
Barotse Cultural Landscape (Zambia) No 1429

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Barotse Cultural Landscape

Location

Western Province
Zambia

Brief description

The gently undulating floodplain of the Zambezi River has been shaped by the Lozi people over the past 400 years, through the building of mounds for houses, palaces and Royal graves, and as the result of an agro-pastoral system, based on the annual movement of people and animals to higher ground in advance of the rising floodwaters.

The nominated property consists of the heartland of this system. There are two capitals, Lealui and Limulunga, between which the Litunga ceremonially moves at the head of his people at the beginning and end of the wet season. The graves of twenty-one previous Litungas are important centres of religious and ritual practices that reflect a communal response to both the norms of society and the forces of nature. Around the mounds in the floodplain are fields, cultivated with traditional as well as more recently introduced crops, and a network of canals many built between 1780 and 1916 to improve transportation, water control and water supply. Most of the dry season villages are around the edge of the nominated area.

The higher pasturelands where animals are grazed are not included in the property nor are the wet season settlements.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (July 2013) paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

10 March 2009

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

25 January 2013

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committees on Cultural Landscapes and on Intangible Cultural Heritage and several independent experts.

Comments about the evaluation of this landscape were received from IUCN in December 2013. ICOMOS carefully examined this information to arrive at its final decision and its March 2014 recommendation; IUCN also revised the presentation of its comments in accordance with the version included in this ICOMOS report.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 15 to 22 October 2013.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party

ICOMOS on 30 September 2013 requested additional information on various aspects of the property including boundaries, agriculture, palaces and road construction. The State Party responded on 1 November 2013 and details from this response are included in this report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

6 March 2014

2 The property

Description

The 2,574 km Zambezi river, the fourth longest in Africa, rises in the north of Zambia, then traverses eastern Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, from which it empties its waters into the Indian Ocean.

The Barotse Cultural Landscape lies either side of the river during the early stages of its journey in the west of Zambia. Up-river of the Victoria Falls, the flood plain stretches for some 120 miles and is 25 miles across at its widest.

The boundaries of the property encompass about 20% of this low lying flood plain which is crisscrossed with smaller rivers and canals and interspersed with *dambos* (shallow wetlands), lakes and pools. To the eastern side of the flood plains are dry forests and to the west *miombo* woodlands.

Historically, Barotseland was larger than the currently proposed property. Much of the hinterland is located in the proposed buffer zone.

The flood plain is intensively cultivated. Above the fields rise man-made low mounds on which are constructed houses, palaces and royal graves.

During the wet season between January and June the river floods the plains and whole communities move with their animals and belongings to settlements on higher ground. The receding floodwater deposits silt provides essential fertiliser for the fields.

To the north of the property in that part of the buffer zone that covers the Liuwa National Park, the flood plain is grazed by large herds of migrating wildebeest and other wild animals. This was formerly a royal hunting ground for the Lozi rulers.

The property extends to 7,966 sq kilometers and has a buffer zone of 59,168 sq kilometers, which includes to the north of the property the Liuwa National Park.

About 10,000 people with some 10,400 cattle live in 108 villages along the eastern and western boundaries. ICOMOS notes that there is a lack of clarity as to which are in the property but it certainly includes at least part of two towns of considerable size, Mongu and Senanga.

Although the property is nominated as a living, evolving cultural landscape, not all aspects of the integrated cultural landscape are described in the nomination dossier. More emphasis is given to site specific Royal palaces, graves and sacred sites than to the on-going traditional economic and social interactions between the wider communities and their environment over time. Little information is provided on the dynamic organization of families, clans and larger community groups, nor how they collaborate and have collaborated over time to farm and graze the landscape in a persistent way. As a result the living cultural traditions of the Lozi people are barely described and few details are provided on how the proposed boundaries relate to the disposition of peoples in the landscape.

There is also a lack of clarity as to the robustness of those traditions that are described and whether what is set out as a living landscape survives only in the memory of the Lozi and in academic documentation, or exists only in a weak form.

The property consists of the following:

- House mounds
- Palace mounds
- Mounds for royal graves with their associated rituals
- Agricultural land, agro-pastoral systems and trans-humance ceremonies
- Canals
- Sacred lakes, lagoons, groves and forests

These are described in turn. As no mapping of these key aspects of the landscape has been provided, their number and disposition is not known.

House mounds

The house mounds appear to have been formed over several centuries from accumulation arising due to habitation and also from deliberate building up of soil to raise the houses above the level of the flood waters.

Families live on these mounds during the dry season to allow them to farm the surrounding flood plains. ICOMOS notes that no information is provided on the disposition of these mounds or their overall number or how they form villages. Nor is it clear how they relate in social and economic terms to the family structures or the way fields are allocated. Traditionally houses were cluster of circular thatched buildings. The nomination dossier does not set out any details of these houses nor suggest whether any survive.

