

**Cultural Parks in Algeria and Their Role in safeguarding real estate
Cultural Heritage:
-The Ahaggar Cultural Park as a Case Study-**

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Abstract

Algeria possesses a rich historical legacy and a significant cultural heritage, owing to its strategic geographical location, which has served as a crossroads for numerous civilizations throughout history. Its vast Sahara contains remarkable landmarks, archaeological remains, and historical evidence that reflect the ways of life of human societies across different ancient periods.

Given the importance of this cultural heritage, which varies from one region to another and encompasses both tangible and intangible forms of heritage, the Algerian state has undertaken considerable efforts to preserve and safeguard it through the establishment of appropriate mechanisms. Among these mechanisms are cultural parks, which constitute an important instrument for the protection and management of immovable cultural heritage in Algeria.

Since ratifying the relevant international conventions, Algeria has sought to preserve areas containing immovable cultural properties across different regions of the country. This has been achieved through the creation of cultural parks and the provision of the necessary legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms aimed at ensuring the conservation and protection of cultural heritage of an immovable nature.

This study aims to examine the cultural park approach as a mechanism for safeguarding immovable cultural heritage in Algeria, using the Ahaggar Cultural Park in the Algerian Sahara as a case study.

Keywords: Real Estate Cultural Heritage - Cultural Park - National Office of the Al-Ahghar Park.

Introduction

Algeria is among the countries endowed with a considerable cultural heritage, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements. This heritage reflects several important

historical periods in the nation's history and constitutes a continuation of the various civilizations that succeeded one another in North Africa in general and Algeria in particular.

Immovable cultural property represents one of the fundamental components of tangible cultural heritage. Given the significant historical, cultural, and even economic value associated with this category of property, the Algerian legislator has devoted specific legal provisions to its protection. These provisions define the various categories of immovable cultural property, determine their forms, and establish the legal mechanisms designed to ensure their preservation and safeguarding.

Like other states that have ratified international treaties and conventions concerning the protection and classification of tangible cultural heritage, particularly the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Algeria has sought to adapt its domestic legislation in a manner that guarantees adequate protection for its immovable cultural heritage.

In order to strengthen the legal protection afforded to cultural properties of an immovable nature, the Algerian State has established various mechanisms and institutional frameworks aimed at ensuring their preservation. Among these mechanisms are cultural parks, which constitute an important approach to the protection and management of cultural property located within areas of archaeological, historical, and cultural significance.

Through this research paper, we seek to address the following research question:

To what extent can cultural parks be considered an effective mechanism for safeguarding immovable cultural heritage under Algerian legislation?

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Highlight the efforts undertaken by the Algerian State to preserve and safeguard immovable cultural heritage.
- Analyze the system of cultural parks in Algeria as a mechanism for protecting archaeological areas that contain immovable cultural heritage, using the Ahaggar Cultural Park in the Algerian Sahara as a case study.
- Examine the Algerian legal framework governing the preservation and protection of immovable cultural heritage.

Significance of the Study

The importance of studying the cultural park system as a mechanism for safeguarding immovable cultural heritage in Algeria lies in the following aspects:

- Assessing the effectiveness of cultural parks in preserving and protecting immovable cultural heritage.
- Providing recommendations that may contribute to strengthening the legal and institutional framework for cultural heritage protection.
- Evaluating the adequacy of the current Algerian legal framework in ensuring effective legal protection for immovable cultural heritage.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a combination of the descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive method is employed to present the relevant legal concepts and frameworks, while

the analytical method is used to examine and interpret the legal texts and regulations governing the protection of immovable cultural heritage. This methodological approach is considered particularly suitable for studies of this nature.

To address the research problem raised in this paper, the study is divided into two main sections. The first section examines the conceptual framework of cultural heritage in general and immovable cultural heritage in particular within the context of Algerian legislation. The second section analyzes the system of cultural parks as a mechanism for safeguarding cultural property, in accordance with the provisions of Algerian law.

