
Koutammakou (Benin) No 1140bis

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba

Location

Atacora Department
Benin

Brief description

The property lies next to the cultural landscape of Koutammakou in Togo and is nominated as an extension of this landscape. The nominated extension embodies the characteristic and original land use of the Batammariba, whose dwellings are known as *takienta* (*sikien* in the plural). Groves, springs and sacred rocks, terraced slopes and networks of water retaining walls, and forests and plant species used in the construction of *sikien*, associated with the rituals and beliefs of the Batammariba, also form part of this cultural landscape.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a nomination of an extension of a *site*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2021), paragraph 47, it has also been nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

Included in the Tentative List

16 June 2020

Background

This is a nomination for an extension of the site of Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba in Togo, inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee (Suzhou, 2004) on the basis of criteria (v) and (vi).

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by members of ICOMOS International Scientific Committees and independent experts.

Information on the property's natural attributes, and their conservation and management, was received by the IUCN on 4 March 2022 and has been incorporated into the corresponding sections of this report.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 3 to 10 October 2021.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 30 September 2021 requesting further information about the factors affecting the property, and about protection and management.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 15 November 2021.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 20 December 2021, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the Interim Report, including: links with the property located in Togo inscribed on the World Heritage List; justification of the property boundaries; protection measures and urban pressures; conservation measures; transnational cooperation with Togo; tourism; involvement of local communities; and the road map.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 20 January 2022.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

9 March 2022

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The Koutammakou cultural landscape stretches from north-eastern Togo to north-western Benin. The Togolese part has a total area of 31,168 ha. The nominated extension – with an area of 240,658 ha – adds the Beninese part to the existing World Heritage property, and has no buffer zone, which is also the case with the Togolese part.

Koutammakou designates the territory of the Batammariba (Otamari in the singular), which can be translated as the “builders” or the “architects”. Koutammakou is located in the foothills of the Atacora mountain range, where cave-refuges are to be found, along with sanctuaries dedicated to divinities of the land of the Tammari. The climate consists of a dry season (from the end of October until the end of April), favourable for livestock and poultry rearing, and a rainy season, when crops are planted. The Batammariba live essentially from subsistence farming. The main agricultural produce of Koutammakou consists of millet, fonio and yams. Mountain rice, black-eyed peas, Bambara groundnuts and taro are also grown to supplement the main crops.

The characteristic occupation of the land by the Batammariba consists of dispersed dwellings. Each family lives in the centre of a small area of land that it manages and farms for subsistence. This wide dispersion also provides protection from outsiders. The territory is scattered with fortified dwellings, known as *sikien* (*takienta* in the singular). This dwelling type provides a defensive structure, enables economic unity and is also a religious gathering place.

Sikien architecture characteristically consists of compact, monolithic, organically-shaped earthen structures. The *takienta* has an upper floor, and is divided into two or three levels depending on its type: the ground floor, the upper floor and an intermediate outdoor terrace area between the two where cooking is carried out. The main characteristics that distinguish the various types of *takienta* are roof shapes, access to the upper floor and the number of rooms and outdoor terraces. The most recent inventory, conducted in 2018, lists three different types of *sikien*. The type most frequently encountered is Otchaou, with 1,144 *sikien* listed, consisting of a house with a vestibule and terrace, and a flat roof. The second type, Okpanri, for which 329 *sikien* are listed, ranges from a simplified dwelling with a single terrace (for widows and unmarried women) to a highly complex model with two or even three terraces. The third and final type, Ossori, for which 72 *sikien* are listed, consists of granaries arranged on either side of the vestibule tower. There is no landing or access tower to the upper floor, and no intermediate terrace.

The main stages of construction begin with the building of the two rear towers. The walls are built by manual application of successive layers. Openings are made in the towers before the mud is completely dry. The walls are often decorated by the women with lines and dashes in the freshly applied plaster. Once the walls are dry, the men insert the large wooden pillars into the ground to hold the main terrace. The young people and women then prepare the earth to be used to cover the terrace. Once the terrace is dry, the hearths are installed and the granaries are built. The building process continues for several months, and requires the participation of the whole community. The *takienta* requires regular maintenance after each rainy season.

The *takienta* is the place in which the life of an Otammari is organised from birth to death. It reflects the universe of the Batammariba in its spatial organisation, with the ground floor dedicated to the dead and deities and the upper level to the living. During the construction process, rituals are performed and a “diviner” is consulted. At each major stage of the process, a ceremony is held, not only to ensure that the construction is successful, but also to honour the divinities and ancestors. The Batammariba believe in the existence of a supreme being, and in the powers of nature, which act as its intermediaries. The ancestors also play a fundamental role in the rituals of the Batammariba. Like the supernatural powers, the ancestors of each family are provided with an altar, which may be individual or collective, inside or close by the dwelling. Outside the dwelling, some altars are a receptacle for the spirits of animals killed during

hunts in the past, or the underground spirits with which ancestors having clairvoyant powers have made a pact, from which the descendants benefit. There is therefore a close link between the *takienta* and the sacred groves of the village.

Rites of passage are also important stages in the life of the Batammariba. The initiation of the boys (*Difoni*) and the girls (*Dikuntri*) takes place every four years. The initiations are performed in sacred places, particularly in the groves. Agrarian rituals are also performed. The authority of the elders is expressed in the role they play in these community ceremonies, hence their common designation as religious chief or leader of worship.