It is not clear what proportion have been abandoned as dwellings. Some former house mounds are now marked by trees especially mango trees and are used as burial places.

Many villages are also located on the edges of the flood plains but it is not clear how many of these are within the nominated area.

ICOMOS noted that the villages generally follow a concentric plan, with a communal space in the centre. The houses are mostly traditional, but with modern structures becoming more prevalent. At present these ensembles still have a great degree of integrity, but taking into account the development pressures on the urban periphery of the floodplain, these could soon reflect the processes of acculturation and change.

Palace mounds

The Lozi had twin capitals, a dry season one on a mound in the flood plain and a second wet season capital on higher ground, both in the north of the territory.

In the plains, Naliele was the first capital of the Lozi during the reign of Mulambwa (1790-1825). Of the palace, nothing apparently remains, although the mound is still in existence. The current capital Lealui was built by Litunga Sipopa (1864-1876) and completed by Litunga Lewanika (1878-1916). The current wet season capital is Limulunga. No details are provided of when this was founded or of any earlier wet season capitals.

There was also a southern dry season capital for the second-in command at Nalolo and a complementary wet season one at Mooyo Village in Senanga. It is not clear if these are in the nominated area.

Each of the palaces consists of the *kwandu* (palace), *limbetelo* (drummers' house), *kamona* (induction house),

kashandi (the visitors' pavilion), *lilenge* (Litungas' private house), and *nanda* (Queen's house). The whole palace complex was traditionally surrounded by reed fences (*imilombwe*) that denote the presence of royalty.

Lealui palace

The *kwandu*, built in 1890, was reconstructed in 2004 and only some of the timber poles are original. This frame building with a double row of hardwood timber columns supporting the massive grass roof, is the only palace building still constructed partly in traditional materials.

Limulunga palace

All the buildings were constructed by the British in the 1930s. They are of white-washed brick with tile roofs.

Nalolo palace

The *kwandu* constructed between 1887-89, is supported on hardwood vertical poles with timber trusses and is currently under rehabilitation. Concrete blocks are being used for the walls as opposed to traditional adobe.

Mounds for royal graves with their associated rituals

There are over twenty-two royal graves in the nominated area. Prominent among these are those of Mulambwa, Lubosi Lewanika, Mwanawina I and III, Sipopa, Ilute Yeta and Imwiko.

The grave of the female ruler, Mbuyuwamwambwa, who led the migration of people into the area is now the place where enthronement ceremonies start.

Each Litunga selected the location of the mound for his burial place before his death. The royal graves are located at the centre of their mounds within a reed fence called *limbwata*. The graves are identified by two Y-shaped poles that denote the entry point into the inner chamber. Special trees were planted around them. Every royal grave has a lagoon nearby where the barge used by the departed Litunga is sunk. These lagoons are connected to canals to allow for the movement of the departed Kings.

The royal graves have villages surrounding them, some with modern houses built in modern materials. Around the grave of the Litunga Lewanika (1885-1916), the village houses are still in traditional style with hand plastering and some fine thatching, while those near the grave of the first Litunga, Mboo Muyunda, are in modern materials, the earlier traditional village having been destroyed by fire in 2010.

The royal graves represent centres of mystical power. It is believed that those buried in them are grantors of plenty: good crops, many calves, and many children.

Agricultural land, agro-pastoral systems and trans-humance ceremonies

The silt deposited by the flood waters made the flood plains extremely fertile and this is reflected in the

intensive agriculture that was and is practised, some permanent and some on a rotational basis.

Traditionally there were eight types of cultivation: mound gardens on loamy soil for maize, inter-planted with sorghum; dry margin gardens at the edge of the plain, fertilised by cattle for bulrush millet and cassava; moist margin gardens for maize, cassava, fruit trees, sugar cane, tobacco and vegetables; clay gardens in depressions for maize; drainage gardens along the *dambo* margins also for maize and sweet potatoes; and *mikomona* raised ridges for root crops.

This food production was supplemented by crops from permanent fields on the high grounds above the plains. ICOMOS notes that no details have been provided as to how these fields related to the disposition of houses, nor how land was divided between communities of farmers nor how this reflected social and cultural systems. It is understood that formerly all land was vested in the king, but his rights were limited in various ways. Farmers had the right to pasture, net fishing in deep waters, stabbing fish along the banks and killing birds and game.

Each year as the flood waters of the river rise in the wet season, there is an annual migration of people and animals to higher ground settlements. The migration is led by the Litunga in a large decorated royal barge on which music and songs celebrate the triumph of the community over the natural environment.

For up to nine months of each year in the wet season families lived in villages sited above the flood level. These villages and their associated grazing grounds are outside the nominated area.

No details are provided as to whether the social structures of the lowland villages are reflected in the layout of the higher level villages.

Canals

Canals were primarily constructed to provide drainage for the arable fields but they were also used for transportation, irrigation, flood control, fish stocks and as sources of water for humans and livestock.

