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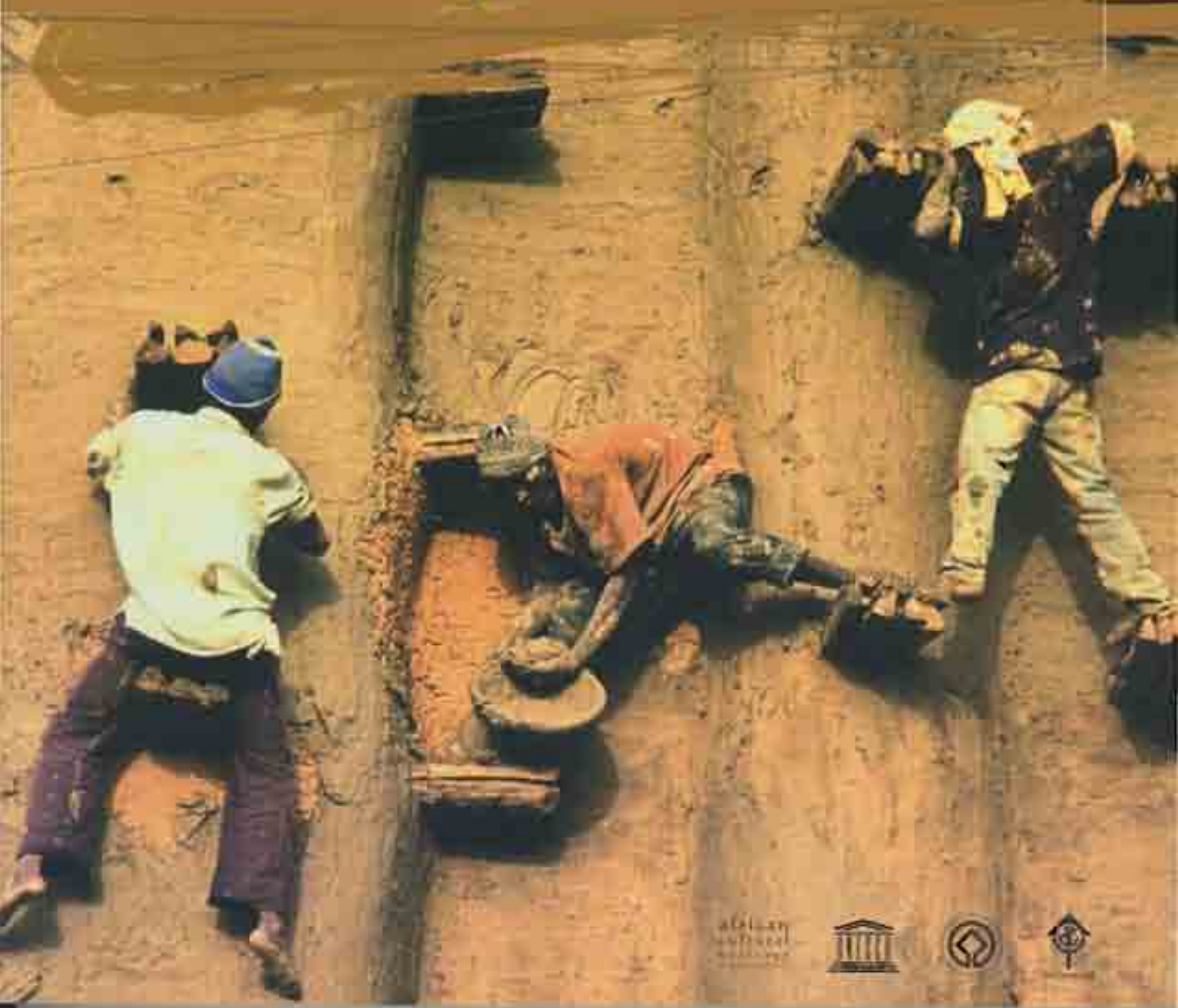
ICCROM CONSERVATION STUDIES 2

Traditional conservation practices in Africa



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edited by Thierry Joffroy

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Partners

Conservation of Immovable Cultural Heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa

Current partners in the programme include :
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Financial partners for the Projet Cadre include :
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GEORGE H. O. ABUNGU

Foreword

As the First Chairman of the steering committee of the Africa 2009 programme, it gives me great pleasure to write the forward to this important book. Africa 2009 is a programme realised in partnership with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM, CRATerre-EAG and the African Cultural Organizations. It was founded to address the various problems that affect African Immovable Cultural Heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa. This, however, was not to discriminate against movable heritage or other parts of Africa. On the contrary, it was to make the programme manageable by looking at a specific type of heritage within a specific area, and I am happy to note the numerous successes of the programme to date.

Africa is a continent endowed with extremely rich cultural and natural heritage of both movable and immovable nature. Africa indeed is the cradle of humankind and possesses some of the earliest settlements of human occupation. Africa has produced the earliest evidence of hominids as well as the earliest man-made tools. It has spectacular cultural and natural landscapes that include sacred forests, lakes and mountains, caves and rock shelters. It is a continent of great biodiversity and even its animal life is unparalleled elsewhere. But the continent's heritage is not confined to the tangible, but also to the intangible. Oral history has always been part of the African world and this has further enriched our tangible heritage, giving it meaning and passing it from generation to generation. Thus in Africa, culture and nature are much intertwined, as well as are the tangible and intangible. It is indeed this experience that has led to the creation of the traditional architecture and traditional ways of building that are discussed in this volume.

The cultural landscape of the continent ranges from the coral stone towns of the East African Coast to the dry-stone walling of the eastern and southern Africa interior, from the pyramids of Egypt to the great earthworks of south-western Nigeria, and to the earth structures of Mali, Ghana and Benin among others. The cultural heritage of Africa is not only spectacular but it also presents a great variety.

This book celebrates African architecture and traditional building techniques. It celebrates the wealth of knowledge left behind by the great masons and builders of Africa. It also celebrates the wonderful work that has been done by the Steering Committee of Africa 2009 since its inception in 1998. It shows a spirit of commitment on the part of the partners in this programme not only to recognise this common heritage, but also to use it as an example to inspire other cultures to protect their immovable heritage for posterity and promote it.

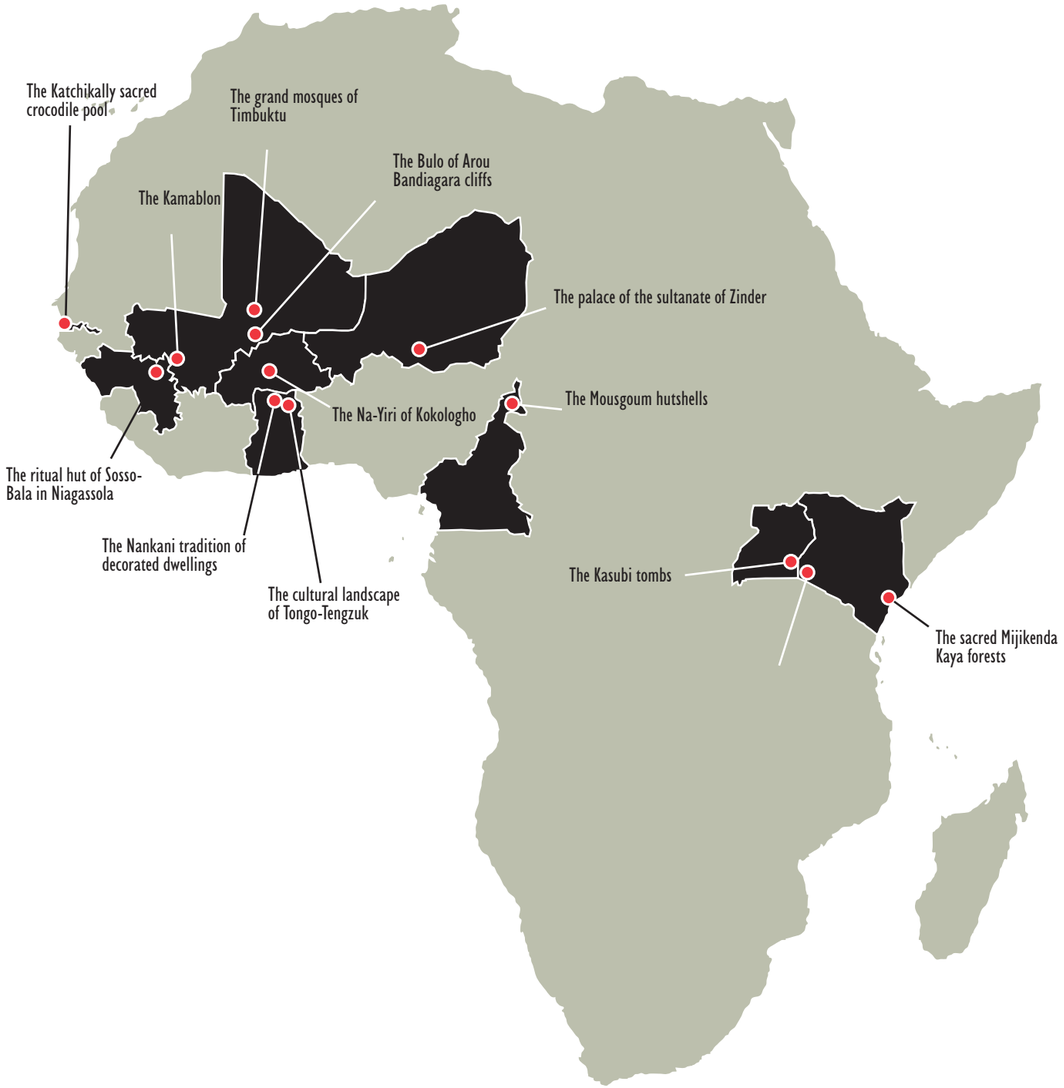
African people are very rooted in their culture; they have the ownership of their heritage. It is through sharing and working with them that these results have been achieved. We do hope that these examples will inspire others to do the same, to recognise the owners of the heritage, to work with them in partnership towards a sustainable conservation, including that of the knowledge that has ensured the survival of our heritage for posterity.

Much effort has gone into this book, and the research by African professionals together with CRATerre-EAG and ICCROM, is commendable. The support from other partners and more importantly our donors has allowed us to realise many dreams. This work in itself should act as an incentive for others, both in Africa and outside, to continue research in this unique field. The results presented here will be a good reference point for those working in the field, particularly when addressing issues at sites which are under their responsibility. Tradition has been very productive. It still builds today, and so it is extremely imperative that in our work traditional practices on built or immovable heritage become part of our calling.

We would not have achieved what we have so far done without the generous financial support of our partners. I would like to thank sincerely the following: Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida); Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Italian Ministry of Foreign affairs, World Heritage Fund, ICCROM, and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have made our work possible and the results are obvious. We hope that together we can continue to serve this special heritage of humanity.

Many professionals, both African and others, have contributed immensely to the work of Africa 2009 and we also acknowledge their contributions.

Thank you for your support and understanding.



FRANCESCO BANDARIN

Preface

The World Heritage Convention states that loss through deterioration or disappearance of cultural heritage assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all humanity. Until the last decade, the approach of the World Heritage Committee to conservation had been based on a 'monumental' understanding of cultural heritage significance. This meant that less consideration was given to the distinctiveness of each region of the world and how conservation was perceived locally. In addition, traditional maintenance and conservation practices were not promoted, resulting in their abandonment by local populations in many countries. In the case of Africa, significant immovable cultural heritage sites with outstanding universal values have been lost, or are today quickly deteriorating.

In launching a Global Strategy for a Balanced and Representative World Heritage List in 1994, the World Heritage Committee intended not only to create a World heritage List that would enhance cultural representation, but also to encourage identification of appropriate conservation approaches in each region of the world. Many African experts were consulted who insisted on the need to challenge the monumental perception of heritage by recognizing a broader approach which takes into consideration the resilient, intangible aspects and beliefs that had always contributed to the permanence of this heritage.

It is therefore important to recognize the traditional conservation practices that play a vital role in ensuring the preservation of Africa's immovable cultural heritage. These practices remain testimony to communities all over the continent who have always expressed their views on conserving heritage associated with specific beliefs and rituals, and also social organisation and sense of community belonging. Through the AFRICA 2009 Programme, started in 1998, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre made more specific its strategy for Africa by assisting African countries to carry out successful integrated heritage management and conservation practices for their cultural heritage.

Of the sixty-three African properties inscribed on the World Heritage List at the time of this publication, thirty are cultural, thirty-one are natural and two are mixed. Many of the thirty cultural properties provide evidence of the richness and importance of traditional conservation practices that have contributed to the recognition of their outstanding universal value by the World Heritage Committee. The following articles featured in this publication highlight the importance of recognizing the high level of conservation skills developed through the centuries up to the present day by Africans. They bring to light that conservation activities at sites are still understood by local communities, and furthermore, that they are not only undertaken by authorized specialists but are also seen as a combination of technical activities and protection of spiritual values.

It is thus a great honour for the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to welcome such an important publication, which not only contributes to a better understanding of African immovable cultural heritage values, but also helps to reinforce the current efforts being made by the World Heritage Centre in order to tackle threats to African cultural sites in general and World Heritage properties in particular. This publication echoes the World Heritage Centre's commitment to support research made by African heritage professionals in their collective effort to sensitize the world to important issues regarding heritage conservation in Africa. The fact that conservation by local communities at three African World Heritage properties (Cliff of Bandiagara, Timbuktu and Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi) is portrayed within this publication, as well as four sites that are registered on the Tentative List of African State Parties, confirms that World Heritage status can make a distinct and valuable contribution in ensuring international recognition of the conservation skills of local communities. Moreover, it is an efficient tool for the protection and conservation of African World heritage properties.

In this context, the AFRICA 2009 Steering Committee must be congratulated for initiating this research on traditional conservation practices. Undoubtedly, the outcomes as shown in this book, will not only render effective the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) vision on culture, but also demonstrate that appropriate management of African immovable cultural heritage is an important tool for the promotion of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Finally, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre is grateful to both the operational partners of AFRICA 2009 and the donors, who have enabled this publication to take shape. I personally call on them to continue to provide their support to this programme whose impressive results are well illustrated in such a publication.

Contents

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THIERRY JOFFROY, CRATerre-EAG

1. Introduction

The AFRICA 2009 programme is a partnership of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM, CRATerre-EAG, and African Cultural Heritage Organizations. It was launched in 1998, at the regional meeting of African cultural heritage professionals held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and is based on the results of a survey carried out in 1996 to which 32 African countries responded. Its long-term aim is to improve the conditions for the conservation of immovable cultural heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa within the larger framework of sustainable development.

AFRICA 2009 is structured to take advantage of activities at two levels. At the regional level, the *projet cadre* favours reflection and the progressive development of ideas. Courses, seminars, research projects, and the improvement of networking are implemented, guaranteeing continuity of activities and dissemination of results. Professionals are invited to work together, share ideas, and develop common frameworks that can be adapted to local needs. At the site level, the *projets situés* ensure that AFRICA 2009 is deeply rooted in the realities of the field while responding to the specific needs of the selected sites, both in terms of training and of implementation of conservation activities.

Information from *projets situés* enriches the activities developed within the *projet cadre*, while, in turn, the knowledge and new ideas developed in the *projet cadre* are used in later *projets situés*. Through this continuous loop of feedback and response, the programme creates references and models that can be used for planning and management at both the site and national levels.

This AFRICA 2009 research project, devoted to 'Traditional Conservation of Immovable Cultural Heritage in Africa' is a good example of the fertility of this interaction. Part of the *projet cadre*, it originates from the *projets situés* that prefigured those of AFRICA 2009. Both at the Royal Palaces of Abomey in Benin and at Timbuktu in Mali, the preliminary research and conservation work carried out highlighted the role of the traditional owners and local communities in the long history of the conservation of these immovable heritage sites. During the work, it also became apparent that attempts by national institutions to conserve these sites without involving these local parties would have little chance of success. Moreover, this approach could create social or political problems (a question of legitimacy). On the other hand, by respecting the traditional owners and communities and keeping them involved, many advantages would be gained in the conservation process. Firstly, our understanding of the site in relation to its social use and context would be improved and, secondly, it would better orient conservation strategies for preserving the overall authenticity of the site. Furthermore, in cases where it might be necessary to intervene physically, the work would benefit from traditional experience and know-how to establish proper conservation practices.

From these first projects, it became clear that these issues would have to be raised and considered within the activities of AFRICA 2009. The idea of gathering more information on this topic for awareness and sensitization purposes was agreed upon, and a project to compile a series of articles describing such practices at selected sites was approved by the Coordination Committee of the programme.

The aim of the research project was to create awareness of existing traditional conservation practices in African contexts, and to highlight the need for professionals to integrate them into the development of conservation strategies. The short-term objective of the project was to prepare a document that would illustrate the variety of traditional conservation practices, and that would include eight to ten case studies.

FIGURE 1 Replacing the gargoyles on the Sankoré Mosque in Timbuktu

FIGURE 2 Communal work on the re-roofing of a ritual house, Nupe, Nigeria.

FIGURE 3 Re-roofing of a traditional dwelling at Jenaale, Somalia

A call for papers was made to the AFRICA 2009 network, and several professionals asked to write on sites that they had already studied. In addition, a scientific committee was established to assist in commenting on the articles to ensure that the desired information would be developed. To that purpose, guidelines for the format and content of contributions were established.

Because this approach to traditional conservation is relatively innovative, information was rarely already available. Visits to sites and interviews were often necessary to gather information and fine-tune basic knowledge about the traditional conservation practices at the sites. Writing on this topic has also sometimes been difficult for professionals who have a more technical background. Some of the authors benefited from research carried out during *projets situés*. Although several proposed articles were abandoned, the final number is greater than expected. Moreover, the variety of cases that are included offers a wide coverage of traditional practices. This result could not have been achieved without the strong desire of the authors to contribute to the development of new knowledge about the heritage sites that they respect, admire, and wish to conserve in all their authenticity. Their efforts, sometimes executed in difficult conditions, are acknowledged here.

The result of this research is the thirteen articles published in this book. They provide the evidence that many sites in Africa are concerned with traditional conservation practices. These practices can be classified into two main categories, spiritual values and technical practices, but often both categories apply to the same site.

Within the first category, spiritual values are used to protect the site. Specific beliefs or prohibitions ensure that the site is preserved from any modification, or that access is restricted to initiated people who know how to behave and how to treat the site with respect.

The second category, technical practices, relates specifically to the physical requirements of maintenance and protection. These practices are very variable, depending on the type of site (sacred forests, housing, city walls, palaces, community buildings, places of worship, etc.). They are (almost) always related to specific social organizations whose complexity depends on the size and importance of the site and of the related community.

Often, technical practices are connected with special events that, consciously or unconsciously, aim at reinforcing the social cohesion of a community, or good relations between two or more communities. This social cohesion manifests itself through a collective and symbolic effort to conserve a property that carries important values. Sometimes, the two categories may be directly linked: the special event may be a specific ceremony entirely related to the religion or beliefs of the community.

FIGURE 4 Restoration of the Kano Wall replica, Jos Museum, Nigeria.

FIGURE 5 Floor maintenance, Gourounsi compound in Zoula, Burkina Faso.

It is important to note that these conservation activities do not always aim at a 'pure restoration'. In fact, it often appears that they are an opportunity to adapt to new conditions, new expectations, or to the evolution of beliefs and/or social organization. At times, they provide clear opportunities for the new generations (individuals or communities) to put their mark on their environment and express their skills. In northern Ghana, the regular repair of the decorations never attempts to imitate the existing designs. Rather, entirely new decorations are applied, inspired by the mood and trend of the moment and the need for the women to express their kindness. It is obvious that sites which have been treated in such a way have evolved over time (e.g. Timbuktu) and that this evolution is fully part of their authenticity! Particular situations such as periods of dryness, encounters with other cultures, conflicts, or normal discontinuity of use (for example, shrines in the Asante region of Ghana that can remain unused for several decades) may also bring about important changes or partial reconstitution of sites.

An important element of this process of change comes from foreign influences that have regularly increased, sometimes for more than a century. These changes are due to new technical possibilities offered by industrial products and/or evolution in social behaviour. Not surprisingly, sites located within or close to urban centres have been more affected. The changes are varied: they may concern the fabric of a site, its size (generally a reduction), its use(s), its layout, and/or its hierarchy of spaces and rules for access. In quite a number of cases, foreign materials

have deliberately been used to reinforce the perception of power or to challenge more strongly the power of rivals. Of course, this has had a major influence on the fabric and design of the built environment. In more drastic cases, some structures that are no longer useful have been abandoned or destroyed for re-use. This has been the case for many defensive structures and city walls (for example, at Zinder).

More recently, the 'heritagization' of some sites and their use for educational purposes and tourism have brought about new values and a desire to conserve them. This consciously historical approach has entailed changes to the fabric and/or traditional life at sites. More specifically, the presentation of the site leads to changes in its soul and, therefore, to its authenticity. Such an impact is quite common when the site is turned into a museum, particularly when the museum is not designed to help understand the site itself.

With the influence of international conservation rules and practices, the general tendencies of the government heritage organization have been to take over the management of sites; to try to 'freeze' them, and reinforce their fabric by using 'durable' building materials. However, partnerships have sometimes been put in place between the traditional rulers and the government institutions. This approach has been (and still is) implemented with varying degrees of mutual respect and conflict, resulting in a wide range of results in terms of physical conservation and of proper integration of the site and its related practices into its social environment. Often, there is more of a superimposition of ruling practices than actual partnership. Even though the power of the traditional rulers might be diminished, there is still the will to express it, and the conservator could easily be seen as a rival, a situation which is not always easy to deal with.

FIGURE 6 Roof maintenance at St. Bartholomew's Church, Zaria, Nigeria.

The articles in this volume show that there is a need to be concerned about the current state of traditional conservation methods. In many cases, it appears that recent changes in the social environment, new trends in lifestyles, and new needs and priorities of the population (e.g. education) have often considerably reduced the capacity for traditional conservation practice. Problems include the lack of respect for traditional beliefs (and sometimes their complete rejection), difficulties in mobilizing the community, the need to pay for the services of skilled artisans, and difficulties in gathering traditional building materials as well as increases in their cost and transport. Of course, the sites that are the most affected are, again, those closest to large cities, but this does not mean that there are no changes in rural areas. Therefore, the endogenous conservation of these sites should not be taken for granted, and exogenous contributions could be very useful, if not vital.