It appears that the Batammariba, who hailed originally from northern Togo and south-eastern Burkina Faso, later settled at Koubonku and Koubentiéguou. They subsequently populated the whole of Koutammakou, while remaining closely linked to the religious centres of Koubonku and Koubentiéguou for the main religious activities and initiation festivities. Archaeological research suggests that the first settlements of the Batammariba date from the 6th to the 14th century CE. It was in this territory that the Batammariba developed their typical dwellings and this dispersed pattern of settlement.

State of conservation

The nominated extension area, dominated by the Atacora mountain range, and almost all the *sikien*, have been maintained in a good state of conservation. Although deteriorations have occurred in some of the *sikien*, the State Party stresses that these can be easily repaired, and the old materials can be largely reused for the building of other dwellings. According to the inventory the State Party has referenced, 1,545 *sikien* have been preserved, but a new inventory currently being compiled is going to list 4,550 of them.

The nominated extension and its traditional dwellings are currently being affected by changing lifestyles and the impacts of climate change. The transformations are most noticeable in the vicinity of the semi-urban centres (Natitingou, Boukombé, and Toucountouna), and along the asphalt road (RN3), but the traditional architecture is more densely concentrated outside these zones.

The cultural landscape proposed for the extension continues to be preserved for ritual purposes (groves), for medicinal purposes (plants), and in order to provide the materials needed for building *sikien* (wood, straw). The State Party also emphasises that expressions of culture and identity are proving resilient, as seen in the case of the rites of passage (for *Dikuntri* and *Difuani*), and in the creation of several associations and commissions set up to protect and promote the Otammari language and culture.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is generally good.

Factors affecting the nominated extension

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated extension are development pressures, environmental constraints, natural phenomena, and the deterioration of the security situation.

Development pressures stem to some extent from younger generations turning away from this type of architecture towards a more “modern” form (rectangular dwelling with corrugated iron roof, in some cases with an upper floor). These new architectural forms are accompanied by the development of semi-urban centres around settlements which were once remarkable because of their large number of *sikien* (Natta, Natitingou and Boukombé).

In the additional information provided in November 2021, the State Party informs that planning measures have been adopted to deal with development pressures. The State Party also emphasises the existence of a traditional land use management model whereby the land is considered a sacred space from which large-scale infrastructure projects are excluded.

ICOMOS considered in its Interim Report that it would be desirable to obtain details about the drawing up of the municipal development master plans of Boukombé, Toucountouna and Natitingou, and the urban planning regulations for the urban centre of Boukombé, together with a schedule for the finalisation of these documents.

The additional information provided in January 2022 states that, following the extension nomination process under way, the three communes are currently seeking funding to update the municipal development master plans. Funding has already been obtained for Boukombé, which expects its master plan to be drawn up during 2022.

Although the building of a new *takienta* is an increasingly rare occurrence, ICOMOS notes that several associations and committees have been set up for the conservation and promotion of the *sikien* and of the Batammariba heritage.

The influence of mainstream religions is considerable in the semi-urban centres and in the villages along the asphalt road (RN3), where churches have been built and *sikien* have disappeared. ICOMOS wishes to emphasise however that the villages outside these zones are maintaining the traditional values of the Batammariba.

The nomination dossier for the proposed extension points out that the way of life of the Batammariba is changing, and that new economic activities are appearing, in particular the production of charcoal and timber, and cotton-growing, which all have an impact on the Koutammakou cultural landscape. This results for example in shortages of materials for building *sikien*, and

there is also a potential impact on other traditional practices.

In the additional information provided in November 2021, the State Party emphasises that civil society is supporting the central state in resolving this specific issue, notably through the NGO CERD Bénin (which promotes culture, education and research for development), the Safad project, and campaigns to raise awareness amongst local communities. ICOMOS notes that the impacts are visible around inhabited areas, but that the general environment remains safe from these threats.

The effects of climate change can also be measured by the frequency of rainfall, which erodes bare soil areas, weakens the architecture of the *sikien* and devastates fields. Wide temperature fluctuations and increasingly high temperatures are also giving rise to adaptation problems. ICOMOS notes that maintenance practices must be encouraged to combat the threats arising from this phenomenon.

The deterioration of the security situation in the sub-region is also a cause for concern. ICOMOS notes that no preventive measures have been proposed by the State Party to overcome the potential impact of security issues on the nominated extension.

ICOMOS notes that the factors affecting the property are clearly identified and summarised, but would benefit from being better documented and more fully described, to better measure their impacts. It would also be useful to establish a hierarchy of risks, particularly with regards to the gradual changes taking place in traditional society in the face of “modernity”.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the property is generally satisfactory, but that the factors affecting the property are a cause for concern, particularly in view of the large size of the nominated extension. Changes in the Batammariba lifestyle, with growing urban pressure, the construction of “modern” housing, and the emergence of new economic activities, in addition to the effects of climate change, have a negative impact on the integrity of the nominated extension, and measures must be taken as a matter of urgency.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

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

- The nominated extension possesses particular land use characteristics illustrated by scattered land concessions, with surrounding agricultural zones, terraced slopes, groves and other sacred places, ritual and funerary spaces, virgin (untouched) zones and processional routes for clan rituals.

- The Batammariba have developed a culture that judiciously mixes a fusion with nature, technical skills, social stability and religious practices.
- The nominated extension is distinctive amongst other landscapes in the Sahel because of the *takienta*, a family housing unit that is unique and outstanding for the technical prowess of its construction, the ingenuity of the spaces it affords, and the richness of its symbolic significance.
- The nominated extension includes the historic birthplace of the Batammariba with major religious sites, and contains the three main types of *takienta* known to date. The extension would restore the historical integrity of the land of the Batammariba.