The Lozi must have created canals from the time of their earliest settlements as without water management any sizable settlements would not have been feasible. A massive extension of the canal system was undertaken between 1780 and 1916 (see history). The unlined canals are dug out of the clay subsoil and until the late 1880s, were dug with wooden tools.

The canals are divided into primary, secondary and tertiary channels. The primary ones are the *Mwayowamo*, the *Musiyamo* and the *Liabwa la twelufu*. The *Mwayowamo*, constructed from 1887-89, is the principal canal linking Lealui to Limulunga.

At their greatest extent, the canal system across the whole of the Lozi flood plain extended to around 1,000km in length, with some canals up to 5 metres in width. ICOMOS notes that it is not clear what percentage survive or what length is in the nominated area, nor how far the system works as an overall integrated hydrological network.

Sacred lakes, lagoons, groves and forests

All royal graves are considered sacred and near them are sacred groves and also lagoons (see above). Some lakes associated with royalty are also considered to be sacred.

Former hunting grounds of the Litunga and forests that were sources of timber for royal barges are also considered sacred or have restrictions associated with their use.

ICOMOS notes that no details are provided as to the location or number of sacred lakes and forests. It is also clear that some major royal hunting grounds are outside the boundaries of the property to the north in the National Park.

History and development

Although the plains were settled in the Stone and Iron Ages, the connection of the area with the Lozi spreads back around four hundred years.

The Lozi is a collective noun for around 25 different peoples that live in the nominated area but who are also spread out in the wider Western Province. It is generally accepted that the Lozi migrated with a number of related leaders to their current area as part of Luba migrations from central Africa in the first half of the 17th century. They displaced the Andonyi people who tradition states were living on the plains.

The first ruler called *Mbuyuwambwa* is believed to have been the daughter and wife of the god, *Nyambe*. She later abdicated the throne in favour of her son *Mboo*, who extended his domain by conquering the neighbouring tribes. Lozi history is characterized by such expansionary conquests and the absorption of other peoples under their rule to gain land and cattle.

The centralization of the Kingdom was achieved by the fourth Litunga Ngalama, the grandson of Mbuyuwambwa. He extensively expanded the Kingdom by defeating breakaway groups. During his reign, the Lozi Kingdom was no longer restricted to Kalabo district, but came to dominate the flood plain.

For thirty-four years in the 19th century, the Lozi were ruled by the Kololo after a military defeat. After the restoration of Lozi rule, the next Litunga established Lealui as the capital.

During the reign of the 14th Litunga, the influence of the Lozi spread widely into the present day north-west and

southern provinces of Zambia. At the height of their power, before it was diminished in colonial times, the Lozi held sway over some twenty-five other peoples numbering around half a million people.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

ICOMOS notes that the comparative analysis is brief. It compares the property to the Rideau Canal, Canada (2007, criteria (i) and (iv)), the Seventeenth-Century Canal Ring Area of Amsterdam inside the Singelgracht, Netherlands (2010, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)), and the Canal du Midi, France (1996, criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi)). The conclusion drawn is that further the Barotse Cultural Landscape canals stand out from the other canals from the point of view of transhumance. They are the only canals in the world that are associated with the mass movement of people characterized by ritual practices particularly during the Kuomboka Ceremony.

Within southern Africa, the property is compared with Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape, South Africa (2007, criteria (iv) and (v)), where the Nama also practice transhumance but the difference is seen to be the association of the Lozi with floods.

The Lozi are the only known people in the world who practice transhumance as a result of living in a floodplain.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis is insufficient to fully demonstrate that there are no other similar properties that might be nominated for the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis does not justify consideration of this property for the World Heritage List at this stage.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Barotse cultural landscape demonstrates an ingenious system of constructing mounds for houses and canals for transportation, drainage and flood control.
- It is associated with the spiritual beliefs of the Lozi people.
- It has Royal grave mounds distributed across the landscape that act as centres of spirituality.

ICOMOS considers that the overall cultural landscape of the flood plains and the bordering higher ground is distinctive and of value for wider reasons than the site specific mounds and canals and associated spiritual beliefs. The landscape is a reflection of complex long-

standing agricultural and pastoral traditions of the Lozi people and their social and economic organisation. This was a system of Royal patronage with families organised into villages on the plains.

Their land management revolved around dry season cultivation of the flood plains, drained by canals, house mounds to provide protection from the wet season floods, and migrations to higher ground in the wet season.

Currently the nomination dossier only provides sketchy details as to how this complex landscape functioned in terms of the processes that shaped and shape the lives of those who live there and how it relates to the wider Lozi domains.

In order to set out how and why this cultural landscape might justify Outstanding Universal Value, there is a need for more in depth assessment of its structure and attributes – both tangible and intangible processes, associations and beliefs.

