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## Konso (Ethiopia)

### No 1333rev

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#### Official name as proposed by the State Party

The Konso Cultural Landscape

#### Location

Konso Administrative District, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

#### Brief description

At the end of the Ethiopian arm of the Great Rift Valley, lie the intensively terraced, steep, arid Konso highlands, rising to around 2,000 metres and overlooking plains on all sides.

The nominated area extends to 55 sq kilometres. Lying on the eastern slopes, the property encloses the upper reaches of three high level valleys, two draining to the south-east and one to the north.

The stone walled terraces, some rising to five metres in height, support fields of millet and corn, and are part of an intense, communally organised and finely balanced agricultural system which incorporates water-management systems that ensure that water seeps from one terrace to another in order that the greatest number of fields make use of the available water.

Within the terraced landscape, are stone-walled settlements (*paletas*) crowing the summit of hills. They are variously encircled by between one and six defensive dry stone walls. Each of the settlements has several large open communal and ceremonial spaces (*moras*), with large round thatch-roofed structures (*paftas*), used for meetings, games etc, and bachelors' dormitory. The mainly thatched roofed domestic and agricultural buildings are arranged around fenced compounds.

The Konso are notable for the erection of *wakas*, memorial statues to a dead man. These stylised wooden carvings are arranged in groups, representing the man, his wives and heroic events such as the killing of an enemy or an animal such as a lion or a leopard.

#### Category of property

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

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (January 2008) paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

## 1 Basic data

#### Included in the Tentative List

30 September 1997

#### International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

1998

#### Date received by the World Heritage Centre

27 January 2009

31 January 2011

#### Background

This is a referred back nomination (34 COM, Brasilia, 2010).

A first nomination dossier for the Konso Cultural Landscape was examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 34<sup>th</sup> session (Brasilia, 2010). At the time, ICOMOS recommended that the nomination be deferred in order to allow the State Party to:

- Undertake and provide a more detailed inventory of the key attributes such as town walls, *paftas*, shrines;
- Re-define the boundary to reflect the key attributes of the property, the geo-morphology of the area, and social and cultural units, and in particular consider the interface between Dokatu towns and Karat;
- Augment the comparative analysis;
- Define and put in place a buffer zone to protect the property from urban development;
- Strengthen and augment structures and regulations to ensure support for customary systems;
- Strengthen the planning processes to ensure that the spatial planning of the towns is conserved;
- Ensure more active involvement of regional and national authorities in the management and conservation.

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

Furthermore, ICOMOS considered that the international community should be invited to support this extraordinary landscape to ensure that its communities can meet the challenge of establishing a sustainable future.

The World Heritage Committee adopted the following decision:

Decision 34 COM 8B.11:

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Documents WHC-10/34.COM/8B and WHC-10/34.COM/INF.8B1,

2. Refers the examination of the nomination on the basis of cultural criteria of Konso Cultural Landscape, Ethiopia, back to the State Party to allow it to:

- a) Undertake and provide a more detailed inventory of the key attributes such as town walls, paftas, shrines;
- b) Re-define the boundary to reflect the key attributes of the property, the geo-morphology of the area, and social and cultural units, and in particular consider the interface between Dokatu towns and Karat;
- c) Augment the comparative analysis;
- d) Define and put in place a buffer zone to protect the property from urban development;
- e) Strengthen and augment structures and regulations to ensure support for customary systems;
- f) Strengthen the planning processes to ensure that the spatial planning of the towns is conserved;
- g) Ensure more active involvement of regional and national authorities in the management and conservation;

3. Also considers that the international community should be invited to support this extraordinary landscape to ensure that its communities can meet the challenge of establishing a sustainable future.

In response to this decision, the State Party has supplied the following new information to supplement the original nomination dossier:

- Executive summary and revised nomination file, January 2011
- Management plan, January 2011
- Konso proclamation, April 2010
- Maps showing revised boundaries
- Photos and note on photos, 2011

The revised nomination is for a much enlarged area, some four times the area of the first nomination and includes some settlements as well as extensive terraced landscapes. It also includes further walled towns.

#### Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and several independent experts.

Comments on the first ICOMOS assessment of this cultural landscape were received from IUCN on 18 February 2010 and were related to the following issues:

- Boundaries
- Protection and Management

The information was carefully considered by ICOMOS in reaching the final decision and recommendation in March 2010, and IUCN has also reviewed the presentation of its comments as included in ICOMOS's first report.

#### Literature consulted (selection)

Amborn, H., 'Agricultural Intensification in the Burji-Konso Cluster of South-Western Ethiopia', *Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa* XXIV, 1989.

Hallpike, C.R., *The Konso of South Western Ethiopia: A Study of the Values of a Cushitic People*, 1972.

Shinohara, T., 'The Symbolic Meaning of the Pot on the Roof. A case study of the Konso in Southern Ethiopia', in *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*, 1, Kyoto, 1993.

Watson, E., *Living Terraces*, 2009.

Watson, E.E., 'Agricultural Intensification and Social Stratification: Konso contrasted with Marakwet', in Mats Widgren and John Sutton, eds., *Islands of Intensification*, 2004.

#### Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 19 October to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009. As this is a referred nomination, ICOMOS has not been able to undertake a second mission to consider the revised boundaries, or to view the new areas.

#### Additional information requested and received from the State Party

None

#### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2011

## 2 The property

#### Description

The revised nominated area extends to 230 sq kilometres or 23,000 ha, about 10% of the overall Konso hills. This is just over four times the area of the first nomination. The revised boundaries, as understood from the maps provided, now follow recognisable geographical features and encompass coherent geo-physical areas.

The much enlarged area extends the property slightly to the north, east and south and substantially to the west. It brings in eight more walled towns near the original twelve and extensive terraced hills in the west that display very different settlement pattern of scattered unfortified, small villages with rectangular houses.

The dry and rugged Konso range of mountains rise out of the Ethiopian arm of the Great Rift Valley in south-west Ethiopia. The area is home to the Konso speaking people who live in stone walled settlements on the summit of hills, facing high level valleys that drain to the surrounding plains. All slopes of the mountains display

steep stone-revetted terraces that make agriculture possible in this area of low and unpredictable rainfall through sophisticated soil and water conservation measures, many carried out communally, and encompassing rain-water harvesting, leaf fodder, intercropping and agro-forestry.

The first nomination covered land lying on the eastern slopes of the hills enclosing the upper reaches of three high level valleys, two draining to the south-east and one to the north. The much enlarged nomination extends the boundaries to cover the western parts of the Konso hills and so also includes the valleys draining to the west.

In the north-east of the nominated area is the modern urban area of Karat and this has been excluded.

