

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION — IUCN SUMMARY

606: PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DA CAPIVARA (BRAZIL)

Summary prepared by WCMC / IUCN (April 1991) based on the original nomination submitted by the Government of Brazil. This original and all documents presented in support of this nomination will be available for consultation at the meetings of the Bureau and the Committee.

1. LOCATION:

The park is situated near the town of Sao Raimundo Nonato, 220km south of Floriano and 530km from Teresina. The main body of the park is the Serra do Congo massif and the central Chapada da Capivara in the State of Piaui. 100,000ha.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

The national park was designated under Federal Decree of 5 June 1979. In 1987, the IBDF commenced the identification work of the park boundaries. Presidential Decree of March 1990 ensured creation of three zones of permanent protection, and expansion of the park.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Physiographically, the area is connected with the Piaui and Bom Jesus do Gurgueia regions of the north-east basin. For 180km, cliffs up to 270m high form a border between two contrasting geological zones: a plain to the south-east and mountain massifs to the north-east. Erosion has hollowed out canyons and valleys within the mountain terrain. The landscape is characterised by mountains, valleys and open plains. The area is an important watershed including the river valley systems of Riacho Toca da Onca, Riacho Baixo da Lima, Riacho Bom Jesus and the Gruta do Pinga.

Typical of the semi-arid region of the north-east of Brazil, the vegetation is in a transition zone between the central province and the Atlantic province. The park largely consists of dense thorny scrubland vegetation, called caatinga, with a predominance of semi-arid vegetation dominated by succulents, drought-resistant deciduous thorny trees and shrubs and other xerophytic vegetation. Relict isolated patches of forest cover survive in a few deep, narrow canyons. This vegetation, which includes palaeo-endemic relict genera and families representative of rain forests which were found in the area during the humid Ice Age period of over 11,000 BP, is restricted to the canyons that retain moisture during the dry season

Characteristic fauna is scarce in caatinga thorn scrubland, although recorded in the park are notable species including ocelot (V), bush dog (V), rock cavy, red-legged seriema, and a species of Tropidurus lizard.

Fossil records of the Ice Age period over 15,000 years BP indicate a humid environment harbouring such animals as camelids, gliptodonts, giant armadillos, peccaries, deer, and numerous rodents and birds.

Over 300 archaeological sites are found within the park, the majority consisting of rock and wall paintings, some of the oldest remains in the Americas dating from 50,000/30,000 years (5,000 years BP), and pre-dating previously held theories that man first entered the new world shortly before 12,000 years BP. Certain geological formations and a palaeofauna that included giant sloths, horses, camelids and early llamas indicate that the Ice Age environment was quite different from the existing semi-arid conditions.

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

Primarily of importance for a nature archaeological, anthropological and palaeontological interest, the area is regarded as the most important cultural site in Brazil.

Access to the area is difficult. In May 1989, an accord was signed between IBAMA and the Fundacao Museu do Homem Americano (FUNDHAM), delegating FUNDHAM to undertake the management work on the protection of the park. FUNDHAM is also charged with preparing the management plan which was completed in 1990. The plan is valid for five years, and reviews conservation regulations and the utilisation of the park's cultural and natural resources. As part of the plan any occupants that wished would be compensated for leaving the park. FUNDHAM, with the aid of the Laboratoire de recherches des monuments historiques, Champs-sur-Marne (France), is involved with preservation of sites.

The main objectives of park management include the preservation of the environment and of the cultural heritage, together with ecodevelopment harmonious with this zone. One of the prime management objectives is to educate the local population in the needs for maintaining the area, minimising exploitation of the fragile environment and re-establishing the conditions characteristic of the ecosystem which have not yet been degraded.

Because of the fragility of the ruins and the lack of park infrastructure, Serra da Capivara is not visited by large numbers of tourists.

Little of the vegetation in the park is primary, having been disturbed throughout the historic and prehistoric period by slash-and-burn technique and fuelwood collection. Deforestation is extensive, as is use of insecticides and illegal poaching. The rock paintings are seriously affected by the hymenoptera pupae 'Maria Pobre' growing on the paintings and by termite nests. Deforestation has led to painting degradation by exposure to sunlight, alteration of drainage leading to changes in painting chemistry, fire of primary vegetation and brush and algal activity.

