

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Serra da Capivara National Park
Location : State of Piauí
State party : Brazil
Date : 24 October 1990

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That this cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criterion III.

C) ICOMOS OBSERVATIONS

The World Heritage Bureau in June 1991 wished examination of this site to be deferred pending receipt from the Brazilian authorities of fuller information on the dating of the rock paintings of Serra da Capivara.

The Brazilian authorities have provided a considerable quantity of documentation concerning the site in response to the Bureau's request. While it should be borne in mind that dating of prehistoric archaeological sites is still a controversial subject - and no less so for this site - the bulk of written evidence seems to confirm the early dating of the site proposed in the nomination.

D) BACKGROUND

The nominated site is a national park established in 1979 in the southeast part of the State of Piauí, bordering two geological formations: the Maranhao-Piauí sedimentary basin and the peripheral depression of Rio São Francisco. The main interest of this site is the many shelters hewn in rock which are decorated with rock-art paintings. These shelters, which were discovered in the 1960s, were not examined systematically until the 1970s. This research resulted in the establishment of the park.

The site must have been inhabited by the early men who populated the American continents. Fragments of broken wall found in the Pedra Furada shelter appear to be the oldest traces of rock art in South America; with C14, they have been dated 26000 B.C. to 22000 B.C.

In spite of the value of the rich archaeological elements discovered thus far, this site is especially remarkable because of the rock-art paintings that decorate the shelters. The oldest panels with decipherable painted images date back to 12000 B.C., but most of the rock-art ensembles in Serra da Capivara National Park date back to 10000-4000 B.C. and belong to the Nordeste and Agreste cultures.

The Nordeste culture, which appears to have originated in the region, though it is also known elsewhere in the territory which is now Brazil, features a figurative repertory (anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, vegetal and geometric designs) that provide a rather good understanding of the society's spiritual organization. Part of this iconography remains incomprehensible (human bodies heaped in the form of a pyramid), but four main cultural themes have been observed: dance, sexual practices, rituals performed around a tree, and rituals associated with hunting. The dominant color is red.

The Agreste culture seems to have existed alongside the Nordeste culture for a certain period of time, then replaced it completely in about 5000 B.C. Agreste culture features a preponderance of anthropomorphic figures and is known in a good part of the north of the South American continent. Based on the investigations carried out thus far, other cultures may be discovered in the Serra da Capivara National Park and our understanding of the dominant cultures may be increased.

- **Criterion III.** The shelters in Serra da Capivara National Park bear exceptional testimony to the oldest human communities that have populated South America and preserve the oldest examples of rock art on the continent. Moreover, the deciphering of the iconography of these rock-art paintings, which is being carried out gradually, reveals major aspects of the religious beliefs and practices of these peoples.

A management plan for Serra da Capivara National Park was established in 1990 by the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) and the FUNDHAM Foundation of the United States.