At the present time, Outstanding Universal Value has not been demonstrated.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

ICOMOS considers that from the information provided in the nomination dossier, the rationale for the boundaries is not clear. The flood plain cultivation and transhumance practices of the Lozi people appear to extend well beyond the nominated boundaries. A more fundamental issue relates to the fact that the settlements, fields and grazing areas to which the Lozi migrate in the wet season appear to be excluded from the nominated area as do certain royal hunting grounds to the north. It is therefore not possible to confirm that the boundaries encompass all the attributes related to the distinctive system of land management practices by the Lozi or reflect an area where these attributes can be said to be most robust.

In terms of the vulnerability or otherwise of the attributes, information is lacking. Some of the text of the nomination dossier is written in the past tense and it thus appears that certain practices are no longer extant. Almost no details are provided on the settlements and thus it is unclear how the boundaries encompass the communities of people who work the land. However it is stated that 'traditional architecture has also not been spared by elements deterioration due to a breakdown in traditional aspects dealing with communal maintenance practices'. The current agricultural processes are mentioned as being vulnerable to new crops such as rice which are unregulated, while canals are acknowledged as lacking the necessary maintenance to allow them to function optimally.

Furthermore there is concern that major developments such as mining and road building could threaten the integrity of the landscape - see details below.

Authenticity

The statement of authenticity in the nomination dossier reflects a limited number of attributes: canals, mounds, royal graves and the Kuomboka ceremony all of which are stated to be in continuing use.

ICOMOS considers that these four aspects cannot be said to sum up the authenticity of a living, dynamic rural landscape. If the canals, graves, mounds and annual ceremony all survive, this would not ensure the sustainability of the traditional processes, cultural systems and beliefs that have combined to shape this landscape over several centuries.

Authenticity needs to be related to people and processes as much as to their outcomes in landscape terms.

As such, the property would appear to be vulnerable to changing ideas and aspirations and to new beliefs. Reassurance is needed that such vulnerabilities are understood and acknowledged and have been fully debated amongst the communities concerned as a means of developing appropriate mitigation measures. See further discussion on this below.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have not currently been met at this stage.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the practice of transhumance, involving the annual movements of people from the flood plains to higher grounds associated with royal rituals, and the complex of royal graves, mounds and lagoons constitute a unique testimony to the living cultural tradition of the Lozi.

ICOMOS considers that for this criteria to be justified there needs to be a much clearer understanding of the many complex cultural and social traditions that make up the transhumance system that is practiced by the Lozi and a much clearer justification as to how these have shaped the landscape over time and continue to shape the landscape in an exceptional way.

A transhumance system goes beyond the grandiose annual Kuomboka ceremony and the site specific royal graves, settlement mounds and canals: it is the social, cultural and economic forces that bind communities together in a communal annual migration between the

flood plains and the higher ground, and the value of the very specific types of agriculture that are practiced on the fertile plains that in effect provide the impetus for this system. It also includes the sacred venerations of places and the spirituality of nature that both constrain and enhance collaboration. All these combine to define the Lozi traditions that are at the heart of this nomination. How they are reflected in the landscape and where they persist most strongly needs to be better understood and in particular the essential link between dry and wet season settlements, fields and grazing grounds. Such a transhumance system cannot be conveyed by only one half of the process – that is the flood plain fields alone.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified at this stage.

Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the over four hundred year old mounds and man-made canals illustrate significant stages in the evolution and technical history of the landscape and the ingenuity of people in relation to transportation, flood control and land reclamation.

ICOMOS considers that the overall Lozi cultural landscape needs to be seen as an on-going, dynamic cultural tradition of land management involving transhumance, land drainage to allow arable cultivation and navigation, and settlement mounds as well as the social, political and cultural structures that have allowed a communal response over some 400 years. It then needs to be shown how the landscape developed by this creative system to master the flood plains can be understood to reflect a specific period of history – in this case the migrations of the Lozi people and their consolidation of the flood plain territory that has had a marked impact on the history of the region.

ICOMOS further considers that such a justification needs to be made on the basis of a much more detailed analysis of the cultural landscape and its scope, extent, and specificities in tangible as well as intangible terms.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified at this stage.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the landscape is inextricably and tangibly linked with the annual historic Kuomboka Ceremony when royal barges and small boats accompanied by traditional music mark the start of the transhumance

migration to higher ground at the beginning of the wet season.

ICOMOS considers that one single annual ceremony, although of great significance for local communities and now hugely popular with tourists, cannot be said to imbue the whole nominated landscape and its communities.

This one ceremony could be seen though as the pinnacle of much wider panoply of traditional beliefs and spiritual associations that are fundamental to the land management system that allows the Lozi to cultivate the flood plains. ICOMOS considers that more details need to be provided as to the extent and dynamism of such traditional practices in relation to the agro-pastoral transhumance system.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified at this stage.