The primary challenge, as revealed in this volume, is to find a proper complementarity between professionals and traditional rulers/custodians. Even though people desire progress, they nevertheless still retain a respect for traditional sites. There may also be a need for those responsible for such sites to retain their status within the community and avoid losing their honour. The questions are numerous: how to establish confidence; how to avoid a deconsecration of sites; how to make use of modern methods and concepts, while respecting traditional rules and habits; and how far can traditional rules and habits be adapted to the contemporary environment without losing their soul.

Another important question is that of the authenticity of a site. When the authenticity of a site is considered through a specific relationship with cultural practices, if an external body intervenes, does the site remain authentic? Or should the changes that occur together with the socioeconomic changes be considered as the true authenticity, reflecting fully the current cultural situation of a place? In practice, this raises several questions: does a conservator have to facilitate/contribute to the revalorization of vanishing practices; is it really possible or acceptable to people to keep them or 'freeze' them in a certain state; is it even reasonable as long as culture is generally constantly evolving; and are there other

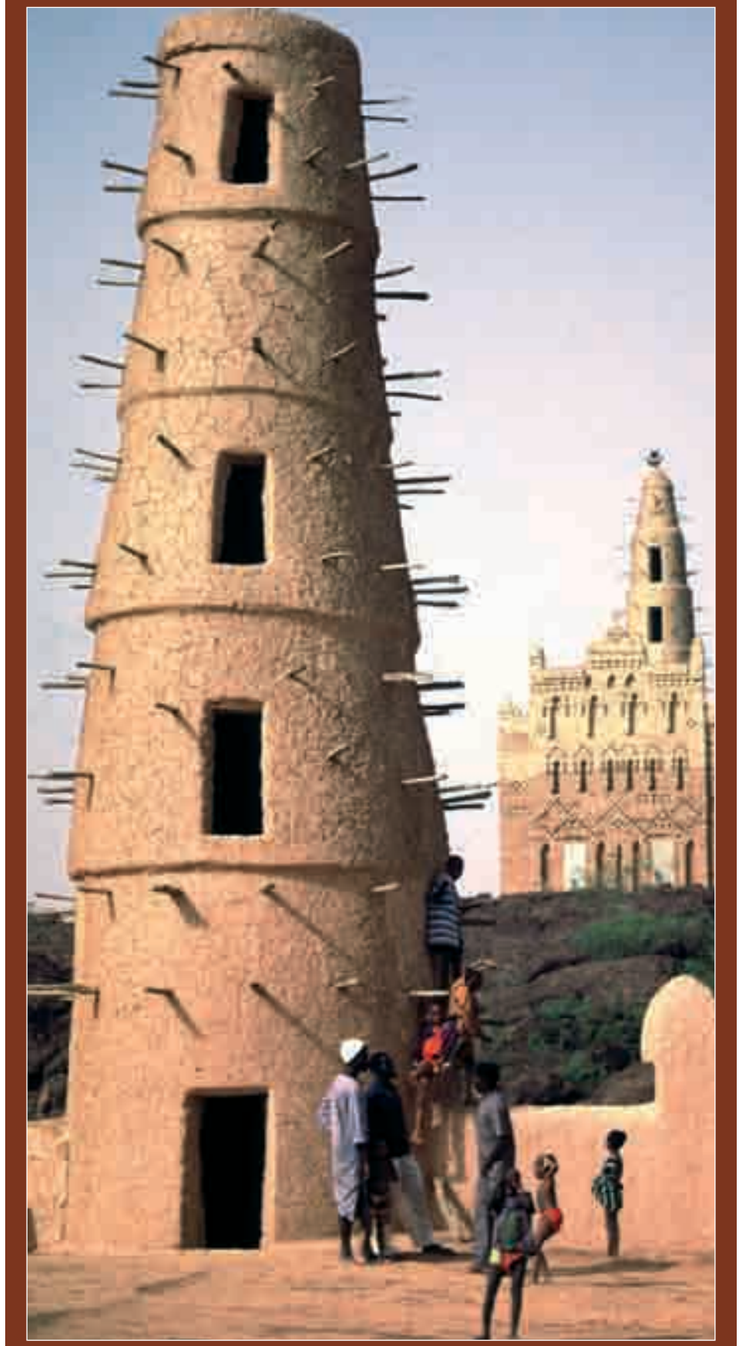


FIGURE 7 Mosques at Bani, Burkina Faso

alternatives for keeping a site or the memory of a site for us today and future generations. There is a need for serious reflection to sort out these possible contradictions.

In conclusion, it appears that the conservation of sites that are already taken care of by a traditional organizational/belief system is a complex issue which needs to be looked at with care. The parameters being numerous, similar sites could present very different situations. Therefore it is clear that, for each case, in-depth research and social impact studies are necessary. However, what should be seen as of paramount importance is the need for professionals to establish confidence and strong partnerships with the traditional custodians/rulers and the community at large. In order to achieve this goal, one should avoid doing research and studies on a site and its people *for* them, but rather as much as possible *with* them and for themselves. If this is done, the knowledge about the site, the conclusions drawn, and the proposed plans will be shared among all partners (stakeholders), giving them a better chance of success.

The results of this research project are of great interest for understanding and interpreting sites, where similar conservation practices may have been used in the past. They may also help to recover or reconstitute facets of practices now vanished, especially when dealing with sites that have been abandoned for a time (for example, after conflicts). Another important point is that we have also (re-) discovered people with original social organizations. These often leave room for each generation to express itself while still respecting the environment, and to the benefit of future generations. Interesting models that might be adapted to solve some of today's problems? In any case, they represent methods and practices that should not be forgotten when conserving immovable heritage in Africa.

It is therefore of paramount importance that this research should continue in order to improve our approach to such sites, as well as to develop the most effective management strategies. Collection of information on other sites will enlarge and fine-tune this basic knowledge about traditional conservation practices in Africa and elsewhere, and we hope that this book will inspire others to join efforts in this area.

My thanks to all those who have participated in this research programme, first of all to the authors of the articles, but also to the members of the scientific committee who have contributed to the overall quality, and to all those who, directly or indirectly, have provided valuable information and/or facilitated the work, and finally to the donors who, again directly or indirectly, have made this research possible.

ABDOULAYE NAPON, Department of Cultural Heritage of Burkina Faso
BAKONIRINA RAKOTOMAMONJY, Architect, CRATerre-EAG

2. The Na-Yiri of Kokologho

Kokologho is located 45 kilometres from Ouagadougou. The palace, known as Na-Yiri, is in the centre of the village not far from the road that leads to Bobo-Dioulasso. The site is made up of the central palace surrounded by a so-called courtyard of idols. The local notables live there (the head griot, the chief groom, and the chief guardian of the palace). Not far away is the royal cemetery with its altars, as well as a palaver tree and an apatam (covered shelter) which functions as the meeting place of the Naaba. All surrounding dwellings depend directly on the central palace. Indeed, for the Mossi, all life revolves around the Naaba, the traditional chief; his palace is the symbol of the strength of all his people, and therefore of his. The palace is the official and private residence of Naaba Kaongo, the eighteenth Naaba of Kokologho, who according to tradition reigns over the eight surrounding villages. The Naaba appoints the heads of these villages and he in turn is answerable to the Naaba of Ouagadougou, one of the four main Naabas ('Mogho Naaba', or world chief) who reign over the four kingdoms of the Mossi.

Oblong in shape, the main building is of Sudano-Sahelian type. It is made up of mud walls with a straw roof covered with earth and supported by laths of cleft wood and beams from tree trunks. The complex plan of the building, together with the decorative archways and numerous cloisters, distinguishes the palace building from others in the village.

The palace was built in the reign of Naaba Boulga, enthroned by the Mogho Naaba Kom II in 1940. Tradition held that a newly-enthroned Naaba had to build his own palace. His predecessor's palace had fallen into disrepair due to lack of maintenance, and the rule was to occupy only the palace of the reigning Naaba. As a result, the ruins of three palaces are all located in a 10 km radius. However, this tradition was modified as the Naaba Boulga wanted his successor to live in the same palace in order to preserve it and to perpetuate his own name and power. The present Naaba (Naaba Kaongo) would, in any case, have probably found it very difficult to mobilize his people to build a new and more imposing palace than his father's.

At the time, Naaba Boulga, who was the first Naaba to convert to Christianity, benefited from the help of the Christian mission. Traditionally, the Naaba is also responsible for maintaining Na-Yiri. For this purpose, the Baloum (Council of Ancients) names a conservation head, the 'Manegd-Naaba', who relies on a team of craftsmen and workers directed by a head stonemason, the Songue Da. They are charged with small repairs, plugging cracks, repairing plasterwork, and replacing faulty beams. In principle, the beams are checked every five years, but the last repair dates back to 1992.

The courtyard of idols ('Tim-Dogho') is located in the eastern part of the palace and is the very foundation of Mossi power and existence. It is the setting for all the ceremonies, rituals and other offerings to the forebears and to the gods. This courtyard is more important in the eyes of the population than the palace itself, as it is where their ancestors' spirits reside. It is shared by the eight villages that fall under the authority of the Naaba of Kokologho. Each of the eight huts shelters the idol of the corresponding village. The courtyard of idols is looked after by the Mogho Naaba (the Great Naaba of Ouagadougou) through the intervention of the Naaba Kaongo, but according to the custom every village must annually guarantee its maintenance. If the hut sheltering the idol is not conserved, the village head can be dismissed by the Naaba of Kokologho (by the withdrawing the relevant headgear). A village idol can sometimes be entrusted to another village. To get their idol back again, the villagers must go the temporary custodians after a certain period of time and offer gifts. They are not allowed to address the idol directly. Gifts must be

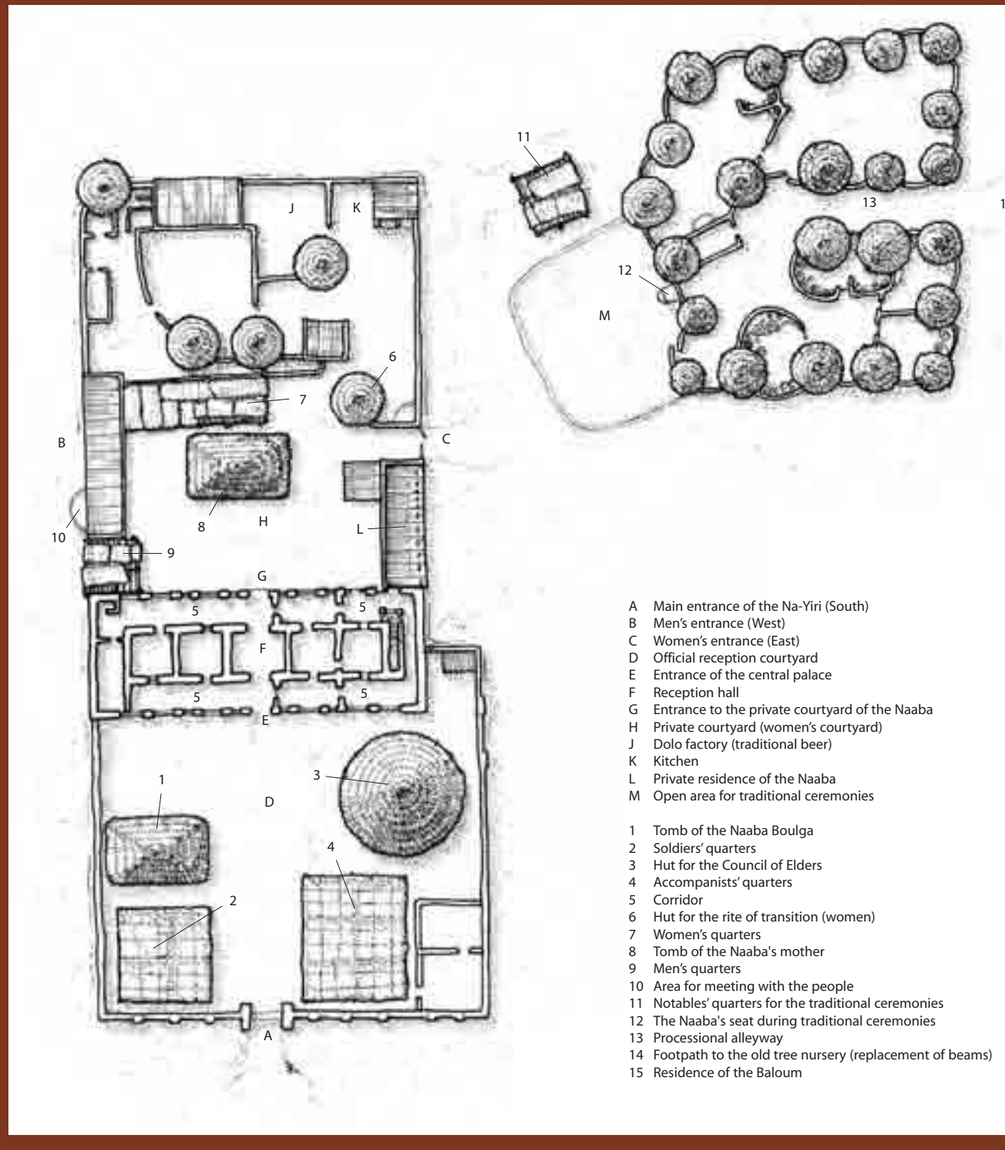
FIGURE 8
The Na-Yiri of Kokologho

FIGURE 9 The courtyard of the idols.

FIGURE 10 The southern elevation, with the Meeting Place of the Elders on the right.

sent to the Mogho Naaba through the intermediary of the caretaker village, then to the Naaba of Kokologho with all the associated risks. It is precisely to avoid this kind of deplorable situation that the maintenance of the courtyard of idols is held in such importance.

Annual maintenance work is linked to the customary festival of Na-Basga. It begins with the Mogho Naaba and spreads afterwards to all the Naabas, who set the date in agreement with other village notables after consulting the idols.



A Main entrance of the Na-Yiri (South)
B Men's entrance (West)
C Women's entrance (East)
D Official reception courtyard
E Entrance of the central palace
F Reception hall
G Entrance to the private courtyard of the Naaba
H Private courtyard (women's courtyard)
J Dolo factory (traditional beer)
K Kitchen
L Private residence of the Naaba
M Open area for traditional ceremonies

1 Tomb of the Naaba Boulga
2 Soldiers' quarters
3 Hut for the Council of Elders
4 Accompanists' quarters
5 Corridor
6 Hut for the rite of transition (women)
7 Women's quarters
8 Tomb of the Naaba's mother
9 Men's quarters
10 Area for meeting with the people
11 Notables' quarters for the traditional ceremonies
12 The Naaba's seat during traditional ceremonies
13 Processional alleyway
14 Footpath to the old tree nursery (replacement of beams)
15 Residence of the Baloum

FIGURE 11 Plan of the Na-Yiri at Kokologho.

FIGURE 12 The entrance gate

FIGURE 13 The crowd during the annual festival, 'Na-Basga'.

FIGURE 14 A group of women renovating the mud plaster.

The general population is told twenty-one days beforehand, since work must begin two weeks before the actual day. The work is decided upon after carrying out a meticulous inspection to determine conservation status. To do this, the opinion of the idol guardians is taken into consideration as well as expert technical advice.

Orders for materials are then placed: straw to redo the roofing, earth and cow dung for the plaster, and other building materials are brought to the palace. Following the rituals and other ancestral offerings, small groups manufacture the straw covering for the roof and the mud required for plastering.

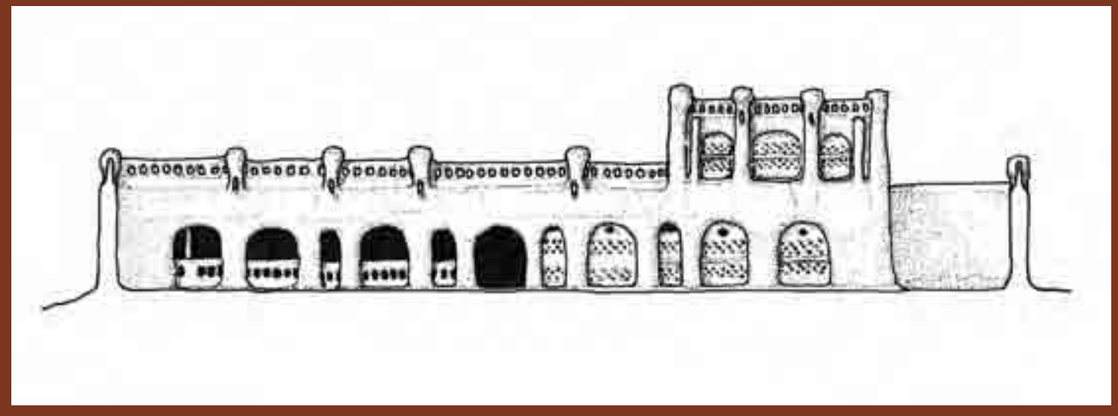
A week later, another ceremony heralds the removal of the roofing and the replacement of the straw cover takes place in a festive in atmosphere.

Each group of craftsmen from the eight villages is supervised by a senior person, and the different work takes place under the overall supervision and monitoring of the Dapoe Naaba, the palace guardian. The work must be completed three days before the beginning of the Na-Basga festival.

The same practise was followed for the restoration of the palace although nowadays it is restricted to the courtyard of idols. This traditional conservation practice was part of the handing down of knowledge

FIGURE 15 The group of women renovating the flooring.

FIGURE 16 South elevation.



and know-how, and it helped maintain social cohesion and respect for customs, values that now appear to have been abandoned. The rural exodus, economic difficulties, inroads made by new religions, a lack of interest by young people in local customs, but also, to a certain extent, problems in obtaining traditional building materials, especially quality timber species, are all possible reasons for this change. Moreover, individuals with traditional know-how are today not held in as much esteem by society as they used to be, and only rarely do they have the chance to pass on their knowledge. Instead they seek other work and end up using their knowledge to master modern materials.

The Naaba is doing his best to respect his dead father's wishes, but is unable to absorb the cost of the periodic maintenance, and perhaps to modernize his image he has altered some parts of the palace by using permanent materials to render it habitable. In fact, part of the palace has become a storage area for supplies and other objects, and is under attack by insects and rodents.

Furthermore, because it is the only one of the palaces in Burkina to have preserved a certain authenticity of shape and aspect, with its typical traditional decorations, it is occasionally used as a film set. To make the scenes look authentic, some modifications and maintenance work have been carried out, notably the complete repair of the plaster. Some elements that looked out of place have been removed, while others have been added, mostly for purely aesthetic reasons but always with respect to Moaga symbolic tradition. Even though the palace is not completely authentic, it still has many interesting features and is a good interpretation of traditional Moaga culture. This could be enhanced by reclaiming some elements and rearranging some of the currently closed areas of the palace.

The Naaba Kaongo is concerned that after he dies the site will come to a tragic end, since neither the Ministry of Culture nor young people are interested in it. He has written to the Ministry of Culture requesting that the site be classified, but currently nothing has happened. Thus the site receives no help or assistance from the bodies in charge of conserving cultural heritage. There is no official text guaranteeing its protection, and only local customs prevent the regional administrative authorities from transforming the palace's surrounding areas into a residential area.

Although the site is private heritage, it is recognized as being of communal interest and serious initiatives are underway to have it listed on the World Heritage List.

A programme to safeguard and develop the site could attract many visitors and encourage local people to consider their heritage from a different viewpoint. The site could then become an attractive centre for cultural activities as well as a witness of living history and culture, in spite of its transformations. Besides classifying the site and garnering government support for its conservation, it would be useful to:

- list the other interesting sites in the region, which include at least one sacred pool and several trees not far from the palace;
- design and install display panels and other presentation and interpretation materials;
- design and produce promotional materials, a catalogue and/or leaflets;
- train site guides and staff;
- integrate a site visit into tourist itineraries to improve its self-funding capacity;
- encourage the population to organize cultural shows or evenings; and
- foster the necessary conditions for safeguarding traditional building knowledge.

To implement such a programme, a site management plan should be developed in partnership with a management committee. This committee should comprise representatives from site stake-holders who could then take over daily management of the site in partnership with the Cultural Heritage Authority of Burkina Faso.

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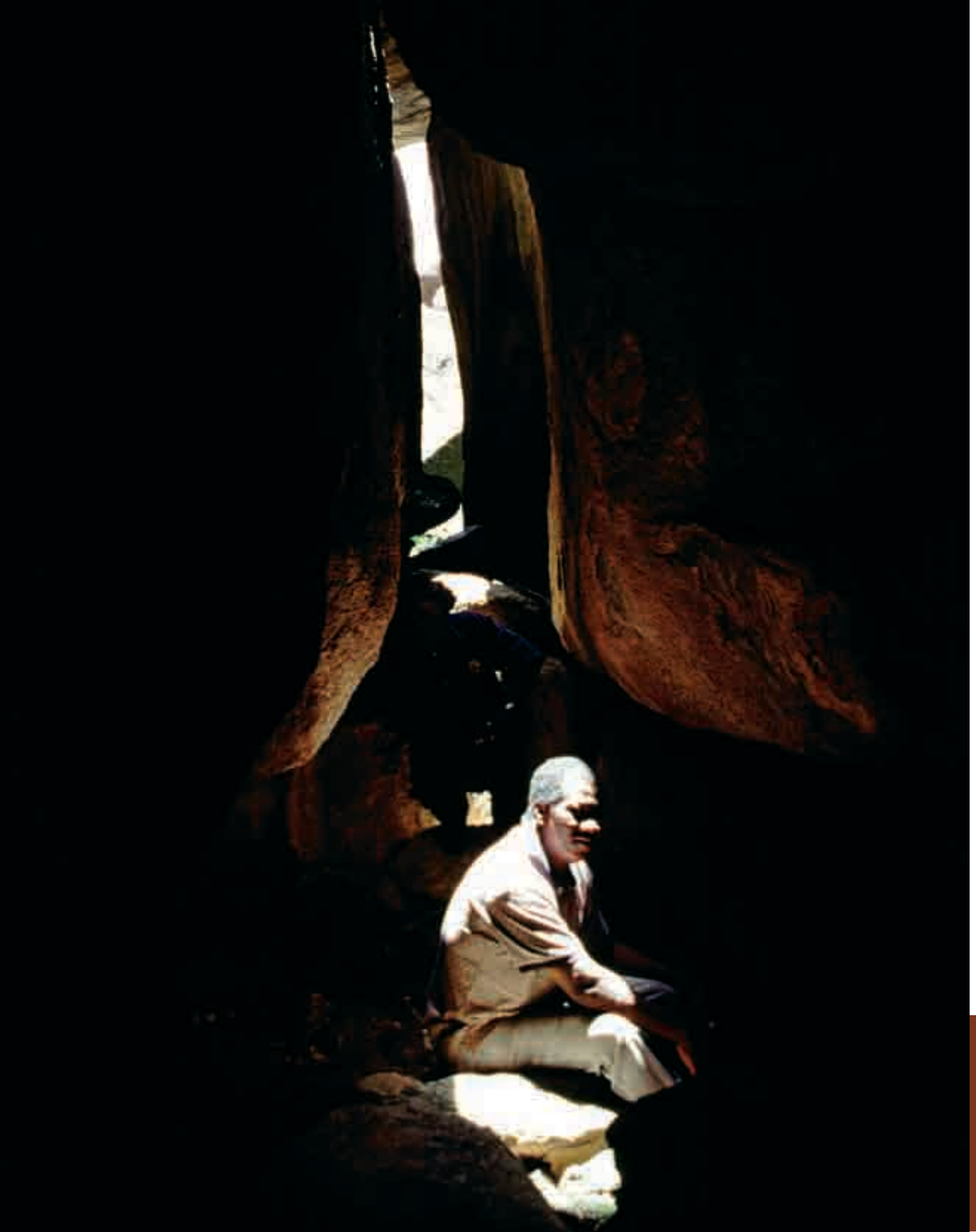

FIGURE 17
The interior of one of the caves of Tenzuk.