1. The Conceptual Framework of Immovable Cultural Heritage

Most international legislation, conventions, and treaties relating to cultural heritage have sought to define the concept of cultural heritage. Similarly, Algerian national legislation has established the concept of cultural heritage through various legal texts governing this field, most notably Law No. 98-04 of 1998 concerning the Protection of Cultural Heritage. However, prior to this legislation, the Algerian legislator had already attempted to define and regulate cultural heritage through the first relevant legal text enacted in 1967 (Law No. 67-281), which primarily addressed archaeological excavations as one of the components of cultural heritage.

This section examines the concept of cultural heritage in general before addressing the concept of immovable cultural heritage from the perspective of Algerian legislation.

1.1. The Concept of Cultural Heritage

The concept of cultural heritage has been defined through numerous legal instruments and international conventions, most notably the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. At the national level, the Algerian Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of 1998 addressed the definition of cultural heritage, identified its various components, and outlined the characteristics that may distinguish this cultural legacy in its different forms and dimensions.

1.1.1. Definition of Cultural Heritage

This subsection examines how cultural heritage has been defined under international legal instruments and subsequently explores how Algerian national legislation has approached the definition of cultural heritage through the relevant legal texts.

1.1.1.1. Definition of Cultural Heritage under International Law

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972, defines cultural heritage in Article 1 as comprising the following categories:

Monuments: Architectural works, monumental sculptures and paintings, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings, and combinations of features that are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science.

Groups of Buildings: Groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, homogeneity, or integration into the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science.

Sites: Works of humanity or the combined works of nature and humanity, including archaeological sites, which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological, or anthropological point of view.

With regard to natural heritage, paragraph 2 of the same article defines it as including:

Natural Features: Physical and biological formations or groups of such formations that are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view.

Geological and Physiographical Formations: Precisely delineated areas constituting the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants that are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Natural Sites: Precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation, or natural beauty.

It is noteworthy that the definition of cultural heritage provided by the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage focuses primarily on the components of cultural heritage in general and, more specifically, on the elements of immovable cultural heritage.

The Convention does not refer to the components of intangible cultural heritage. This suggests that the Convention was mainly intended to strengthen the protection of tangible heritage, given its vulnerability to deterioration, destruction, and loss. (Nasser, 2019)

At the Arab regional level, the Unified Antiquities Law adopted following the Third Conference of Arab Ministers of Culture held in Baghdad in 1981 defined heritage as any object created by civilizations or left by previous generations, whether discovered or yet to be discovered, whether movable or immovable, and related to the arts, sciences, literature, morals, beliefs, daily life, public events, or other aspects of human activity, provided that it dates back at least one hundred years and possesses artistic or historical value. (Saïdi, 2016, p. 27).

It can be observed that the definition adopted by the Arab Ministers of Culture approaches cultural heritage through the identification of its constituent elements and by linking heritage status to a specific temporal criterion, namely a minimum age of one hundred years.

1.1.1.2. Definition of Cultural Heritage under Algerian National Legislation

At the national level, cultural heritage is defined by Law No. 98–04 of 15 June 1998 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Article 2 of this law provides that the cultural heritage of the nation encompasses all immovable cultural property, real estate by designation, movable cultural property, and cultural assets located on or within national territory, whether owned by natural persons or legal entities governed by private law. It also includes cultural assets found in inland and territorial subsoil layers, inherited from the various civilizations that have succeeded one another from prehistoric times to the present day.

The second paragraph of the same article further stipulates that cultural heritage also includes intangible cultural property resulting from social interactions and the creative expressions of individuals and communities throughout history, which continue to be manifested from ancient times to the present day.

It is therefore evident that Algerian legislation adopts a comprehensive approach to the definition of cultural heritage by combining both tangible heritage, represented by immovable and movable cultural property, and intangible heritage, represented by the cultural legacy generated through the creativity of individuals and communities. Furthermore, both categories are linked to the temporal dimension of cultural continuity, without distinguishing between public and private cultural heritage.

1.1.2. Characteristics of Cultural Heritage

Given its significance to all peoples and nations, cultural heritage possesses characteristics that confer upon it considerable importance. Its value extends to historical, civilizational, artistic, economic, and social dimensions. Consequently, cultural heritage has become a matter of concern for the international community, while national cultural heritage occupies an equally important place in the lives of Algerian citizens and society as a whole.