ICOMOS notes that the nominated extension includes the historic birthplace of the Batammariba and the major religious sites of the land of the Tammari (particularly Koubonku and Koubentiégou). In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party points out that the Beninese part would restore the integrity of the land of the Batammariba, who have the same traditions both in Benin and Togo. The State Party further indicates that the Batammariba in Togo and in Benin recognise Koubentiégou as the cradle of the Tammari people. The State Party also points out that the initiation places and clan cemeteries of the Batammariba of Togo are found in Benin. Some ceremonial practices are therefore conducted in Benin by both communities.

The key attributes of the nominated extension are the traditional houses known as *takienta*. The forests, groves, springs, sacred rocks, networks of water retaining walls and terraced slopes are attributes of the cultural landscape, in view of their inextricable links with cultural practices over the course of history, and the same applies to local plant species, particularly those used in *takienta* construction, or in agricultural and craft activities. Lastly, the cultural practices, knowhow and local knowledge, and many other aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of the communities in the nominated extension (in particular language, toponyms, ecological knowledge, crafts, activities and rituals) are attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of this cultural landscape.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed on the basis of the following parameters: comparisons with defensive earthen architecture, with earthen dwellings in organic forms, and with earthen dwellings expressing powerful intangible values. It has examined properties throughout the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, and others included in the Tentative Lists of States Parties, as well as other properties.

The nominated extension is compared, in a worldwide context, with defensive earthen architecture, including fortified earthen dwellings, palaces, military forts and fortified granaries. They include the *Tulou* of Fujian (China, 2008, criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)), the Fort of Bahla (Oman, 1987, criterion (iv)), and the Rukuba granaries in Nigeria. Although these buildings are comparable in some

aspects, the differences are considered by the State Party to outweigh the similarities.

The nominated extension is also compared to dwellings with organic forms. The State Party notes that the comparison demonstrates a certain degree of homogeneity of architectural processes arising from the use of earth as a building material. The State Party points out however that the Batammariba are proven to be more dynamic in their architecture in terms of the number of concessions used and maintained, as well as the number of new concessions built.

The nominated extension is then compared with earthen dwellings associated with powerful intangible values. Although similar cultures in West Africa are still being maintained, the State Party argues that one of the strengths of Koutammakou is the integrity of its intangible culture. The State Party concludes that there is no other property and no other culture with such a strong connection between religious concepts, functionality, social organisation, technical skills and respect for the environment.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis could have been extended to include similar societies and environments in the Volta basin. ICOMOS also points out that the dimension of the territory is not elaborated satisfactorily in the comparative analysis. On the territorial scale, it is not about singular constructions, but rather hundreds across a very extensive territory, which gives full meaning to the historic landscape dimension. The question of the intangible dimension associated with the worship, beliefs and rituals linked to the dwellings is also weakly evoked.

With regard to the differences and similarities between the Togolese part of Koutammakou already inscribed and the nominated extension, ICOMOS considers that the nominated extension forms a coherent continuum with the Togolese part. The Beninese part of Koutammakou includes the historic cradle of the Batammariba. Furthermore, the religious centres of Koubonku and Koubentiégou today remain sacred places for the Batammariba, who continue to hold important religious activities and initiation ceremonies there.

Despite some weaknesses, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated extension for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba, was inscribed on the basis of cultural criteria (v) and (vi). The extension is therefore nominated for inscription on the basis of the same cultural criteria.

Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use or sea use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the proposed extension is an outstanding example of a traditional land use system. Still alive and dynamic, it is subject to traditional and sustainable systems and techniques, and reflects the unique culture of the Batammariba, particularly the outstanding tower-houses known as *sikien*.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified by the nominated extension, and that the Beninese part completes and strengthens the justification of this criterion as it applies to the Togolese part of the property already inscribed. The nominated extension has a larger area, and is richer in cultural terms (representation of dwelling types, historic sites, etc.), than the Togolese part that is already inscribed. The extension restores the historical integrity of the land of the Batammariba.

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. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the proposed extension is an eloquent testimony to the force of the spiritual association between people and the environment. Technical knowhow, deep knowledge, social practices and religious beliefs form part of an ongoing dialogue with the natural resources in the environment, thereby creating homogeneity and fusional harmony with and between the Batammariba.

ICOMOS considers that the attributes embodied in the nominated extension are manifold, and that many of them are outstanding in terms of their own qualities, thus strengthening the justification of this criterion. The nominated extension reflects the establishment and development, over a long period, of a society with specific and original cultural traits, which has successfully adapted to changes in its immediate environment. The relationships found there between the environment, dwellings and lifestyles (social structure and organisation, construction methods, etc.) are exemplary. The religious centres of Koubonku and Koubentiégou are still today sacred places for the Batammariba, who continue to hold their major religious activities and initiation ceremonies there.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated extension meets criteria (v) and (vi).

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the property nominated for the extension lies in the presence of several thousand *sikien*, of which 1,400 are still occupied. According to the State Party, the Beninese part of Koutammakou includes all the elements needed to express its Outstanding Universal Value, in terms that are both tangible (dwellings and their environment) and intangible (ritual practices and beliefs linked to the *sikien*). Because of its cultural and religious importance in the life of the Batammariba, the continuing existence of the traditional architecture requires the perpetuation of local traditions of building and maintenance using local materials. The extension proposed by Benin to the Togolese Koutammakou property inscribed in 2004 is fully justified, as it will restore the historic integrity of the Koutammakou by including the historic birthplace from which the Batammariba dispersed.