ICOMOS does not consider that the conditions of authenticity and integrity and criteria have been justified at this stage.

4 Factors affecting the property

The regular maintenance of canals is probably the key determining factor for the survival of the agricultural and mound building traditions in the flood plain landscape. For many years traditional management of the canals has been neglected, or given little emphasis. Although traditional skills to clear the canals still survive they are apparently no longer robust enough to keep the waterways in use.

The Management Plan mentions canals being clogged and impacted on by development and the absence of on-going maintenance. The apparent lack of conservation and maintenance of these water courses is a cause for concern. It also impacts on agriculture as waterlogged land reduces yields.

ICOMOS considers that what is also unclear is the hydrological relationship between those canals within the nominated area and those beyond, and whether lack of maintenance of those upstream outside the nominated area could have a devastating impact on the viability of those within.

The Management Plan further mentions a multi-million pound canal dredging programme which has been approved. This will be carried out by dredging machines. At the same time the Management Plan also states the need to revert to the traditional system of maintenance which ensured periodic dredging. ICOMOS considers that clarification is needed that the major project will not have the effect of hastening the demise of traditional practices and ties.

The introduction of rice, allied to a concrete canal built with international funding in 1991, is beginning to cause changes in the structure of farming. Rice takes much more water than maize and other traditional crops. ICOMOS was also told though that the government had no policy to stimulate rice farming.

Overall the loss of traditional practices is the greatest issue in relation to the viability of the overall land management systems. Currently the details provided in the nomination dossier are not extensive or specific enough to allow understanding of whether the lack of traditional practices for canals has reached a crisis point or whether the agricultural system itself has been weakened by the introduction of new crops or by migrations of people away from the area.

Although the nomination dossier states that the proposed area is devoid of major infrastructure development except for electricity pylons and associated grid lines from Mongu in the east to Kalabo in the west, ICOMOS noted the high visual intrusion of the high voltage power lines. These power lines run down the eastern edge of the property, as well as traversing it from east to west alongside the new main road across the plain. They pass right beside the Lealui palace and the harbour where the Kuomboka ceremony starts. Overall the power lines running alongside the road also have a very large visual impact on certain grave mounds and on the wider landscape.

It would be extremely costly to alter the existing routes. Furthermore, electrification of villages could in the future cause more visual impact.

Up until now, no Environmental Impact Assessment or Heritage Impact Assessment has been included in the process for assessing electrification projects.

ICOMOS notes that new 'ZICTA' telecom towers are to be constructed in the property in the very immediate future. These will cause high visual impact.

ICOMOS also noted that there was a Minister of Works directive stating that telecom towers should be positioned as near as possible to palaces.

There is already a proliferation of telecom towers on the east periphery of the property that have adverse visual impacts.

Large scale and rapid development of the urban centres on the eastern boundary and partly in the property is beginning to have negative impact on the overall landscape.

Mongu (which is partly in the property) and Senanga are growing rapidly with urban sprawl being the main characteristic. There are already a few tall buildings in Mongu and an expansion of these could have a highly negative visual impact.

Senanga has an airstrip and is showing signs of urban sprawl. The river passes next to the town and there are views over the plains with high scenic quality. ICOMOS considers that there is a need for development guidelines. As Limulunga is a destination for cultural tourism that is likely to increase, this town also needs development guidelines.

The main airport is also within the property. Its expansion due to a growth in tourism would have visual impacts and cause an increase in noise levels over the cultural landscape.

Within the property there is considerable evidence of deforestation, most probably due to the need for charcoal. ICOMOS observed a great deal of deforestation in the property, as well as on the higher land edging the floodplains. The threat appears to be growing and ICOMOS considers that currently it is not being addressed satisfactorily.

The degradation of forests has a marked visual impact on the landscape. The declining number of trees also impacts on boat building, as the source of timber is reduced, and also on the canals as a result of the forests no longer being large enough to filter run off from the hills, with the result that silt ends up in the water courses.

The nomination dossier states that a major road embankment built through the flood plain was apparently partly washed away and that an amended design is now under construction. No details have been provided.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission provided clear details of the new road that had been constructed through the property and of the very considerable impact that this has had. The road is almost complete and would be difficult to change or mitigate at this late stage.

The doubling and heightening of the east-west road from Mungo was not mitigated nor was it made subject to an HIA or EIA for the cultural environment.

The road is located near to the mission, the harbour and Lealui palace and has pronounced visual impact on the wider landscape. The road has also caused archaeological and environmental damage. It will as well alter the use of the canals. There is no definition or analysis of the archaeological damage caused by this development. A remnant of the smaller road embankment has been abandoned.

ICOMOS was told that it would be difficult to introduce changes at this stage. However, the National Heritage Conservation Commission (NHCC) will require that the excavation quarries, borrowing pits and spoils be rehabilitated.

The new road will allow large buses to traverse the plains and the use of canals could become more local.