Within the original nominated area were 12 fortified settlements, 3 associated sacred forests, used for ritual and medicinal purposes plants, and shrines. The enlarged area has encompassed as far as ICOMOS can understand, eight more fortified settlements in the east and an unknown number of unfortified settlements scattered over the western valleys. No details have been provided for these additional settlements, apart from some data on two in an Annex.

The various aspects of the landscape are considered separately.

#### *Terraced Landscape*

The Konso area has the highest degree of uncertainty regarding rainfall due to its position at the southern extremity of the highlands. The problem is not usually an absence of rain but an abundant discharge in a short time, hence the use of terracing to collect the maximum amount water and to discharge any excess in a regulated way.. In those years when rain is scarce, the terraces similarly optimise the collection of water.

The terraces prevent soil erosion and maximise water retention. Crops are grown in rotation throughout the year. Coffee, cotton and chat are cash crops. Twenty-four different varieties of millet are grown as well as wheat, barley, sorghum, maize, peas, beans, potatoes, banana, cotton and coffee.

The descriptions provided relate to the terraces in the area covered by the original nomination. Terraces can be up to 8m high and the width depends upon the steepness of the slope. They are made where the soil is cut away to make a perpendicular face and a stone wall built against it. Foundations are usually small (10 – 25cm). Stone is moved from above and used to level the lower area.

Men and women work together in building and maintaining the terraces, although stonework is the job of men. Women use *tomas* (long wooden bowls carved from trees) to move earth.

Bends in the wall are reinforced by turrets. Turrets seldom rise more than 2m above the field. They are used as platforms to protect crops from birds and animals. For further support, flanking walls are built to cross the terraces perpendicularly, approximately 50m apart. These are up to 1.5m high and serve as pathways.

To protect the fields, the Konso maintain their cattle, sheep and goats in stalls and feed them by hand or supervise their grazing.

The revised nomination has provided a map of the overall nominated area showing the percentage of the land area that is under terraced cultivation. Apart from the river valleys, the coverage of the hillsides by terraces varies between around 50% to over 80 % depending on the steepness of the slopes.

The newly nominated western terraces extend the nomination beyond the regions of Fasha and parts of Karate (within the Konso *wereda* or administrative area) into parts of the Kulme region. Although the new boundaries follow geographical features, it is not clear what the relation is for the new boundaries in terms of cultural units.

#### *Fortified Settlements - paletas*

In the north, eastern and southern part of the nominated area the settlements are walled and fortified. Known as *paletas*, these towns are all on flat or mainly flat land on or near the summits of hills. There are enclosed by between one and six concentric walls of basalt boulders.

The nominated area contains the following walled towns. The first twelve were in the original nominations, the last eight have been added in the revised nomination (as shown on the new maps) and some details have been provided for only two of these:

Gamole, 3 walls  
Gocha, 1 wall  
Mechelo, 3 walls  
Lower Dokatu, 6 walls  
Burquda, 1 wall  
Hulme, 1 wall  
Dara, 6 walls  
Olanu, 4 walls  
Mecheke, 1 wall  
Burjo, 1 wall  
Gaho, 1 wall  
Busso, -1 wall  
Nalaya Segen, number of walls not known  
Jarso, number of walls not known, but multiple  
Lehaite, number of walls not known  
Gume, number of walls not known  
Gera, number of walls not known  
Un-named town south-west of Gera, not known  
Gesergio, not known  
Un-named town in south-east, not known

The walls reflect it seems a response to population increase, with the inner walls being the oldest, and in most case the highest, reaching up to 4 metres in height and in places 2.5 metres wide.

It is stated that the most heavily fortified towns with multiple rings of heavily built stone walls. (e.g., Doketu, Gamole, Derra, Jarso, Olanta, Gamole) are considered to be the oldest but also furthest to the east of the nominated area, while towns with only one wall are further west (e.g., Mecheke, Burjo, and Gaho) and may have been developed later.

The outer walls of each of the towns have two or more exit gates leading to water sources, farms or markets.

Each town is governed by an autonomous council of elders and divided into smaller administrative neighbourhoods or wards known as *kantas*. Each member of the community will belong to one of the *kantas*.

Within the towns, the Konso live in individual compounds surrounded by wood and stone fencing. The compound is divided into two halves: the upper part for people and the lower for animals and storage. Usually there are 5 or 6 thatched structures, including the house, stores and granary, a grinding space with a stone mortar, often in the lower part of the granary, and a cattle kraal.

Within each of the towns are several *moras*, large open communal and ceremonial spaces. There can be up to seventeen *moras* in a *paleta*, located at the centre of the main central wall and at different locations within the towns. There might be one or two outside of the walls. Paths lead from gates to *moras*. Paths also connect one *mora* to another.

Some *moras* have tall round thatch-roofed structures, known as *paftas*. These are larger and more ornate versions of ordinary houses, with stone slab seating areas and thatched roofs supported by stout juniper posts. They are the practical and ceremonial centres of daily life. They are used for meetings, games etc, and used to be as bachelors' dormitories, associated with ceremonies related to the transfer of power to the younger age groups but this ceremony now only takes place in Doketu.

These *paftas* are a reflection of communal pride and serve as the show-pieces in each village. They may be surrounded by 'generation' trees, *ulahitas* dead junipers up to 40 feet high transported from the forests, monolithic stone stele, *daga-hela*, reflecting the success of warriors, oath taking stones and ritual spear sharpening stones.

Within each town, one or two central *moras* occupy the highest status. These have higher stone walls, larger *paftas*, larger and more generation trees, and up to 5 or 6 stele.

In the original documentation provided it was not clear how many *paftas* existed or where they were. Annotated maps have been provided for each of the towns originally nominated which show the position of the *paftas*.

The fortified settlements once contained all the houses within their walls which were accessed by two or more main gates. Today these gates no longer need to be guarded or actively defended (and side entrances through the outer wall may now substitute), and the distinction between the enclosed, densely settled 'town' and the surrounding terraced cultivation has been blurred in several instances, as families are preferring to site their homes outside the enclosing wall or along the road.

There is also a growing tendency for households in the walled *paletas* (and those who have built outside the walls) to reconstruct their dwelling houses in rectangular shape convenient for roofing with corrugated metal sheets. These metal roofs catch the eye from afar.

However, in those compounds where metal roofing has been introduced, it is usually confined to the main house alone, and the layout and function of the other structures and spaces has not been radically affected.

The individual *paletas* for which information is provided are as follows:

#### Gamole

Gamole walled town has three dry stone walls with the outer wall approximately 1,300 metres long. The inner wall is the oldest and encloses what is believed to be the original settlement. Gamole has eight *Moras*. The *dina* woodland around the town is mostly destroyed due to population and development pressures.