ICOMOS stresses that integrity could be threatened if the State Party does not, in the medium term, reconstitute the vegetation cover by planting species that are used on a large scale for traditional architecture.

ICOMOS also considers that the process of “modernisation” threatens the integrity of the traditional society of the Batammariba (rural depopulation and urbanisation of urban centres). In this regard, while inscription of the property on the World Heritage List would partly open up the extension by improving lines of communication, this would also accelerate the influx of industrial building materials, which are detrimental to the traditional model but also a sign of social change.

ICOMOS notes that, in view of the large size of the nominated extension, the density of attributes varies from area to area. The integrity of some areas is also threatened by development. ICOMOS points out that it is important to better understand which areas in the nominated extension deserve closer attention and a more protective approach, in order to guarantee that the best preserved areas are very closely monitored. It will be necessary to draw up a map indicating the location of the *sikien* in their territory, showing in detail the nature of the land use, the terraced slopes, the network of water retaining walls, and the groves and other sacred places. This would enable the identification of zones with high concentrations of cultural and natural attributes, and provide a better picture of the original spatial organisation of this specific territory.

The nomination dossier for the extension points out that an inventory currently being compiled, led by the Catholic University of Louvain and the NGO Éco-Bénin, indicates that the number of *sikien* is in fact far greater than the number shown in the most recent survey (1,545). ICOMOS points out that some of the research team’s findings have already been published. The inventory shows that there are

in reality some 4,550 *sikien*, and that new architectural types have been identified. ICOMOS notes that these results could be of use in better defining the areas of the territory where attribute concentrations are high.

The State Party confirms, in the additional information provided in January 2022, that a field mission will be conducted in 2022 to map all the attributes of the nominated extension. The State Party adds that, in the future management of the property, the results of this inventory will constitute a tool for the management and conservation of the property's key attributes. They will be used to set up a plan for monitoring and maintaining the *sikien*.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the nominated extension will be met when a map incorporating the results of the "HTC-ATACORA" research project has been drawn up. This will enable more detailed identification of the areas of high cultural and natural attribute concentration and ensure that the best preserved areas are subject to very close monitoring.

Authenticity

ICOMOS considers that the cultural attributes of the nominated extension are a credible reflection of the proposed justification, because of their form and conception, their materials, their interrelationships and their links with the surrounding landscape.

In general, the original traditional architecture of the *sikien* integrated into its cultural landscape remains visible today, and constitutes one of the tangible testimonies of perseverance in maintaining and passing on knowledge and knowhow relating to the construction culture of the *sikien*. Each Koutammakou village thus has its own ritual site, its cemetery, its sacred forests and woods, its farmland spaces, its set-aside spaces that remain untouched, and its inhabited spaces. The location of the traditional dwellings is an expression of this balance.

ICOMOS points out that each *takienta* requires regular maintenance after each rainy season, and that if traditional architecture is to be maintained, it is necessary to perpetuate local building and maintenance traditions using local materials. ICOMOS however expresses reservations about current and future changes, in view of the case of some villages close to urban centres, where traditional construction practices are being abandoned in favour of "modern" buildings. ICOMOS notes that the intrusion of imported modern building materials could over time adversely affect the authenticity of the architectural heritage, with the partial or total use of such materials in the restoration and/or rehabilitation of some *sikien*.

ICOMOS also notes that, although the conditions of authenticity of the ritual sites (sacred forests and groves) close to the dwelling zones are maintained, the surrounding landscape is being subjected to substantial pressures, linked to the overexploitation of tree species in certain places. It is necessary for the State Party to continue its

efforts to re-establish some of the component parts of the landscape.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of authenticity of the nominated extension will be met when stronger conservation measures are in place to protect the property from landscape changes and developments that could reduce or end the capacity of the nominated extension to significantly express its Outstanding Universal Value.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated extension will be met when areas of high cultural and natural attribute concentration are identified and reinforced conservation measures are in place.

Boundaries

According to the State Party, the boundaries of the nominated extension correspond to the boundaries of the villages that are recognised as being Tammari. The limits of the nominated extension are marked in the north by the communes of Tanguiéta, Coby and Toucountouna; in the south-east by the Sinaïssiré watercourse; in the south-west by Togo; in the west by Dikoumini and Dipoli; and in the east by Wabou and Tchantangou. The population in the Beninese part is 203,503 (2013 census).

The nominated extension has no buffer zone, because of the large size of the territory, and this is also the case with the Togolese part of Koutammakou.

In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party points out that, although the area of the property is large, the boundaries have been determined on the basis of the villages that have been identified as Tammari. As in the case of the Batammariba, each socio-cultural group in the Atacora lives in a territory that is specific to it, and whose boundaries are clearly defined by the villages and recognised by everyone.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for extension

To sum up, ICOMOS considers that, despite some weaknesses, the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated extension for inscription on the World Heritage List. ICOMOS considers that the nominated extension meets criteria (v) and (vi), but that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have not been met at this stage. In view of the large area of the nominated extension, a map must be drawn up to identify the location of zones of high cultural and natural attribute concentration, and strengthened conservation measures must be put in place. It is important to clearly identify areas which merit a more protective approach, in order to guarantee that these areas are very closely monitored.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

The nominated extension has been largely documented over decades, and has benefited from a long tradition of research. The State Party refers to a comprehensive inventory of *sikien* compiled in 2017-2018, as part of the support programme for the preservation and development of gallery forests (funded by the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union). It shows the location of 1,545 *sikien* on a high definition map from the Benin IGN (National Geographical Institute). The extension nomination dossier is based on this inventory.