BENJAMIN WARINSIE KANKPEYENG
Head of Regional Office, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Bolgatanga

3. The cultural landscape of Tongo-Tenzuk

TRADITIONAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The Tongo Hills, embracing the unique cultural landscape of Tongo-Tengzuk, are located only ten miles from Bolgatanga. The area is of outstanding natural beauty and cultural richness. The hills, with their amazing rock formations, caves and natural rock shelters, are the sacred epicentre of the Talensi, an ethnic group in northern Ghana. Over countless generations, through work and play, in their buildings and rituals, the Talensi at Tongo-Tengzuk have managed to master their unique environment.

Interdependence between Nature and Culture

The environmental mastery at Tongo-Tengzuk has come about through effective use of land for buildings, agriculture (which engages about ninety-eight percent of the population) and shrines. The local architecture blends seamlessly into the natural environment, while also creating human order within nature. The design and placement of structures has served the social needs of the community for many centuries and is carefully preserved through tradition. The houses mirror the social and ideological relations among the Talensi. The footpaths, the shaded spaces, the shrines and groves, cattle kraals and granaries, reflect the cosmological system and sociopolitical structures. The numerous compounds, clustered among the rocks of the hills, produce a landscape of extraordinary beauty and tranquillity, typical of a superb example of the interdependence of nature and culture, of humans and their environment. Retention of water for agricultural purposes is achieved through careful rock terracing. Some rocky areas are used for processing foods: threshing, pounding or grinding grains and *shea* butter. Some of the caves, rock boulders, rocky pavements, land and groves are sacred or serve as shrines for the community.

Historical Background

The oral traditions of the community at Tongo-Tengzuk claim that their ancestors have always been there, or alternately, sprouted from the ground or descended from heaven (Gabrilopoulos 1995), as do the other indigenous Talensi living around the base of the hill. Those Talensi known as Namoos at Tongo, who are actually migrant Mamprusi, acknowledge the antiquity of the real Talensi living on the hill or at the foot of it, and affirm peaceful coexistence with their neighbours (Fortes 1945, Rattray 1932).

For centuries the Tongo hills formed part of a frontier belt between centralized states. The conquest states of Dagbon and Mamprugu lay to the south and those of the Mossi kingdoms to the North. By the time of European contact, the Talensi were sedentary horticulturists with a loose, acephalous political organization. Tongo-Tengzuk was recognized as an established site of sacred power with the arrival of colonial rule at the end of the nineteenth century. It was one of the last areas in Ghana to submit to British rule; only in 1911 did a British military expedition storm the hills and end the resistance. The Tallensi were evicted and access to the area banned. In 1915, the British found out that many people had clandestinely returned to the hills and a second assault was launched in the same year. By the 1920s many people had returned to the area because of its sacred power.

FIGURE 18 Ceremonial activity at the Tongnaab shrine.

FIGURE 19 Ceremonial activity at the Tongnaab shrine.

FIGURE 20 A council of the elders held at the special meeting place.

FIGURE 21 A libation to a minor deity worshipped at the Tongnaab shrine

Conservation Practices

The conservation of the Tongo-Tengzuk cultural landscape site is tied up with the Talensi worldview. The site contain numerous sacred shrines including earth shrines (*tengban*) and ancestral shrines (*ba'ar*). The Talensi believe in a supreme being and worship this being through lesser gods represented by a host of natural features in the form of rocks or boulders, cliffs, caves and constructed ancestral shrines. Paramount among the earth shrines is Tonna'ab, nestled in the cliffs to the west of the settlement at the section called Kpatari, which has provided the area with enormous sacred power for both the Talensi and other ethnic groups in Ghana. Tonna'ab has dominated the religious topography of the area as well as attracting pilgrims from surrounding populations (Guruni, Kusasi, Builsa, Dagomba and Mossi). It has also been viewed historically by the Akan in southern Ghana as a site of potential ritual power. Rattray (1932) observed the presence of wealthy Asante businessmen and women in the area. Tonna'ab is a benevolent, protective, and curative shrine that abhors evil. It has been the unifying factor for the Talensi and continues to flourish today.

At Kpatari there are two sacred groves, Bonab and Nnoo, that also greatly influence the culture of the entire Talensi community. Bonab performs the same ritual functions as Tonna'ab. The Nnoo shrine serves as the home of the Golib god. The Golib god has a lot of influence on the agricultural life of the community, ensuring the maintenance of several cultural practices in the area. The Gologo festival, which takes place at the end of the dry season or the beginning of the rainy season, is celebrated to reinforce the community belief in the Nnoo shrine or Golib god.

The historical establishment of, and adherence to, many taboos and norms in respect to the needs of the Golib god has helped to evolve and maintain a number of traditional conservation practices which over the years have preserved this unique cultural landscape. These taboos, norms and penalties have been instituted to strengthen the relationship between the Talensi and this god or shrine. The social conventions of the Talensi, which have a strong ideological background related to ancestor worship, also serve to conserve the cultural landscape.

Architecture

A cursory examination of architectural variation at Tongo-Tengzuk reveals two architectural types: at Kpatari and Bonchiig, there are only flat mud roofs, while all other settlement have roofs of thatch or modern materials (aluminium or galvanized sheets). The difference is explained by the fact that the Golib god abhors fire and therefore thatch, as it can cause a gusting fire. The displeasure of the god can bring about catastrophes within the community, such as drought, poor crop harvest and sicknesses. Consequently, there is a proscription against the use of thatch in construction by the Kpatari and Bonchiig communities, where the three important shrines of Tonna'ab. Bonab and Nnoo are located. Historically, all worshippers of the Golib god from the external Bogyar clan (the real Talensi and not the Namoo or migrants) celebrated the spring festival of Gologo and autumn festival of Boaram and upheld this proscription, but today the situation has changed. Only the Kpatari and Bonchiig communities continue to adhere to the regulation and hence their houses consist of mud structures, except for a few rooms built with cement by wealthy individuals, though even these retain a flat roof.

The establishment and maintenance of the building tradition at Tongo-Tengzuk has been due to the passing of the essential elements of building construction or conservation from members of the older knowledgeable generation to their successors. The transmission of the knowledge is conducted verbally or by demonstration. Oral traditions can be formulaic in nature (Gabrilopoulos 1995) and their transmission includes mnemonic devices.

Building is a semi-permanent occupation, conducted and supervised by experienced individuals in the community. These individuals, who are also farmers, will help families who wish to build new compounds, as well as those who are expanding or maintaining existing ones. One does not train formally to be a builder. Individuals and youngsters acquire knowledge of building techniques by seeking out experienced builders or relatives who will engage them in informal apprenticeships. As they help, they learn the rules of traditional design, construction and traditional norms relating to the built form.

Several factors limit the location and the form of the building. These include the availability of building materials, natural features and obstructions, minimal requirements for shelter and comfort, and, above all, social and ideological needs. The building process among the Talensi is negotiated and practised according to convention. In addition, the compound is constructed in a manner 'facilitating domestic life,

segregating activities, animals and people, reinforcing relationships and affirming beliefs, the structure of the compound, in concert with its occupants use' (Gabrilopoulos 1995), and it has its own social logic.

The social conventions of the area provide another source or impetus for the conservatism displayed with respect to the conservation of the built environment. 'Social conservatism reduces anxiety about the range of actions that a particular actor may take. Modifications to the built environment have a logic of their own, that must be negotiated within the community' (ibid.). Rich individuals who could afford to purchase modern materials are pressured by the community to conform to the village planning norms and to use more traditional ones instead.

Building work is conducted from January to April. Women and men both contribute to the construction and maintenance of buildings. Women carry the mud and men do the actual building. Maintenance is necessary during each dry season. Wind, rain, fire, and human and animal impacts contribute to the deterioration of the mud structures. Mud is best conceptualized as a semi-permanent material. Replastering is usually done annually. Courtyards are repaired in general every two years. Mud roofs are repaired somewhat more frequently because of the direct rainwater impact. High traffic areas, steps, and walls that suffer impacts from livestock are repaired frequently. Thatch roofs outside Kpatari are replaced every three years. Compounds are also remodelled to accommodate changes in social relations in the house: men acquire new wives and sons come of age, marry and beget children. Entire new courtyards may accrete onto the compound. Additional ancestor shrines are added after the death of more elders or landlords. Compounds consist of round and square rooms, except for the Dakore's house which contains important oracles for the community and consists of only round rooms because the oracles abhor any other form.

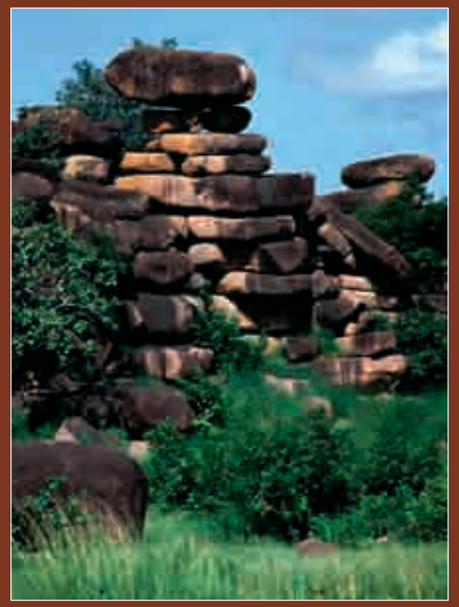

FIGURE 22 One of the many strange rock formations at Tengzuk

Farmland and Shrines

The rock boulders forming the stone terraces prevent fires, set to burn stalks in preparation for the next season, from getting out of control because of the Golib god. Stone terracing effectively retains and checks water erosion for farming purposes. The terracing helps to preserve the fertility of the soil. The proscription against gusting fires has helped to preserve the natural vegetation around the shrines. Tradition also prohibits the cutting of the trees, shrubs and grasses around the three shrines. There are prescribed walkways to each shrine.

Natural Landscape

The community has resisted attempts to destroy the physical or natural landscape of the area. For example, their Tallensi neighbours at Wakyii, a village at the base of the hill, gave a concession covering parts of the hill under their control to a quarrying company, allowing degradation of the area. In contrast, the Tengzuk community violently resisted attempts by the same company to extend their operations beyond the foot of the hill. Complaints were made to the district and regional authorities, and to the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (the national institution responsible for the preservation of the material cultural heritage) by the leaders of the Tengzuk community. Steps have now been taken by these governmental agencies to stop the quarrying operations.

Legal Protection

Traditionally, the earth-priests of the seven sections of Tengzuk, namely, Sameed, Sakpiega, Tamboog, Gundari, Nanchieyir, Kpatari and Bonchiig, as well as the custodian of Tonna'ab, enforce the laws on the use of the natural and cultural environment. The Goldana, the most senior earth priest, acts as the chief. The Tongo-rana, paramount chief of the Talensi, has only administrative responsibility with respect to traditional political matters. The Bolgatanga District

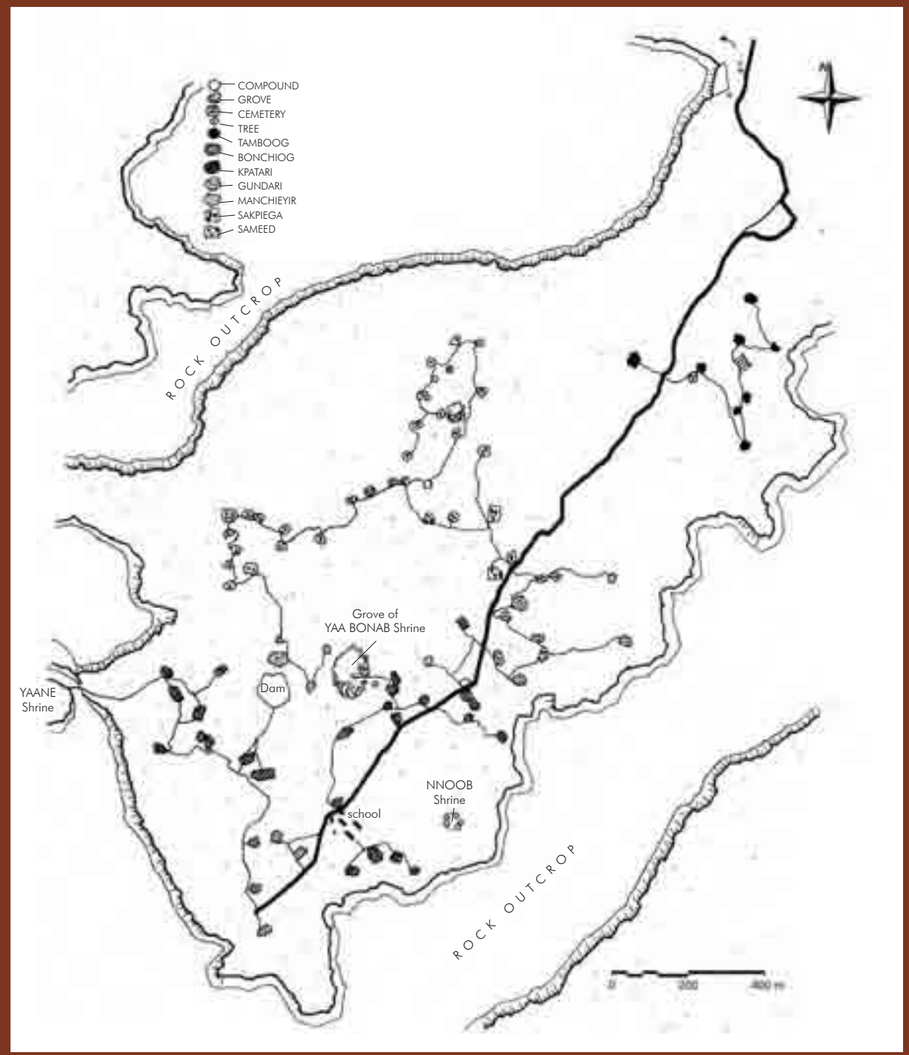

FIGURE 23 Plan of Tengzuk.

FIGURE 24
A shrine by the entrance to a family compound.

FIGURE 25 A view across the roof of Goldana's house.

Assembly has been enthusiastic about, and interested in, the preservation of the site, since it has potential for tourism development. The assembly has a plan to construct a road from the base of the hill through to the end of the settlement. It has also demonstrated its interest by providing funds for the limited ethnographic documentation and mapping of the settlement by the Upper East Regional Museum, Bolgatanga. The Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, empowered by law NLCD 387 of 1969 for the preservation of the material culture of Ghana, has identified and nominated the settlement to UNESCO for consideration as a world heritage cultural landscape site.

Conclusions

Tongo-Tengzuk is a masterpiece of a cultural landscape, one that the Talensi community have attempted over the years to preserve for posterity, despite increasing threats from modernity and little outside intervention or support. Limited research has provided some knowledge about the community's ethnography and history (Allman 1999; Fortes 1945; Gabrilopoulos 1995; Kankpeyeng 2000; Rattray 1932). The community has conserved the site for several decades by relying on traditional methods, inspired and strengthened by their worldview. The Tongo-Tengzuk community's relationship with staff at the Upper East Regional Museum has demonstrated its enthusiasm and support for any assistance to preserve the site for posterity. Preserving the site for posterity will require detailed research work on the ethnography, archaeology, traditional architecture, soil management and environmental techniques. This research will provide us with an understanding of the chronology of the site, the kinds of materials needed to conserve it, and those philosophical and psychological elements within the community that stimulated its preservation. The application of modern conservation techniques will greatly enhance the preservation of the site. Equally important is support for the community and education to help its members maintain their traditional culture in the face of the many present-day challenges that confront them.

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FIGURE 26
Renovating the western façade of the Djingarey Ber Mosque (December 1996).

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THIERRY JOFFROY, Architect, CRATerre-EAG

4. The conservation of the Grand Mosques of Timbuktu

Located right in the heart of the Sahara, at the top of the loop of the Niger River, Timbuktu was one of the largest academic centres in Africa, playing a role in the spread of science, literature, philosophy and religion. Built in the 14th and 15th centuries, the two main mosques of Timbuktu, Sankore and Djingarey Bers, are evidence of an impressive past. However, let us not be mistaken, as living monuments they have changed and evolved considerably since that time. This characteristic is a result of the way they were built, but also of the particular physical and sociocultural environment in Timbuktu.

First of all, the building materials used (earth, softstone, wood, palm beams) are rather fragile, and regularly eroded and damaged by the rare but violent rains. The plasterwork requires small-scale but regular changes and repairs.

Additional factors include sand encroachment, soil erosion, evolution of building norms and techniques, and finally the willingness of generous donors to contribute to the mosques' greatness. These factors led to extraordinary work being carried out: buttress reinforcement, full-scale repairs, embellishment, extensions, and new elevations. This is how the colour and texture of the mosques vary according to the seasons, and also how their shapes, decorations and dimensions have evolved with time.

An important trade crossroads between sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, Timbuktu aptly reflects its Sudanese and Maghrebi origins. In the building domain, two main families of stonemasons are organized into one guild. These masons have exclusive rights to building work under a master's authority. This guild is one of the 'Mysteries of Timbuktu'. Although Muslim, the masons engage in secret rituals and often employ amulets or talismans. Each family is responsible for one of the two big mosques (Koba Boo for Djingarey Ber and Hamane Boo for Sankore). This responsibility, as well as the magical power associated with the guild of masons, is illustrated neatly by a local belief that a mason would be turned into a maggot if one of the walls that he has built falls down.

Against this background, annual collective works to repair the mosque are organized. Benefiting from the many people who visit his offices, the Imam launches an appeal and announces these works; a truckload of earth, a wooden beam, a waterspout, gradually each person makes his contribution. When the materials are ready, the Imam informs the guild of masons and the masons get ready. In order to mobilize the maximum resources, works are organized on Sunday. Worshippers are told the Friday before during the main weekly prayer session, as they have to help the masons transport the materials to the site. The mud plaster (building earth) is prepared in advance so that the mixture can macerate several days before use.

Works are carried out under the supervision of the head of the guild of masons. Four experienced young masons are chosen by the patriarchs to oversee the works. A cotton fabric of about four metres in length is attached around their waist. This has been filled with amulets and chanted over by the marabouts. These four masons are the first to climb the walls of the mosque using the pieces of wood set out for this purpose. Incantations accompany them as they apply the first balls of mud plaster to produce a thick plaster coating. These measures help maintain site security and enable work to proceed smoothly. From then on,

work can really begin. Plaster is first applied to the outside wall of the mihrab.

The masons are divided into four working groups. Most are given the task of applying the protective coat while the others replace roofing beams or waterspouts. The eldest remain seated in the shade and are content with supervising the work. The non-specialists, often young people, busy themselves by preparing and transporting the earth mortar used for the plaster and other necessary materials. Large amounts of water are necessary for mixing the mud plaster and to dampen the walls before the plaster is applied. Supplying water used to be the job of the water carrier organization, but now women walk backwards and forwards non-stop with their jars and buckets filled from the taps made available for the occasion.

This work on the mosques is tantamount to a religious and social duty. All young people of working age are forced to take part. Once the work has begun, each age group counts the persons missing and goes to fetch them to bring them to the work site where they will be forced to take part in work after a mud-bath! The conservation work on the mosque takes on the character of an authentic popular celebration. For lunch, the different groups meet up to share their meal. The masons are served on site and are offered Kola nuts and tobacco.

The afternoon passes in a quieter manner. The work carried out in the morning has to be finished, such as the repair of the roofing and the application of plaster to the main minaret. It is one of the highlights of the day but also a very meticulous exercise because the minaret is the object of special attention. The mud plaster for the minaret is mixed beforehand with baobab powder to make it more resistant to the adverse affects of bad weather. Finally, the four masons chosen at the beginning of the day apply this special mixture, each working on one of the façades of the minaret.

At the end of the day, the Imam pronounces thanks for the assistance and utters blessings to preserve community unity before the traditional evening prayer. The masons accompany their patriarch to his residence where they will be offered a ritual dinner.

The repair work is scheduled just before the winter season to protect the mosques from imminent rain damage, anticipating the risk of deterioration. As not everything can be solved in the festival-like climate, a traditional visit is arranged just after the first strong rainfall to see how effective the work was. If any defects are detected, the masons carry out additional repairs.

To understand better the present form of the Timbuktu mosques, it should be noted that they have been subject to exceptional modifications. The mosques have always been the object of donor generosity and, for whatever reason, donors have wanted to redo the work and extend or add a prominent detail to the architecture. So the mosques have gradually acquired their current shape and dimensions.

This happened particularly in the 16th century, the golden age of Timbuktu, during the reign of Qadi El Aqib who was a generous benefactor. Many works were also carried out during the 20th century when Timbuktu was influenced by western culture. Thus in 1952, when a sand dune threatened to overwhelm the mosque of Sankore, the mosque was raised higher and its façade covered with 'alhore' stone (limestone blocks), thereby reducing the frequency of maintenance. The north façade of the mosque of Djingarey Ber received the same treatment. During the same period, the mosque of Sidi Yahya, the third most important mosque in the city and located in a relatively rich commercial district, was completely covered with the same stone, completely transforming its appearance. Owing to the fact that they are considerably larger, the mosques of Sankore and Djingarey Ber were never transformed to the same extent.