#### Gocha

Gocha has one stone wall around 1,700 metres long with five gates. The walls are, however, mostly destroyed and few families live in the town. There are five *moras* within the town and one outside. Outside the line of the walls is a small *dina*, with decaying *wakas* (burials). In recent years the community has failed to maintain this area.

#### Mechelo

Mechelo is considered with Gamole and Gocha to be one of the oldest walled towns. It has three walls, the external walls covering around 1,700 metres. The average height of the inner wall is nearly two metres but it rises to just over four metres in places. Mechello has seventeen *Moras*. These have *Daga-dirumas* and *Olayta* trees rather than *paftas*. Mechelo is one of the few towns to keep part of its *dina*. Around 2,500 sq metres survive with thirteen grave markers.

#### Dokatu

Dokatu is the collective name for three walled towns, Lower Dokatu, Burquda and Hulme. The main Konso-

Jinka road passes between Burquda and Hulme and all three are near the growing urban area of Karat. Generally the towns of the Dokatu cluster collaborate together during rituals and to combat fire accidents.

Lower Dokatu has six walls with an outer length of around 1,600 metres. In contrast to other towns, the outermost walls are the highest rising to just over 3.5metres. The town is large covering 158,293 sq. metres. There are 6 gates and 19 *moras*. Its two sister towns have their own *moras* too. Nevertheless, some of the *moras* in the three towns provide services to all three communities during common rituals such as the Kara ceremony.

No descriptive details are given for Burquda and Hulme. Each has one wall.

#### Dara

Dara has six walls with the outer wall extending to just over a 1,000metres. Some of the walls reach to 4.5metres in height. There are four gates and nine *moras*, one being outside the walls.

#### Olanta

Olanta has four walls, the outer around 1,000 metres in length. There are three gates and 15 *moras* with nine *paftas*.

#### Mecheke

Mecheke has one wall running to 1,300 metres. There are five gates and eleven *moras*.

#### Burjo

Burjo is a small town with a single wall, around 800 metres long. There are four gates and four *moras*.

#### Gaho

Gaho also has a single wall extending to around 800 metres. There are six gates and nine *moras* with *paftas*.

In both Burjo and Gaho the walls are lower than in other towns – perhaps reflecting their central position which might be associated with fewer threats. In the two towns there is a tradition of supporting small storage buildings on a single vertical log.

#### Busso

Busso is not fully encircled by a wall as it is protected by natural terrain and walls were only constructed on the flat areas. There are six gates and sixteen *moras*. There are 31 erected stones outside the main gate. There were formerly many *wakas* but these have been stolen or are decayed.

The following eight towns have been included in the revised nomination – for these there is no description and no plan is provided to show the walls, but statistics for the height of walls and numbers of *moras* and *paftas* have been given for Jarso.

#### Nalaya Segen

This town is said to be one of the earlier ones with multiple walls but the number is not given.

#### Jarso

This town is said to be one the earlier ones with multiple walls but the number is not given. However the walls are said to rise to a height of 5.6 metres – which must make them the highest. It has eight *moras* and eight *paftas*.

Lehaite (not marked on map but mentioned in Annex)

Gume

Gera

Un-named town south-west of Gera

Gesergio

Un-named town in south –east

#### Unfortified settlements

An extensive area of terraced landscape in the west of the enlarged property contains scattered settlements. No details have been provided of these other than that none of these are as large as the towns in the east and none are fortified. However it is not clear whether they contain similar round thatched houses to the fortified towns. It is said that *moras* are located in central spaces that are easy to access for all, and sometimes on major tracks.

#### Daga-hela stone stele

The Konso people have an age grading system through which every generation takes responsibility to protect the well being of its community. This system is linked with a tradition of erecting a generation marking stone called Daga-hela. This is freshly quarried piece of columnar basalt reaching some three metres in height and transported and erected through a ritual process called Kara. Generations who have served the community well, based on the views of their elders could have the honour of having their generation marker stone Daga-Hela erected near the most prestigious Mora, as a witness for their good work.

Less successful generations have their stones erected elsewhere in the town or outside the walls. The latter are usually smaller in size.

#### Forests

There are three main sacred Poqolla forests in the Konso areas, Kala (196,430sqm), Bamale (105,338sqm) and Kufa (45,066sqm). The generation trees erected in the *moras* are cut from these forests.

Kala is the best preserved and most actively used. Priests reside near this forest and are buried within them with elaborate *wakas* erected beneath shelters of wood and thatch. It contains several ritual spots such as the Shila Genda or ritual mourning stone, a large basalt block next to two open spaces. One, Kenota, is where young males stay for two months during initiation before they go back in to the Gamole walled town to get married. The other space called Koltoma is reserved for young females. The initiation takes place only once every 18 years. Another block of basalt, called Shila Saga, is where the *Fora* or ritual fight dance takes place.

The scarification for the harvest and conflicts are also arbitrated at Shila Saga and at a nearby block for different communities.

The Bamale sacred forest covers an area of 105,338 square metres. The ritual leader holds the same name, Bamale and lives near the forest with his family. The graves of the earlier Bamales are located at the center of the forest. Unlike the Kala, there are no Wakas placed in the forest. Formerly the trees were mainly Juniperus, but the Derg Government (1974 until 1987) cut much of them for timber. Eucalyptus has since been re-planted. However, since 1991 there has been some regeneration of indigenous species.

The Kufa sacred forest covers an area of 45,066 square metres. The Poqola or priest resides near the forest but there are no recent wakas in the forest. There are ancient graves of ancestors of the present Poqola at the centre of the forest.

Near many of the towns there is a dense grove of euphorbia and finger cactus between the towns and the fields. Known as *dina*, these woods provide firewood and were also used as a burial ground for the towns' artisans who did not have their own land. In spite of their social and cultural functions, many of these areas are now neglected and partly deforested.

#### *Waka (wooden statue) and Daga-diruma (erected stone) Burial markers*

The Konso are notable for the erection of *wakas*, memorial statues to respected members of the community. These large, stylised anthropomorphic statues, usually made of juniper wood, are arranged in groups, representing the man, his wives and particularly heroic events.

Formerly these were erected near the *mora* or near the gates. Latterly they have been put up beside major paths. Many are now neglected.

Farmers were buried in their farms and simpler *wakas* erected, while artisans without land were buried in the *dinas*.

#### *Hardas*

These are water reservoirs located within or near forests. They are also found close to every walled town and dispersed in the landscape and dispersed. They collected rain water for cattle. Some *hardas* are as long as 60 metres and their retaining walls can be up to 13 metres in height. The Dokatu Harda at an altitude of 1,420 meters is among the oldest water reservoir still in use.

The number and location of these are not provided.