A new and much extended inventory was drawn up in 2021, as part of a project to promote earthen dwellings in Atacora, financed by the public authorities of Wallonia, involving the Catholic University of Louvain and the NGO Éco-Bénin. This has resulted in an inventory of some 4,550 *sikien*, divided into three categories. The State Party points out that, when the nomination dossier was being compiled, the data had not yet been finalised and therefore could not be included.

ICOMOS considers that it will be necessary to incorporate the data from the latest 2021 inventory in order to better identify attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

Conservation measures

In its additional information, the State Party emphasises that no specific conservation plan has been drawn up, but that conservation measures have been integrated into the management plan, and that practical initiatives are already under way. The State Party also points out that a management committee for Koutammakou has already been set up, with the task of elaborating the conservation policy for the nominated extension.

In the field, the ANPT (National Agency for Heritage Promotion and Tourism Development) also assists and provides technical and financial support to the NGO Éco-Bénin for the implementation of the "Route des Tata" project, which supports communities in the conservation, enhancement and promotion of Tammari culture.

A large-scale trans-border project sponsored by the World Monuments Fund has been undertaken with the "Corps des Volontaires Béninois", focusing on the Batammariba heritage. This has led to the setting up of four local committees to provide alerts and surveillance of the state of conservation of the *sikien*, bringing together representatives from the whole of the local community.

Conservation work has been carried out on forty-five *sikien* in the nominated extension. The State Party indicates that the work has been carried out directly by the local communities, with support from the project coordination team and the Togolese part of the Service for the Conservation and the Promotion of Koutammakou. Awareness-raising activities focusing on construction and restoration techniques have been organised in six schools.

A reforestation campaign was also carried out in 2020 with the NGO CERD Bénin. A survey of the plant species used in the construction of the *sikien* enabled the creation of short-cycle shea and locust bean tree plantations, two species used for plastering, decorating and hardening the walls of the *takienta*. Exploitation of the locust bean and shea trees has had beneficial economic consequences for the local communities involved in the project.

In 2020-2021, Project Safad carried out reforestation in several places with tree species used in the construction of *sikien*. Initiatives to raise awareness of the need for conservation of these species were organised in 2021 for local communities, and these efforts will continue in 2022.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation measures put in place represent one of the most important challenges for the management of the property. Action plans with clear priorities in terms of conservation interventions and budget proposals must be developed, together with a plan for maintenance work and monitoring mechanisms.

In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party indicates that a conservation plan, a maintenance work plan, and reinforced monitoring mechanisms will be incorporated in the management plan. In this framework, the results of the "HTC-ATACORA" research project, financed by the Air and Climate Agency of Wallonia and the Catholic University of Louvain, will be used to identify *sikien* requiring maintenance work. The State Party also adds that clear protection and conservation priorities will be defined for areas with high concentrations of attributes. A work calendar, with the projected action plans, will be drawn up and finalised at the first session of the management committee in 2022.

Monitoring

The monitoring indicators, and the corresponding monitoring intervals, are described in the extension nomination dossier. The main indicators for measuring the state of conservation of Koutammakou are the state of conservation of the environment, the state of conservation of skills, respect for tradition and for the intangible heritage, and the cultural attractiveness derived from the authenticity and good conservation of Koutammakou.

The nominated extension is monitored on a multi-annual basis by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPC), with support from representatives of the local communities, and national and international technical and scientific partners. The State Party states that links are also maintained with the Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPC) of Togo, notably through training courses given by the EPA (School of African Heritage).

In view of erosion threats, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the property should be monitored more frequently. ICOMOS also notes that the monitoring system must include risk management as a monitoring indicator.

ICOMOS considers that the documentation should be updated, taking into account the results obtained by the Catholic University of Louvain and the NGO Eco-Benin. It will be necessary to incorporate a conservation plan, a maintenance work plan, and reinforced monitoring mechanisms in the management plan, in order to take these factors into account. ICOMOS considers that, for areas with high concentrations of attributes, it will be desirable to define clear protection and conservation priorities. It will also be useful to draw up a work calendar (with short-, medium- and long-term action plans). The monitoring system must also be adapted to facilitate the incorporation of its results into the Periodic Report questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

Koutammakou has national cultural heritage status, under the terms of Article 3 of the Interministerial Order 2020 N°271/MTCA/MCVDD/MEF/DC/SGM/CTJ/CTC/DPC/CCJ/SA058SGG20, which defines its geographical limits and stipulates its Beninese components. This order recognises the tangible and intangible attributes of the nominated extension, including its traditional protection mode.

The nominated extension is protected by Law N° 91-006 of 25 February 1991 on the Cultural Charter in the Republic of Benin; by Law N° 2007-20 of 23 August 2007 on protection of cultural heritage and natural cultural heritage in the Republic of Benin; and by the Decree N° 2019-521 of 27 November 2019 on the attributions, organisation and functioning of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Art.

The Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPC) is the body that devises, implements, monitors and evaluates the State Party's cultural heritage policies and strategies. Accordingly, it elaborates the national policy and strategy for cultural heritage protection and management; ensures that a framework is set up for the inventory, conservation, enhancement and classification of historic and contemporary monuments, and archaeological, historic and natural sites; and devises the strategy for the enhancement of the historic and cultural heritage, particularly by creating a national certification or designation to apply to the most outstanding elements of the Beninese cultural heritage.

