

ICOMOS GUIDELINES ON FORTIFICATIONS AND MILITARY HERITAGE

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PREAMBLE

Humans have constructed fortifications and military heritage using a variety of complex designs for thousands of years.

Surviving fortifications and military heritage from distant past to recent times have served as a major link to the history of human settlements, nations, and regions. At the same time, the use of these monuments and sites as elements of power projection remain a painful physical reminder for many communities. Understanding and respecting these memories and consequences from the perspective of these communities can generate new identity references that positively re-signify the relationship between population, fortifications and military heritage.

From prehistory to modern times, fortifications have been a necessity for human communities to defend themselves. Fortifications have also been integrated into the surrounding cultural landscapes and terrain, and their respective communities and settlements in a variety of ways. How this integration has been achieved provides important information about the diverse ways that societies developed fortifications.

Historic fortifications may include a range of architectural forms from earthworks to complex structures designed for offensive and defensive purposes. The original functions of these fortification systems may continue to exist or may have become obsolete.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ICOMOS GUIDELINES ON FORTIFICATIONS AND MILITARY HERITAGE

The objectives of the Guidelines on Fortifications and Military Heritage are to establish basic principles for interventions and methods of research that are specific to the conservation, protection and value of fortifications and their surrounding cultural landscapes. The Guidelines aims to bring clarity and ensure authenticity and integrity in the forms, setting and functionality of the fortifications and military heritage which is essential for the conservation of all attributes including the protection and enhancement of their tangible and intangible values.

The Guidelines also contributes to the safeguarding of the tangible and intangible values of fortifications and military heritage as “memory” tied to facts, people, communities, and expressions of cultural identity of local history.

The need for a Guidelines of Fortifications and Military Heritage is based on two observations which also led to the formation of a specialized committee for fortifications and military heritage.

- Fortifications and their military heritage have specific problematics which are wholly or partly distinct from other types of heritage.
- Fortifications and their military heritage assets have specific values that are totally or partially different from those recognized in other types of assets.

Art. 1. Definitions

Fortifications and military heritage comprise of any structure built with either natural (i.e., botanical, or geological) or synthetic materials, by a community to protect themselves from assailants. Such structures include, works of military engineering, arsenals, harbors and naval Shipyards barracks, military bases, testing fields, and other enclaves and constructions built or used for military, offensive and defensive purposes. Military cultural landscapes include but are not limited to territorial or coastal defense installations and earth works and have values similar to other heritage buildings and sites, but also possess unique values that need to be carefully studied, analyzed, and preserved.

Art. 2. Characteristics

Fortifications more than many other types of architecture have an integral relationship with the surrounding cultural landscapes. They exhibit a number of principles present in all regions of the world and manifest in every period of human history. Perhaps more than other categories and types of heritage, an understanding of the meaning, history and strategic rationales for the design and location of fortifications is indispensable for their proper conservation and protection. The following terms define some of the main characteristics of strategies used in conjunction with fortifications and military heritage:

Barrier and protection: The primary attribute to protect human activity and settlement against any external threats with the ability to resist attack;

Command: the ability to monitor the area surrounding the defended zone as far as possible and prevent the attacker from approaching;

Depth: a military strategy that seeks to delay rather than prevent the advance of an attacker by yielding space to buy time; this tactic allows for the creation of successive defensive lines;

Flanking: A strategy that aims to delete blind spots, commonly applied with above-ground structures (e.g., rampart, towers, or bastions);

Deterrence: a defensive strategy used to deter the enemy from attacking by instilling doubt or fear of the consequences. This strategy can include a range of tactics including, the construction of a majestic enclosure and its defensive attributes, (e.g., multiple openings for shooting, scale of gates and towers, decoration of walls and entrance).

PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO FORTIFICATIONS AND MILITARY HERITAGE

Art. 3. Theoretical and methodological

3.1. Historical Constructive Evolution, Stratigraphic and Spatial Complexity of the Structure.

Objectives:

Preserve the multiple layers of stratigraphic, constructive, structural, and strategic information, the spatial relationship and the elements that are part of contemporary territorial systems through the development of comprehensive preservation and maintenance guides specific to the needs of fortifications and their cultural landscapes.

Methodology:

Promote the research necessary to provide adequate management, interpretation and protection of the complexity and stratigraphic richness of the fortifications and the respective cultural landscapes in which they are integrated.

3.2. External functional scope beyond its physical boundaries.

This is established according to defensive needs and the military technology of the time, as well as other objectives of territorial or commercial expansion or both.

Objective:

To understand the fortification from the view of its operational zone.

Methodology:

To develop appropriate interpretation which must include, but is not limited to, their collections, archaeology, built fabric and design as well as the cultural landscape ensembles, including space, panoramas, dominant views, and territories they were intended to defend and protect.