ICOMOS, November 1991

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

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

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

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

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

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

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

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

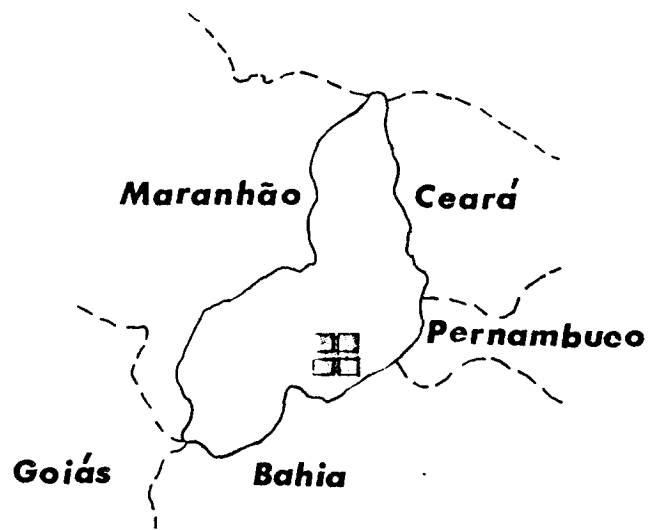
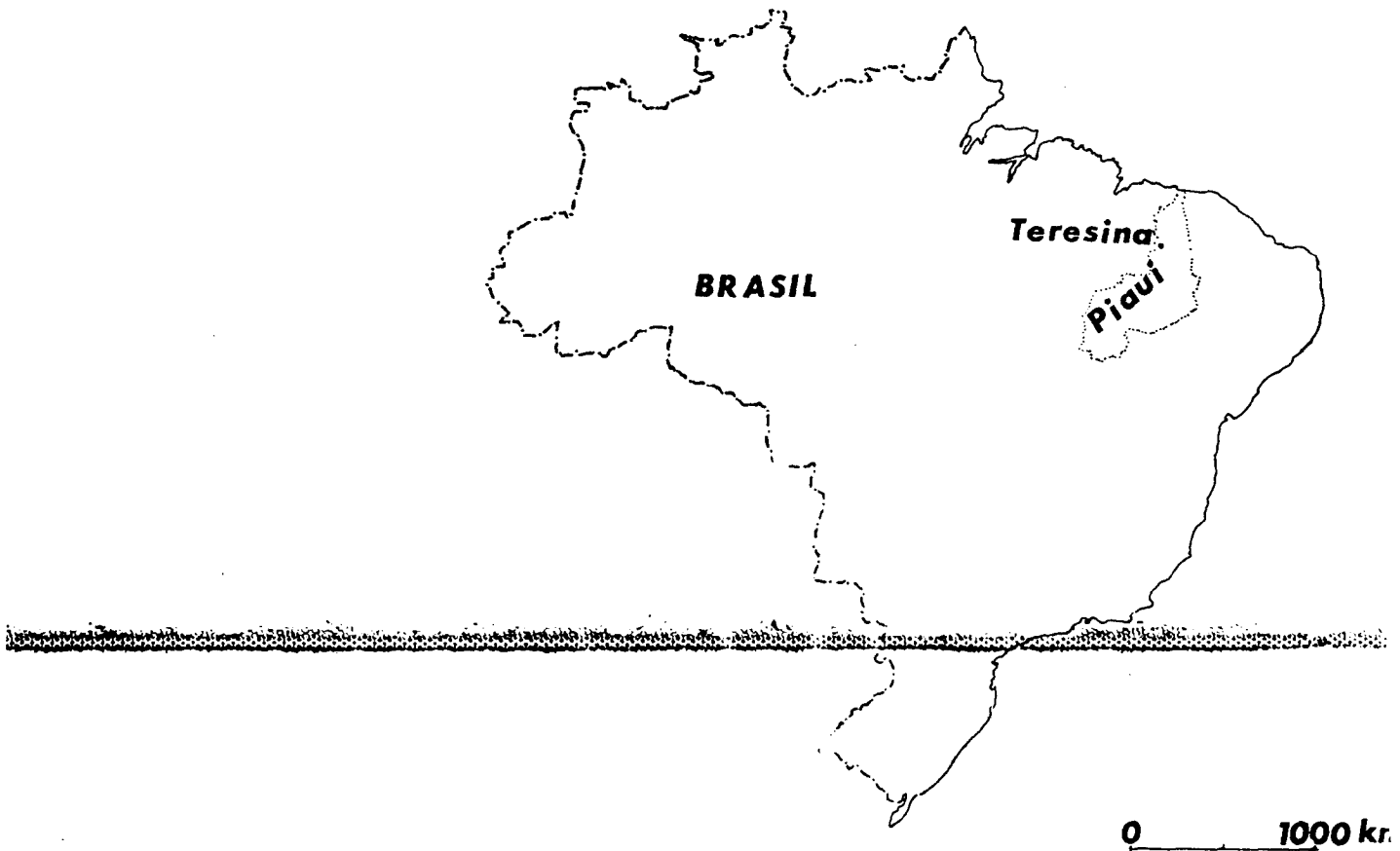
5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

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

D) Natural property

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

LOCALIZAÇÃO DO PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DA CAPIVAI



WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION - IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

606: PARQUE NACIONAL DA SERRA DA CAPIVARA (Brazil)

1. DOCUMENTATION

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

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

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

3. INTEGRITY

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

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

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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

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

5. EVALUATION

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

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

6. RECOMMENDATION

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

LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL N° 605

A) IDENTIFICATION

Bien proposé : Parc national de la Serra da Capivara
Lieu : Etat de Piaui
Etat partie : Brésil
Date : 24 octobre 1990

B) RECOMMANDATION DE L'ICOMOS

Que ce bien culturel soit inscrit sur la Liste du Patrimoine mondial au titre du Critère III.