Furthermore, Article 10 of the Law N°2007-20 provides for the setting up of the National Cultural Heritage Protection Commission.

The nominated extension moreover is subject to the traditional protection mechanisms, including for example respect for the spirits of ancestors, and the *Dikuntri* and *Difuani* rites of passage.

Management system

A management plan (for 2021-2025), officially approved in 2020, was drawn up in line with the principles and guidelines of the management plan (for 2016-2026) for the Togolese part inscribed on the World Heritage List. The objective, once the extension has been inscribed, is to put in place a single management plan for the whole of Koutammakou.

The management framework is administered at national level by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPC), attached to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts; at departmental level by the Departmental Directorate of Tourism, Culture and Arts of Atacora-Donga; and at local level by a Service for the Conservation and Promotion of Koutammakou, which is currently being set up.

The nominated extension is managed on a traditional basis by the villages and by the clans. Traditional management is governed by the codes established in Tammari society, whereby each member of a clan or lineage is aware of his or her identity and role in protecting the whole of Koutammakou; respect for traditional land law, with the land belonging to the spirits of the place, and then to the community; and the regulation and traditional management of the territory by the *katenkaya*, the earth priests, the allocation of farmland, which belongs to the community and not to individuals. The CNLD (National Ditammari Linguistic Commission) also participates in the traditional management of the property through its branches in the villages.

ICOMOS notes that the management plan provides for the creation of a Service for the Management and Promotion of Koutammakou. In the additional information of November 2021, the State Party informed that the management committee is operational following the ministerial order 2021 N°0142/MTCA/DC/SGM/CTJ/DAF/DPC/CCJ/SA/003SGG21 of 15 April 2021 that created the Koutammakou site management committee. The committee is made up of all the stakeholders in charge of the nominated extension. The committee members have already been appointed, and an initial meeting was held in August 2021.

The State Party does not directly fund the conservation of *sikien* architecture, as the construction of new *sikien* and their conservation are entirely the result of the local communities' efforts. The State Party funding allocated to Tammari culture, via the NGO Éco-Bénin, is aimed at ensuring the development of responsible cultural tourism. The Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DPC) is currently mobilising resources for the partial implementation of the management plan for 2021-2025. Negotiations are under way, particularly with municipalities, to set aside budgets for the conservation of Koutammakou.

In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party also specifies that a detailed investment budget, broken down into annual expenditures, and corresponding to each priority of the projected action plan, will be finalised in the first half of 2022. The State Party adds that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts has

allocated a budget of some 65 million CFA francs for the annual work plan for 2022.

The management plan for the nominated extension has three goals: to ensure legal protection and efficient management for the conservation of Koutammakou; to showcase and promote Koutammakou and Tammari culture as well as sustainable tourism; and to help improve living conditions for the Batammariba.

In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party gave details of the measures in place to ensure trans-border cooperation with the Togolese part of the World Heritage property already inscribed. From the outset, the State Party states that collaboration with Togo began from the start of the extension nomination process. The Togolese management committee for the property has actively participated in the validation of the Beninese management plan. If the extension is approved, a transnational property management body will be set up before 2024, under the supervision of the two cultural heritage Directorates of Togo and Benin. The modus operandi and missions of the body will be defined by bilateral agreement.

ICOMOS notes that the impact of climate change and bad weather is taken into account as a factor affecting the property in the extension nomination dossier. The additional information submitted by the State Party indicates that several concrete actions referred to in the management plan have already been implemented to take this factor into account. The documents already drawn up are the National Risk Analysis and Coverage Scheme and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (2019-2030). Since 2015 the commune of Boukombé has drawn up a communal contingency plan for responses to flooding, pockets of drought, soil erosion and fires. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre is supporting a programme for the period 2021-2022 focused on ensuring the resilience of communities in combating adverse climate change impacts in the Togolese and Beninese parts of Koutammakou.

ICOMOS emphasises that it is important to draw up a risk management plan and a conservation plan in order to fully take into account the impact of climate change and bad weather in the management of the nominated extension.

The IUCN also recommends the possibility of establishing an integrated management structure that covers both the cultural and natural values of the nominated extension and guarantees the integration of duly qualified personnel dedicated to the conservation of natural values.

Visitor management

The State Party aims to make tourism a key economic development priority by creating the ANPT (National Heritage Promotion and Tourism Development Agency). On the ground, the ANPT assists and provides technical and financial support to the NGO Éco-Bénin for the implementation of the “Route des Tata” project.

Other practical initiatives are under way, such as the project to create the CICO (International Centre for the Otammari Civilisation) under the leadership of the NGO CERD Bénin. At Natitingou, the regional museum displays Koutammakou heritage (scale models of *sikien*, everyday objects) to visitors. Koutammakou cultural events are also held; there are two cultural festivals held in Benin and Togo – the Tammari Art and Culture Festival FESTAM, and the Tamberma Festival FESTAMBER -, and the hope is to merge them into a single trans-border event. Visitor circuits are being put in place through the efforts of local guides, associations and NGOs. Local communities in the village of Koussoucoingou set up an association in 2007, and now offer accommodation in *sikien* to visitors, organise tourism trails, and provide introductions to local gastronomy and craft techniques. To date twenty-three dwellings are available for tourist accommodation, and 7,096 tourists stayed in them in 2019.