3.3. The lack of knowledge of the formal and functional characteristics of the fortification can be much greater than for other types of heritage structures.

Fortifications and military heritage need to be researched and documented by using the relevant skills and expertise.

Objectives:

To promote excellence in the conservation of the historic fabric, archaeological remains and the setting of a fortification and its cultural landscapes.

Methodology:

To enhance and foster expert knowledge of the fortification's characteristics through education of future site custodians and responsible stakeholders;

To develop appropriate scientific conservation treatments and maintenance plans.

3.4. Fortifications and Communities.

Fortifications play an important role in the cultural identity and traditions of communities, countries, and regions. Caution should be exercised when interpreting sensitive aspects so as not to promote dominating or excluding values.

Objectives:

To develop appropriate interpretation with emphasis on facilitating the creation of an accurate history and relationship to the changing cultural, social, and political contexts, including the relationships between contemporary elements and their effectiveness in the territorial protection;

To reinforce visitors and local community appreciation of the site through interpretation of transnational values as a common heritage;

To reinforce visitors and local community appreciation of the site by developing effective tools that foster an agreed and consensual interpretation of identity values;

To reinforce visitors and local community appreciation of the site by developing effective tools that foster a comprehensive and consensual interpretation of identity values, in order to encourage a people-centered, rights-based approach and integration of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) to identification, interpretation, access and management policy.

Methodology:

To apply a holistic integration of heritage values to achieve a positive impact on visitors and the local community, promoting reconciliation of the military past with its subsequent reuse, such as fortifications reused as prisons;

To prepare guidance documents, policies, implementation strategies to safeguard the heritage values of the site;
To promote initiatives for recognition of identity and values communication;
To improve studies and analysis about community perception;
To ensure free, prior, and informed consent of source communities in developing and adopting measures to protect, manage and interpret fortifications and military heritage sites.

3.5. Fortifications use and re-use.

The changing nature of military operations often means that fortifications cannot be reused for the specific purpose for which they were originally built. Fortifications were designed to prevent entry and today this presents obvious challenges for accessibility and meeting current use requirements.

Objectives:

To promote interventions on fortifications and military heritage only where the purpose is to provide a sustainable and appropriate reuse;
To establish a balanced reuse to avoid destroying integrity and authenticity;
To promote reuse that transforms fortifications and military heritage into a place of witness and aggregation of communities;
To promote reuse that transforms fortifications and military heritage into places of knowledge such as places for the interpretation of military heritage including topics such as history, science, technology, etc.;
To promote reuse that transforms fortifications and military heritage into places which transmit a message of inclusiveness, and reconciliation.

Methodology:

To prevent all arbitrary alterations, restorations, reconstructions, or the elimination of historical material forming part of the structures and settlements, through assessments, development, and implementation of a Conservation Master Plan to be overseen by a professional team with specialist skills;
To prepare protection regulations / laws compatible with the preservation of the integrity of the fortification;
To promote the use of technology to provide alternative accessibility.

3.6. Fortification and urban landscape and territorial dimensions.

To address the need to better integrate conservation strategies of urban heritage represented by the fortification system, the singular elements, or the network as a whole, within the broader objectives of general sustainable development, in order to support public and private actions with the aim of protecting and improving the quality of the human environment.

Objective:

To foster greater awareness of the need to understand and interpret fortifications and military heritage as a component of international or transnational systems, territories, settlements of urban ensembles and not as solitary and isolated structures.

Methodology:

Employ a cultural landscape approach for the identification, conservation, and management of historical areas within their wider urban contexts;
To consider the inter-relationship of their physical forms, their spatial organization and connection, their natural characteristics and setting, and their social, cultural, and economic values.

3.7. Fortifications are not typical buildings.

Fortifications can range from single structures to complex multi-structure defensive systems developed over long time scales. However, there may be a lack of comprehensive understanding of the site that identifies important phases of development and interconnects all the significant physical elements of the place, such as, structures, cultural landscapes, views, etc.

Objective:

To improve methodological tools for research and multidisciplinary understanding.

Methodology:

To prepare and implement Conservation Management Plans;
To promote continued holistic research and assessment;
To reinforce networks and partnerships.

Art. 4. Values

The recognition of such intrinsic values of fortifications and defensive heritage determines the extent to which these aspects condition their conservation, rehabilitation, and general value.

The fortification as a monument has documentary value as a built structure. It represents architectural, technological, artistic, and historical values related to the events that led to its construction and the meanings that the building acquired over the time. There is also the value of fortifications seen as a system, as an organizer of the territory. The recognition of these values is what determines the degree to which the fortifications, as part of our heritage, have unique aspects that affect their conservation, rehabilitation, and general value.

4.1. Architectural and Technical value.

The specific typology of the fortifications responds to a specific technology of warfare. The assessment of the technical value requires a deep understanding of the evolution of weapons and warfare so that innovative advances in response to changes in military science and engineering can be identified and tested.