More recently, the mihrab of the interior court of the mosque of Sankore was replaced by a small 'alhore' stone structure using cement mortar. The use of imported materials or techniques remains rare in Timbuktu because of geographical isolation and the expense. However, the installation of fans, lanterns and fluorescent tubes for lighting has brought the mosques in line with current standards. In certain cases, the money used for these so-called improvements would have been better employed carrying out repairs and avoiding on-going deterioration. But this is all part of the mosques' experience and some people have a stronger desire to make their mark than to pay for maintenance, which is not as visible. It is thus a good thing that the guild of stonemasons has a free hand in carrying out maintenance work. Without this work lack of resources would lead to large-scale damage.

The masons are no strangers to this evolutionary phenomenon. Indeed, few interventions on the mosques remain completely neutral and the masons have numerous desires (conscious or unconscious) to leave behind their mark on the mosques. Thus it is usual to leave hand prints on the plaster surface; this could have a technical reason: slowing the water flow on wall surfaces, providing protection against sun rays, and better thermal exchange. As soon as the occasion arises, a structural shortcoming provides

FIGURE 27 (top left) Collective work carried out on the Sankore Mosque (1995).

FIGURE 28 (bottom left) Partial renovation of the roof of the Sankore Mosque.

FIGURE 29 (top right) Replastering the western façade of the Sankore Mosque.

FIGURE 30 (bottom right) Southern façade of the Sankore Mosque.

an opportunity for a mason to destroy and rebuild in his own fashion. This is a cultural fact; it may be noted that one of the masons' traditional instruments, similar to the modern crowbar, is used to destroy the damaged parts of a structure.

This can also be explained by the relatively poor performance of available materials in Timbuktu, leading to their periodic replacement, at least in the more exposed parts of buildings. However, it seems that the *ne plus ultra* is to build a buttress as a visible and sustainable trace of an intervention to conserve the mosque and as evidence of savoir faire! There have been numerous interventions, and photographic evidence shows their rise and fall over time.

The desire of the masons to leave their mark on the mosques was illustrated during work carried out on the monuments during one project (*Pilot sites for training in the conservation of the mosques of Timbuktu*). This revealed that they had been subjected to considerable modifications on several occasions. Some buttresses had a practical function and had been built under the supervision of master masons. On the other hand, the proposed construction of merlons to extend the columns and to transform radically the

FIGURE 31 (top left) The western façade of Djingarey Ber before renovation.

FIGURE 32 (middle left) The western façade during replastering.

FIGURE 33 (bottom left) The western façade of Djingarey Ber after completion of the preventive conservation work.

FIGURE 34 (top right) Repairs to the roof of the Djingarey Ber.

FIGURE 35 (middle right) The eastern façade of the Djingarey Ber.

aspect of the west façade of Djingarey Ber was finally blocked, but not without having to produce a number of documents (old photographs) proving that these had never existed. This experience proves that you learn more when working with the community!

The mosques of Timbuktu are living monuments, subject to regular alteration from the whims of bad weather and man's will. Nevertheless, they preserve extremely old elements that coexist in harmony with much more recent additions. These two mosques preserved their original, exceptional characters and maintained their strong presence in the urban fabric. This was made easier by the fragile and malleable building materials used, which over time have melted into a mass of homogenous texture. This dualism between respect for that which exists and the need to create seems to be the very essence of these mosques. The practice of heritage conservation is part of an original tradition. Indeed, the possibility that every new generation can leave its trace on these sacred spaces is probably an excellent way of promoting voluntary involvement in conservation works, thereby ensuring the mosques endure over time. These mosques have witnessed more than six centuries. They are the fruit of the community of Timbuktu, its somewhat varied culture, its history, its personalities. They reflect the will of successive generations and of its destructive and creative environment. Conversely, the mosques have certainly helped to shape attitudes. While religion is the main driving force, the days of communal maintenance work unite all the city's inhabitants and almost certainly reinforce a sense of community in each person.

Some changes have been brought about by the new requirements of modern living, the economic crisis and the unrest associated with the Turag rebellion; a 700-year tradition is being eroded. It is becoming more difficult to get help for the conservation work. Is this simply another adventure in the mosques' long lifetime or sign of their slow death? Concerned by the state of the mosques, the Government of Mali requested that they be listed on the World List of Endangered Heritage in danger, in 1990. UNESCO assistance was solicited in 1993, when the Government of Mali took the initiative of setting up the Timbuktu Cultural Mission. Following several UNESCO missions, a training programme was recommended. In parallel, the Head of the Cultural Mission was invited by the World Heritage Centre to take part in the three-week PAT 94 event on the conservation of earthen architecture, organized in Grenoble by the Gaia Project.

At the end of 1994, the World Heritage Committee responded favourably to the Timbuktu Cultural Mission's formal request to organize a training programme in partnership with the Gaia project, represented on this occasion by a team from CRATerre-EAG. The main training objective was to complete and improve conservation knowledge and practices for those people in charge of conservation work on the mosques of Timbuktu, mainly the stonemasons and individuals in charge of the mosques but also executive staff and representatives from state services.

To satisfy the practical spirit of the traditional masons as well as to implement concrete action, the training assumed a strong operational character through a training project that was called 'Pilot training sites for the conservation of the Timbuktu mosques'. A one-day training seminar and field visit were scheduled for a more academic audience

After six months of research and preparatory work, the training site was organized at the end of 1996, based on three fundamental concepts: the importance of prevention; the need to define priorities according to the risks involved; and respect for traditional practices.

The three-week programme achieved very positive results:

- a reinforced mastery of conservation techniques;
- the elaboration of new technical details;
- the provision of equipment;
- a better general knowledge of traditional mosque conservation practices;
- the experience acquired by the Timbuktu Cultural Mission in organizing and managing a field activity, which can be used when new action is planned; and
- the involvement of local services, strengthening their ability to react on a daily basis vis-à-vis cultural heritage, and, should the need arise, the more active and motivated individuals can reinforce the cultural mission.

In all, fifteen hundred working days were expended, enabling many projects to be implemented. All important risks were eliminated. Finally, some work was planned to improve the mosques, the most important of which was the repair of the west façade of the mosque of Djingarey Ber, which had not been renovated for a long time (in living memory, at least that of the masons).

Conversely, nothing was planned for the minarets or the façades (east and south for Djingarey Ber, north and south for Sankore) since they are treated annually by the masons, helped by local people during the traditional mosque conservation days. This decision was taken in order to respect important rituals and

especially to preserve the sense of responsibility the traditional mason families with regards to mosque conservation.

On the other hand, the traditional annual conservation work was strengthened by:

- trying to reduce the number of large-scale repairs (by implementing technical solutions for preventive conservation); and
- instituting better working conditions by supplying equipment and materials (a removable staircase was even set up for the mosque of Sankore).

These efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the maintenance days and/or carrying out additional works should be continued in future. Although the mosques can be considered out of danger for the moment, the fragile construction materials makes them continually vulnerable to bad weather.

The mosque conservation days represent a traditional festival that is still enjoyed by all generations today and so it should endure for many years to come. This system appears to be the only way to preserve the mosques' authenticity, in which variations in state, colour and gradual alterations to shape play an integral part.

Following the training session, we wrote: 'for now, compared with what we can see on recent or old documents, one can say that the mosques have not been in such a good general state for a long time'. Yet traditional work was not done that year! Seeing that the mosques were beautiful enough, no-one bothered to bring any materials. However, when some leaks in the roof were noticed, the masons immediately carried out repairs.

The following year, the rains were weak again and the Timbuktu Cultural Mission dedicated itself to restoring the most endangered mausoleums, working closely with the relevant families. Would the maintenance work be carried out? The masons' constant demand for materials and the enthusiasm with which local people talk about the mosque conservation days leave us very optimistic.

Once more, the very serious issue of how to measure and 'dose' intervention and outside assistance has come to the fore. This problem has been put into an even more concrete perspective by the prospects of World Bank financing for the mosques' conservation. Intervene, do too much without considering the future, or phase out the traditional mosque maintenance work: all these are tempting ideas but there is the risk of dispossessing the Timbuktu community of its heritage and a large part of their soul. Is it possible to avoid fracturing social cohesion when the financial and political stakes are so high that they may often be destructive?

The role of the Timbuktu Cultural Mission is therefore essential. They have the job of finding a new balance among the various partners, and of coordinating effective interventions on the mosques to conserve them and their vital link to the community, thus ensuring they remain authentic forever. These observations are valid for other buildings and historic sites in Timbuktu. At present, the traditions and practices associated with this heritage need direct support. To achieve this, a special fund should be set up and/or investments made in cultural tourism that will generate regular long-term revenues, complementing the efforts made by the Government of Mali and the funding from the Cultural Mission.

Based on these observations, the Timbuktu Cultural Mission has undertaken a support and research strategy that complements traditional practices. Thus in the last three years, the traditional conservation works have continued to be organized by the Imams and the guild of masons with the technical and financial support of the Cultural Mission. Some shortcomings remain, but after all are they not man-made? Are these shortcomings not an integral part of the mosques' very essence? Are they not due to the mosques' incessant and renewed appropriation by communities in Timbuktu who gather for this work at regular intervals?

In 1999, the mosques experienced and withstood the torrential rains that fell on Timbuktu, while many houses were unfortunately damaged. Does this not provide sufficient proof of the method's effectiveness and a spur to extend it to the whole of this historical city?

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FIGURE 36 Annual collective work at the Sankore Mosque (1995).

FIGURE 37
The main entrance to the Great Hut (Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga).

REMIGIUS KIGONGO, Site supervisor

5. Kasubi tombs

TRADITIONAL CONSERVATION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The Buganda belong to the Bantu-speaking people and, according to oral traditions, date their political civilization to around the thirteenth century AD. The first King of Buganda was Kintu. He is said to have come to Buganda with his wife Nambi, the daughter of the sky, whose hand he won by performing heroic deeds at the command of her father, the god Ggulu. Kintu is said to have overthrown a tyrant named Bemba at the request of the local clan leader who rewarded him by making him the first Kabaka (king) of Buganda.

There are many stories about Kintu in Buganda and in the neighbouring small kingdoms of Busoga. Kintu is said not to have died but to have disappeared into a forest at Magonga. At Kasubi and the other royal tombs, there is always an area behind the bark cloth curtain known as 'Kibira' or forest where certain ceremonies are performed.

Today, the belief that Kabakas do not die but disappear still remains. In front of the curtain at Kasubi, there are raised platforms corresponding to the position of each king's tomb behind the curtain. Four kings of Buganda are buried at Kasubi, their thirty-one predecessors are buried elsewhere at individual sites within the old kingdom.

Traditional practice was to bury each king in a separate tomb and to establish a royal shrine to house his jawbone, which was separated from his body and believed to contain his spirit.

Shrines were staffed by descendants of the kings' leading chiefs and wives, his ritual half-sisters and by spirit mediums. Twenty-six shrines are located in Busiro County, west of Kampala, an ancient region of Buganda.

Development

Muteesa I established his palace at Kasubi hill in 1881 and resided there from 1882 onwards. At his death in 1884, it became his tomb site. He was buried in the courthouse, Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga. His three successors, Mwanga II, Daudi Chwa II and Muteesa II, were later also buried in the main tombs. Muteesa was a very powerful king and had more wives than any of his predecessors. He was the first Kabaka to be influenced by foreign culture. He adopted some Islamic religious practices from the Ivory Coast and from slave traders who travelled inland from Zanzibar. He also showed interest in European culture after hosting John Hanning Speke, the first European visitor to Buganda in 1862.

In 1967, Milton Obote abrogated the 1962 constitution and introduced a republican constitution abolishing the monarchies in Uganda.

It was only in July 1993 that the National Resistance Movement of Yoweri Museveni restored the traditional institution of kingship in Buganda, and Kabaka Ronald Mutebi II was crowned.

In 1997, four cultural sites, including the Kasubi tombs, were returned to the Buganda Kingdom, after being under the control of the central government. Today, the Kasubi tombs remain under the management of the Kingdom, and the custodianship of the Nalinya. As a national monument, it also falls under the protection of the Historical Monument Act.

Description of the tombs

The Kasubi tombs are located on the site of the former palace of King Muteesa I of Buganda. The hill of Kasubi is 5 km away from central Kampala, the capital of Uganda. It covers an area of 30 hectares and the plot is demarcated by fig trees, traditionally used for making bark cloth. In 1884 the palace was turned into a burial place for the Buganda kings and other members of the royal family who are buried outside the main tomb.

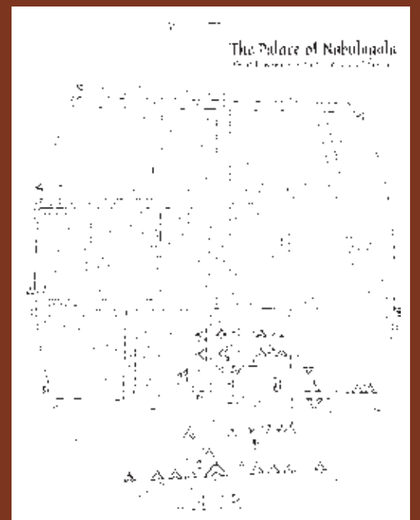

FIGURE 38 (top left) Kabaka Mutesa I with his chiefs.

FIGURE 39 (middle left) Kabaka Mwanga II.

FIGURE 40 (bottom left) Kabaka Mutesa's palace at Kasubi-Nabulagala (from the plan drawn by Sir Apolo Kagwa).

FIGURE 41 (top right) The gate house (Bujjabukula) at the entrance to the site.

FIGURE 42 (bottom right) The Great Hut (Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga), seen from the main courtyard.

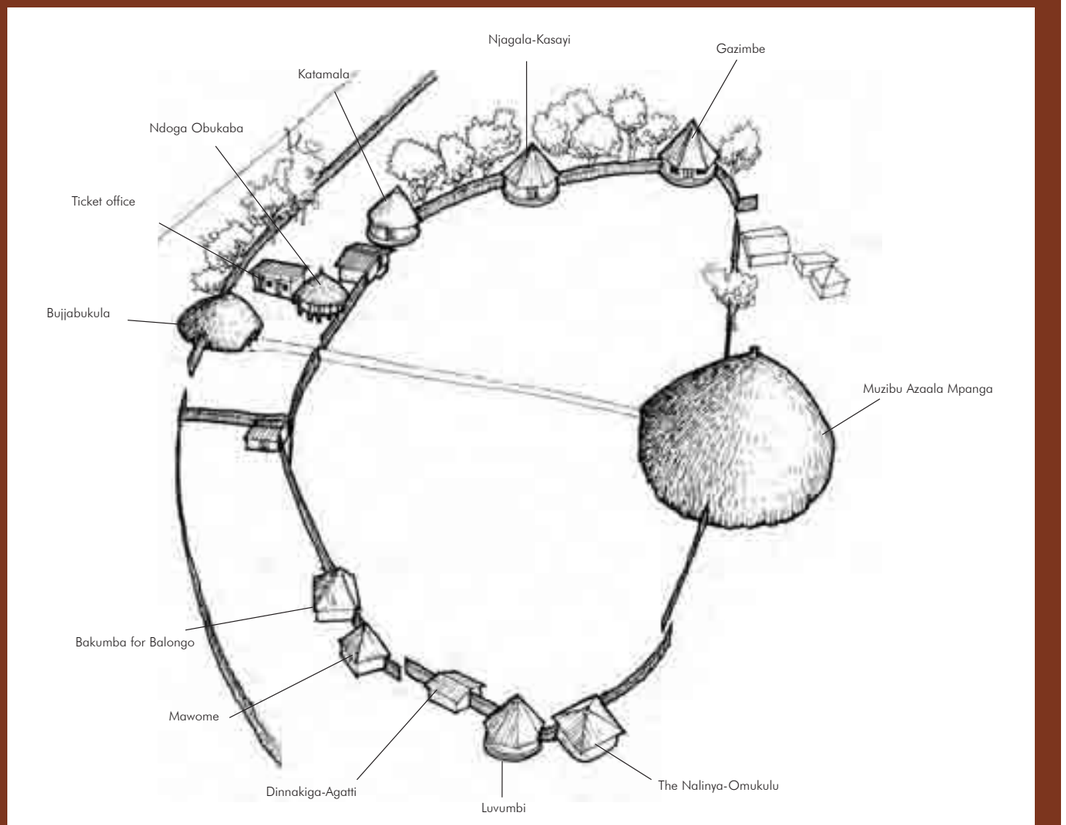

FIGURE 43 Axonometric plan of the site.

The gatehouse for the main tomb, Bujjabukula, is a beautiful structure built for the guards, Abambowa. Traditionally they were supposed to hide within this house which contains screens of woven reeds. The structure is built of local materials such as fibre, grass, cane, and wooden poles, and is supported by walls made of fired bricks. The Bujjabukula leads to a small courtyard, which contains the Ndoga-obukaba, a traditional house where the royal drums are kept. There is also a ticket office, which is one of the few modern structures found on the site. The drum house, like the gatehouse, has a traditional thatched roof and original wooden supporting columns, but the walls are made of brick and the floor has recently been cemented to protect the drums from termites.

From the guards' and drummers' enclosure, one enters the main courtyard and faces the striking main tomb known as Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga. This architectural masterpiece is circular, domed in shape, with an external diameter of 31 metres and an internal height of 7.5 metres. It is mainly made of poles and grass, and is constructed by people from every clan. Each clan has a particular task to perform. For example, the thatching is done by the Colobus Monkey (Ngeye) clan, and the decoration and installation of the bark cloth by the Leopard (Ngo) clan. The beautiful thick thatched roof extends to the ground, with a thickness ranging from 1.5 m at the bottom to 2 m at the top. This variation in thatch thickness prevents the building from decaying. Traditionally the tombs also had a fireplace inside to reduce insect damage, as smoke has drying qualities.

Inside the tombs, there is a huge bark cloth partition which hides the 'sacred forest' Kibira, where only widows of the Kabaka, the royal family and the restoration committee are permitted. The floor is covered with a thick layer of lemon grass and palm leaf mats. Insignias are displayed in front

FIGURE 44 The Lubuga and Nalinya dressed in bark cloth during their inauguration at Kasubi.

of the forest such as spears, shields, medals, walking sticks and pictures of the Kabaka buried there.

There are nine other buildings surrounding the main courtyard:

- The Nalinya Omukulu (the tombs of the first Nalinya);
- Luvumbi (Kabaka's wife's house);
- Dinna Kiga Agatti (Kabaka's sisters' tombs);
- Mawome (Kabaka's wife's house);
- Bakumba for Balongo (Twins' house);
- Katalama (Kabaka's wife's house);
- Njagala-Kasayi (Kabaka's wife's house);
- Gazimbe (Kabaka's wife's house);
- A building constructed to house the body of Muteesa I before his burial.

All these buildings are one storey high and made from varying materials. The walls of the Nalinya Omukulu and Dinna Kiga Agatti are made with traditional wattle while the others are made of fired bricks. Luvumbi, Katalama and Gazimbe have round plans while others are square. Originally these houses would have been roofed with thatch but currently the roofs are made from galvanised metal. However, the management has plans to restore the roofs to the traditional thatch.

Behind the Great House, the Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga, there are a number of scattered buildings, which include houses for the widows of the Kabaka and some members of the royal family. Others are used to store sacred objects and tombs for senior members of the royal family. There is also a cemetery used for burial of the immediate royal family. Before Kabaka Muteesa I died the rest of the site had been occupied by homesteads. Subsistence farming was done by successors of the Kabaka's wives. The community currently farms the area. Notable elements within this area are individual graves of some widows and two man-made mounds. One of the mounds was where Muteesa I named some of the villages near the palace, such as Nakulabye which is now a growing urban area. The second mound was used for certain ceremonies, and the surrounding area is very rich in traditional medicinal plants.

The arrangement of two courtyards and the sequence of the entry from the gatehouse, Bujjabukula, to the main tombs, Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga, offer a unique example of an architectural style developed by the powerful Buganda Kingdom from the thirteenth century onwards. The tombs represent one of the most remarkable buildings of architectural materials in sub-Saharan Africa. The architectural significance lies in the value of craftsmanship (such as the making and decoration of bark cloth and thatching methods).

Customs, norms and beliefs of the site

Customs linked to traditional beliefs are still strongly defended on site. For instance, people are not allowed to turn their back inside the main tomb Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga, and shoes are removed out of respect and to keep the place clean. Workers have to abstain from any sexual activity during the period of construction. Furthermore, women are not allowed to enter the structure at this time. Even the king has certain tasks to perform and is subject to certain prohibitions.

The most important values associated with the Kasubi tombs are the strong elements of intangible heritage. The site is the major spiritual centre for the Buganda who maintain strong links with their traditions. It is still managed in the traditional way by the Nalinya, the Katikkiro, the Lubuga and the widows. Other cultural guardians such as spirit mediums and Abalongo (twins) also continue traditional practices. The spiritual beliefs provide protection for the site, as the Buganda fear the powerful Kabaka's spirits – an intangible heritage shielding it from the pressures of twentieth century modernisation.

The Buganda believed, and still believe, in the afterlife. The tomb site is associated with death, mainly through the bonds that exist between the dead king and his subjects. African culture is familiar with the concept of life-after-death, which is reflected in the duality of objects and structures found at the site.

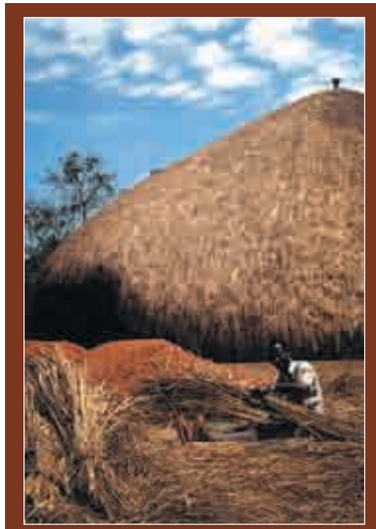

FIGURE 45 Preparing small bundles of thatch .

FIGURE 46 A Ngeye clan member laying a new thatch.

Traditional materials and conservation practices

Traditional materials include wooden poles, grass, reeds, fibres and palm leaves. These materials were recognized by the skilled elders, and experience proved that they were durable. The materials were carefully prepared. For example, the grass was sorted out before it was used to remove undesirable or damaged elements.

Wooden poles were treated by the removal of the bark in order to limit insect damage. Usually the poles were made from the *Markhabia* tree (Nsambya) which is a hard and long lasting wood.