There are other new roads around the property near grave mounds, such as at Nanikelako, the grave mound of the Litunga Lewanika (1885-1916) where there is also a new bridge. Both of these detract from the sense of sanctity of the site.

Although not mentioned in the nomination dossier, it is understood that mining is being explored within the property.

The Management Plan also identifies blocks of land for oil and gas exploration in the property and in the buffer zone. It further states that an Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken but this did not take into account the nomination proposal or any cultural aspects.

ICOMOS considers that such mining and extraction would have a severe impact on the integrity of the cultural landscape. The State Party needs to state categorically whether gas/oil extraction and/or refining and or mining will be entertained in the property and its buffer zone.

Fire is clearly a key threat and has destroyed recently a village around one of the graves.

Little evidence for risk preparedness was provided in the nomination dossier. ICOMOS observed that there is very little risk preparedness at Lealui palace, but heard that a draft plan is being prepared to be presented to the *Kuta* (traditional court).

It is understood that the annual Kuomboka ceremony is now a sponsored event and advertising banners are something of a visual intrusion in the landscape at the beginning and end of the ceremony.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are major infrastructural development, telecom and high voltage power lines, unregulated urban development, extension of the existing airport, mining, oil and gas extraction, and the weakening of traditional agricultural, forestry, construction and canal maintenance practices.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

ICOMOS considers that the logic for the definition of the boundaries is not clear in terms of why certain parts of the landscape are included and others not, as the areas subject to annual inundation are larger than the area included in the boundary. Exclusion of areas upstream from the nominated area could put the site at risk, through limiting control over the management of water sources to ensure the quality of water coming into the system. It is also essential that where a river is the boundary the outer bank is included, to a point related to

high water levels, so as to allow control of the river water.

The nominated area does not include the wet season settlements and grazing grounds at the higher level above the flood plains and thus excludes a crucial element of the transhumance process.

It is also not clear if the boundary relates to clear physical points on the ground or has been marked in some way. The current description is difficult to follow in places and lacking in GPS coordinates. For instance in several places the boundary is said to run 'through' a settlement without making it clear if it included or not. The resolution of the maps provided does not help to clarify these issues.

The boundaries needs to be reviewed to reflect more clearly the cultural traditions of the Lozi, and the adequate representation of the key attributes that might justify Outstanding Universal Value, including both the physical shape of the landscape and the communities and their traditions that sustain that landscape.

How far local communities have been involved and consulted in the process of delineating boundaries is not clear.

The nomination dossier proposes a buffer zone on the map of the proposed property. ICOMOS was made aware that this buffer zone would only be declared once it was known if the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

A buffer zone is essential to protect the setting of the property from urban and industrial development - see below.

IUCN notes that: "the natural values of this property are important at an international level as recognised by its Ramsar status." As these natural values are not adequately considered in the nomination, they recommend that: "options to harmonise the property with the Ramsar listing of the area should be considered."

IUCN also recommends that: "the boundary of the property should be reviewed and potentially extended to incorporate the entire wetland system, in order to strengthen the integrity of the wetland and hydrology of the site."

ICOMOS notes that these recommendations would need to be considered alongside a full review of the cultural attributes in the wider floodplain.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are not satisfactory at the present time and need further justification and clarification.

Ownership

All land in the country is vested in the President of the Republic of Zambia on behalf of all the people of the country.

Nevertheless, traditional rulers including the Litunga still have a say on matters pertaining to land within their area of jurisdiction.

According to the Lozi tradition, all land and the cultural and natural resources in Barotseland are entrusted to the Litunga.

Protection

The nominated area was gazetted as a national heritage site in 2013.

The buffer zone exists only as a line on a map and will not come into force until the property is inscribed. ICOMOS notes that it is not clear what protection will be put in place for this zone to protect the rural landscape from the impacts of rapid urban growth and industrial development. Currently, although parts of the buffer zone have environmental protection, the vulnerable edges of the nominated area lack protection that would control development threats.

Traditional protection is the main method of protection that is stressed throughout the dossier. The strength of this in relation to the current pressures for change is not high. There is a lack of support for the traditional management from other instruments and frameworks that could relate to pressures outside the direct control of communities. The symbiotic relationships between traditional management and other forms of protection are not in place.

There is also concern that the traditional management systems themselves in relation to the dynamic traditional functions of the landscape are not as effective as they might be in sustaining the distinctiveness of the landscape.

ICOMOS considers that the legal and traditional protection in place is not currently adequate.

Conservation

The current level and state of documentation of the nominated property is very low, and not a satisfactory base for the future management of the property. The last inventory and photographic documentation of significant buildings was carried out in 1992 and only half the sites were covered. There is no inventory, either visual or otherwise of grave mounds, graves and custodian villages, villages on mounds, agricultural and forestry areas, or the other aspects of the cultural landscape. Although there are some maps of the canals there is no documentation that identifies which canals are the earliest canals, which canals date from which era of canal building, if any canals have already disappeared, or if all early canals have survived. The villages and paths on the flood plains were mapped in 1985, but the

names and location of villages have changed, and some may no longer exist.