### **History and development**

Knowledge of the history of the Konso landscape comes from oral traditions and linguistic analysis and some limited archaeological investigations of a few

settlements, but so far no reliable dates have been obtained.

Oral traditions suggest that the Konso migrated to the present area from the east and north around 21 generations ago – approximately 400 years ago. This is approximately confirmed by the number of incised rings on the generation batons erected on the tombs of the Poqola of the Kala, the earliest ritual chief, the first Kala lived 21 generations ago.

In the management plan more details are provided and it is suggested that the Konso originally came from the east and the west. The eastern group constitutes those who migrated mainly from Liben (Borena) and also those from the Burji areas. People in the western group, reportedly came from the highlands of Dirashe, Mashile, Gewada, and from the Tsema area etc. Almost all of the local informants agree that migrants from the east were the first settlers of the Konso land. They also confirm that people from the west reached the area shortly after the former, but at almost the same time.

There appears to be no oral traditions associated with the building of the terraces.

The compact village tradition and the agricultural system, and also the history of the internal developments which must have occurred century by century, deserve testing through surveys and possible archaeological excavations. Abandoned plots within the existing villages, and more particularly villages long deserted, several of which remain recognisable in the farmland, their walls now modified as cultivated terraces, could be investigated. Research along such lines would bring a new understanding to Konso and its culture.

ICOMOS notes that the nomination dossier acknowledges this need.

Until the incorporation of Konso land into the Ethiopian empire by Menelik II towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, each Konso traditional town enjoyed an autonomous status and used to be administered by traditional institutions. Councils of elders were placed on top of these institutions and although some resistances was reported in Jarso, Guyle and Dokatu, this resistance came to an end with the fall and destruction of Dokatu town.

Until the 1970s, Konso was administrated within the Gamo-Gofa Region, and before the end of the 1980s, under Semen (Northern) Omo Administrative Region. Currently, under the country's federal structure, it has become one of the Special Woredas (districts) under the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS). Its capital is Karat (formerly Bekawile).

### 3 Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity

#### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis does not systematically compare the Konso landscape with other inscribed landscapes in order to show whether there is room for it on the World Heritage List. It mentions Sukur Cultural Landscape, Nigeria (1999, criteria (iii), (v) and (vi)) and the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, Philippines (1995, criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)), both of which are said to be comparable to Konso.

Comparisons are also made with other inscribed 'megalithic' sites, such as Stone Circles of Senegambia, Senegal – Gambia (2006, criteria (i) and (iii)), and sites that demonstrate clan structures, such as the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests, Kenya (2008, criteria (iii), (v) and (vi)).

ICOMOS considers that a case could have been made for consideration of the property on the List had any comparison been made between the overall attributes of the Konso landscape – that are considered to give Outstanding Universal Value – and other sites on the List. This would have shown that the combination of extensive terraces and fortified towns is not otherwise represented on the World Heritage list; even though there are terraced landscapes such as the Sukur Cultural Landscape in Nigeria on the List, these do not demonstrate the complexity of settlement patterns.

Furthermore, in respect of the second part of the comparative analysis which should show whether there are other similar sites that could be nominated, ICOMOS considers that, although there are examples of intensive and highly specialised agricultural communities, both existing and archaeological, in Ethiopia and those mentioned include the Burji and Amaro regions to the east of Konso, the Zala in Gamo country to the north, and elsewhere in eastern Africa, and in part of West Africa. None of these other landscapes exhibits the degree of continuity, or the visual impact offered by Konso, nor particularly the combination of terraces and fortified towns that reflect a very specific response to environmental and social constructs. The combination of terraces and complex walled towns is not paralleled elsewhere.

Within Ethiopia, in Dawro country, there are extensive stone walls in multiple rows remaining from the 18<sup>th</sup> century post-mediaeval Dawro state and these are reported to reach 176km in length – but these linear fortifications are quite different from those of Konso.

Within the Konso area, there are more walled towns than those in the area nominated. The nomination dossier mentions, for instance, that some of the earliest towns are Patangalto, Idigile and Gandma, not in the nominated area. However no comparisons are offered between these and the nominated towns.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis as set out justifies consideration of part of this property for inscription on the World Heritage List – that part that contains the walled towns and associated terraces but not the terraces on their own. However what has not been fully justified is which walled towns should be included within the boundaries.

#### 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 Konso landscape is an extraordinary cultural landscape that reflects a combination of unique architecture, land use, space planning and management, resource mobilization, and ritual practices, in an otherwise hostile environment.
- The compact walled towns with their multi-layered defensive systems, hundreds of thousands of kilometres of long dry stone terraces that are engineered to manage rain water and control soil erosion and that extend over virtually the whole landscape of the Konso hills, bear a striking witness to an intense resilient land use forged by very specific communal social and cultural systems that were an extraordinary response to the area's aridity and unpredictable rainfall.
- In this restricted landscape of rugged mountains and hostile environment, the people of Konso for 500 years have come to learn, understand, appreciate and utilize the available resources to a maximum degree but within a sustainable way and manner.
- The Konso Cultural landscape is therefore, an outstanding example of the human urge to understand and appreciate his environment, whatever constraints it may pose and to use it to the best of his knowledge and capacity applying good practice.

ICOMOS agrees with this statement but stresses that it is the combination of walled towns and terraces that makes the landscape exceptional.

#### Integrity and authenticity

##### Integrity

In the first nomination the proposed boundaries set out to contain the key tangible attributes of terraces, walled settlements, sacred groves and shrines, but excluded some areas that appeared to share similar attributes. The boundaries also did not define geo-cultural units, they cut across the landscape, did not relate to the coherent cultural or social units that sustain the communal farming activities, and did not relate to recognised visual features.

The revised boundaries have addressed these issues. The new boundaries coincide with natural features such as rivers, or roads, or are mark the edge of the densely terraced landscape. A map showing the intensity of

terracing in the Konso areas, based on multiple transects of the area has helped to define the new limits.

However very few details have been provided of the extensive new areas and in particular the terraces and settlements. And in the absence of a mission, no condition report is available. It is therefore not known whether any of these areas are vulnerable or under any specific threats. Nor is it clear how they relate to the landscape of terraces and fortified towns.

In terms of known threats to the area of the original nomination, the greatest threat to integrity is the dispersal of fortified settlements, with houses being built outside the town walls, thus breaking down the clear, distinctive, landscape patterns of settlements, farmland and forest. Other attributes such as the sacred forests, *dina* woodland, traditional house-building techniques, are also to a degree vulnerable.

#### Authenticity

In terms of the original nominated area, the pattern of the overall landscape and what it reveals of the way it has developed over time, in terms of the arrangement of settlements, terraces, forests and shrines is without doubt authentic. As are the continuing, agricultural, social and cultural processes that maintain and sustain this landscape. ICOMOS cannot comment on the extensive new areas that have been included in the revised nomination.