The spear grass, *Imperata cylindrica* (Lusenke), used for thatching has a wide blade to hold water flow when fixed together. It is dried before use and unwanted materials are removed. It is fastened into bundles of various sizes before being laid on the roof. The principle thatcher guides the team of thatchers by pointing out the areas of the roof that require more grass. After thatching, the roof is neatly trimmed with knives made of copper and brass. The smoke of fires lit inside the huts originally ensured regular treatment of the thatch. This practice is now abandoned for security reasons.

Reeds are prepared through the removal of knots with sharp knives and the smoothing of the surface with a rag filled with sand. Reeds are used for making ceilings, fences, structural rings, sliding doors and walls. They are resistant to weathering, and there is a traditional belief that reeds have protective power.

Palm-fronds, which are resistant to insects, are used to cover the reeds and to strengthen the structural rings.

Strong fibres from shrubs found in swamps are used for fastening the rafters and for tying bundles of grass for the roof, as these are resistant to hazardous conditions.

The bark cloth decorating the inside of the tombs and used for ceremonial clothing is obtained from the fig trees, *ficus natalensis* (Mutuba), growing around the courtyard. After being cut off the trunk, the bark is carefully kept wet and beaten with a set of heavy wooden mallets to make it flat.

Finally, the walls and floors are smeared with a mixture of cow dung, ashes and silty soil to protect them from insect and to control the dust.

The clan functions in the royal court

Clans play important roles and bear great responsibilities for the preservation of the traditions of the Buganda. These clans bring together their members to learn the traditions, which are passed from father to son.

The Ngeye (Colobus monkey) clan is responsible for thatching.

The Ngo (leopard) clan is responsible for the design and decoration in the royal enclosure. They make the traditional crown, head-dresses, the royal twin object and the bark cloth curtains in the Muzibu-Azaala-

FIGURE 47 The inside of the Great Hut.

FIGURE 48 Royal drums inside the drum house.

Mpanga. The Ngo clan members are also the religious performers at the palace.

The Mbogo (buffalo) clan members are the chief drivers for the Kabaka and traditionally carried the Kabaka on their shoulders (okukongoja kabaka). They are the caretakers of the king's spears and shield (kamanyi). The clan also provides the chief gatekeeper and the Nanzigu, the wife of the king before the official marriage.

The Nyonyi (bird) clan is responsible for the fireplace in the royal court.

The Nkima (monkey) clan, headed by the Mugema, is the guardian of the oral and written history of the Buganda Kingdom. It is the Mugema who crowns the king. There is also a junior Mugema who is in charge of all the tombs in the kingdom. The main function of this junior Mugema is to perform the construction rituals.

The Mpologoma (lion) clan is responsible for allocating a suitable site for the establishment of the king's palace.

Traditional conservation practice in regard to the values (authenticity) of the site

The Kasubi tombs have unique traditional, architectural, educational and research values that can serve as a model for many similar sites found in the country. The site can also be used for training and research on conservation management techniques such as the shape and quality of thatch. Longer-term research on the feasibility of a collective grass farmland for the Kasubi tombs and other cultural sites in Buganda is also needed.

Traditional practices have strengthened the value of the site for future generations who will now be able to appreciate the authenticity of the site.

Evolution of the relationship between traditional and professional practices

The evolution of the site management after independence reflects the great political changes in the country. Traditionally, the clan members who had direct links with the Kabaka ensured regular maintenance. The system was well organized through the Prime Minister (Katikkiro) of Buganda, who co-ordinated activities in the Kingdom. Repairs were done in time by the specialized clans who could identify problems in the houses of the royal enclosure.

When Uganda became a republic and the monarchy was abolished, the site was gazetted under the Monument Act and the government took over the management of Kasubi. The central government worked with some of the clan members but the owners lost control of the sites. The clans also lost their technical responsibilities and the traditional management system was put to an end. The central government did not provide adequate resources for the site maintenance. Some of the structures were demolished and reconstructed with a lack of awareness of the associated values.

In 1997, the Department of Antiquities and Museums in conjunction with the Kingdom administration nominated the Kasubi Tombs for World Heritage site status. In 1998, a mission was organized by the Africa 2009 programme to train the people directly involved in the conservation and management of the site. This mission highlighted the need to set up a permanent maintenance team and to revive the role of the traditional clans and their associated techniques. As part of this on-site training, several repair works were undertaken on the thatched roofs, under the technical responsibility of the Ngeye clan, which started to regain recognition.

Between February and May 2000, the nomination file for inclusion of the Kasubi tombs in the World Heritage List was prepared by experts from UNESCO-WHC, ICCROM, and CRATerre-EAG. ICOMOS experts came to Kasubi for the verification of the site in January 2001.

As part of the nomination process, a management plan was developed to coordinate efforts of all stakeholders, stabilize the state of conservation of the site, revive the living traditions, and improve its presentation to the public.

This lead to the creation of the Buganda Tombs Site Committee, with eight members, including members of the royal family, the Buganda Minister in charge of Tourism and Heritage, custodians from the Kasubi tombs, a member of the Ngeye clan, an architect, and an engineer. This committee, appointed by the Katikkiro, was formed to work on all the cultural heritage sites in the kingdom, and is responsible for their conservation and management. Under this committee, a Works Committee was created for the Kasubi Tombs, consisting of five members:

- the chairman (Kaggo T. Malokweza Kivumbi);
- the site supervisor (Kigongo Remigious);
- the chief minister of the site/Katikkiro (Mulumba Ssalongo);
- the head of the thatchers' clan (Wabulakayole Ssalongo Ggingo);
- Lubuga (a woman who assists the custodians in their traditional duties).

The committee does all the management and administrative work for the conservation of the Kasubi tombs. It provides clear accountability for all funds received and materials used. This encourages donors to offer funds or materials needed for the maintenance of the tombs.

In addition, the committee informs the general public about its activities every Sunday through the newspapers.

There has been a gradual change in the practices of conservation professionals in Uganda: they now work with traditionalists to respect the norms and values of the site. Within this new framework for the conservation of the site, new activities are developed to sensitize the community to the basics of conservation and management planning.

The new conservation practices implemented at Kasubi will gradually be developed at other sites in the Kingdom. A training programme was organized in May 2001 for selected artisans to work on six other sites. This on-site workshop aimed at communicating to the participants basic know-how about conservation and management.

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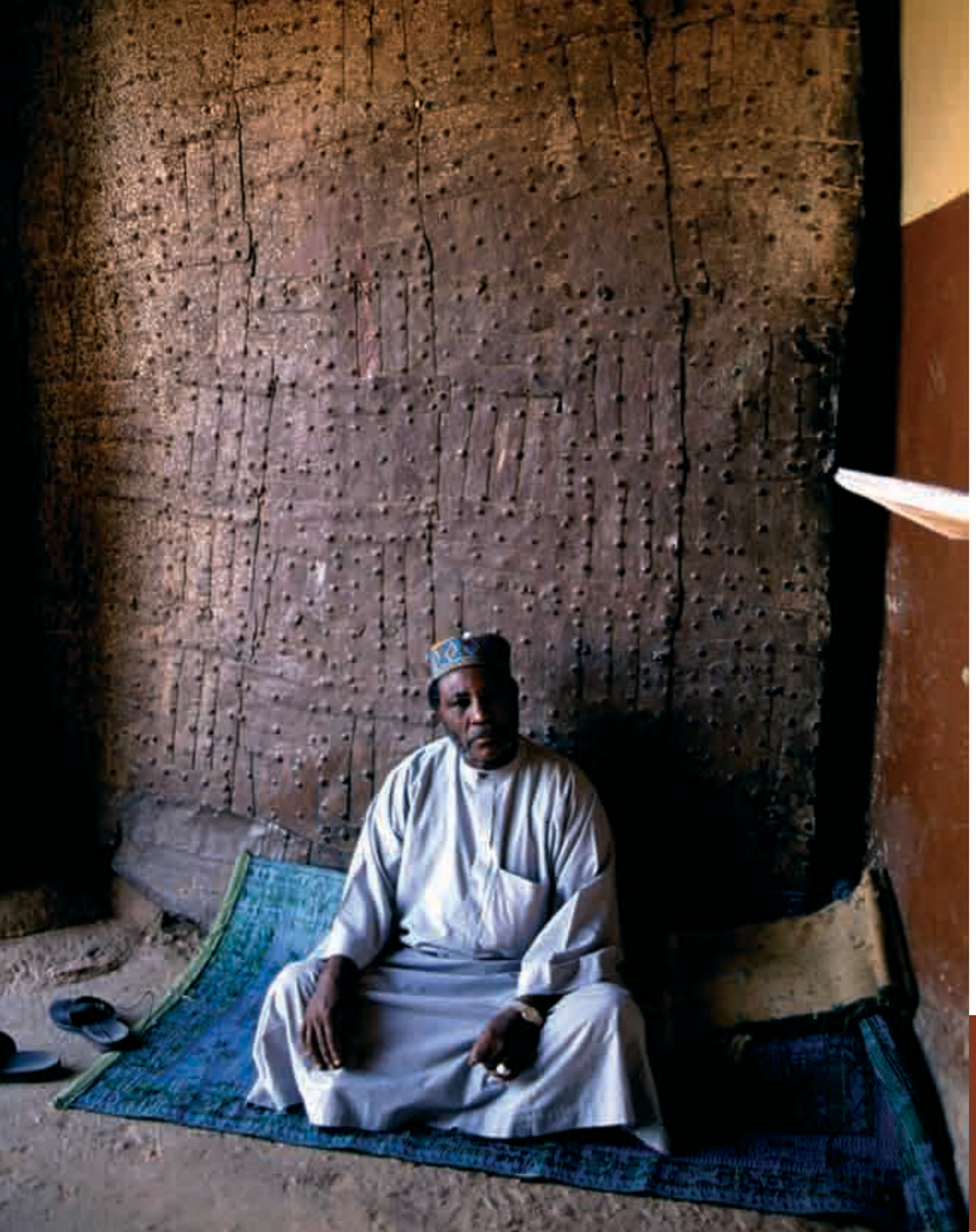

FIGURE 49
The chief guard at the palace entrance.

ANNE-MONIQUE BARDAGOT, Ethnologist, CRATerre-EAG
ALI BIDA, Director of Heritage, Niger Museums

6. The conservation of the palace of the Sultanate of Zindar

The palace of Zinder, a major witness to the history of Damagaram and still inhabited, is a place of memory and identity. It was built probably between 1850 and 1852, at the beginning of the reign of Tanimun, the most famous sultan of Damagaram. It is located in the heart of Birni, the oldest part of the city of Zinder. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the development of Zinder has been linked directly to the setting up of the Sultanate. Zinder is the historic capital of Damagaram and is still the main provincial centre today. It was the capital of Niger from 1911 to 1926, and has benefited from being a communication crossroads between the Sahara and Nigeria, and between Niamey and Chad.

The sultanate itself dates back to around 1736, but the sultan's residence kept changing until 1812 when it was permanently established in Zinder by Sultan Souleymane Dan Tenimou.

The builder of the palace, Sultan Tanimun is the 'Great Sultan' whose fame is still very much alive in popular memory. He is considered to be the real founder of the empire. A great warrior and famous war chief, he brought peace to the whole of Damagaram, and was also an excellent trader. He is reputed to have owned more than one thousand camels, and trade prospered during his sultanate. He set up the first court of justice in the region as well as an important *medreseh*. Right to this day and without exception, his successors descend directly from his blood line.

Presentation of the palace

The palace is the property of the sultanate. It is a manifestation of hereditary power and is part of the national heritage. The sultan cannot treat it as personal property. As the current sultan, Aboubacar Sanda, states, 'each sultan is in a way the guardian of the palace. He has a duty to live there and maintain it, or to find the means of maintaining it.'

The palace is a sizeable architectural structure, spread over an area of 1.2 hectares. It is enclosed by a perimeter wall and includes many buildings. The old part occupies about 1,354 sq. m; the gross surface area is 2,075 sq. m and the net surface area 1,297 sq. m (847 sq. m on the ground floor and 450 sq. m on the first floor).

The palace is constructed of earth, with a roof of birch or Doum palm supporting the roof terraces. It is arranged around three large courtyards and the space is hierarchical. It is built mainly on two levels, with a complex arrangement of about 80 rooms.

It is well-proportioned and the architectural impression is of a sober and imposing building. The walls are tall and thick, becoming thinner at the top. The small drilled holes in the walls only strengthen the massive impression the building conveys. The palace does not have any stylistic designs or Hausa-type decoration, only the regular texture of mud plaster coating applied by hand, and some projections on the roof.

The cultural, social and educational values of the palace

The palace opens out extensively to the outside. The reception area and auditorium are still used. The annual festivals are widely looked forward to and are attended by many people inside and outside the palace: they are either religious festivals such as the *Tabaski* or the *Mouloud*, or traditional festivals such

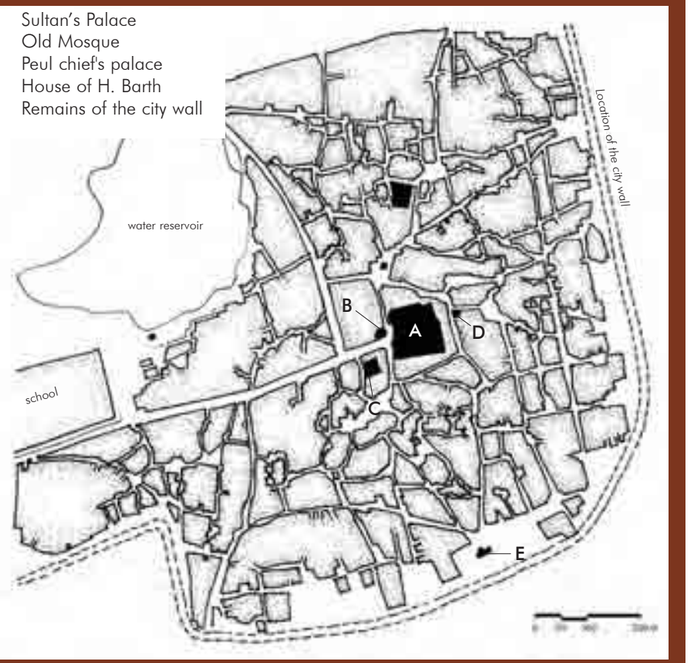

FIGURE 50 The location of the palace within the area of Birni.

as the *Tom-tom* or the *Cavalcades*. The latter are very successful and draw a large number of spectators. To see the shows better, guests watch from the roof terraces of the palace. The country's independence day is also celebrated there.

The palace is visited by a large number of people. The visits always take place under the supervision of a member of the palace staff, generally one of the two protocol officers. The palace is also frequently visited by school groups. Every year there are visits by primary and secondary schools from Zinder, as well as from other cities and villages in Niger, and even from Nigeria and Benin. Groups of children from summer camp also visit.

The current state of conservation of the palace

The reception area of the palace is generally in good condition. The main façade, the entrance hallway, the auditorium, and the reception room (which has been entirely redone) are relatively well-maintained. Outside, the façade and the walls of the auditorium have been coated twice with cement. Despite the questionable use of this material on earthen masonry, there is little visible deterioration, apart from some cracking and flaking, the appearance of dark marks on the coating underneath the waterspouts, and light and localized erosion at the bases of the walls. The ceilings, painted in wood, do not appear to present problems.

Most of the rooms on the first floor above the reception area have also been well-maintained. Parts of the ground floor and the first floor were renovated in 1990 with financial support from the French Embassy, and have remained in good condition apart from some visible water infiltration from the roof on the first floor. On the other hand, the less public and unused spaces are in disrepair. The same is true of the roof itself and many of the terraces, even though these are still used for the festivals that take place on the open ground in front of the palace's main entrance.

The maintenance and transformation of the palace

The palace has undergone many transformations but there are few written records of these. However, regional archives reveal that Sultan Barma Mata (Barma Mustapha), who reigned from 1923 to 1950, renovated the palace. Was it the whole palace or only a part? Since the same records report the collapse of large sections of the palace boundary wall and of the roofs of several palace granaries, it can be assumed that the sultan did not repair all of the building.

Traditionally, the population has been obliged to take part in maintaining and repairing the palace, the former mosque of Birni and, before that, the Great Wall, just as their forebears had to take part in building these structures. Participation was considered a normal activity and was well-rooted in the social organization of the time. This helped to ensure the palace's conservation up until the present day. However, this participation has gradually disappeared, accelerating the various changes that have taken place more recently within the palace.

Some of these changes are linked to an evolution in lifestyles and the demands of comfort. Today, the sultan, his four wives and his children, do not live in the palace but in a residence built from concrete blocks, which is located next to the palace within the surrounding wall and is invisible from the outside and from the auditorium. A guest villa and garages have also been built in similar fashion. It is understandable that the current sultan spends money on these new buildings. The choice to live in a new residence is dictated by the modern need for comfort. The same is true for the guest residence which is reserved for visitors and dignitaries. These new additions have been introduced judiciously: their discrete and hidden

1 Waiting room
2 Corridor (Soron Koofa)
3 Granary for cereals
4 Access to second floor (Matattakara)
5 Room of the head of the cavalrymen (Mourima)
6 Cells
7 Corridor for the cavalrymen (Soron Mouri)
8 Private space for the sultan to meet the Marabouts
9 Store
10 Ritual room
11 Ouwan Doka (Aljana)
12 Central room (Chigifa Tchaka)
13 Enthronement room (Soron Nati)
14 Lodge (Soron Chara-a)
15 Store
16 Tombs of former sultans
17 Sultan's reception room
18 Kitchen
19 Wives' rooms
20 Corridor for the widows
21 Stairs for the women
22 Corridor for those sentenced to death (Kofal bay)
23 Apartment for the First Lady (widow, mother)
24 Kitchen for the First Lady
25 Rooms for the widows
26 Veranda (Kalibu)
27/28 Kitchen
29 Bedrooms (Maï rayray)
30 Jeka Fadé
31 Corridor for the women

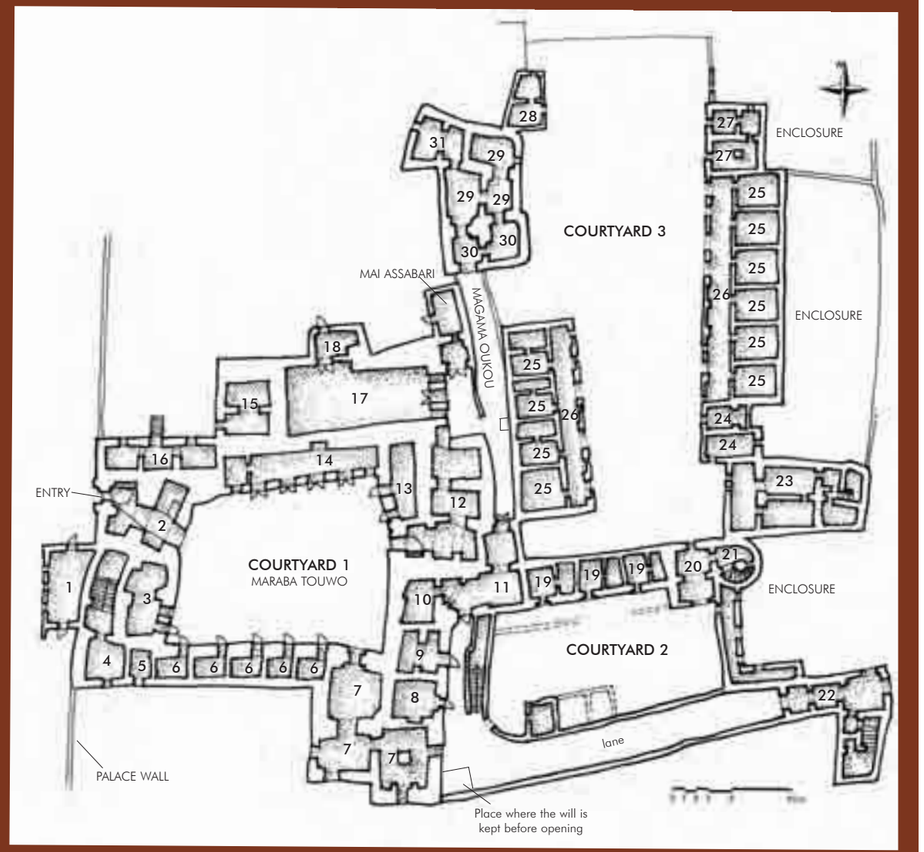

FIGURE 51 Plan of the palace and elevation of the western entrance façade.

FIGURE 53 The entrance to the palace.

FIGURE 52 The Magama Oukou, a corridor linking the main reception room and the sultan's private area.

FIGURE 54 The sultan and his bodyguards in the reception courtyard.

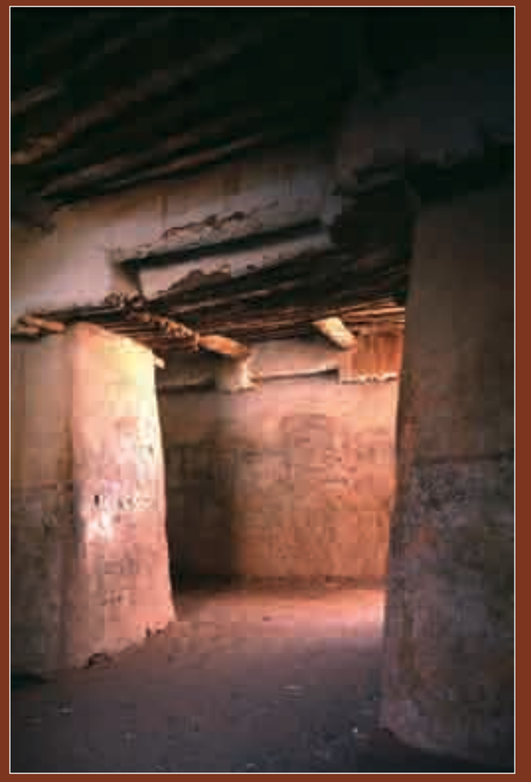

FIGURE 55 The room providing access to the courtyard of the sultan's wife.