There is clearly a need for a multi-disciplinary team to map and record the landscape and its associated processes as a matter of urgency. Such a database could include the movable property in the palaces for which there is also currently no inventory.

The main palace building at Lealui has intact walls and windows but the roof is in a ruinous state – partly due to the use of a large valley in the thatch roof.

Conservation of the palaces will need to acknowledge their ongoing use, and the hybrid nature of the architecture with traditional layout and modern materials. ICOMOS considers that there is a need for a conservation plan to ensure that the historic layers are conserved and to determine the capacity for and limits of change.

ICOMOS noted that the grave mounds were in fair condition, but most are in need of regular, cyclical upkeep that is a requirement of such vernacular buildings.

As the introduction of new crops such as rice could radically change the structure and form of the agricultural landscape, it is necessary for the Management Plan to stipulate the regulation and monitoring of the extent of rice farming in order to ensure that traditional crop farming is sustained as a key element of the traditional landscape of the nominated property.

Many of the canals are silted up and impassable. Although the local communities still maintain some of the channels in a traditional way, opening up the larger channels will need mechanical help.

The nomination dossier does not contain an action plan to contain the threat of deforestation.

ICOMOS considers that the present state of conservation of many inter-related aspects of the landscape is a cause for concern as it reflects a breakdown of traditional practices. The over-exploitation of the forests leads to the silting up canals and this in turn reduces yields of crops and farmers suffer.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The national Chiefs Act establishes the authority of the Litunga in the nominated area. The Barotse Traditional Legal System is in place for jurisprudence in the Barotse region. Both underpin the Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE) Traditional Management.

It is important to note that the current political status of the BRE and its relationship with the State Party is a fundamental aspect that governs the manner of management of the nominated property. If this was to change in the future, it would fundamentally influence the management.

In operational terms it is proposed that the BRE should be in charge of the management of the property through a Site Management Committee, and it would be advised by a multi-institutionary committee that reports to the Minister of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs. ICOMOS considers that there is a need to review this structure to ensure that it includes adequate technical experts and representatives of local communities.

The basic overall difficulty with this structure is that the interaction between the national and traditional protection systems is not clearly defined, particularly how the former provides a framework to sustain the latter.

Traditional management should underpin this nomination. The discussion of it in the dossier is however slight and its key importance appears to be under-estimated as a management tool. There is little mention of the importance of traditional forestry, agricultural and canal maintenance practices. Nor is the importance of belief systems, including taboos, set out as an essential element in the management and conservation of the landscape resources. For instance canals linking sacred lagoons to the river system allow the spirit of the departed king to travel and also keeps them clear of other purposes.

Communal practices should have been highlighted as an important element in the conservation and management system. Unless they are recognised as such, there is a risk they will lose their relevance and have to be replaced by alternative arrangements that could be more costly and less effective, and could lessen the key role of local communities.

There are however tensions between traditions and modernity. Although valuing the traditional approaches is at the heart of the nomination, the area is also subject to an influx of new ideas from Angola to the west and from the denser urban areas to the east. The *Litunga* Lewanika has introduced western elements in his palace and dress, and this approach is cited as a rationale for a syncretic approach to embracing new cultural products, including discarding the vernacular architecture for more durable materials.

Currently there appears to be no policy that could begin to set the limits of acceptable change beyond which the traditional approaches would cease to exist.

There is an urgent need for discourse on limits of change for all elements of the landscape, and the processes that underpin it, as well as for an audit on traditional conservation and management processes in

order to understand more clearly how and to what degree they might be sustained.

The nomination dossier states that “it is clear that due to changing circumstances, the traditional management system required the backing of some form of firm and enforceable legal protection in order to protect cultural and natural heritage resources in the proposed BCL”. ICOMOS considers that a firm supportive framework is needed, but also a clearer understanding that the cultural heritage of the Lozi landscape involves traditional practices and processes embedded in local communities.

From the information provided in the nomination dossier, it is not clear how local communities have been consulted and involved in the overall nomination process, in particular in discussions on how persistent traditional practices might be sustained.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

A management plan was submitted with the nomination dossier. This is an aspirational document and one that does not clearly relate to the specificities and challenges of the property. Its appropriateness, adequacy and efficacy, has yet to be tested in reality.

There are however shortcomings in the scope of the plan and its implementation.

Currently there is no clear management structure for implementing the plan, although a relationship between national NHCC and the BRE has been established. The plan has no components on how traditions might be maintained and change managed, nor on how the relationship between local communities and property management will be nurtured and sustained, or on how local communities might influence the future of the property through participatory decision-making processes.