C) OBSERVATIONS DE L'ICOMOS

En juin 1991, le Bureau du Patrimoine mondial a souhaité que l'étude de ce site soit différée, en attendant que les autorités brésiliennes fournissent des informations complémentaires sur la datation des peintures rupestres de la Serra da Capivara.

En réponse à cette demande, une documentation considérable concernant le site a été envoyée par les autorités brésiliennes. Bien qu'il ne faille pas oublier que la datation des sites archéologiques de la préhistoire reste toujours un sujet de controverse —et ce n'est pas moins vrai pour ce site—, il semblerait qu'en grande partie cette documentation écrite confirme la date reculée, donnée dans la proposition d'inscription du site.

D) JUSTIFICATION

Le site proposé est un parc national créé en 1979 dans la partie sud-est de l'Etat de Piaui, à la charnière de deux formations géologiques: le bassin sédimentaire Maranhão-Piaui et la dépression périphérique du Rio São Francisco. Le grand intérêt de ce site s'explique par les nombreux abris sous roche décorés de peintures rupestres. Découverts dans les années '60 de notre siècle, ces abris n'ont été prospectés systématiquement que dans les années '70. Ces recherches ont culminé par la création du Parc.

Ce site a dû être habité par les premiers hommes ayant peuplé les continents américains et des morceaux de paroi effondrée trouvés dans l'abri de Pedra Furada semblent être les plus anciens vestiges de l'art rupestre d'Amérique du Sud, car ils ont été datés au C14 de 26.000 à 22.000 avant notre ère.

Malgré l'importance du riche mobilier archéologique déjà découvert, ce site est surtout remarquable pour les peintures rupestres qui décorent les abris. Les plus anciens panneaux dont les images peintes sont encore lisibles remontent à 12.000 avant notre ère, mais la plupart des ensembles de peinture rupestre du Parc national de la Serra da Capivara datent de la période 10.000-4.000 et appartiennent aux cultures Nordeste et Agreste.

La culture Nordeste, qui semble avoir ses origines dans la région, mais qui est connue aussi ailleurs sur le territoire actuel du Brésil, se caractérise par son répertoire figuratif (motifs anthropomorphes, zoomorphes, végétaux et géométriques) qui permet une assez bonne connaissance de l'organisation spirituelle de la société. Une partie de cette iconographie reste inconnue (entassement de corps humains en forme pyramidale), mais quatre thèmes principaux ont été remarqués: danse, pratiques sexuelles, et manifestations rituelles autour d'un arbre ou liées à la chasse. La couleur dominante est le rouge.

Pour une certaine période la culture Agreste semble avoir cohabité avec la culture Nordeste pour la remplacer complètement vers 5.000 avant notre ère. Cette culture se caractérise par la prépondérance des figures anthropomorphes et elle est connue dans une bonne partie du nord du continent sud-américain. Tenant compte des sondages déjà effectués il est possible que d'autres cultures soient mises en évidence dans le Parc national de Serra da Capivara et que la compréhension des cultures dominantes soit affinée.

- **Critère III.** Les abris du Parc national de la Serra de Capivara représentent un exceptionnel témoignage des plus anciennes collectivités humaines ayant peuplé l'Amérique du Sud et renferment les plus anciennes manifestations d'art rupestre du continent. D'autre part, le déchiffrement progressif de l'iconographie de ces peintures rupestres mettent en évidence des importants aspects des croyances et pratiques culturelles de ces peuples.

Un plan de gestion du Parc national de la Serra da Capivara a été établi en 1990 par l'Institut brésilien pour l'environnement et les ressources naturelles renouvelables (IBAMA) et la Fondation du Musée de l'homme américain (FUNDHAM).

ICOMOS, novembre 1991