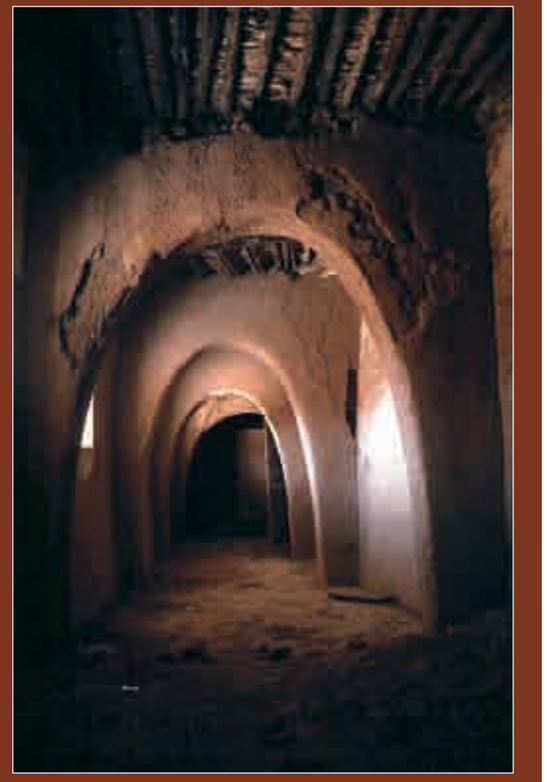

FIGURE 56 Northern corridor at first floor level, currently unused and not maintained.

location in relation to the palace underpin a desire not to clash with the site's authenticity.

Other modifications concern the palace directly and address the growing difficulties encountered when organizing the regular palace maintenance work. While continuing the work of his predecessors, the Sultan of Damagaram has effectively moved towards a 'hardening' of the buildings. Thus, cement-based coatings and caps have been applied to the walls and roofing respectively. Some interventions, such as closing up openings with shutters and metallic doors, clash and are relatively inelegant. Moreover, the burden of maintaining such a building and the construction of new quarters have made the older parts of the palace obsolete; these have become abandoned and are no longer maintained.

Together with the palace masons and other people involved, the sultan laments the fact that the palace must be maintained regularly to preserve its good condition. There are complaints about the constraints of working with mud plaster which is considered heavy and disappointing: last year, some of the work carried out just before the rains was immediately destroyed.

Zakari Mallam Sanda, Abdou Ali and Issoufou Mallam Mom are the three masons entrusted with maintaining the palace and the former mosque of Birni. They are counted among the sultan's servants

and so descend from families who have always served the palace. When a servant dies, a member of his family takes their place with his own set of skills, and thus with responsibilities that can differ. These three masons often work with five other masons from the city.

The time dedicated to palace conservation and the frequency of work vary from one year to another in line with the sort of work that needs to be done. If large-scale work is required, about thirty workers will be needed who become *de facto* palace servants and live there. When there is no work in progress, they are free to work for themselves and to carry out masonry work for private households. Of course, they must give priority to palace requirements. In reality, there is always something to do. There is a general cycle of destruction and rebuilding. Leaks from the roofing represent the main problem. When this happens, the masons inform the sultan so they can get all the resources they need to perform the work once he has given his approval. These leaks are very widespread and the masons admit they have been overwhelmed on several occasions. They thus chose to focus on the solid parts, which explains the current state of conservation of the palace.

Funding issues

It is impossible to ignore both the difficulties faced in maintaining the palace and a certain despondency vis-à-vis the on-going maintenance necessary for effective conservation.

As custodian of palace management, does the sultan have the necessary resources to ensure it is conserved properly? Like all sultans in Niger, he finds himself in an ambiguous situation. He still exercises the roles of religious chief, counsellor and arbitrator for those who come to him. He very frequently receives people in the palace reception room and in the auditorium. In spite of social evolution, he still commands respect. Linked to the reputation of his dynasty and his own powers, his reputation travels beyond Zinder and the province of Damagaram. Yet he enjoys no official status and receives no compensation for his public roles. He is not a civil servant. Even if most important decisions are no longer taken by the sultans and their political role has diminished, their prestige endures and they still fill the role of customary chief, inherited from history and tradition.

On the other hand, they no longer have the resources past sultans possessed, mostly because their former responsibilities were incomparable and because the state has taken this over. This situation stems from the changes linked to colonization and especially to the development of the state's role. The law provides for financial compensation to enable the sultans to maintain their palaces and to face their different burdens. However, the town halls are poor and the annual contribution intended for the sultans does not always get through to them.

Furthermore, the sultan is the head of a household with considerable responsibilities. In Zinder, about 450 people frequent the palace regularly: some 82 notables, 162 guards, 12 people to maintain the palace, and the families of the numerous servants who live in the palace and its surroundings.

The search for solutions

The sultan would like strong and sustainable work to be carried out, because organizing the work raises problems for him, mostly of a financial nature. He speaks of the possibility of organizing work with help from the population. As mentioned above, citizens were traditionally obliged to take part in building and maintaining the palace. The sultan thinks it should be possible to organize work with strong popular involvement during one weekend, or even two weekends in succession.

In 1990, the French Embassy agreed to provide funding for the restoration of several rooms in the palace as a small sultanate museum. The exhibition has not yet been set up but is under serious consideration. The museum would make a visit to the palace more interesting. As for the technical improvements introduced by the masons, gaps remain and the parts that have been treated are subject to recurrent damage.

Since 1995, the sultan has reiterated his request for financial support to restore the palace. This request was addressed to the Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture and to the Minister for Internal Affairs and Regional Planning, and it was subsequently sent to the French Embassy. To ensure the survival of the palace, the sultan has also mentioned the need to approach UNESCO to register the palace on the World Heritage List.

The sultan wishes:

- in the short-term, to receive financial assistance to buy materials, but above all to contact an architect to monitor the works, ensure respect for tradition, offer help and advice to the three palace masons (there is no labour problem since many people are available), and finally to carry out the initial work;
- in the medium-term, to acquire funds to restore a large part of the palace and to carry out sustainable repairs;

FIGURE 57 The palace, seen from the minaret.

FIGURE 58 Empty space in front of the palace, with an old mosque on the left.

FIGURE 59 The city wall of Birni during maintenance work, probably in 1900 when the sultan could still mobilize the population.

- in the long-term, to see the palace registered on the World Heritage List.

For his part, the mayor acknowledges the wealth of architectural, cultural and natural heritage in his city. He knows the palace represents important cultural evidence and an asset for the city. But, above all, he feels the overwhelming need to improve living conditions. Clearly it is not easy to reconcile heritage conservation and modernization. Thus, in the old city of Birni, which includes four districts inhabited by twenty to thirty thousand people, the civic authorities has focused on installing drinking fountains and setting up a 16 km network of rainwater drains.

The World Bank has proposed a project to rehabilitate the city of Zinder. This ambitious project, which also includes several other cities in Niger, has temporarily been abandoned because no local partner could be found. Like most other cities in Niger, Zinder has a modest budget and faces serious financial difficulties. Following the World Bank proposal, a think-tank on city rehabilitation was set up. It is a first step, but much remains to be done.

Conclusion

The case of the palace of the Sultanate of Zinder is definitely not an isolated one. The conservation problems facing the sultan should generate debate and a search for suitable solutions, so as to define and implement a relevant conservation policy and to achieve financial autonomy.

It is necessary to consider the practical and technical measures needed for the conservation work, as well as more efficient solutions that will reduce conservation costs and enhance respect for the site's authenticity. It is essential that part of the palace preserves its purely traditional aspect as keeper of traditional practices, thereby fostering conservation know-how and consequently good conservation of the entire old city in the longer term. Indeed, the palace and its mosque will only truly retain all their significance if they remain part of the neighbourhood surrounding Birni, with its remarkable buildings, decorated houses, and its little streets that constitute an homogenous scheme of much interest.

Financial autonomy is indispensable. If that were to be achieved, it would no longer be necessary to depend almost entirely on outside help, which can be requested only in exceptional circumstances and thus incurs the risk of leaving the property vulnerable to severe damage at other times. It is the only guarantee that regular preventive maintenance works can be planned and controlled. This will require global reflection and the formulation of a conservation and management plan, as well as respect for, and the survival of, the masons' traditional know-how, while introducing innovations in site development such as charging entrance fees to visitors, and selling products such as postcards and guidebooks.

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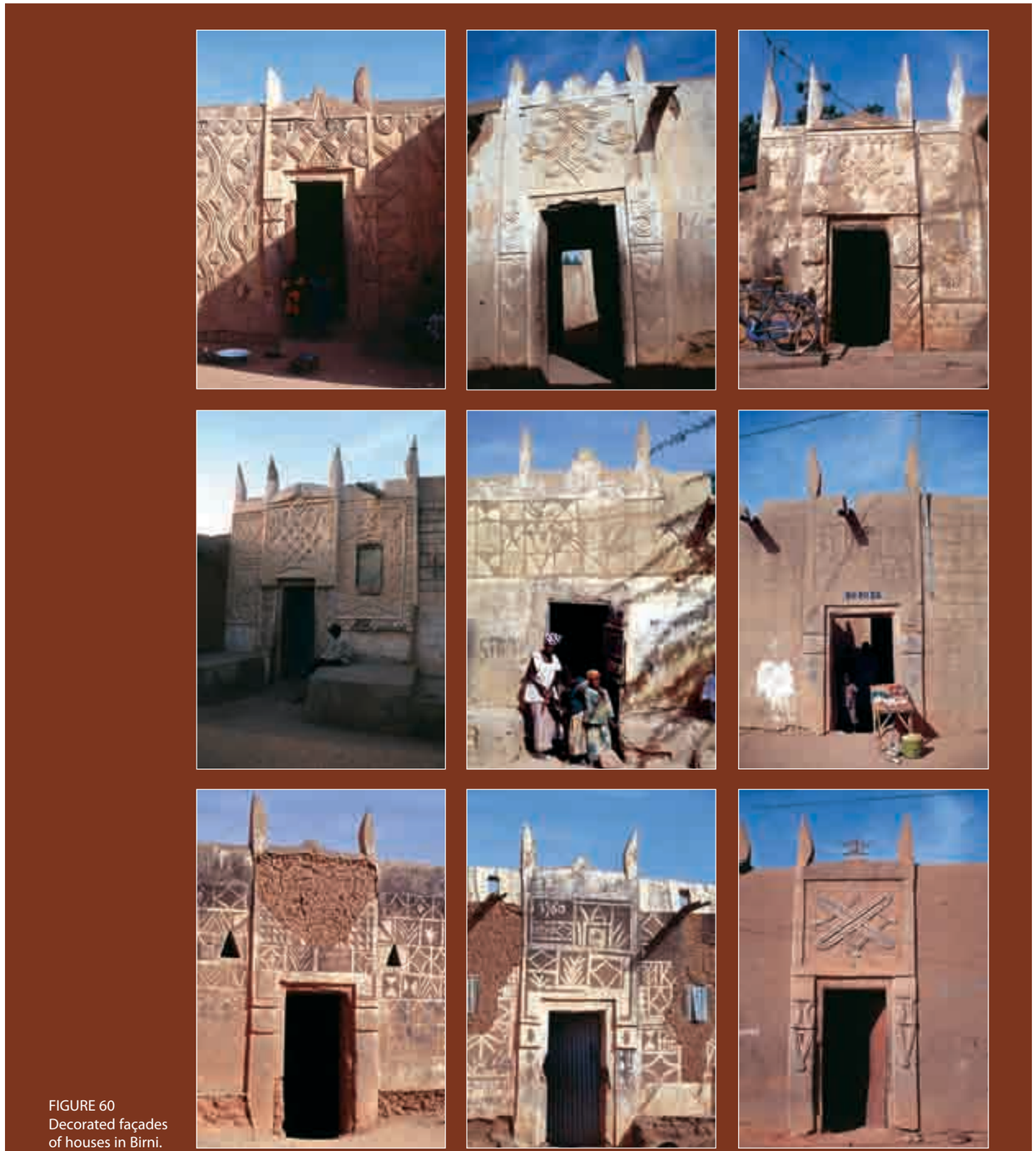

FIGURE 60
Decorated façades of houses in Birni.

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HASSOUM CEESAY, Curator, Gambia National Museum

7. Conservation at Katchikally sacred crocodile pool

According to oral traditions, Katchikally is the name of a mysterious woman who appeared before Ncooping Bojang, one of the ancestors of the Bojangkunda family, who lived some nine generations ago. Katchikally is also the name given to the crocodile pool in Bakau, one of three sacred crocodile pools found in Gambia that are believed to have divine healing powers. Bakau is a town located some 14 km from the capital city, Banjul, and is renowned for its growing tourist industry.

The pool is located in the heart of thick bush and is approximately 50 metres in diameter. It is completely covered with water lettuce throughout the year and is said to be fed by a spring. The surrounding bush is also occasionally used for holding traditional circumcision ceremonies.

Local legends state that the crocodiles were first brought to the pool on the instructions of Katchikally herself, the presiding spirit of the pool. The custodians of the pool, the Bojangkunda family, are some of the earliest settlers of Bakau. Oral history recounts that their ancestor, Ncooping Bojang, encountered the spirit one day and that, because of his good deeds, he was entrusted with the place for the benefit of the community.

The pool has divine uses. It is believed that barren women who bathe in the pool will become fertile. People who wish to have good luck ask for blessings at the pool, giving out charity. In general, it is believed that it can reverse all sorts of bad fortune.

When the people come to seek blessings, they always bring along kola nuts and ask the custodians to take them to the pool. Later, the family will share the kola nuts and pray for the person. Anyone who does not belong to the Bojang family cannot perform the blessing.

Barren women undergo ritual washing in the pool to restore their fertility. The person to be washed fetches the water from the pool herself. The water is blessed and then the supplicant, kneeling and wearing only a shift, is washed from the head downwards. Some water from the pool is also given to them to drink later. A token fee, equivalent to less than one US cent, used to be charged for the ritual bathing, and given to the Bojang family.

Conservation issues

The conservation problems of the pool are:

- the natural increase of the crocodiles;
- the upkeep and development of the site;
- the protection of the lush vegetation and the pool from effluent flowing from an open gutter that is perilously close to the site; and
- the presence of visitors with recreational motives rather than a genuine desire for healing.

Crocodile population increase

From the two crocodiles that were originally brought to the pool on the instructions of Katchikally, the population has now multiplied to over eighty, straining capacity and constituting a threat to human lives (see

FIGURE 61
Sacred crocodiles in the pool at Katchikally.

FIGURE 62 Sacred crocodiles at the Katchikally pool, currently covered with water lettuce.

the *Daily Observer*, Gambia, 30 July 2000). It is not unusual for crocodiles to stray into neighbouring territory, especially farmland, when the pool overflows during the rains. The custodians, however, insist that the crocodiles cannot be relocated to the Abuko Nature Reserve because of their sacred nature.

The natural increase of the reptiles places a strain on feeding them. The pool attendant confided that he spends almost the equivalent of $100 every month to purchase fish to feed the crocodiles. He said that this was unsustainable, as the gate fees are dependent on the vagaries of the tourist season, which at present is witnessing a downward trend.

In the not too distant past, the onus of feeding the reptiles rested on the Bakau fishing community who would contribute a certain proportion of their daily catches to feed them. However, the influx of fishermen from other parts of the sub-region, notably Senegalese, who have less to do with the sacred pool, has completely removed this social responsibility. Hence, fish, the staple diet of the pool's inhabitants, must be bought and brought to the pool at a cost. This is testimony of the commercialization of the new sociocultural environment of the community.

Although the pool is said to be spring fed, the water in it drops drastically, especially in the drier months, exposing the reptiles and offering little water for women to take their ritual dips. Under these circumstances, the custodians enlist the help of the community to dig out the pool. In 1981 and 1985, huge crowds converged on the pool to re-excavate it. It may have been a labour of love, but subsequently the custodians have had to solicit the assistance of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) to pay for bulldozers to do the work. The last excavation was seven years ago. During the same period the NCAC also assisted with the construction of a cement block wall round the immediate perimeter of the pool to prevent sand from the sides slipping in. The height of this cement wall has been gradually raised by the custodians.

The increase in crocodiles has also caused the pool to atrophy. Over-production of oxygen has led to an increase in water lettuce, which now covers the pool entirely, almost choking it. One further result of this is a bad odour which constantly hovers over the site. The foul air is, however, mainly generated by the overflowing open sewer which runs close to the pool.

Vegetation And Environment

The pool is surrounded by high forest-type vegetation that consists of many trees and plants with medicinal value. The conservation of the bushes is therefore of paramount importance. The conservation of the vegetation still rests squarely on the reverence the community has for the pool, which makes it a no-go area. Yet this has not totally kept away illegal woodcutters. A while ago, a wire fence was put up around the site to keep away tree-fellers, ruminants and cattle. Traditional beliefs and a modern fence are therefore helping to keep the bushes pristine. Recently, the custodians have established a nursery that produces seedlings for transplanting on the site. So far 500 seedlings have been transplanted.

In the past, a fire belt was maintained by the community to keep away wayward bush fires. However, rapid urbanization has put the site almost in the middle of the town, thereby eliminating the risk of bush fires.

The vegetation and pool have attracted a unique animal life. A dozen bird species are present, and no effort is being spared to protect them. For example, bird hunting using traps or catapults is strictly forbidden. The birds are regularly fed on grain by the pool attendants, several water troughs have been provided for the birds, and nests are jealously guarded from the children who prowl the site. The fruit trees on site also help sustain the bird life and other animal life such as monkeys, squirrels and wildcats.

The site has a deep layer of compost formed from rotten leaves and barks. Locals, particularly women gardeners, exploit the manure to spread on their farms. Consequently, a breeze block wall is being erected to keep away manure prospectors and to save the site from further human interference.

The pool is located on low ground, prone to flooding in the rainy season. A narrow gutter was built almost a decade ago to carry sewage away from the town. The gutter passes through the site but goes no further, emptying itself right behind the pool. This has resulted in a filthy and smelly stagnant pool adjacent to the site. Not only is the smell and sight unpleasant, but according to the custodian even the reptiles and bird life are imperilled. This is not unreasonable because the pool pollutes the surrounding soil by infiltration. Moreover, during the rains the volume of the dirty pool rises and overflows into the crocodile pool.

Visitors

The two main categories of regular visitors are tourists and local youths, the latter attracted by the tourists and the relaxing, serene and cool atmosphere. The site attendant interviewed for this article could not say when exactly tourists started to visit the site. But his father, Ousman Bojang, was quoted in an interview as saying that his younger brother came from school one day accompanied by a group of tourists. He took them to the pool and they paid the equivalent of half a dollar at the time. After that, the family made the decision to allow tourists to visit the site (*Gambia National Museum Bulletin No.1* 1981: 11). Nowadays, tourists form the majority of visitors to the site. The attendant was not able to provide figures but said that 'dozens visit the site every month'. This is definitely an understatement. The pool is certainly the most important tourist attraction in the Kombo area and tourist visits help sustain its finances. A colony of craft shops, selling local souvenir items, mainly batik and wood carvings, has also grown around the site, capitalizing on the influx of tourist visitors. On the whole, spin-offs from the presence of the site are gradually increasing.

However, the visits by tourists also have some negative impacts on the environment of the site.

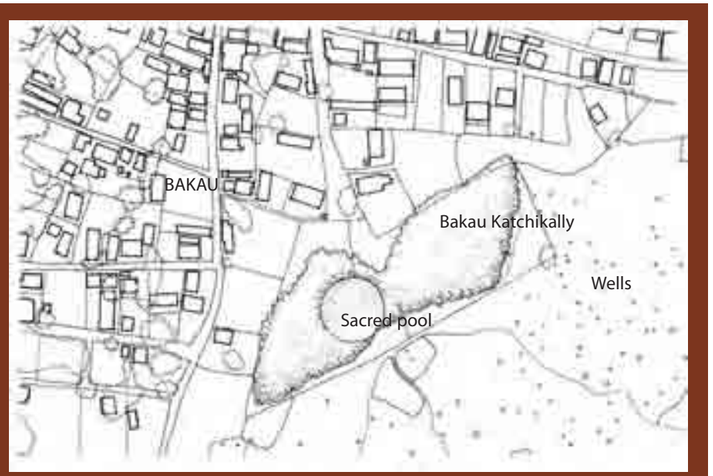

FIGURE 63 The location of the pool on the edge of the town.

Although much of the litter strewn around the site is domestic, there is a marked increase in tourist litter such as cans and plastic water bottles. The presence of tourists has also attracted hordes of self-appointed tour guides called 'bumsters' who at times give the site an aura of insecurity.

The opening of sacred ground to tourists or to people with no feel for the religious essence of these sites, without observance of the traditional respects, is often criticised. The argument is that by reducing the religious essence to a spectacle, the sacredness and value of these sites will gradually diminish and, at the same time, erode the basis of religious and communal life held together by the sites (Ceesay 1998). At Katchikally, tourists take photographs of the sacred crocodiles, or even caress the reptiles, perhaps diluting the divine and mystic essence of the pool. Indeed, many now believe that the site no longer has any mysteries due to the tourist cameras. However, the use of the pool by local inhabitants for divine purposes continues unabated.

Maintenance And Development

The pool area was first surveyed, demarcated and provided with a chain link fence with assistance from the then Museums and Antiquities Division of the Office of the President (now part of the NCAC). Since then, the fencing has been replaced by block-work, and other visitor conveniences such as toilets and seating have been built. All these improvements were realized by the custodians themselves.

Recently the attendant has started collecting for the establishment of a museum at the site. This is indeed a good idea, as are many other initiatives he has taken in the past. It may be assumed that such a museum would help in the interpretation of the site, and that it could also serve to showcase the community's heritage. However, the present management is reluctant to modify the contents of his initial plan which, from what has been collected so far, appears to be for a general African arts museum. Despite the reasons alluded to above, the most he would accept from the National Museum is a collection form/format to guide the collection exercise and obtain the required data at the right time. The site attendant is against the establishment of a management committee. He says that the Bojang family has been charged with the affairs of running the pool by its ancestors and so cannot devolve the duties. He calls it interference, adding that the community will not even want to be part of such arrangement because they accept the custodianship of the Bojang family. For these same reasons the family objected to the proclamation of the site as a National Monument in 1989.

The reforestation exercise helps to replace dead plants with the same species, conserving plants of medicinal or nutritional value. However, urbanization is hampering the traditional conservation practices of the pool, as the rapid spread of the town has put the site in the centre of town with all the attendant problems of litter, encroachment by land grabbers and even profanement. The entrance to the site and compound is always littered.

Urbanization has also disturbed the community's attachment to the pool. Now all services for the pool have to be paid for, and the influx of strangers who have no regard for the community role in the upkeep of the pool continues to be a problem.

The dredging of the pool is necessary for the welfare of the reptiles. Yet the high cost of machinery has made it almost financially unsustainable. Another weakness of the process is the threat posed to the fragile ecosystem by pollution and dredging machinery. However the traditional ceremonial dances, drumming, and masks, which accompanied the digging of the pool, are still of great cultural significance.

