMOS General Assembly, in Mexico, October 1999.  
[http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/vernacular\\_e.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/vernacular_e.htm)

### **Interesting Links:**

- UNESCO World Heritage List - <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>
- UNESCO Intangible Heritage Lists -  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00011>
- FAO, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) -  
<http://www.fao.org/nr/giahs/en/>
- CGIAR (the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research).  
<http://www.cgiar.org>

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*Expert Meeting on Desert Landscapes and Oasis Systems* (UNESCO, Oasis Kharga, Egypt, 2001).

*World Heritage Thematic Expert Meeting on Vineyard Cultural Landscapes* (UNESCO, Tokaj, Hungary, 11-14 July 2001).

*Committee on the Preservation, Development and Utilization of Cultural Landscapes Associated with Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*; (Monuments and Site Division, Cultural Properties Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs Japan/UNESCO, 2003).

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They all can be consulted in [www.whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/](http://www.whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/) and [www.icomos.org](http://www.icomos.org)

### **Other conferences and meetings**

1ª Conferencia Internacional sobre Agroalimentación. TICCIH (Reims, Francia, Mayo de 2007).

II Encuentro Internacional de Patrimonio Industrial Agroalimentario. TICCIH (Córdoba, Argentina, 4-7 de noviembre de 2009).

X Jornadas Internacionales de INCUNA sobre *Patrimonio Industrial Agroalimentario* "Testimonios cotidianos del diálogo intercultural" (TICCIH/INCUNA Gijón, España, 1-4 de octubre de 2008).

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