ICOMOS considers that some attributes of the landscape in the original area are vulnerable from lack of maintenance such as forests, woods and grave markers. Others are vulnerable to the changes in materials, or developmental threats (see below) that interrupt the relationship between the walled towns and their landscape. These vulnerabilities could increase unless further structures are put in place and could impact adversely on the overall authenticity of the property.

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ICOMOS considers the condition of integrity appears to have been met in terms of the boundary encompassing all the key attributes of walled towns and terraces, although it is not clear how the extensive new area contributes to the attributes. ICOMOS cannot comment on the vulnerability of the extensive landscape that has been included within the enlarged boundary of the revised nomination. The condition of authenticity has been met for the original area but this has a degree of vulnerability that needs to be addressed, if the overall landscape is to be sustainable. ICOMOS cannot comment on the authenticity of the large area of landscape that is included in the revised boundaries.

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#### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (v) 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 Konso landscape is constituted by the most spectacularly executed dry stone terrace works in the world which are still actively in use by the people who created it. This extraordinary terrace work is a witness of the struggle of man to harness a hostile environment and is today a major human achievement. The landscape also demonstrates the megalithic tradition of stele erection which together with the funerary system that involves the tradition of mummification of their ritual leaders and the carving and erection of anthropomorphic wooden statues represents an exceptional living testimony to traditions that are on the verge of disappearance.

ICOMOS considers that what is being nominated is the overall Konso cultural landscape, and the issue is how this reflects a specific cultural tradition in an exceptional way. ICOMOS considers that the dominant aspects of the landscape that have been nominated are the stone terraces and the fortified towns in their midst. The funerary traditions are an integral part of the cultural traditions associated with the settlements. ICOMOS considers that it is the associations between terraces and the fortified towns that make this landscape so exceptional.

In the first nomination the boundary of the landscape that was nominated did not adequately respect the terrace formation and cut across the cultural and geographical features. The boundaries do now respect geographical features but, from the information provided, ICOMOS is not able to say how far the new boundaries can be said to align with the cultural traditions that created the towns.

Further assessment is needed of the proposed revised boundaries which unfortunately ICOMOS has not been able to undertake in the absence of a mission.

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

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*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 dry stone walls demonstrate an adaptive strategy to the dry environment and that the overall landscape of terraces and the highly organised towns with multiple defence systems demonstrate a strong tradition of common values, social cohesion and engineering knowledge.

ICOMOS considers that the overall Konso landscape, particularly its terraces and associated walled towns, can be seen as an outstanding example of a resilient land use, forged by very specific social and cultural systems that were an extraordinary response to the area's aridity and unpredictable rainfall.

In the first evaluation, ICOMOS considered that the attributes (both physical features and processes) of that system need to be better defined and more carefully mapped in order to set out more appropriate boundaries that respect the morphology of the area and its cultural and social units. The current revised nomination has greatly increased the boundaries to include an expansive area of terraces in the west. This area has perhaps the greatest concentration of terraces but does not have walled towns. ICOMOS has not had the opportunity to assess this area that increases the size of the nominated areas fourfold. However it notes that it has changed the emphasis away from the dominance of the walled towns.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion could be justified for a smaller coherent area that reflects the extraordinary conjunction between terraces and walled towns.

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

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*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 Konso belief system, social organisation, rituals and art (*wakas*) are testimony to traditions of megalithic societies.

ICOMOS considers that the justification provided does not demonstrate how these beliefs are of universal significance in relation to megalithic societies in general, or how the overall cultural landscape reflects these beliefs in an outstanding way.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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ICOMOS does not consider that the criteria and Outstanding Universal Value have been justified at this stage.

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## 4 Factors affecting the property

### Development pressures

One of the main trends identified by the State Party is for new houses to be built outside the enclosing town walls and for old plots to be left abandoned. This trend is not yet undermining the social fabric and functioning of the

villages; but if the process of moving out and leaving abandoned plots continues, this could have a detrimental impact on the value of the spatial organisation and overall social structures of the towns. There is also pressure for schools, clinics, flour mills, churches and modern burials. There appear to be no policies or planning currently that can control these processes adequately so that new buildings respect the patterns of the landscape.

In several villages, the positioning of the water tanks, standpipes and latrine blocks in front of the main entrance, or original gate seems to have been chosen without necessary consultation.

To the north-east, the boundary encircles Karat town, which is an exclusion zone. The population of Karat has doubled in the past ten years and the town is undergoing rapid infrastructural development. To the east and west are the three towns that collectively are called Dokatu. All three are right up against the property boundary with the threat of development in Karat immediately outside. Measures have been now taken to control this interface - see below.

The expansion of the town of Bekawle (the Konso administrative center), had also threatened the terraces that lie in Dokatu, Hulmie, Olanta, and Dara territories. But it is now accepted that the town can only expand toward NE and E directions, outside of the nominated area.

Currently electricity is not connected to all the villages. If the lines continue from those in the existing towns, this could lead to a plethora of overhead lines in the landscape. ICOMOS notes that there has not so far been consideration of whether this can be avoided and how consultation might take place.

It is noted new road constructions has cut across the terraces

### Lack of development

The lack of water supplies and of adequate sewage disposal is a negative factor in terms of encouraging families to stay in the towns and villages.

### Dams

To the south-west of Konso there are projects, apparently going ahead, for a series of dams on the Omo river to supply hydroelectricity to the country's grid (and maybe adjacent countries too). It appears that the approved route for the high-voltage power line is not parallel with the tarmac road through the middle of Konso, but to the east of the nominated area.

ICOMOS considers that assurances need to be given on this point.

### Changing agricultural practice

Sufficient availability of labour for the myriad of tasks necessary to keep the overall agricultural terrace system

functioning is absolutely crucial. Traditionally many of these were apportioned to youths or children, such as promptly repairing damage to walls and drains after storms or scaring birds and monkeys from the ripening grain. Now, with a weakening of the age-grade institutions and communal obligations, strains in maintaining the agricultural cycle are likely to manifest themselves.

#### Demographic changes

Only around 20% of Konso people now live in the heart land of Konso country – that is the nominated villages. It appears that many families have moved to lower ground where it is easier to farm and there are less social constraints. Although they keep links with their ancestral villages, there must be a danger that, unless farmers in the nominated areas can in some way add value to their produce, they will become marginalised and the fortified villages the residences of older people.

#### Tourism pressures

There is clearly a wish to increase tourism but there is also a risk that this could lead to a museumification. The newly inaugurated Konso Museum could play a central role, liaising with other museums and institutions and scholars generally, in providing more sophisticated information (rather than on the traditional terraces and town walls) of the persistent and resilient agricultural and cultural systems and raise awareness within the community, as well as with visitors, of the dynamic social and cultural landscape.