1.1.2.1. General Characteristics of Cultural Heritage

World cultural heritage possesses several characteristics that account for its importance in the eyes of the international community. This significance has prompted international legal intervention aimed at ensuring its protection and preservation. The importance of cultural heritage may be examined from several perspectives, among which the following are the most notable:

A. The Historical and Civilizational Dimension

Cultural heritage constitutes a historical and civilizational asset for peoples and nations. It represents an extension of a nation's past and serves as evidence of societal interactions during specific historical periods. As such, it fosters a sense of belonging among individuals to the history and civilization of a particular nation. Moreover, its significance often transcends the boundaries of a single society, contributing to the collective legacy and history of humanity as a whole. Consequently, its value extends beyond the spatial and temporal limits of any one community. (Nasser, 2019)

B. The Human Dimension

Cultural heritage constitutes a fundamental element in the formation of national identity. Intangible heritage, in particular, reflects the feelings, perceptions, and interactions of individuals within society. It contributes to the continuity of national identity and to the preservation of a nation's culture and civilization across generations. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of a civilization without an intangible heritage that shapes its intellectual and cultural identity and embodies the human values derived from it. (Samir, 2012)

C. The Scientific and Artistic Dimension

The scientific and artistic significance of cultural heritage lies in its role as a rich field for research and scholarly inquiry. Studies conducted in archaeology, ancient history, and the history of civilizations constitute important examples of the scientific value associated with the cultural heritage of peoples and nations. Furthermore, cultural heritage provides valuable artistic resources that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of human creativity throughout history. (Nasser, 2019)

1.2. Immovable Cultural Heritage from the Perspective of Algerian Legislation

Having examined the concept of cultural heritage from both the international perspective—particularly through conventions concerned with its protection—and the perspective of Algerian national legislation, as well as highlighting its principal characteristics at both the international and national levels, attention must now be directed to immovable cultural heritage as one of the main components of Algeria's national cultural heritage. This section seeks to define immovable cultural heritage and identify its constituent elements in accordance with Algerian legislation.

1.2.1. Components of Immovable Cultural Heritage

According to Algerian national legislation, cultural heritage is divided into two main categories: tangible heritage, which includes immovable property, artifacts, and manuscripts, and intangible heritage, which encompasses all forms of intellectual and artistic creativity, as well as inherited customs and traditions.

Reference to Law No. 98–04 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage reveals that the Algerian legislator, in defining cultural heritage, explicitly included immovable cultural property as an integral component of the national cultural heritage.

Immovable cultural property consists of the material remains of successive civilizations that are identified, studied, and brought to light through archaeological research. It constitutes one of the fundamental elements of the nation's cultural heritage and is classified as part of the tangible cultural property included within the national public domain. (Khawadjiya, 2016)

With regard to the components of this category of national cultural heritage, Article 8 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage provides that immovable cultural heritage comprises the following categories:

- Historical monuments;
- Archaeological sites;
- Urban and rural ensembles.

1.2.1.1. Historical Monuments

Article 17 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage defines historical monuments as “any individual architectural or engineering work, or group of works, bearing witness to a particular civilization, a significant stage of development, or a historical event.”

The same provision further specifies that such monuments include, in particular, major architectural achievements, paintings, engravings, decorative arts, Arabic calligraphy, monumental buildings or complexes of a religious, military, civil, agricultural, or industrial nature, prehistoric structures, funerary monuments and burial sites, caves and grottoes, rock paintings and engravings, memorials, as well as structures or isolated elements associated with major events in national history.

It can be observed that this definition relies on two principal criteria. The first relates to the scientific or artistic value of the monument in terms of its architectural design and construction. The second concerns its close association with important historical events that have shaped Algeria's history, including the successive civilizations that flourished on its territory. (Bougmiya, 2020)

The third paragraph of the same article provides that the classification of immovable cultural property as a historical monument is carried out by decision of the Minister responsible for Culture, following consultation with the National Commission for Cultural Property, either on the initiative of the Minister or at the request of any interested party.