The atrophy of the pool could be removed by clearing away the water lettuce covering the pool, but the custodians have ruled this out, saying it will render the pool 'naked' by betraying its 'sacred inside'. However, could not the crocodiles be culled by relocating some to the Abuko Nature Reserve reptile pool? Would this be acceptable to the custodians, would it profane the site? If feasible, this would be a sustainable way of conserving the reptiles in the pool.

Conclusion

The conservation of the Katchikally crocodile pool cannot be confined to the mere preservation of the reptiles and the immediate environment. The issues discussed above illustrate the degree of importance attached to the well-being and intangible essence of the pool by its custodians and by the community. However, there are many other stakeholders who for different reasons (economic, tourism, entertainment etc.) have an interest in its survival. An integrated conservation management approach is therefore desirable if the pool is to survive the adversities of time and urban pressure.

It is evident that the pool is seriously threatened. The site attendant and the Bojang family in an advisory capacity are the sole decision-makers for all matters affecting the pool. Given the wide range of competing interests, there is a need for regular dialogue between the various stakeholders to avoid conflicts and to ensure that each interest group contributes its fair share of the conservation effort and that benefits accrue to all deserving stakeholders. To realize this, a 'management committee' could be established. Its task would be to improve the state of the site and the quality of its 'services' by providing a forum for a more thorough, thoughtful and participatory approach to the running of the site for the benefit of all concerned.

Looking at the traditional set-up, one solution for the short-term could be the establishment of a 'safeguard committee' composed not only of members of the custodian's family, but also of the community at large, including youth representatives and women. In times of need, for example, when the pool requires cleaning up, such groups' participation is crucial.

The NCAC should also be considered for membership to such a committee. It is also important to have a representative of the Public Works Department as one of the major threats to the site, the open sewer, relies on their capabilities. In fact, a first common effort that could be easily organized would be a general cleaning exercise. The positive results of such an activity could create the basis for further co-management activities.

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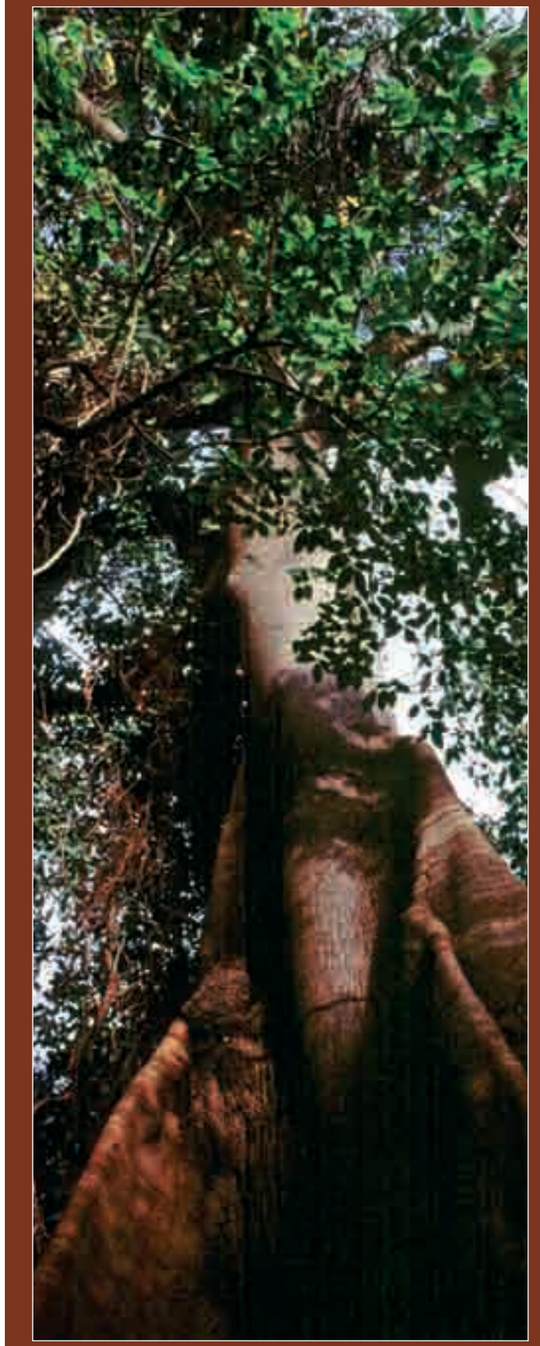

FIGURE 64 Large trees surround the Katchikally pool.

FIGURE 65
The entrance to the Kamablon.

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8. The septennial conservation of the Kamablon

AN AUTHENTIC CEREMONY OF 'MAKING TANGIBLE' THE INTANGIBLE

Manden be i lonbolanba ko febaroji
Manden be i lonbalanba ko dagakonoji
Nka Mande you good de

The Mande can pitch like water in a big calabash
The Mande can pitch like water in a canary
But the Mande is the water that will never be poured.

The Mandingo people (i.e. the people from Mande) use the above saying to express the eternal nature of their country. The original Mande is the land located in the upper basin of the Niger River, straddling the border between Mali and Guinea Conakry. From this small territory covering the Kita triangle, Kangaba in Mali and Niagassola in Guinea, historic Mande was born. The powerful empire of Mali, still known today as the Mandingo Empire, was founded in the thirteenth century by Soundjata Keita. According to mythology, the original Mande was the cradle of humanity. The word *mande* itself is made up of the radical *ma*, the person, and *den*, the child or the fruit, embodying the idea of enumeration, of multiplication. It also means the place where man's fruit has grown (de Ganay 1995: 26-27). The Mandinga are convinced that their land, their people and their sacred places, in particular the Kamablon, are eternal. Is not the idea of eternity reflected in the seven-yearly tradition of site repair?

The Kamablon is a sacred house in Kangaba, a city located 95 kilometres from Bamako. It gives its name to a *bara*, a public place reserved for large ceremonies. The circular building is constructed from earth (*banco*) and covered with a conical thatched roof. Its outside walls are decorated. Inside, decoration is left to the discretion of the occupants. The sanctuary was built in 1653. According to Solange de Ganay, the building work and consecration rituals lasted seventy-seven days and took place in seven stages: design, tracing and digging of the foundations; preparation and drying of the bricks, and dressing of the building mortar; building and roughcasting of the black clay walls; sacred rituals inside the building and consecration of the *washi*, the raised square platform built to the south of the sanctuary; rituals, libations, sacrifices and prayers in honour of Mande; cutting the thatch and bamboo for the roof; distempering using kaolin, painting and decorative work; and preparation and installation of the roof (ibid. 64).

The Kamablon is in a good state of conservation because of repair work carried out every seven years on the roof and the damaged parts of its walls, and the touching up of the decorative paintings using traditional techniques that are still employed today. This septennial conservation work is accompanied by ceremonies and rituals that are attended by people from all the villages in Mande. On this occasion, the history of the region, its values, reference points, cosmogony and beliefs are revisited during long vigils of *maana* (detailed and public narration of traditions) and of *burujufo* (genealogical records). The occasion is also used to strengthen social ties: new marriages are celebrated, and pending intra-community conflicts are solved, sometimes at the cost of honourable fines and expiatory rituals as

FIGURE 66 (top) The Kamablon, with the Washi bank on the right and the Molobalini stake on the left.

FIGURE 67 (bottom) The Washi with its covering of lateritic stones.

FIGURE 68 (top) The stake next to the mosque.

FIGURE 69 (bottom) Monobaninbolo (the stake of the shameless).

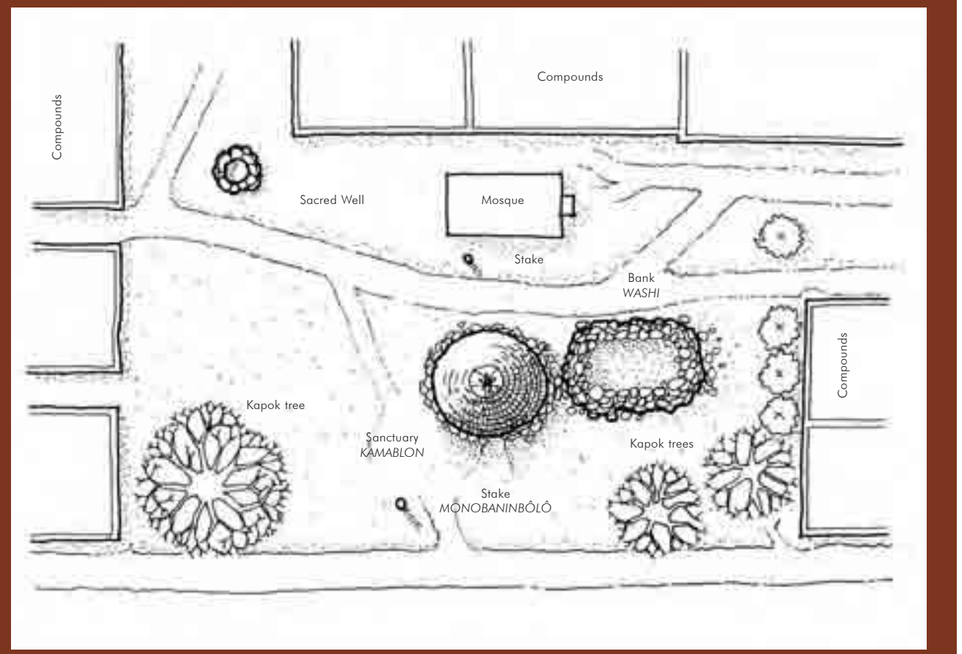

FIGURE 70 Schematic plan of the Kamablon.

is customary in African tradition. The soothsayers then proceed to read the future of the Mande for the seven years to come. This premonitory reading is performed using the renovated decorations.

Thus, the septennial conservation of the Kamablon enables the building to be physically repaired and social ties to be consolidated at the same time. This tie between the tangible and the intangible can be found in the etymology of the word *kamablon,* which in some people's view is made up of *kuma*, the word, and *bulon*, the vestibule. *Kumabulon,* literally the hallway of speech, has become *kamablon.* It was also in this hallway-sanctuary where the village patriarchs of the Mande used to meet in the past in a sort of senate to discuss community problems. This corresponds to the union between an ideal debate (speech) and the materialization of this ideal, the hallway (*bulon*). However this may be, all elements of the Kamablon (the walls, the roof, the doors and the numerous ornaments and ideograms on the walls) and all objects sheltered within the building are full of symbols and historical significance concerning the history, philosophy, world vision and religion of the Malinke. In summary, the ideal of a union between all people from Mande is made tangible in the structure of the Kamablon. Its cyclical maintenance helps to sustain social ties, traditions and ancestral references.

The making tangible of the intangible can also be found in other site elements. Examples include the sacred well and the fig-tree (*Ficus polita*) that overhang the building, the three silk-cotton trees (*Ceiba Pentandra*), one of which is called *n be aw wasa*, (literally, 'I will overwhelm you with happiness'), the tomb of Mansa Seme, founder and first priest of the sanctuary, and the whipping post *molobalininbolo* (the 'post of the shameless') on which people who broke social rules were attached and whipped. The giant tree species from the African forests, such as the silk-cotton tree (*Ceiba Pentandra*), are supposed to act as seats for the genii protectors of human communities, hence their sacred value. By the same token, these species are generally integrated into the landscape of the inhabited cities where they represent an essential link in the world vision.

Who takes care of the septennial site maintenance and what does it involve?

The rituals and ceremonies of worship are supervised by the adults and the initiated who play precise roles according to their social status and degree of initiation. These are the *soma* (initiation priests), the *doma*, (people of knowledge) and men of castes such as blacksmiths, storytellers, *jonw* (slaves) and *wolosow* (descendants of slaves). Labour is guaranteed by the general population, but also and especially by the *kare* (boys and girls about to enter adulthood). The elders set the date of the ceremonies according to the lunar calendar: they fix the calendar of restoration activities for the building, supervise the ceremonies to remove the old roof and those to place the new roof.

On the first day of restoration work, the roofing cone is removed by the masters of ceremony and repaired by specialists, in the presence of representatives from other Mande villages. The roof is then demolished by the *kare* who work in order following the strict social class system of Mande.

The materials used to repair the roof are bamboo (*bo wontan*), straw (*tije*) and lianas (*buban*) of superior quality. The materials used to repair the walls include: black clay, a symbol of fertility and secrecy; charcoal powder, symbol of initial chaos; kaolin, symbol of light, knowledge and hope (de Ganay 1995: 133), but also of revelation – its whiteness also representing birth; and, finally, kneaded red laterite, representing blood. Beyond their symbolism, these anti-erosive materials are good in the fight against the holes made by rodents and against termite attack. The walls are restored by the boys and the girls recognized as *yerewoloden* (legitimate children, the activity is forbidden to illegitimate children). The old roughcast is meticulously removed. Then the wall is carefully swept free of dust and parasites (spiders webs, for example) with a broom. The roughcasting is carried out by boys. As for the final plastering, this is done by virgin girls, selected beforehand by matrons of high lineage. Under the guidance of these same matrons, the girls then create the *nyengen* (tattoos) and the *masiri* (holy ornaments).

Other sacred residences exist in Mande and in other traditional regions of Mali, for example the sacred house of Kiniero in the township of Siby (Mande) 70 kilometres from Bamako, or the one in Karatabougou in the township of Sanankoroba, about 60 kilometres from Bamako. But by combining the teaching of history, social ethics and religion with large scale mobilization, the Kamablon succeeds even today in crystallizing, through its institutionalized cyclical ritual, its symbolical value in strengthening social ties and conservation, in terms of memory and spirituality as well as cultural heritage. The site remains an sacred place of prayer and sacrifices; it is adulated and feared; it fascinates, frightens and on occasion challenges the most incredulous. All of Mande knows the demands of the cult, the cult of the Kama, the divine stone which is about purity of soul and is cause for fervid celebration, solemnity, abasement and humility. The site is still the septennial meeting place for the Mandingo and the Malinga diaspora (for example, for the Bambaras and the Dogons who left Mande).

The Kamablon is therefore a mixed site whose historic, social and religious values focus on the sacred house, especially during its conservation cycle when its activities are both technical and ritual, making the sanctuary a veritable institution for social regulation. This cycle of conservation remained intact until the last repair work in 1996 (the previous two repair cycles were in 1982 and 1989 respectively). It is to be hoped that its registration on the World Heritage List will help sustain this spirit of human respect for nature, understanding and peace among men. This is why the Minister of Culture considered it a priority for inclusion on the National Heritage List, and in July 1999 the Kamablon was suggested for the indicative list of Mali heritage sites for registration on the World Heritage List.

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FIGURE 71 The decorated doorway of the Kamablon

FIGURE 72 The platform behind the Kamablon, with a house behind.

FIGURE 73 General view of the site.

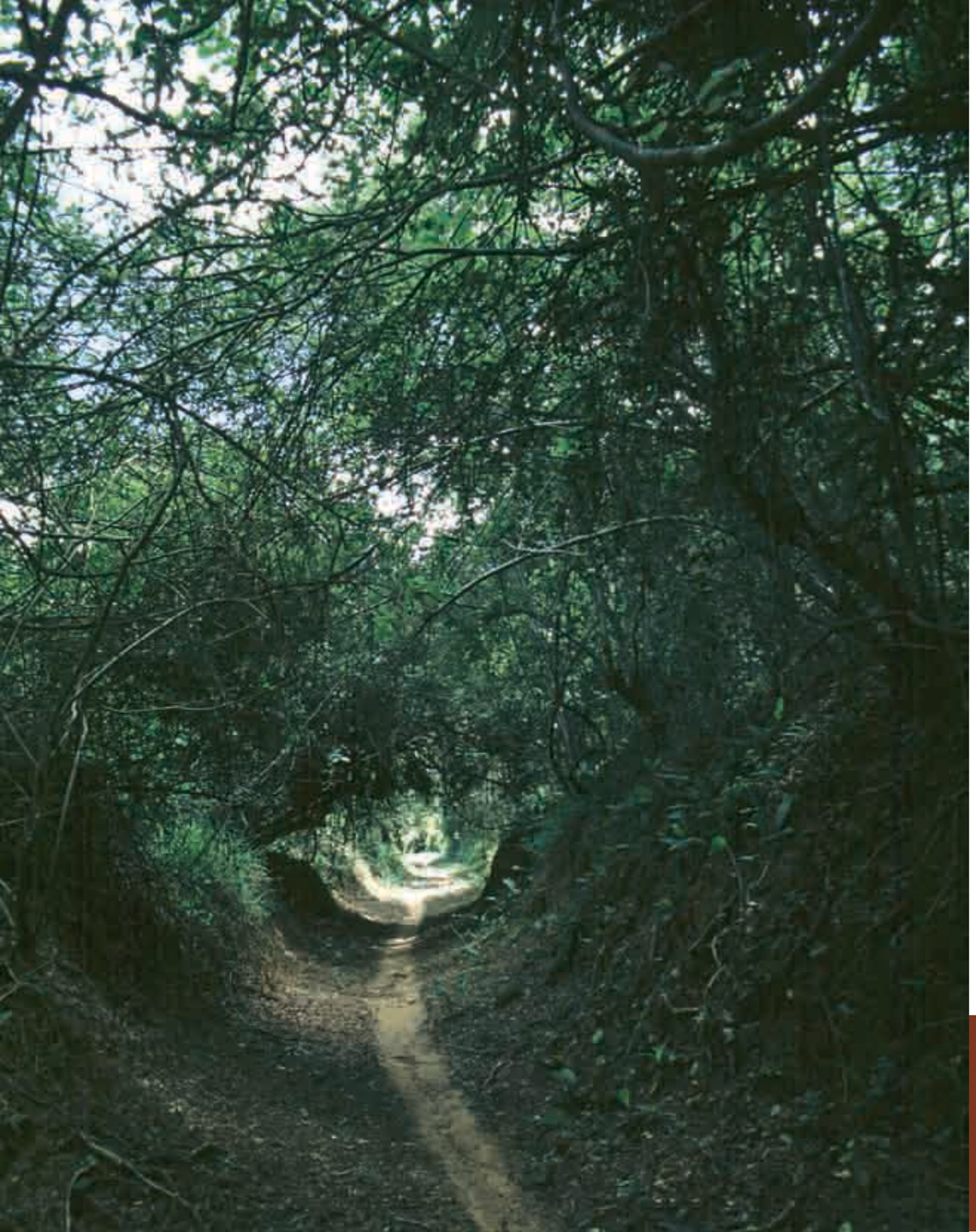

FIGURE 74
The path through the thick forest, Kaya Fungo.

ANTHONY N. GITHITO, Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, National Museums of Kenya

9. The sacred Mijikenda Kaya forests of coastal Kenya

TRADITIONAL CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The sacred Kaya forests are situated in the coastal plain and hills of Kenya, in East Africa. Most of them are residual patches (on average 10–400 hectares) of once extensive diverse lowland forest of Eastern Africa. The Kaya forests owe their existence directly to the history, culture and beliefs of the nine coastal Mijikenda ethnic groups. The Giriama, Digo, Rabai, Duruma, Ribe, Kauma, Chonyi, Jibana and Kambe (Mijikenda means 'nine settlements') arrived in the region three centuries or more ago, from an undefined place in Somalia.

The Mijikenda settled in small fortified villages: the 'Kaya' ('homestead' in Bantu). These settlements were clearings of several hectares surrounded by one or more high wooden stockades or fences. Designated access and exit paths to the village were made through the thick forest and failure to keep to them would arouse suspicion among the villagers. In many of the Kayas there was a series of gates or heavy wooden doors along the paths and into the stockade, at which strong protective 'medicine' was placed and which were guarded by young warriors. Many of the Kayas were established on hilltops or other sites which provided defensive advantage.

During the last hundred years the Kayas were abandoned for various reasons. However, some of them have been maintained and today there are over sixty known Kaya in the contiguous districts of Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi and Malindi, a coastal strip over 250 kilometres long.

The Kaya in history

According to tradition, when the ancestors of the Mijikenda arrived in the region, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, they chose to settle in what was a very extensive forest. This was because they were pursued by various enemy tribes, in particular the Oromo who had forced them to emigrate from the north, and the Maasai. These tribes, being plains warriors, were at a disadvantage mounting attacks in the dense bush. There seems to have been a collective recognition of a zone surrounding the village which was considered to be an integral part of the Kaya. Its physical and spiritual defensive role was tightly controlled by the Kaya Elders. Beyond this zone, villagers could clear and cultivate, or graze animals.

The Kaya was governed by a Council of Elders whose authority was based on supernatural powers derived from certain oaths that they had acquired (Nyamweru 1998). The Elders, who belonged to the oldest age-set 'Kambi', had power over the use of land, acted as spiritual mediums and healers, settled disputes, collected fees for adjudication and initiation, and administered trade. They also controlled witchcraft or sorcery in the whole society, a role performed by secret societies among the Kambi (Brantley 1979).

The populations of the forest settlements varied from a few hundred to a few thousand, as estimated for the Giriama Kaya in the late nineteenth century (Brantley 1978). Within the Kayas, the dwellings were grouped according to the clans (mbari), with meeting

FIGURE 75
The remains of the clearing at Kaya Fungo.

FIGURE 76
One of the two ritual huts at Kaya Fungo used by the Elders.

houses or sheds (Luanda) for each clan. The central structure of the village was normally the large Moro or meeting hut where gatherings of the whole village took place and all important discussions were held. The Fingo or protective magic of the whole Kaya was buried in a secret site within the Kaya or, if it was too powerful, in the surrounding forest (Champion 1969; Spear 1978; Brantley 1979; Nyamweru 1998). There were identified areas for burial in which the carved wooden posts and Vigango were erected as markers. The burial places of important leaders were sometimes marked by a grove of trees planted within the village.

Decline of the Kayas as settlements

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the population of the Mijikenda increased and security improved. People moved out from the original Kaya villages and established homesteads within their own farmlands (Nyamweru 1998: 11). By the late 1800s and early 1900s this process was quite advanced, although significant numbers still resided in the Kayas (Champion, 1969: 4-5). This resulted in a loss of cohesion of the various Mijikenda groups as the Elders could not exert control over their communities as before, in the restricted Kaya setting.