One of the main current adverse impacts of tourism is a rash of lodges, some labelled 'eco-lodges', on prominent sites, directly overlooking villages. The lodges are thatched imitating authentic Konso style – but in entirely unauthentic situations.

It is not clear how permission for these was given but ICOMOS understands that the aim is to provide clearer scrutiny of such proposals in the future.

#### Theft

There is particular concern for the safety of the carved funerary effigies, *wakas*, commemorating senior clan-heads and heroes, since they are subject to decay (as they always were) but also, having acquired some fame and monetary value in the ethno-art world, and are thus now vulnerable to theft. In some villages action has been taken to move *wakas* from their original grave-marking positions to safer ones inside the walls, and to protect them from the elements by erecting shelters of metal sheeting. Others are said to be hidden away and are expected to reappear soon in the safe refuge of the new Konso Museum where there will be suitable conditions (and treatment facilities) for permanent conservation.

#### Environmental pressures

##### Building materials

Customary materials and labour for repairing terraces, town walls and houses, are increasingly being seen as

having a price. The nomination dossier mentioned the cost of thatching grass, for the *paftas* as well as for individual homes, indicating the scarcity of grass in this intensively cultivated landscape, as well as the continuing need for fodder for the stalled cattle.

These factors are exacerbated by the pressure of an increasing population upon all natural resources (and perhaps the reluctance of people to fulfil customary obligations without payment).

Where roofs have been changed from thatch to tin, although this change of style requires an outlay of cash, it may prove in the long run cheaper in terms of the labour (and reciprocity obligations thereby incurred) than obtaining thatching grass and regularly maintaining the roof.

Any policy to sustain traditional roofing will have to find a solution to the scarcity (and expense) of thatching grass.

#### Forestry

IUCN notes that: *'The natural values of the landscape have been heavily degraded and little is left of the original vegetation across much of the area. The sacred forests, which provide some protection to forest remnants, continue to be degraded and cut down. These forests, while small, preserve some natural values, as well as having sacred significance in a number of cases. There has been replacement of some species with exotic Eucalyptus which is reported to exacerbate problems of water management.'*

*The implementation of a reforestation programme, initially for firewood, could be considered priority in the property. Protecting the last remnant natural forests and restoring them is more difficult, but should be attempted in order to retain natural values within the landscape'.*

#### Natural disasters

The property has a degree of vulnerability to earthquakes and to storms which produce flash floods that could inflict considerable damage on the terraces.

#### Impact of climate change

The landscape is clearly vulnerable to changes in rainfall patterns, although during past famines the areas has managed better than other parts of the region. IUCN notes: *'In an already dry environment, climate change is a threat to the values of the landscape and mitigation and adaptation measures should be important components of site management'.*

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ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are changes in traditional practices, related to building construction and forestry, community obligations, resources, a potential over-reliance on tourism, and development pressures from Karat.

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## 5 Protection, conservation and management

### Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The area within the boundary covers approximately 230 sq. Km.

The original boundaries were somewhat arbitrary with long straight lengths cutting across the landscape and not coinciding either with recognisable landscape features or cultural or administrative units. The revised boundaries follow natural and cultural landscape features and include the upper watersheds that feed the irrigation systems.

No buffer zone has been designated as it is stated that the wider landscape is also managed by traditional law.

ICOMOS considers that the larger nominated area gives much more effective protection to the west but the landscape near the cluster of walled towns to the east is still vulnerable to what happens immediately outside the boundary in Karat town and its environs. This landscape does need protection from some form of buffer zone.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundary of the nominated property as revised relate it more clearly to topography and cultural and social units and in so far as it can judge without a site visit, are adequate from the point of view of protection; however either a buffer zone needs to be put in place or planning policies that protect visually contiguous areas that form the setting of the property in the north and east.

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### Ownership

All land is owned by the State as is the case throughout Ethiopia. Terraces are owned by individual members of the community. The forests are 'owned' by the *Poqolla* and members of their family, a status that is defined by traditional law. The walled towns are collectively owned by the community members.

### Protection

#### Legal Protection

The regional Konso proclamation, which came into force in 2010, gives protection by the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Government to the nominated area and specifically to the area and attributes of the 12 walled towns of the original nomination which are listed. The boundaries of these towns are set out.

Specific protection is also given to the towns adjoining Karat. The legislation has placed posts as the limits of the traditional towns, and no construction is to be conducted within the 50 metres space outside the external walls of the traditional towns.

ICOMOS notes that the nomination dossier makes reference to existing Federal Law No. 209/2000

governing the protection of archaeological, ethnographic and cultural sites and artefacts. It is not clear how under decentralisation, specific enforcement under federal law, and prosecution where necessary, will be initiated.

The *Rural Land Administration and Utilization Proclamation No.53/2003* makes provision for customary laws and communal protection and this provides the framework within which the Konso proclamation has been drafted.

#### Traditional Protection

Almost the entire management, maintenance and conservation of the nominated property is carried out by traditional measures. These are supported by the Proclamation mentioned above.

#### Effectiveness of protection measures

However effective traditional practice is, it has the capacity to be highly vulnerable to demographic and social pressures.

ICOMOS considers that traditional management needs to be supported through legal protection or planning measures and encouraged through incentives if it is to survive. These constraints and incentives need to be robust enough to support the living communities of the Konso area in a sustainable way, allowing them opportunities for improved standards of living based on the economy of the terraces rather than from an over-reliance on tourism.

IUCN also notes that: *'The basis for protection of the area is customary law. IUCN questions whether this will be sufficient to guarantee the protection of the nominated property, especially the natural values, over time. It is also of concern that the management plan for the site does not carry legal weight and may not be entirely consistent with customary law. Ideally, governance set-ups integrate customary and formal protection and management in a complementary and consistent fashion.'*

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is has now been strengthened through the Konso Declaration. Although the traditional protection arrangements currently in operation are admirable, they need active support and constraints to ensure they are resilient in response to social and economic changes. ICOMOS considers that the current protective measures for the property need to be augmented and strengthened to support the communities in their massive conservation responsibilities.

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### Conservation

#### Inventories, recording, research

As part of the nomination process, community members have participated in data collection and have led a

mapping process within their respective territory, supported in part by external funding.

As a result, town stone walls have been measured, the *moras* have also been measured, their use and related data recorded, and sketch drawings prepared for two representative *moras*. Sample homesteads have been documented; data on the extent of terraces has been collected through car and foot transects; and a sample terrace area measured systematically. Three major traditionally protected forests and associated cultural manifestations have been documented.