1.2.1.2. Archaeological Sites

Archaeological sites, as one of the components of immovable cultural property, are defined in Article 28 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage as:

“Built or unbuilt areas no longer serving an active function, bearing witness to human activity or to the interaction between humanity and nature, including the associated subsoil, and

possessing historical, archaeological, artistic, religious, scientific, ethnological, or anthropological value. This category includes, in particular, archaeological sites, archaeological reserves, and cultural parks.”

According to Article 32 of the same law, archaeological reserves consist of areas that have not yet been subjected to archaeological surveys or excavations and that may contain unidentified sites and monuments. Such areas have not been inventoried and may conceal archaeological remains or exposed archaeological structures beneath or on the surface of the ground.

The classification of archaeological sites is governed by Article 29 of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which stipulates that such classification is made by decision of the Minister responsible for Culture following consultation with the National Commission for Cultural Property and in accordance with the procedures established under Articles 16, 17, and 18 of the same law.

1.2.1.3. Urban and Rural Ensembles

The Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage provides examples of urban and rural ensembles in Article 41, which states:

“Urban or rural ensembles such as casbahs, towns, ksour, villages, and traditional residential complexes characterized by the predominance of residential areas and distinguished by their architectural and aesthetic unity and coherence, possessing historical, architectural, artistic, or traditional significance that justifies their protection, restoration, rehabilitation, and enhancement.”

Urban and rural ensembles therefore include built and unbuilt properties such as cities, villages, and historic districts which, by virtue of their architecture, unity, harmony, or integration into their surrounding environment, possess national or universal value from a historical, aesthetic, artistic, or traditional perspective. (Boubakr, 2019–2020)

An examination of the provisions of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage reveals that the Algerian legislator merely provided examples of the elements that fall within the category of urban and rural ensembles, without offering a precise legal definition of the concept itself.

1.2.2. The Legal Nature of the Components of Immovable Cultural Heritage

The first legal text enacted in independent Algeria to address immovable cultural property was Law No. 67–281 of 20 December 1967 concerning excavations and the protection of historical and natural sites and monuments. This legislation established that both immovable and movable cultural property constituted part of the public property of the State and could not be privately owned, except in cases where ownership had already been established prior to the entry into force of the law.

Under Algerian civil law, public property is defined as:

“Movable and immovable property allocated, either in fact or by virtue of a legal provision, to a public interest, an administration, a public institution, an administrative body, a socialist enterprise, a self-managed unit, or a cooperative operating within the framework of the Agrarian Revolution.” (Order No. 75–58, Article 688)

Subsequently, Law No. 90–30 on National Property, as amended and supplemented, provided in Article 16 that the artificial public national domain includes, in particular:

“Land artificially protected from the effects of waves; public monuments, museums, and archaeological sites; artistic works and classified collections of artifacts.” (Law No. 90–30, 1990)

Article 58 of the same law further stipulates that State ownership extends to all movable and immovable objects possessing national historical, artistic, or archaeological value, whether discovered during excavations or found accidentally, regardless of the legal status of the property on which they are discovered.

Through these provisions, the legislator clearly classified immovable cultural property as part of the national public domain. Consequently, such property benefits from the legal protections afforded to public property, including inalienability, immunity from seizure, and exemption from acquisition by prescription under the rules of Algerian civil law.

An exception exists, however, for waqf (endowment) property and cultural property that was privately owned prior to the enactment of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. Nevertheless, the provisions of this law clearly indicate that, as a general rule, immovable cultural property forms part of the State’s public domain, while private and waqf ownership constitute exceptions. This legislative approach reflects the intention of the Algerian legislator to ensure the highest level of administrative, civil, and criminal protection for cultural property possessing significant historical and civilizational value for the nation. (Nasser, 2019).

2. Cultural Parks as a Mechanism for Safeguarding Immovable Cultural Heritage

The Algerian legislator has sought to provide adequate legal protection for immovable cultural property as an essential component of the nation’s cultural heritage. To this end, the Algerian Ministry of Culture launched a comprehensive program—the first of its kind worldwide—to establish a network of cultural parks and adopt them as a mechanism for safeguarding immovable cultural heritage. The initiative began with the creation of the Tassili and Ahaggar Parks and was subsequently expanded to include the Atlas, Tindouf, and Touat Cultural Parks (Djenane & Kahoul, 2015).