In the additional information provided in January 2022, the State Party informs that the planned tourism strategy will take into account the calendar of cultural events and ceremonies, in order to prevent the “folklorisation” of local traditions and practices. In the framework of the “Route des Tata” project, the guarantors of tradition are directly involved in conservation, maintenance and showcasing actions, as are the *takienta* owners, united in an association. Two local community representatives also sit on the Koutammakou management committee to enable information sharing, and guides have received training in sustainable tourism approaches.

Community involvement

The traditional management of the nominated extension has enabled the conservation of the architectural and landscape models of Koutammakou. The relationships between the environment, dwellings and lifestyles of the Batammariba (social structure and organisation, building methods, etc.) are exemplary from this viewpoint. ICOMOS emphasises that the involvement of the local communities in the protection and everyday management of their architectural heritage and their environment is clearly visible, as is the positive reaction to the extension nomination proposal.

The extension nomination dossier also describes the ways in which Tammari society is evolving, under the impacts in particular of education, the centralisation of administrative power, mainstream religions, tourism, increasing monetarisation, and the appearance of new needs. The State Party indicates that, in order to attenuate risks of abandonment of traditional management forms, it is important to achieve greater involvement of the Batammariba in traditional Koutammakou management and conservation practices. In this respect, the “Route des Tata” project has enabled the training of specialised builders and the construction of *sikien*. The communities have also actively participated in the planting of a plantation of locust bean and shea trees.

ICOMOS notes however that there is no indication of any link between this traditional system and the management and conservation plans. For example, the management plan does not include any action to involve local communities in the activities planned in the devolved structure to ensure legal protection and efficient management for the conservation of Koutammakou.

ICOMOS considers that a form of combined protection, incorporating both traditional and institutional stewardship, is an asset in terms of ensuring the involvement of local communities and increasing their awareness and participation in the safeguarding and management of the extension nominated for inscription.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated extension

To sum up, ICOMOS considers that the management system for the nominated extension combines both traditional management, at village and clan level, and the legislative measures taken by the State Party to protect the site and involve local populations. If the extension is approved, the State Party also emphasises in the additional information that a transnational body for the management of the property will be set up before 2024, under the supervision of the two cultural heritage Directorates of Togo and Benin.

In view of the threats of erosion, ICOMOS notes that it will be necessary to incorporate a conservation plan, a maintenance work plan, and reinforced monitoring mechanisms in the management plan, in order to take these factors into account. In the case of areas with high concentrations of cultural and natural attributes, clear protection and conservation priorities will have to be defined.

ICOMOS also notes that it is necessary to ensure greater involvement of the Batammariba in the management of the property, and to take into account traditional practices for the management and conservation of Koutammakou. For example, the management plan does not include any action to involve local communities in the activities planned in the devolved structure to ensure legal protection and efficient management for the conservation of Koutammakou.

With regard to the issues of documentation, protection and conservation measures, the transnational management of the property and tourism management, it is necessary for the State Party to draw up a road map and an implementation calendar that could cover all these aspects by establishing priorities over the short, medium and long terms, provided that adequate financial resources can be obtained, including funding from external sources.

6 Conclusion

Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba, extends from north-eastern Togo to north-west Benin. The Togolese part was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004, and the nominated extension adds the Beninese part to the existing World Heritage property.

The nominated extension is an essentially changing and living cultural landscape. It is characterised by an original land management by the Batammariba, whose dwellings (*takienta*) embody an architecture that is unique for the technical prowess of its construction, the ingenuity of the spaces it affords, and the richness of its symbolic significance. Groves, springs and sacred rocks, terraced slopes and networks of water retaining walls, forests and plant species used in the construction of the *sikien*, associated with the rituals and beliefs of the Batammariba, are the component parts of this cultural landscape. The cultural landscape of Koutammakou is an example of the close relationships between human beings and nature, and is crucial for an understanding of the synergistic lifestyle of the Batammariba in the Atacora massif. The relationships there between environment, dwellings and lifestyles (social structure and organisation, construction methods, etc.) are exemplary. The nominated extension will restore the historical integrity of the land of the Batammariba. The religious centres of Koubonku and Koubentiéguou are still today sacred places for the Batammariba, who continue to hold major acts of worship and initiation ceremonies there.

ICOMOS considers that the extension nominated for inscription has the potential to be approved for the World Heritage List, on the basis of criteria (v) and (vi). However, several important aspects require additional actions on the part of the State Party. The results of the inventory conducted in 2021 by the Catholic University of Louvain and the NGO Éco-Bénin should be taken into account in the management of the cultural landscape of Koutammakou, in view of the 4,550 *sikien* identified, compared with the 1,545 *sikien* previously listed in the 2017-2018 inventory, and on which this extension nomination dossier is based. Furthermore, a map showing the location of the *sikien* in their territory, and indicating in detail the nature of the land use, the terraced slopes, the network of water retaining walls, the location of groves and other sacred places, is also necessary. This would enable the identification of areas with high concentrations of cultural and natural attributes, and provide a better picture of the original spatial organisation of this specific territory, but would also guarantee that areas worthy of a more protective approach could be very closely monitored.

ICOMOS also considers that a form of combined protection, incorporating a stewardship that is both traditional and institutional, is an asset to ensure the involvement of local populations and to increase their awareness and their participation in the safeguarding and management of the nominated extension. The State Party should ensure greater involvement of local communities in the property management and conservation plan, and take

into account traditional practices for the management and conservation of Koutammakou.