The nomination dossier has however not provided details of all the evidence collected. For instance there are no specific details of the town walls, apart from their plan, nor details of numbers and locations of the *moras*.

Several of the villages, with ward boundaries, *moras* and wall configurations plotted, would serve as an excellent base for more revealing surveys – involving student teams, say – undertaken homestead by homestead (both occupied and abandoned), wherever that can be undertaken without undue intrusion.

#### Present state of conservation

The structures of the landscape that need conservation are extensive: the town walls, wood-and-thatch houses, granaries, stock-stalls within the compounds, the *paftas* in the *mora* spaces, as well as the footpaths, walls, surviving gates etc of every town, and outside, the *dina* woods, graveyards, sacred forests, stone reservoirs, *hardas*, and the vast extent of stone-walled terracing.

Some variation from traditional practice has been noted, in particular the substitution of metal sheets for roofing of houses and the overall positioning of new buildings. Overall the state of conservation of the town walls is fair although some gates are no longer maintained. Some of the *pafta* buildings have been restored with outside funding. There is a problematic lack of maintenance of the *dinas* and *wakas* and thus their state of conservation is poor. There are difficulties with the conservation of the sacred forests where much of the original juniper stands were felled, where there has been replanting with eucalyptus and there is currently little regeneration.

The conservation of the field terraces is good and reflects the need for these terraces as a vital part of the Konso subsistence economy. Features such as the *harda* reservoirs could suffer from neglect if they are rendered redundant by new water supplies.

#### Active Conservation measures

Conservation is governed, up to a point, by local traditional practices and sanctions; but in view of modernising pressures, there is no guarantee that traditional work will continue.

ICOMOS notes that this is acknowledged in the nomination dossier.

In recent years, partly in tandem with the preparation of the nomination dossier, some financial support for conservation has been forthcoming (in particular from the Christensen Fund in USA) through local NGOs. This has brought some valuable results, in particular for the maintenance of village walls, repairing of *moras* and their *paftas* with necessary re-thatching, protective measures for surviving tracts of forest (with appropriate emphasis on the virtue of biodiversity), and reviving of communal cultural events.

The success of this will depend not only on agreement to certain standards but the viability of the overall economic system.

It is difficult to say whether this conservation work would continue if the moral encouragement of a modicum of funding were to be lacking.

The surviving pockets of traditional forests need active conservation. ICOMOS understood that the team preparing the nomination dossier has made special efforts to strengthen or revive the traditional control and management of these forest relicts, and to raise public awareness of the importance of their conservation in the villages around. But if these efforts are to be effective and lasting, ICOMOS considers that a system of constant vigilance, at district as well as local village level, will be essential.

#### Maintenance

Maintenance cannot be separated from conservation in terms of the elements of the Konso landscape.

#### Effectiveness of conservation measures

There is a great reliance on the strengths of the traditional community system with its complex obligations. ICOMOS is concerned that this system is not resilient enough to counter the social and economic forces for change, to the extent that key attributes are conserved, and considers that more proactive engagement is needed at regional and national level.

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ICOMOS considers that conservation approaches need to be better supported at regional and national level.

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#### Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The Konso area is a *wereda* or single administrative unit within the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region/loa State. As a nationality, the Konso have the right to make their own policies.

The nominated area include some of the Konso *wereda* – the Fasha region in the centre, a small part of Karate to the east, including Karat town the main urban area, and part of Kulme region to the west.

The management of the property is based on traditional structures. These are set out in detail in the management plan in terms of Clans, Age and Priestly groups, their sub-groups and functions.

A Management Committee has been agreed at the regional level to include concerned governmental administrative offices, community members including traditional leaders, youth and women representatives. Committees have also been formed at the community level. Although no details are provided as to the responsibilities of these committees.

The involvement of regional and national authorities is confined to inspection. The Konso Office of Culture and Administration inspects the property on a quarterly basis. They can then take any necessary enforcement action. The representatives of the regional government conduct two monitoring missions each year. Both of these are reactive rather than pro-active measures. The national Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) has no officer of its own in the district.

There is also the issue of potential conflicts between conservation and income from new development and tourism projects.

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

A management plan was submitted with the Nomination. This, as outlined above, sets out the current structures and explains how the Konso community, through its recognised village committees and the district management committee, will endeavour to ensure the necessary standards of conservation and handle contraventions. It also sets out the activities of the partners but does not suggest any policies or action plans.

There is a need for the plan to address the presentation of the property, generally and through the new museum, and an overall strategy for visitor management.

Risk preparedness

There is no modern system of risk preparedness in place. Nevertheless, the Konso traditional system has its way of dealing with natural disasters. The terraces, ponds, walls and communally owned properties are conserved by the community work groups.

The community members of the generation in power are alert and sleep together, at night, in the *Pafta* within the *Mora* space to put out fires. Every walled town plants euphorbia and finger cactus in the *Dina* that they use to extinguish fires.

Involvement of the local communities

Local communities underpin this nomination and are at the centre of the management of the area.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

Overall resources are lacking, as noted in the nomination dossier. All the Agencies are trying to provide support but what is available is considered to be insufficient. Some limited funds are available to support tourism projects.

External support from NGOs in recent years has been used to foster community engagement on the repair of features such as walls, *moras* and *paftas*. Whether the level of effort in conservation could be maintained if, for some reason, the external source of these modest funds were to be withdrawn, and if the local organizations dependent on them for core finance and salaries were to suffer as a result it is difficult to ascertain.

There appears to be an unarticulated assumption that revenue from increased tourism will come in after inscription to fill any gaps. This may be related to the setting up of a World Tourism Organization Konso Information office.

Overall there is a need for supportive funds, perhaps through international cooperation with other similar properties.

Effectiveness of current management

The management of this complex cultural landscape needs resources and skilled people to support the commitment and skills provided by local communities. Currently this management support is not in place to a degree that would ensure that the values of the property are sustained over time.

For the property to be sustainable, there will be a need to foster ways for farmers to 'add value' to their produce and for them to benefit from visitors.

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ICOMOS considers that a major effort is needed to bring in support for the traditional management of the property to ensure that it is robust and resilient enough to provide long term conservation.

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## 6 Monitoring

Various monitoring mechanisms have been put in place to capture the work that needs undertaking such as terraces and walls that need maintenance, degradation of *wakas*, houses that need conservation. However there is currently little response that can be put in place to these needs. The monitoring is effective in identifying need rather than the effectiveness of conservation measures. The monitoring also needs to be related to

more detailed inventories or documentation of the key attributes.

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ICOMOS considers that the monitoring is identifying problems but without any real resources to address those problems.