This section examines cultural parks as a mechanism for protecting immovable cultural heritage in Algeria, using the Ahaggar Cultural Park in the Algerian Sahara as a case study. It also analyzes the legal and institutional mechanisms established to ensure the protection of the archaeological areas located within the park.

2.1. The Concept of Cultural Parks

The need to safeguard immovable cultural property, particularly following Algeria’s ratification of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, prompted the Algerian authorities to develop a specific mechanism for protecting this category of cultural heritage. The first legal instrument addressing the establishment of national parks was Presidential Decree No. 83–458 of 1983, which regarded such parks as an appropriate protective framework for preserving archaeological areas located within their boundaries.

Consequently, five cultural parks were established in Algeria, each managed and supervised by a dedicated administrative body. Among the most significant of these is the

Ahaggar Cultural Park in the Algerian Sahara, which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982 (Al-Alaa, 2015, p. 72).

2.1.1. The Concept of a Cultural Park

As a mechanism of protection and a system for managing archaeological areas, the concept of a cultural park must first be examined within the framework of Algerian legislation. Its defining characteristics can then be identified based on the provisions governing cultural heritage protection in Algeria.

2.1.1.1. Definition of a Cultural Park

The Algerian legislator first introduced the concept of a cultural park in the legal instrument establishing the Ahaggar National Park in 1987. Article 3 of the decree provides that:

"The Ahaggar National Park is classified as such due to its archaeological wealth, rock art, historical resources, fauna, flora, geological formations, and natural landscapes, and shall be placed under the supervision of the Minister responsible for Culture."

This definition indicates that cultural parks are characterized by the presence of archaeological resources, both movable and immovable, as well as significant biological, geological, and natural features possessing cultural value.

The Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of 1998 introduced another definition in Article 38, which states:

"Areas characterized by the predominance or significance of cultural property and whose cultural assets are inseparable from their natural environment shall be classified as cultural parks."

A further definition was introduced by Executive Decree No. 12–291 concerning the Model Statute of the Ahaggar Cultural Park. Article 2 defines a cultural park as:

"A space in which the cultural and natural dimensions are inseparable and are perceived from both environmental and cultural perspectives. It constitutes a cultural instrument and a collective creation that is continuously reshaped through the historical relationships between local populations, their activities, their representations, and the environment they share. It is a place where administrative and historical territories overlap and where cultural traditions are maintained and transmitted."

Accordingly, cultural parks may be understood as extensive territories containing the material remains of prehistoric societies that reflect their cultural, social, and technological development. They represent open-air museums where natural environmental elements and cultural-historical deposits coexist and interact in such a way that they cannot be separated from one another (Boubakr, 2019–2020).

2.1.1.2. Characteristics of Cultural Parks

Based on the foregoing definitions, cultural parks, as a mechanism for cultural heritage protection, possess several distinguishing characteristics:

- They constitute spaces of both environmental and cultural significance, and their establishment aims at preserving and enhancing these values.

- They encompass extensive territories containing predominantly immovable cultural heritage, while also protecting elements of intangible heritage such as customs, traditions, social practices, and local dialects.
- Under Algerian law, each cultural park is administered by a public institution known as the Park Office (Diwan), which is responsible for management and supervision.
- Cultural parks are supported by a General Development Plan, which serves as the principal instrument for implementing protection measures and replaces ordinary land-use plans within protected areas.
- A distinction exists between a cultural park and a national park in terms of legal status. National parks are public administrative institutions operating under the authority of the ministry responsible for forests, whereas cultural parks are managed by a dedicated office under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture.
- While national parks are generally established within already protected natural areas, cultural parks involve the subsequent classification of territories on account of their cultural significance. Nevertheless, both share the common objective of preserving the cultural heritage located within their respective boundaries.

2.1.2. The Ahaggar Cultural Park as a Model for the Protection of Immovable Cultural Heritage

As part of its policy to safeguard archaeological areas and cultural heritage resources, Algeria established five cultural parks throughout the national territory. Among them, the Ahaggar Cultural Park occupies a prominent position due to its location in the Algerian Sahara and the richness of its cultural and natural heritage resources.