In terms of scope and content, the plan also needs much more detailed policies and strategies to address:

- Large-scale infrastructure in the property
- Restrictions on mining and oil and gas extraction
- Land Use plan for the property
- Development guidelines and planning guidelines overall and particularly for urban areas such as Mungo
- Definition of critical viewpoints that need to be kept open
- Modernization and its limits
- The effects of river pollution and climate change
- Re-afforestation
- The optimisation of the role of canals.

In terms of resources for management of the property, there appears to be an unrealistic emphasis on external funding.

ICOMOS considers that the management of the property is currently not strong enough to meet the considerable challenges that it faces; the management structure and management plan both need strengthening and more clearly defining in relation to the specific needs of the property in relation to supporting traditional management and addressing threats. Management also needs to be more participatory in involving local communities.

6 Monitoring

Adequate baselines for monitoring, and the monitoring processes themselves both remain to be developed. This process needs to be linked to a much clearer audit of traditional processes.

ICOMOS considers that an adequate monitoring process is not currently in place and needs to be developed.

7 Conclusions

The property has been nominated as a landscape that reflects the way traditional agro-pastoral, political and religious processes shaped habitation of the flood plains based on annual transhumance processes.

The landscape is a reflection of complex long-standing agricultural and pastoral traditions of the Lozi people and their social and economic organisation.

Currently the nomination dossier only provides sketchy details as to how this complex landscape functioned in terms of the processes that shaped and shape the lives of those who live there and how it relates to the wider Lozi domains.

The nomination suggests that the most important aspects of the landscape are those relating to the palace and grave mounds and their associated customs. ICOMOS does not consider that these can be disconnected from the overall cultural landscape of fields, villages, canals and forests that traditionally worked as an integrated unit.

What should underpin this nomination is the recognition of traditional practices and the empowerment of local communities. Currently however these fundamental elements are not at the forefront of management, nor are supportive policies in place that might frame links between traditional practices and planning policies and plans.

Some of the traditional practices are strong such as ceremonies related to annual migration and to the royal graves. More practical practices related to the cultivation, maintenance and use of the landscape seem less strong.

If the cultural landscape is to be sustained, there needs to be a clear understanding of its scope and what defines it in terms of its features and the associative processes that shape it. Currently no detailed documentation exists which could act as a baseline for boundaries, protection and management. Also there is no clearly agreed approach as to how this landscape might change in the future while still holding on to what defines its distinctiveness.

Although a management plan has been produced, this has not been clearly focused on the strengths and challenges of the property. These challenges are considerable and currently there is no active process that can define what is and is not acceptable in relation to cultural value.

Unfortunately, the landscape has in parts become degraded – particularly the forests and increasingly parts of the canal structures, both of which impact adversely on the livelihoods of local communities. More fundamentally it is under great threat from infrastructure projects that have been built or are being developed. New roads, pylons and communication towers have a major negative impact on this sensitive open landscape. Within the landscape urban areas are also growing without the benefit of land-use plans. The boundaries also include an airport and areas that have been earmarked for oil and gas extraction.

The logic for the boundaries of this cultural landscape have not been fully established in terms of justifying why certain parts of the plain are excluded that have high cultural associations such as wet season settlements. Given the current major threats from roads, urban development and from mining and oil and gas extraction, the boundaries also lack robustness in terms of enclosing an area that is not under threat.

ICOMOS considers that there is an urgent need to document this cultural landscape in all its facets, including its natural values, as a basis for reassessing boundaries for an area where traditional practices can be sustained through strengthening the traditional roles of local communities, and where further major threats to the landscape from infrastructure projects and unregulated urban development can be controlled and where mining and oil and gas extraction can be halted.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of Barotse Cultural Landscape, Zambia, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party, with the advice of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre, if requested, to:

- Explore whether a revised nomination might be proposed that could be based on:
 - a robust boundary that takes account of the major negative impacts of new roads, and other developments, and excludes urban areas, the airport, and zones for mining and oil and gas extraction, and includes essential attributes that reflect fully the key aspects of the Barotse socio-cultural-political system and its landscape impacts;
 - survey, documentation and recording of the physical manifestations of the wider flood plain cultural landscape including the Liuwa National Park, and all of its traditional land management practices and other traditions;
 - a structured management approach that brings together traditional practices and planning policies and is based on the skills and involvement of local communities, and a clear understanding of the limits of change;
 - a clear vision as to how the landscape might be sustainable in the future, and protected from major developments.

ICOMOS also recommends that, as a matter of urgency, steps should be taken to ensure that further pylons are not installed in the landscape next to palaces.

ICOMOS remains at the disposal of the State Party in the framework of upstream processes to advise them on the above recommendations.

ICOMOS considers that any revised nomination would need to be considered by an expert mission to the site.



One of the canals of the Barotse Cultural Landscape



Lealui palace



The Litunga on its way to Limulunga during the Kuomboka ceremony



The royal grave of Mwanawina III