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## 7 Conclusions

The compact walled towns, with their multi-layered defensive systems, and the maintained terraced fields, extending over the surrounding landscape of the Konso hills, bear striking visual witness to an intense, resilient land-use forged by very specific communal, social and cultural systems that were an extraordinary response to the area's aridity and unpredictable rainfall.

The nomination is to be commended for the way it has been developed from community level and harnessed the resources of the community to undertake surveys and provide documentation for the dossier.

What has been nominated in the revised nomination dossier is a vast area encompassing the heart of the Konso area, within which the terraces are at their most dense and the traditions of walled towns most prominent, and a much larger area to the west with terraces and scattered unfortified villages. ICOMOS has not been able to visit and view the large new area that extends the original nomination some four-fold. This very extensive area of terracing is in many ways quite distinct from the area around the walled towns, in terms of its settlement patterns and organisational structure. However few details have been provided of its landscape or its settlements.

It is not clear what the rationale is for the new boundaries in cultural terms as they cut across the Kulme region.

In the original evaluation, ICOMOS considered that management of this terraced landscape would present challenges in terms of sustaining traditional practices and managing the interface with development needs. This challenge is multiplied four-fold with the new boundaries.

ICOMOS considers that a great effort has been made to re-consider the boundaries of the re-nominated area in order that they reflect geographical features and to put in place through the Konso declaration a measure of protection for the nominated area and particularly for the original twelve walled towns.

Unfortunately in the very short time since the Committee considered this nomination, it has not been possible to augment the nomination file to reflect the additional 175 sq kilometres now added within the boundaries, or to fully justify the new boundaries in terms of how they relate to the walled towns.

It is a highly ambitious project to revise the boundaries in this extensive way.

However, the original nominated area had coherence in terms of encompassing the areas of Konso where the walled towns, set within their terraced landscape were the most dense. Also in terms of the Outstanding Universal Value, ICOMOS considered that the combination of terraces and walled towns were not paralleled elsewhere. With the newly extended boundaries, the emphasis has shifted towards the overall terraced landscape and terraced landscapes on their own are found in several other areas.

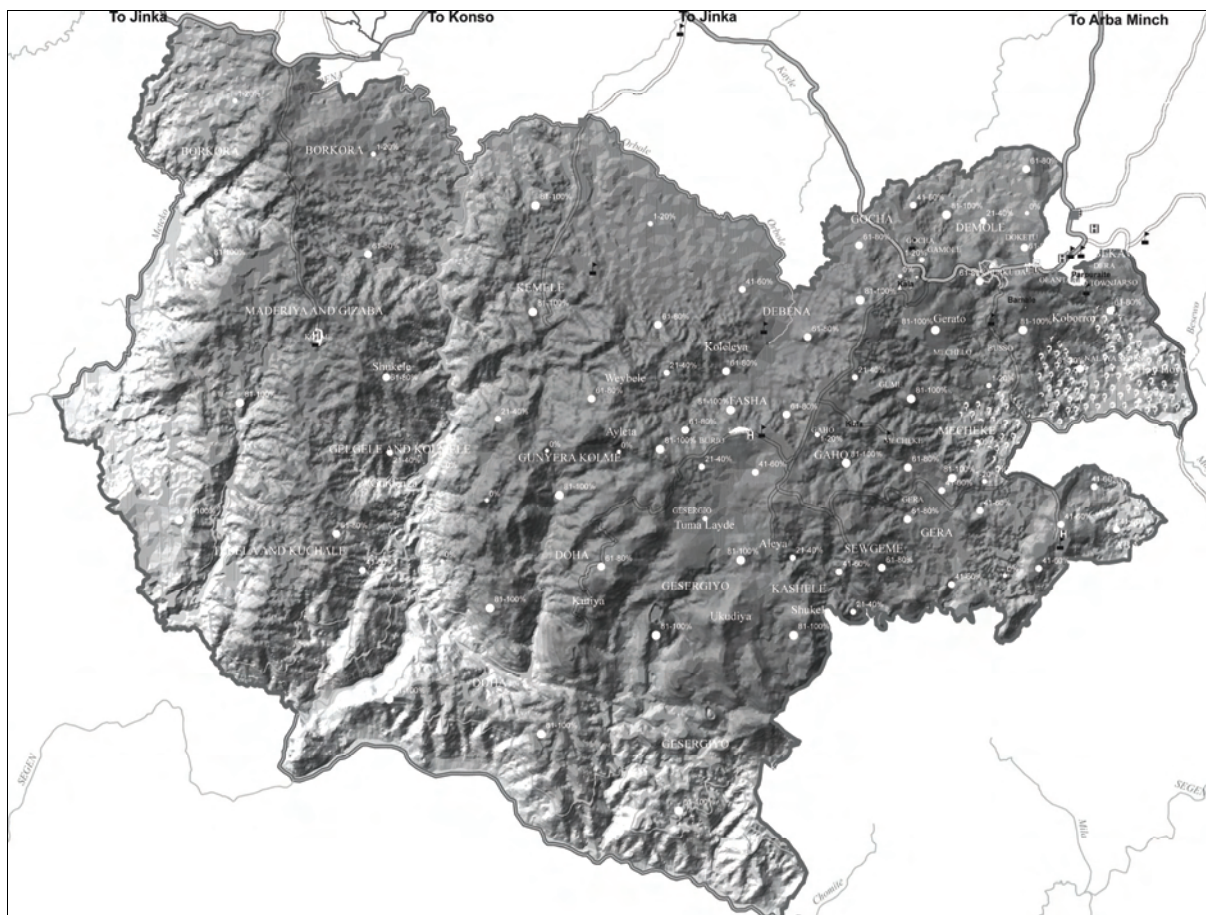
ICOMOS reluctantly considers that it is not possible to evaluate adequately the very large additional area included in the revised nomination without more details being provided of the landscape, settlements, additional walled towns, and without a mission to consider the state of conservation of this very extensive and potentially highly vulnerable terraced landscape and how it will be managed. However on the basis of the information provided, it does appear that the large western extension does not add to the attributes of potential outstanding universal value.

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of the Konso Cultural Landscape, Ethiopia, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party to:

- Re-consider the boundaries to reflect the exceptional combination of walled towns and terraces within a coherent area;
- Augment the nomination dossier to include details of the eight extra walled towns, including their conservation;
- Provide details on how the whole nominated area will be managed;
- Define and put in place a buffer zone to protect the property from urban development around Karat town;
- Strengthen the planning processes to ensure that the spatial planning of the walled towns is conserved;
- Ensure more active involvement of regional and national authorities in the management and conservation.

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





Aerial view of Gamole town



Terraces near Dokatu



*Harda* (water reservoir) near Busso town



*Mora* (communal space) with *pafra* (thatch-roofed structure) at Gamole town