2.1.2.1. Establishment of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The Ahaggar National Park was established in the Algerian Sahara, specifically in the Province of Tamanrasset, pursuant to Executive Decree No. 87–231 of 1987. According to Article 3 of this decree, the park covers a total area of approximately 633,877 km² and is bounded as follows:

- **North:** The municipalities of El Meniaa (Ghardaïa Province) and Rouissat (Ouargla Province);
- **Northwest:** The municipalities of Aoulef and Reggane (Adrar Province);
- **East:** The municipality of Bordj El Haouas (Illizi Province);
- **West:** The municipality of Bordj Badji Mokhtar (Adrar Province);
- **South:** The borders of the Republic of Niger, extending approximately 844 km, and the borders of the Republic of Mali, extending approximately 338 km (Boubakr, 2019–2020, p. 336).

The **Ahaggar** Park is the largest protected cultural area in Algeria. Its geological and archaeological formations are among the oldest in the country, dating back between 600,000 and one million years. Owing to its exceptional historical and cultural significance, the Algerian State granted it special protection status. In 2011, its designation was changed from the Ahaggar National Park to the Ahaggar Cultural Park.

2.1.2.2. Archaeological Heritage of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The **Ahaggar** Cultural Park contains an exceptional concentration of archaeological remains and rock art dating back to civilizations that flourished in the Algerian Sahara long before the emergence of Ancient Egyptian civilization. The park also includes geological formations of considerable antiquity, archaeological sites, and burial structures dating to pre-Islamic periods.

Among its most remarkable natural features is the Assekrem Pass, widely regarded as one of the most spectacular viewpoints in the world for observing sunset landscapes. The park is also home to Mount Tahat, the highest peak in Algeria, reaching an elevation of 3,301 meters above sea level.

The park further contains numerous historic structures, some of which are in a deteriorated condition, while others take the form of **ksour** and fortified settlements characterized by architectural styles adapted to the geographical environment and cultural traditions of the local population. These structures are subject to restoration and conservation efforts undertaken by the authorities responsible for the park's management.

In addition, the park preserves a rich collection of rock engravings and paintings illustrating the daily life of prehistoric populations inhabiting the region. These representations depict animals, hunting scenes, social activities, and geometric motifs that provide valuable insight into the cultural and economic life of ancient communities.

With regard to intangible cultural heritage, the **Ahaggar** region is renowned for its traditional ceremonies and cultural events of historical significance, including the Spring Festival (*Tafsit*) and *Asihar*, which serve as seasonal trade fairs held annually during January and February.

The region is also inhabited by the **Tuareg** people, one of the most emblematic communities of the Sahara. They continue to preserve their cultural identity through their distinctive traditional clothing, musical heritage—particularly *Tindi* and *Imzad* music—and their ancestral language, *Tifinagh*, which comprises at least twenty-five characters (Djenane & Kahoul, 2015, pp. 201–205).

2.2. Implementation of the Cultural Park System as a Protection Mechanism

The establishment and operation of cultural parks in Algeria as a mechanism for safeguarding immovable cultural heritage required the creation of specific legal and institutional instruments. To this end, the Algerian legislator entrusted the management and supervision of cultural parks to a specialized public institution known as the Cultural Park Office (*Diwan*), which is also responsible for preparing and implementing the General Development Plan of the park.

2.2.1. The National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park constitutes one of the principal legal and administrative mechanisms responsible for managing and supervising the park. It performs a wide range of functions aimed at ensuring the preservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage contained within its boundaries.

2.2.1.1. Legal Status of the National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park was established pursuant to Executive Decree No. 87–231 of 3 November 1987 concerning the creation of the Ahaggar National Park Office. Following the transformation of the National Park into a Cultural Park, the Office retained its management functions under the new institutional framework.

According to Article 5 of Executive Decree No. 12–291 concerning the Model Statute of the Ahaggar Cultural Park Office, the Office is a public administrative institution endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy. It operates under the authority of the Minister responsible for Culture and has its headquarters in the city of Tamanrasset in southern Algeria.