In order to guarantee the preservation of the property, it is recommended that the management plan should be supplemented by the drawing up of a full conservation plan, a maintenance work calendar, and reinforced monitoring mechanisms, with an associated action plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals, and dedicated financial resources.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

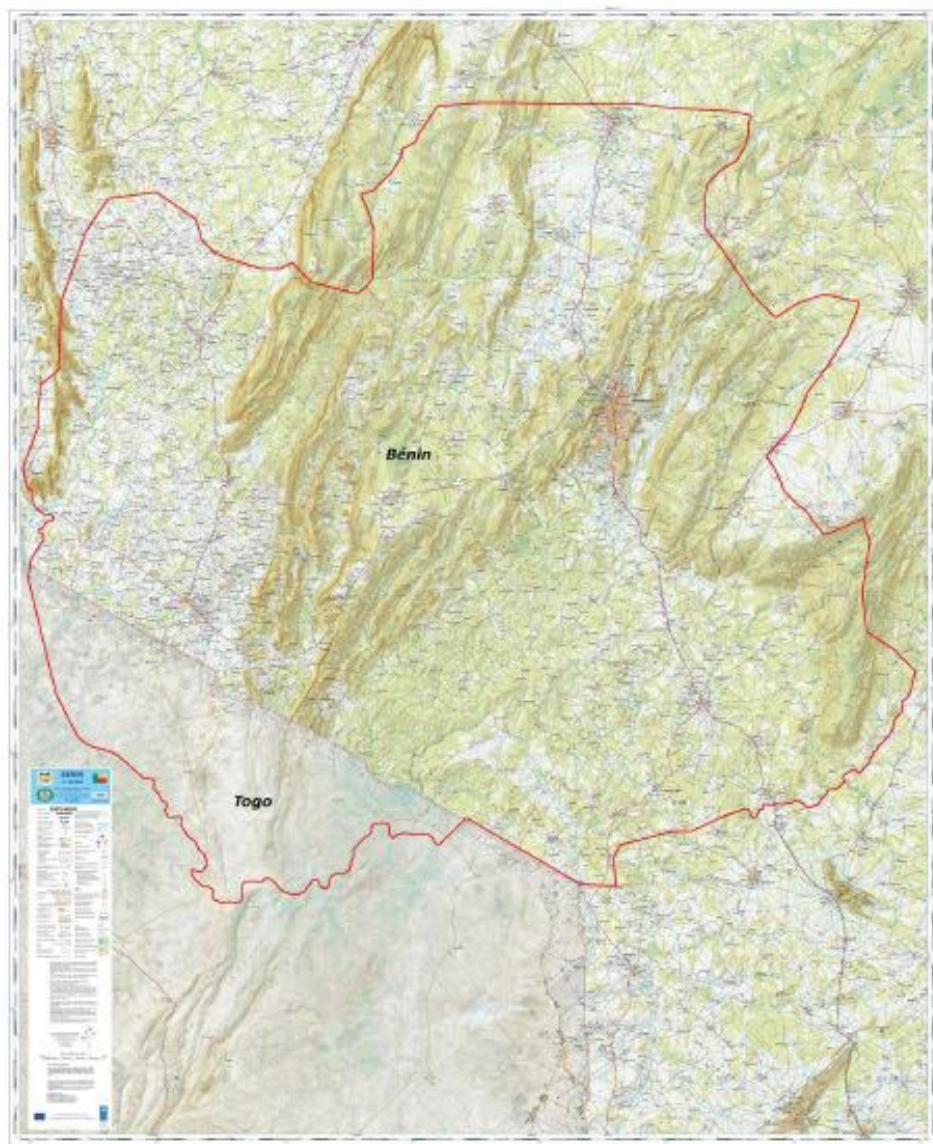
ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the extension of Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba, Benin, be **referred back** to the State Party, to allow it to:

- Draw up in the short term a map indicating the location of the *sikien* in their territory, and providing details of the nature of land use, the terraced slopes, the network of water retaining walls, and the location of groves and other sacred places. This geo-referenced database will ensure regular updating and appropriate document management, which are essential for effective management and protection of the proposed extension and its attributes;
- Incorporate in the short term the results of the “HTC-ATACORA” research project in the management of the cultural landscape of Koutammakou. These results will be useful in more precisely identifying areas of high concentrations of cultural and natural attributes;
- Ensure in the short term greater involvement of local communities in the management and conservation plan of the proposed extension, and take into account traditional practices for the management and conservation of Koutammakou;
- Elaborate in the short and medium terms the municipal development master plans of Boukombé, Toucountouna and Natitingou, and the urban planning regulations for the urban centre of Boukombé;
- Incorporate in the management plan in the short and medium terms a conservation plan, a maintenance work plan, and strengthened monitoring mechanisms in order to take these factors into account;
- Define in the short and medium terms clear protection and conservation priorities for areas with high concentrations of attributes;
- Implement this road map in accordance with the established order of priority, and subject to obtaining adequate financial resources, including from external sources.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS also recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following points:

- a) Setting up the transnational property management body, under the supervision of the two cultural heritage Directorates of Togo and Benin, and defining its operating procedures and missions,
- b) Preparing a risk management plan to take into account the impact on the proposed extension of climate change and bad weather,
- c) Considering the possibility of establishing an integrated management structure, covering both the cultural and natural values of the proposed extension, and guaranteeing the integration of duly qualified personnel, dedicated to the conservation of natural values;



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property