4.2. Territorial and geographical value.

The value of fortifications as a territorial organization is an important component of the significance of defense systems. While some fortified structures may be independently standing isolated elements, others may form part of a larger system of non-adjacent components that shape the surrounding cultural landscapes and require evaluation in a broader context. In these cases, the value of the system is greater than the specific value of each of its parts, all of which require the same protection regardless of how modest they may seem.

The identification of these values may also take into consideration inter alia, the strategic advantages of location, and how the design responds to the spatial distribution of weaponry, the type of siege or attack intended, the reach of the defensive range, and the topography and ecosystems of the territory to be defended.

4.3. Cultural Landscape Value.

The value of the cultural landscape allows better understanding of the material and functional context of fortifications, and takes into account, among other elements, respect for its enclave, the role of military construction for defensive purposes, its dominance position, visual and physical in relation to the surrounding territory.

4.4. Strategic Value.

The Fortification is a symbol of the fusion of multiple types of knowledge. The strategic value of a fortification is greater than its territorial or geographical value. Since it reflects the power of decision and the depth of knowledge, as well as the social cohesion of the ruling group

4.5. Human and Anthropological Value.

Fortifications were built to protect one human group from another. Therefore, they can be associated with sites of conflict. Fortifications are sometimes connected with cruel and devastating battles and wars that resulted in one group being victorious over another defeated group. They can also be associated with their

role in the performance of nation-building, and they can be used to play a role in nation-building. Both fortification structures and cultural landscapes may also contain archaeological information which is important to their understanding and can provide information about the past use of these places not available from historical sources.

4.6. Memory, Identity, Educational Value.

Fortifications can play an important role in the memory of society. They illustrate the conflict directly, allowing for an intense, often personal, learning experience from events that can be part of the shared history of communities. They belong to the collective memory in relation to the cultural landscape in which they are set. Fortifications have educational value because they can provide a stimulating and nurturing environment related to the cultural experience of military heritage.

4.7. Historic value.

Fortifications and military heritage embody attitudes and world views specific to the periods of their development and use. These attitudes may be understood through the study and interpretation of the military sites and the relationships with contemporary societies.

4.8. Social/Economic Value.

The recognition of the social value of fortifications, through appropriate enhancement actions, must activate a stimulus effect giving economic benefit for the communities and activating the recognition of new values and new knowledge.

Art. 5. Intervention parameters

The recognition of these values by a research team working with the local community assumes crucial importance and consists of the first methodological step in an intervention. This team should be multidisciplinary and be composed, at a minimum, of specialists in military history, architecture, art-history, construction materials and technology, archaeology, and landscape interpretation. These specialists should work with community groups to ensure that any intervention is acceptable to the local community. Guidance produced by these preliminary works is to be observed in any intervention projects, and this team should be part of the monitoring, development, and implementation of the intervention throughout the process.

5.1. All interventions should be based on a Master Conservation Plan. This Master Plan should include at a minimum:

Historical study of the site and all periods of its development and use; study of morphological development; topographic / planimetric surveys; evaluation of archaeological studies; structural evaluation; structural analysis; diagnosis and monitoring of preservation; study of cultural landscape; interpretive study; analysis of reuse feasibility; use analysis; criteria and recommendation analysis; risk assessment / risk preparedness plan; business and operations plan; visitor surveys / visitor management studies; protection plan; Management plan.

The entire Master Plan must be developed by an interdisciplinary team of appropriately qualified professionals with specific knowledge and experience in similar fortifications and military heritage.

5.2. All interventions should be based on the holistic integration of the values of the site in relation to the defensive systems and surroundings.

5.3. All interventions must be compatible with the elements and characteristics of the fortifications and military heritage in accordance with the Zimbabwe Charter and in relation to the Vitruvian Triad: "Firmitas, Utilitas et Venustas".

The choice between "traditional" and "innovative" techniques should be weighed on a case-by-case basis and preference given to those that are least invasive and most compatible with heritage values, considering

safety and durability requirements (ICOMOS Charter – Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage, 2003).

The nature of military operations needs to be considered particularly with a view to any previous “loss” of fabric or destruction which may be considered as a marker of an historic event that should be conserved rather than restored.

5.3.a. The concept of “Firmitas” compatibility must be understood as the mechanical compatibility between the historical materials and materials used for structural restoration and/or consolidation, always preferring minimal impact intervention.

5.3.b. Functional compatibility or “Utilitas” is the survival of the characteristic elements of the fortification from the point of view of its original functional design and the defensive layout of its routes and accesses.

5.3.c. Aesthetic or “Venustas” compatibility means that the intervention must be aesthetically compatible with the original structure and setting. However, it must also guarantee the permanence of the stratigraphic reading prior to the intervention and the stratigraphic legibility of the intervention itself.

References

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