The Office is composed of various administrative, scientific, and technical structures, including specialized departments, monitoring and surveillance units, and field stations distributed throughout the park according to the management plan established by the Office.

Its administrative structure includes:

The Director

Pursuant to Article 20 of Executive Decree No. 12–291, the Director of the Office is appointed by executive decree upon proposal of the Minister responsible for Culture from among individuals possessing scientific, cultural, and technical expertise relevant to cultural park management.

According to Article 21 of the same decree, the Director is entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- Preparing draft internal regulations and organizational rules of the Office;
- Preparing the General Development Plan of the Cultural Park in coordination with relevant sectors and submitting it to the Board of Directors;
- Ensuring the implementation of decisions and recommendations adopted by the Board;
- Preparing annual and multi-year activity programs;
- Representing the Office before judicial authorities and in all civil matters;
- Preparing the budget proposal and authorizing expenditures;
- Concluding contracts, agreements, and conventions in accordance with applicable legislation;
- Organizing meetings of the Board of Directors and the Scientific and Technical Committee;
- Preparing the annual activity report and submitting it to the supervisory authority following approval by the Board.

The Board of Directors

Article 14 of Executive Decree No. 12–291 provides that the Board of Directors includes representatives from several governmental sectors, including Culture, National Defence, Interior, Finance, Energy and Mines, Water Resources, Urban Planning and Environment, Agriculture, Public Works, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Housing and Urban Development, Tourism, the Province of Tamanrasset, as well as the municipal and provincial assemblies concerned.

Board members are appointed for a five-year term and deliberate on matters including:

- Internal regulations and organizational structures;

- Annual and multi-year activity programs;
- Acceptance of donations and bequests;
- Revenue and expenditure forecasts;
- Annual activity reports, administrative accounts, and management reports;
- The proposed budget of the Office;
- Any other matter submitted by the Director.

The Scientific and Technical Committee

Articles 22 to 26 of Executive Decree No. 12–291 establish a Scientific and Technical Committee chaired by the Director of the Office and composed of specialists in fields related to the activities of the Cultural Park. The Committee may also seek assistance from external experts whenever necessary.

The Committee prepares its own rules of procedure, adopts scientific and technical reports on its activities, and submits them to the Director and the supervisory authority. It also provides opinions and recommendations concerning management plans and scientific and technical programs undertaken by the Office.

2.2.1.2. Functions of the National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The primary objective behind the establishment of the National Office of the **Ahaggar** Cultural Park is the preservation, management, and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage located within the boundaries of the park. This objective is clearly reflected in the legal framework governing the Office, particularly Executive Decree No. 12–291 concerning the Model Statute of the Cultural Park Office.

Article 7 of the Decree assigns the following functions to the Office:

- Preparing the General Development Plan of the Cultural Park, which serves as a planning and protection instrument aimed at ensuring harmony between the cultural and natural dimensions of the park;
- Conducting inventories and studies of the park's natural, environmental, and cultural resources;
- Undertaking research and studies related to the protection and conservation of the park's environmental and cultural heritage;
- Coordinating the activities of the various sectors operating within the boundaries of the park in matters relating to environmental and cultural heritage;
- Protecting the park from any intervention likely to alter its character or impede its natural development;
- Ensuring the implementation of regulations governing the use and exploitation of the park's environmental and cultural heritage;
- Taking all necessary measures for the conservation, enhancement, and promotion of the park's environmental and cultural resources;
- Promoting awareness and disseminating information through various communication channels regarding the protection, preservation, and valorization of the cultural park;
- Participating in national and international events aimed at promoting the environmental and cultural heritage of the park.

2.2.2. The General Development Plan of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

Following the discussion of the National Office of the **Ahaggar** Cultural Park as one of the principal management and supervisory mechanisms, attention must be directed to the second major instrument designed to ensure the protection of the cultural heritage located within the park, namely the General Development Plan.

2.2.2.1. Concept of the General Development Plan of a Cultural Park

The Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of 1998, particularly Article 40, provides that the protection, conservation, and rehabilitation of lands included within the boundaries of a cultural park shall be entrusted to a public administrative institution. Among its principal responsibilities is the preparation of the General Development Plan of the Cultural Park.