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

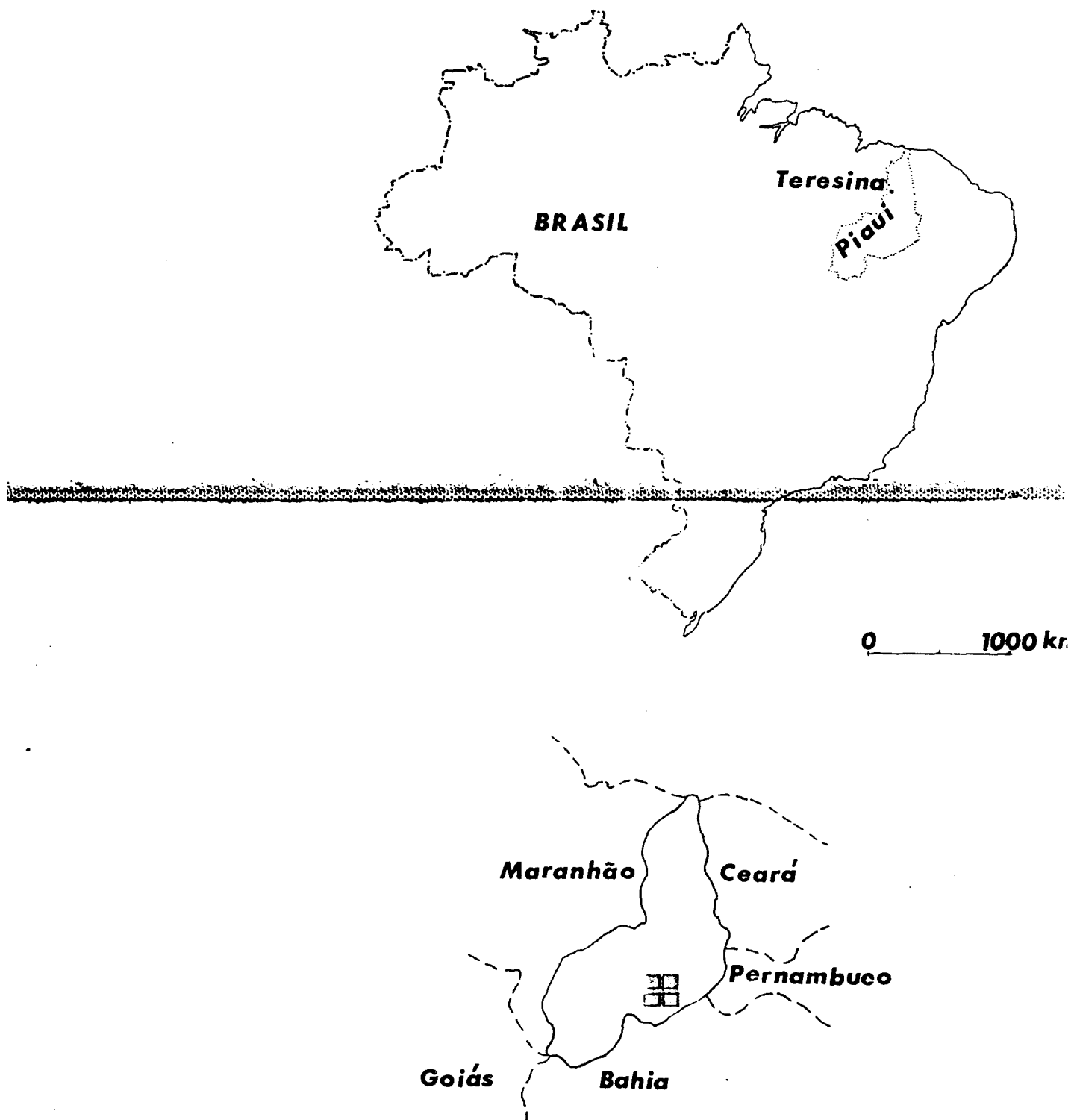
The nomination, as presented by the Government of Brazil, provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

D) Natural property

- (iii) Contains unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features of exceptional natural beauty The Serra da Capivara contains beautiful countryside exhibiting unique rock formations sculptured by rain erosion to form caldeiroes, boqueiroes, pingas and cuevas cliffs;
- (iv) The most important and significant habitats where threatened species of plants and animals of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science and conservation still survive Serra da Capivara is recognised as one of the few protected areas within the caatingas biogeographic province, which includes a vegetation type endemic to north-east Brazil. It contains unique species of animal and plant unknown elsewhere.

LOCALIZAÇÃO DO

PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DA CAPIVAI



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

606: PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DA CAPIVARA (Brazil)

1. DOCUMENTATION

- i) IUCN Data Sheet
- ii) Additional Literature Consulted : None.
- iii) Consultations: J. P. de Oliveira Costa, I. Camara.
- iv) Field Visit : None.

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

Serra da Capivara is one of 63 national parks in Brazil and one of 10 protected areas that protects caatinga vegetation. Almost 40% of protected caatinga is located in this one park although the proposed Mamipaua Ecological Station would substantially double the representation of this increasingly rare vegetation type. The singular quality of Capivara is the extensive presence of archaeological remains which are concentrated there. In this sense it has many of the same qualities as Cerro Colorado in Argentina, a site deferred in 1987 and Rio Abiseo in Peru, inscribed in 1990.

3. INTEGRITY

Protection of the park to date has not been effective although this may improve with a new World Bank-funded project to strengthen protected areas management in Brazil. Little of the park's vegetation is likely to be primary being much disturbed by slash and burn agriculture and fuelwood collection. Much of Capivara has been damaged by deforestation, wildfires, poaching and the use of insecticides. Livestock grazing in the park exacerbates the impacts. Actions are underway to acquire private lands in the park and to remove an unpaved road along the eastern edge.

There is no information in the nomination on resident staff, equipment or budget.

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The nomination form presents only minimal information on the natural aspects of Capivara (e.g. no species list is provided). The prime objective and values of the area appear to be cultural. IUCN has not

conducted a field inspection but will reconsider the file once the ICOMOS assessment on the significance of the archaeological remains is available.

5. EVALUATION

Capivara is a valuable representative area of caatinga vegetation in Brazil, a unique biogeographical province of very restricted distribution and which includes a number of endemic species. It is not possible to determine if Capivara is the single most important area for caatinga or how it compares to the other caatinga reserves at Urucui-Una and Mamipaua.

There has been several research studies undertaken on ancient man who inhabited the area over 25,000 years B.P. (which challenges the theory that man first entered the Americas by way of the Bering Land Bridge 12,000 years B.P.). It appears that the natural values of the area, however, are of secondary importance to its cultural values. Information is also lacking on the details of the natural values and of management. In light of these limitations the evaluation by ICOMOS of the cultural values will be the determining factor in the formulation of the final recommendation.

6. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN reserves a recommendation on Serra da Capivara until the cultural resources are assessed by ICOMOS and until more detailed information on the natural features and the management regime is available.