

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Introduction

ADB requires that the impacts on cultural heritage be assessed as part of the overall environmental assessment of a project. Culture heritage is a record of humanity's relationship to the world, past achievements, and discoveries. Cultural heritage, also termed cultural property, cultural patrimony or cultural resources, can be defined as the present manifestation of the human past. It refers to sites, structures, and remains of archaeological, historical, religious, cultural, or aesthetic value. In conserving this heritage we are conserving those elements of our past that have the potential to contribute to our understanding of human history.¹ (See Table 1 for examples of cultural heritage).

Table 1: Selected Types of Cultural Heritage Sites

Main Categories	Sub-types	Examples	Comments
Sacred sites	Burial sites	Xian, China; Tomb Fields, Bahrain.	They are often discovered during the construction phase of projects. The Liaoning Environment Project in China will help conserve ancient burial sites.
	Sites of religious or spiritual significance	Mecca, Saudi Arabia; Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Nepal.	Important cultural sites were often inspired by religious beliefs and are still considered sacred places.
Archaeological sites	Pre-historic sites	Mounds, middens, caves.	These sites are often undetected or overlooked. They frequently shed light on use or overuse of natural resources, changing survival strategies and social organization.
	Historical sites	Historic roads, bridges, dams and other water works, fortifications, and walls.	Many of these structures are still in use, such as Roman roadways in Tunisia or hydrological features in Indonesia. They may also point to changes in sea level, vegetation, and hunting and agricultural practices.
	Engineering and industrial sites	Marib Dam, Yemen; The Great Wall, China; nineteenth century industrial sites (train stations, early woolen mills).	The introduction of new technologies—metallurgy, mortars, arches and vaulting, industrial architecture—can be documented and understood by studying artifacts and earlier structures. This in turn may suggest methods for conservation and may shed light on future avenues of technological advance.
	Submerged or marine sites	Ancient coastal settlements in the Mediterranean and Central America; sunken ships.	New techniques of marine exploration have revealed many sunken ships and submerged sites of ancient human settlement.
Monumental sculpture	Sites within biologically diverse areas or protected reserves	Tikal, Guatemala; sacred groves in Ghana.	Management policies that protect both cultural and natural resources should be developed.
	Cave sculpture	Chinese and Indian Buddhist cave sites.	The protection of these sites depends on an understanding of the processes of deterioration
Monumental painting	Architectural sculpture	Thebes, Egypt; Petra, Jordan.	Exterior sculpture is often damaged by polluted air and rising water tables.
	Cave or wall painting	Tombs in Luxor, Egypt; Tassili, Algeria	Conserving wall painting, in the face of large tourist flows, requires careful planning.

¹ Culture Heritage and Environmental Assessment. Environmental Sourcebook Update 8, World Bank. September 1994.

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Architecture and town planning	Monumental architecture	Monte Alban, Mexico; Copan, Honduras; Wat Phu, Laos.	Great works of architecture and urban planning demonstrate the introduction of new design principles and construction techniques.
	Indigenous or vernacular architecture	M'zab Valley, Algeria.	Local materials, such as wood, mud brick and stone, were used to build extraordinary architectural compositions.
	Historic settlements and town centers	Fez, Morocco; Quito, Ecuador.	The protection of the historic core of cities depends on a comprehensive policy to address infrastructure and social needs.
Historic landscapes	Cultural landscapes	Cres, Croatia; Land of the Dogon, Mali.	Landscapes, whether designed, organically evolved or relict, demonstrate mankind's responses to changing environmental conditions.
	Historic parks and gardens	Sigiriya, Sri Lanka; Shalimar Gardens, Pakistan.	Returning gardens to their original appearance may require research into plant materials.
	Trade routes monuments and remains	The Silk Route from China to Europe; Pan-African trade routes; Mediterranean-wide commerce.	Remains of ancient trade routes document early trade relations and cultural connections. Trading patterns, often long distance, are revealed in archaeological finds such as ceramics, metalwork, coins, or paleobotanical evidence.

Source: Culture Heritage and Environmental Assessment. Environmental Sourcebook Update 8, World Bank. September 1994.

Cultural heritage is legally protected in almost every country. The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 has become the foundation for national and other legislation since it requires signatories to adopt general policies; establish appropriate organizations and services; and develop legal, scientific, and financial measures for the protection and conservation of cultural and natural heritage. The World Heritage List, sponsored by UNESCO, also encourages protection and includes cultural sites of exceptional interest and universal value. At the national or state level, there are generally four kinds of legislation relevant to cultural sites: (i) heritage place protection acts that specifically protect particular places (or places as a class) and specify procedures for their protection; (ii) land management, zoning, or planning acts that provide general protection for sites; (iii) notification or listing acts that allow for the recording of important data on cultural sites; and (iv) acts to conserve natural areas in which cultural features are located. In many countries, religious laws also address cultural heritage and in some cases, assign ownership or oversight responsibilities to various religious authorities.

Cultural Heritage and Environmental Assessment

ADB uses environmental assessment as one of its main instruments to ensure that projects do not result in unacceptable damage to cultural heritage. The potential significant adverse impacts on cultural heritage are considered along with other types of environmental impacts at all stages of the environmental assessment process from country strategy and program development through environmental classification, environmental assessment, and environmental review, to implementation and supervision.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Impacts on cultural heritage tend to be site specific. Sites with important cultural resources may be considered to be as environmentally sensitive areas. This will require that the project be classified as Category A or environmentally sensitive B. In this case, the

assessment may include inventories of cultural heritage resources, analyses of alternate sites or routes to avoid or reduce impacts, and plans to mitigate damages through protection of specific resources.