The General Development Plan constitutes a legal instrument of protection integrated into the broader framework of spatial planning and urban development. Within areas forming part of a cultural park, it replaces ordinary land-use plans and serves both as a planning instrument and as a protection mechanism aimed at ensuring coherence between the cultural and natural dimensions of the protected territory (Gouas, 2011–2012).

Responsibility for preparing the General Development Plan of the **Ahaggar** Cultural Park is entrusted to the National Office of the **Ahaggar** Cultural Park in its capacity as a public administrative institution. The Plan covers all protected areas within the park, including prehistoric archaeological zones, areas containing rock art and engravings, and the natural environment—both flora and fauna—that forms an integral part of the protected heritage (Saidi, 2015–2016).

According to Article 27 of Executive Decree No. 12–291, the General Development Plan includes the following elements:

- Delineation of protected zones;
- Identification of sites open to visitors;
- Establishment of surveillance and monitoring stations;
- Development and marking of routes and pathways leading to sites accessible to visitors;
- Installation of general and specific signage throughout the various protected areas.

2.2.2.2. The Role of the General Development Plan in Protecting the Heritage of the Ahaggar Cultural Park

The General Development Plan is fundamentally intended to safeguard the diverse cultural heritage resources of the **Ahaggar** Cultural Park. In this regard, it contributes to regulating access to protected areas within the park and organizing activities conducted therein. The Plan regulates and controls:

- Entry into and movement within protected areas;
- Certain pastoral, rural, artisanal, and industrial activities, including quarrying and sand extraction activities conducted within designated zones;
- Research, exploration, excavation, and sampling activities undertaken for scientific purposes;
- Tourist routes, visitor sites, and areas frequented by tourists, whether individually or through organized tourism operators.

The General Development Plan also contributes to heritage protection by prohibiting activities that may adversely affect the cultural and natural resources of the park. Such prohibited activities include:

- Any destruction, degradation, or alteration of movable or immovable cultural property, natural environments, or landscapes within the park;
- Any unauthorized use or exploitation of natural or cultural sites located within the park;
- Failure to report archaeological discoveries made accidentally during excavation, exploration, or research activities;
- Unauthorized collection of movable cultural property or natural resources within the park;
- Unauthorized extraction, removal, or destruction of mineral samples found within the protected area;
- Damage to, destruction of, cutting, or uprooting of plant species located within the park;
- Defacement or destruction of rock paintings, engravings, and archaeological representations;
- Pollution of, or unauthorized discharge into, wetlands, lakes, springs, and other water resources located within the boundaries of the cultural park (Executive Decree No. 12–291, 2012).

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined the mechanisms and legal instruments established under Algerian law for the protection of immovable cultural heritage. Particular attention was devoted to the cultural park system, an innovative mechanism in which Algeria has assumed a pioneering role through the establishment and operationalization of a network of cultural parks across its national territory.

The creation of these cultural parks has been accompanied by the adoption of a comprehensive legal framework aimed at strengthening the protection of immovable cultural heritage and providing the necessary institutional and legal instruments to ensure its effective preservation and management.

The Ahaggar Cultural Park was presented as a case study illustrating the role of cultural parks in safeguarding the archaeological, historical, and cultural heritage of the Algerian Sahara. The study further highlighted the efforts undertaken by the Algerian legislator to support this mechanism through the establishment of the National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park and the adoption of the General Development Plan as a key instrument of protection and management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations may be proposed:

- Strengthening and enhancing the protection of classified immovable cultural heritage by incorporating heritage preservation objectives into spatial planning and urban development instruments, particularly through the establishment of additional cultural parks.

- Promoting the active involvement of civil society in the protection of immovable cultural heritage through reporting heritage violations and participating in the activities organized by cultural park offices.
- Establishing specialized departments and branches within cultural park offices dedicated to specific fields of heritage protection, including the conservation of listed monuments, the preservation of historic buildings, and the protection of biodiversity and environmental resources within cultural parks.
- Updating and reforming the legal framework governing cultural heritage protection in order to align it with contemporary conservation requirements and the principles of sustainable development applicable to archaeological and cultural heritage sites.

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