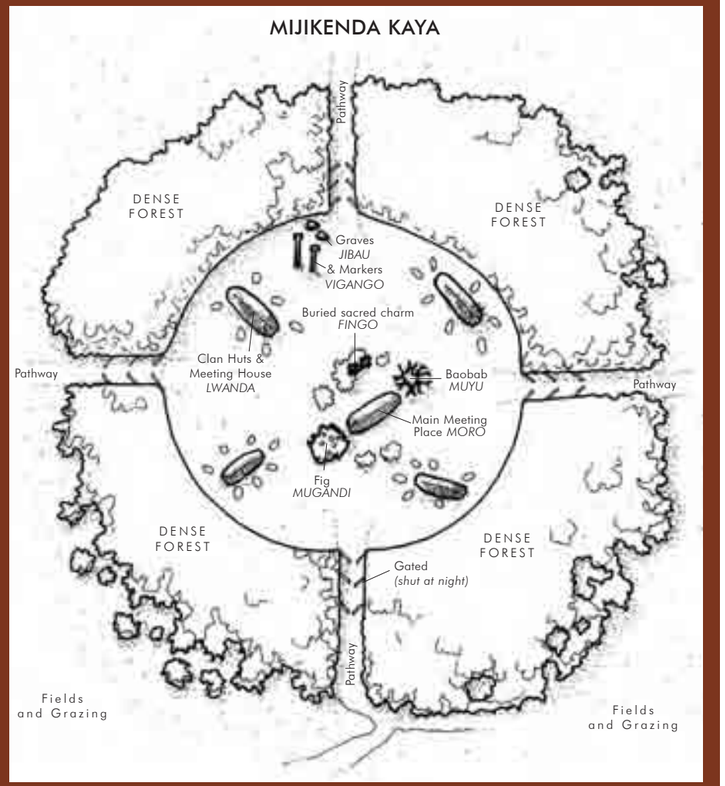

FIGURE 77 Diagrammatic drawing of a traditional Kaya, a fortified village within a forest.

During the twentieth century, rapid political, social and economic changes saw major changes. These included: the advent of the colonial and later republican government as alternative authorities; conversion from traditional religion; formal western style education and employment; social dislocation; search for employment in the growing towns and cities; and exposure to other cultures. There was understandably a decline in knowledge of, and respect for, traditional cultural values, just as had happened in other Kenyan communities in pursuit of 'modernization' and 'progress'. This was coupled with a rising demand for forest products such as timber, and for agricultural, construction and mining land needed to support the increase in population.

One result has been tremendous utilization pressures on the Kaya forests, particularly in the north coast Kilifi district. Most of forests here have been reduced in size to varying degrees up to the state of a 'resistant core', *Misitu ya Kaya,* characterized by a small forest with its central clearing. Some were logged for valuable hardwood timber trees, altering their structure and character. On the south coast, a number of the Digo Kayas along the beach fell prey to intensive hotel and housing development, and some were included in government settlement schemes.

At various times the local Kaya Elders and political leaders raised the issue of the loss of the Kayas and lamented the disappearance of the forests. By the early 1990s the government of Kenya had begun the process of gazetting the Kayas as National Heritage Sites under the care of the National Museums of Kenya.

Plant conservation value

Apart from the historical and cultural aspects, the government decision was also to protect its natural value. Two surveys funded by WWF were undertaken by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK). These were a floristic survey of Kaya forests (Robertson 1987) and a broader survey of coastal forests completed in 1993. An analysis of the data collected shown that seven out of the twenty sites with the highest natural values in coastal Kenya were Kaya forests.

Considering that the area covered by the Kayas is roughly 3,000 ha, or about 3% of the total amount of remaining coastal forest, the above figures are quite remarkable. The reason for the large number of rare plants recorded for the Kayas may be that they cover a broad range of habitat and micro-climatic conditions (Robertson and Luke 1993). More than half of Kenya's rare plants are found in the coastal region, with many of them within the Kaya forests. This botanical value further underlined to the National Museums (a natural science research institution) the need to protect these sites.

Traditional conservation practices

It is a testimony to the strength of local culture and beliefs among the Mijikenda that most Kaya forests are still in existence today. It indicates that, to a significant degree, the traditional rules and prohibitions passed down by the Elders still held sway in the minds of local communities and that they stood in awe or fear of the forests. Although the Kayas had been largely abandoned by the early twentieth century, the

FIGURE 78
Kaya Funo Elders dressed for a ceremony.

Kayas did not entirely lose their importance to the Mijikenda. Instead they became ritual centres and symbols of ethnic identity and unity. They were the storehouse of all medicines and the burial grounds of the ancestors and thus came to be considered as sacred (Nyamweru 1998). Reports from the turn of the century indicate that the bodies of all deceased tribesmen were still brought to the Kayas for burial (Johnstone 1902).

Thus, the Kayas changed over time from sites of practical settlement to symbolic and spiritual places. While the political power of the Kaya Elders had waned, they still maintained a strong ritual and ceremonial role as stewards of the sacred sites and felt responsible for preserving the forest shrines. The tradition arose that the forest should not be destroyed and the Elders upheld and enforced this protection so that they could perform these ceremonies and rites in secret (Robertson 1987). The original central clearing sites are still distinct within the forests, although many are overgrown and weedy when not in use for ceremonies. Some are under light secondary forest.

What rules did the Kaya Elders formulate in order to protect and preserve the Kayas? When were they developed and what was their purpose? How effectively were the rules enforced and to what extent did local people observe them? These are some of the questions the National Museums, through the work of its Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, is hoping to answer. Some broad observations can be made on the basis of existing research and these will be outlined below, although much more detailed research still remains to be done.

The main object of traditional management appears to be the maintenance of the Kaya as a sacred place by preventing its desecration. The central clearing area is where the ancestors are buried and their spirits present. The potent *fingo* (magic) of the tribe is still hidden somewhere. Hence certain profane or unclean activities are prohibited within the Kaya and surrounding forest. Certain sites are out of bounds to all but the Elders performing their duties. It is also intended to guard or protect the sense of secrecy or mystery about the Kaya. Partly, this atmosphere is provided by the dense forest. Therefore, disturbance of the trees and other vegetation is discouraged.

There is wide variation in the rigour and observation of the use-rules from site to site. In addition, the origin of some of the regulations is not clear with respect to whether they are ancient and originate at the time when the site was an active settlement or developed later when the forests became shrines.

How the rules were enforced

Rules were laid down by the Kaya Elders but there existed no policing agency to enforce the rules and bring offenders to book. Instead a system of oaths, taboos and curses was used as deterrents to activities that were forbidden. As the Mijikenda strongly believed in the supernatural and the activity of spirits, both good and bad (and still to some extent do), these methods were quite effective in promoting self-restraint where undesirable activities were concerned. As Champion (1914: 35-36) notes with regard to the Giriama: 'The... oath is a solemn compact with the supernatural powers, administered by medicine men… These oaths are used to protect property such as crops, trees and wells'. In such cases the *mapeho* (powerful evil spirits) are enjoined to protect a site and certain objects are placed there to signify this: 'so great is the fear of the consequences of breaking the spell (i.e. incurring the wrath of the *mapeho*) that… property thus protected seems to be fairly safe ….Amongst a tribe totally lacking in executive authority, these oaths are the only means the Elders have of obtaining obedience to their orders' (ibid).

Johnstone (1902: 272) reports on an example of this at Kaya Jibana where there was a prohibition on the use of any entrance but the main gate. Elders told him that a charm hanging from the gate insured instant death to any who left the village by another exit. If a miscreant happened to be caught in an illegal act by the Elders and fined, failure to pay the fine also brought misfortune to the person. The fine, usually consisting of livestock, might be used to cleanse the site after the desecration.

Rules relating to physical site maintenance

Tree-cutting

Perhaps the most important rules relating to the maintenance of the forested site affect the cutting of trees or other vegetation. In general, cutting of trees was prohibited in all the Kayas. No green or live tree of any size was ever to be cut and removed. At Kaya Rabai the fine for this offence was a sheep (Amini 2001). On the cutting of dead wood, there was some variation. Some Kayas permitted women to collect dry wood from the forest floor, but not in the most scared sites such as the central clearing or its vicinity. Standing dead trees or branches could not be removed unless they had fallen to the ground (ibid).

One way in which the cutting and removal of deadwood was controlled was the formulation of rules which ensured that it was physically impossible to take more than a certain quantity. For example in Kaya Kauma, women were to collect only as much as they could carry in their arms without the use of a cord or rope. Similarly on many sites, cutting or other metal implements were not permitted, so that you could take only as much as could broken by hand or picked up.

Grazing

Grazing cattle in the Kaya was forbidden (Tengeza 2001). Apart from the obvious effect of denudation, it is surmised that many traditional cultural and religious artefacts were hidden or placed in certain parts of the forest and that cattle roaming freely on the site would result in interference or damage to them. In some Kayas like Kaya Kauma, cattle straying into the Kaya were liable to be slaughtered and eaten by the community. When the sites were settlements, cattle were kept in special corrals, separate from the settlement, and were taken to graze outside the Kaya forest zone.

Rules relating to behaviour and activities within the Kayas

As mentioned above, certain rules were in place to prevent the desecration of the site. In case of infringement, fines were imposed and cleansing ceremonies became necessary. The forest was preserved by the local people because of its spiritual dimension, rather than for its own sake or for conservation reasons.

Sorcery

Sorcery or witchcraft was regarded as a destructive and antisocial activity, harmful to the cohesion and unity of the community, and strictly forbidden in the Kaya.

Bloodletting

On several Kaya sites it would appear that the shedding of blood in the central clearing polluted it, and any deliberate or accidental shedding of blood needed to be cleansed by a ceremony. This rule sometimes resulted in women being prevented from visiting certain sites on account of menstruation.

The handling of the dead

Human remains were not allowed to be brought into the central clearing. There were (and still are) designated burial grounds for members of the community within the forest. However, suicides and murder victims could not be buried in the Kaya. If one died of natural causes within the Kaya then one had to be buried there. No coffins or other receptacles could be used to bury the dead, only a white shroud.

Attire

Certain Mijikenda communities placed restrictions on the type of clothing that could be worn on a visit to the central clearing. Among the more conservative Kayas (Giriama, Kauma, Rabai), shoes could not be worn. In the most sacred sites, only traditional garments, including distinctively coloured sarongs and shawls which are seamless and wrap around the body, were permitted. This means shirts were not to be worn, nor caps and hats, and use of umbrellas was forbidden. The origins and reason for this particular requirement are obscure but it may be that unusual attire in olden times may have helped to identify one as a stranger and a possible threat.

Site Restrictions

Especially in the conservative Kilifi District Kayas, non-members of the ethnic group or non-Mijikendas were not permitted into the central clearing (Chiro

1997). When this happens now from time to time as a matter of expediency, cleansing of the site is required. The Kaya clearing should be entered and left along the traditional designated paths of entry and visitors should keep to these paths. In most Kayas certain areas are intended for specific ceremonies and activities, and only the appropriately ordained Elders are permitted to enter.

Active site maintenance today

In the present day, active physical site maintenance activities are fairly limited. They are mostly confined to the historic paths and central clearing. Preparation of the Kaya site seems to be done only when the need arises for a ceremony or a ritual. In such an instance, specific members of the community, usually the women, clean the entry path by cutting grass or other undergrowth. The central clearing itself may also be cleaned in this way or a token portion of it, as some of them are quite large. When the occasion passes, the site is usually left to revert to an 'unkept' state. According to some, the purpose of the clearing is to signify the cleaning of the compound or living space which the Kaya symbolically is. In the past it is probable that the whole space was cleaned regularly but this is no longer practicable (Jembe pers. comm., 2001).

The surrounding forest is not treated or tended in any way apart from discouraging cutting or other significant disturbance, and it is to all intents and purposes a nature reserve. As described earlier, greater emphasis is given to spiritual maintenance or preserving the sanctity of the Kaya clearing by giving various sacrifices to atone for wrongdoing and to cleanse the site.

Within a number of Kaya sites traditional ritual huts can still be found. They are used by the Elders during their stays in the Kaya, and to store their paraphernalia. These are also maintained, and indeed their neglect is said to be a reflection of the general neglect of their Kaya by a community.

Challenges facing traditional conservation practices

The Kayas and their related culture and beliefs have lost their use-value and part of their influence. In addition, many of their associated rituals and protocols are lost, as Elders who had first-hand experience of Kaya procedures died without passing on their knowledge to others.

But there is no doubt that the Kaya forests as they exist today are still authentic cultural landscapes, going by the UNESCO definition, in their 'distinct character and components'. The challenge of their conservation is found in the strong relationship between the tangible and the intangible. Without conserving the ritual and cultural aspect of the Kaya, the integrity of the sites as living cultural landscapes is not complete. Conversely, the inter-linkage of the cultural and natural aspects also means that the cultural values of the Kaya are dependent on the existence of the forest. Yet the main weakness of the traditional conservation system in protecting the forest is its heavy reliance on belief systems specific to the Mijikenda and characterized by supernatural deterrents. These beliefs are no longer strongly held by many Mijikenda and not at all by other groups in Kenyan society who may wish to convert Kaya sites to other uses. They may not be effective in checking 'outsiders'.

To begin to resolve this problem the Government has gazetted many Kayas. The understanding is that the national law will back up traditional law where it is not effective in protecting and conserving Kaya forest sites, a state referred to by some as 'Legal Pluralism' (Mumma 1999). The government agency of the National Museums will provide this support, including monitoring and legal prosecution where required. As part of the process of gazetting, definite boundaries have been agreed on and permanently demarcated. This should bring to an end the steady encroachment of Kaya forest land. Hopefully, the process will also provide an environment free of excessive external pressures, in which the Kaya communities can explore and rediscover positive and enriching aspects of their culture and evolve a response to contemporary conditions.

The National Museums has the capacity to conduct research on, and record aspects of, the Mijikenda Kaya culture where the only mode of transmission to date has been oral. It cannot be assumed that the oral system of information sharing will withstand the impact of rapid changes still being experienced in the region and the country as a whole. It is important that, as far as possible and to an extent acceptable to Kaya communities, the ancient rules, regulations and values should be recorded for posterity. National institutions must also support the Kaya Elders in enforcing the traditional laws and preserving the integrity of the Kaya cultural landscape. This implies that there should be close cooperation and collaboration between NMK heritage and biological scientific professionals in developing universally understood management schemes and communicating them to the public.

FIGURE 79
Cultural ceremony at Kaya Puma Kwale.

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10. The ritual hut of Sosso-Bala in Niagassola

CONSERVATION VALUES AND PRACTICES

Niagassola is the main city of the sous-préfecture located in the extreme northeast of Guinea (9° 7' west, 12° 9' north,). It is surrounded on the west and south by the sous-préfectures of Malea and Doko, and to the north and east by Mail, with the cities of Bamako and Kita. Niagassola features particularly well-preserved traditional Mandingo architecture which is important both from a social and an immovable heritage point of view. According to oral traditions, Niagassola was the ancient residence of the 'Mansas' (the rulers of Mali). Soundjata, the creator of the Empire of Mali, decided for strategic reasons to make his capital Niani, an archaeological site very close to the Sankarani River in the prefecture of Mandiana on the Guinean-Malian border.

The uniqueness of Niagassola is that it contains one of the most sacred Mandingo buildings: the Sosso-Bala ritual hut, this lies within the lou[1] of the Kouyates griots of Dokala[2], the setting over the centuries for the great family spread, with numerous dwellings ordered in a harmonious way around the home of the patriarch.

The ritual hut was built solely to shelter the Sosso-Bala, a balafon (an African percussion instrument) that, according to mythology, was bequeathed to the Kouyate family by Bala Fasseke Kouyate, the griot of Soundjata Keita, Emperor of the Mandinga in the thirteenth century AD. Tradition relates that previously this instrument belonged to Soumaoro Kante (King of Sosso), who received it in thanks for the ingenious way in which he undertook to protect it.

After the victory of Soundjata Keita over Soumaoro Kante at the battle of Krina (1235), the Sosso-Bala became the property of Bala Fasseke Kouyate. Since then and right up to the present day, the Kouyate griots of Dokala, an important clan of Bala Fasseke Kouyate's descendants, keep this sacred balafon in its protective setting, safe from the eyes of unauthorized viewers.

The balafon is surrounded by its accessories: a spear, a turban with red bouquets, three pairs of 'daro' (a type of idiophone in the shape of a small bell), two drumsticks, and an old sabre and its accessories, all watched over by the spirits of the ancestors. Together, these items represent an irreplaceable symbol of Mandingo cultural identity.

The ritual hut is only opened for three reasons: whenever it is necessary to conserve or maintain the instrument or the hut itself; on ritual occasions, particularly for making sacrifices to the ancestors; and on days when the Sosso-Bala is displayed in public.

These public displays of the instrument only take place at major events in the community (such as the funeral ceremonies of important people and the enthronement rites for the new Balatigui, the guardian of the Bala). These displays, during which the instrument is played, provide an opportunity for large-scale gatherings not only of the local inhabitants and people from many other neighbouring communities, but also of other members of the Mandingo community who live far away from Niagassola.

Despite its importance as the protective haven for the great Bala and its accessories, the hut of the Sosso-Bala does not present any extraordinary

FIGURE 80
A member of the Kouyate-Dokala family playing a cordophone in front of the Sosso-Bala hut.

FIGURE 81 (above left) The sacred hut of Sosso-Bala.

FIGURE 82 (bottom left) Niagassola.

FIGURE 83 (above right) Sekou Kouyate, the 'Balattigui', playing the Sosso-Bala.

and obvious features. Its size is modest, about four metres in diameter and six metres in height, similar to the usual dimensions of local dwellings. It is much smaller than some of the houses lived in by the family heads of Niagassola, and is also smaller than the *bolon*, the rooms that make up the entrance area to family compounds in most Mandingo villages. In fact, among the traditional communities of Upper Guinea, the size of buildings is not proportional to their sacred importance. On the contrary, sanctity is characterized by relative simplicity, a sign of the great wisdom displayed in Mandingo culture.

Hut construction

The hut is built with materials found locally, such as colloidal clay, which is mixed with grass, and wood. The mud walls form a cylinder which is hardly more than two metres high. Based on widely-used practices, the building work begins by tracing the base circle of the hut using a rope of a length that matches the radius of the hut to be built. This rope is attached to a post placed in the centre of the circle and, at the other end, to a hoe which is used to draw the circle around the central post. The outline is then excavated out to form a brick foundation trench.

The ceiling, constructed from raffia stems and covered in a very hard clay plaster, is supported by wooden pillars (made from *Eurythrocarpus eurinaceus*, a species that is resistant to insect damage and attack).

The conical roofing is made from a rounded wooden framework tied together with lianas. It is covered with straw that has been plaited beforehand. This roofing has a steep slope of about 40° to facilitate the outflow of rainwater.

By referring again to traditional techniques, it can be surmised that the conical framework was put together on the ground and placed on top of the cylindrical wall. Branches of about four metres in length are used. Wood species which demonstrate good natural resistance are chosen, such as kolokolo (*Afrormosia laxiflora)*, tali (*Erythrophleum guineensis*), *gben* (*Pterocarpus eurinaceus*), kobi (*Carapa procera*) and soh (*Isoberlinia doka*).

Once the framework is placed on the walls, the work of adding the roof covering can begin. The gutters are completed first (i.e. the cone edges) before progressing upwards. Finally, the ridge-board is treated with fairly complex plaiting. In accordance with a traditional practice that is slowly disappearing in the region, plant materials are mixed with the clay to form the wall mortar, and plaster containing cow dung used as a roughcast. This ensures that the hut and its contents are better protected against mildew and bugs,. Samakada capsules (Caesalpiniaceae) are used for this purpose. There are other traditional practices that have yet to be researched, for example the use of karite butter to stabilize the soil.

Conservation

Protection by the State of Guinea of the cultural environment of the Sosso-Bala extends to the ritual hut and its ecosystem, made up of the Kouyate lou, the mobile heritage (the Bala and all its accessories), as well as the popular traditional oral culture of this tangible heritage. But the conservation of the Bala and its protective hut raises the issue of the protective rites and values associated with the ancestral culture of the Dokala Kouyate family.

In the eyes of this family of griots, the Sosso-Bala embodies the spirit of their ancestor Bala Fasseke, the very soul of the oral history they are entrusted to impart from one generation to another. After many tribulations over the centuries, the sacred balafon and its accessories have found shelter in this hut. From this perspective, the hut of the Sosso-Bala represents a place of safety that is emblematic, unique and, especially, inviolable. The whole site is owned exclusively by the Dokala Kouyate families (broadly speaking) and this family of griots is responsible for maintaining the refuge.

The hut is located among the houses and is watched over daily by the Balatigui, the guardian of the Bala who protects the ritual hut. But the site also enjoys the protection of the Kemooh-bolon, the Council of Elders of Niagassola, led by the chief of the clan, the Kabilatigui. However, the main protective role is performed by the Balatigui. Nowadays, this office receives considerable attention in Mandingo society. The recent enthronement of the current Balatigui, Sekou Kouyate on 11 April 1999 was the occasion for a large-scale celebration in which a huge crowd participated. Attendees included not only top ranking Guinean officials but many traditional Mandingo personalities from neighbouring countries.

Conservation measures at the site mainly involve regular maintenance of the hut and its sacred contents. On some occasions, the 'inhabitants' of the hut, the ancient balafon and its old accessories, are smeared with karite butter (*Buthyrospermum Parkii*).

The materials used to build the hut generally have a relatively short lifespan as a result of the bad weather. Some of them, especially the most exposed or fragile parts, have to be replaced periodically. This is the case for the covering materials (the straw and lianas). The wood in the framework and the fastening ropes made from plant fibres are also vulnerable to water leaks. Likewise, despite their treatment with karite butter, the external plasters are not capable of permanent resistance to damage from the beating rains that are frequent in the region.

It should be noted that periodically the inside of the hut is warmed up or smoked in. This practice has helped to conserve the ancient balafon by repelling parasites and eliminating some of the humidity. It has also had a positive effect on the hut's conservation. It may have been inspired by observing the better state of conservation of huts used for cooking, which benefit from this treatment on a daily basis.

The organization of the repair works

Any restoration or renovation work of the Sosso-Bala ritual hut necessitates consultation among the Kouyate family descendants. The decision is communicated to all the sons and daughters of the lineage, wherever they are. Some of them, because of their hierarchical rank in the Kouyate family of Dökala or because they bear special responsibility in the spiritual protection of the Sosso-Bala, must come to Niagassola to attend and participate in some way in the work.

For regular maintenance of the thatching, the covering of the hut is not completely removed as it is for a normal hut. Parts are only replaced where necessary. After the damaged parts are removed, new straw plaits are immediately inserted.

The guardian of the Sosso-Bala (or his legitimate successor in the case of his death) is in charge of organizing and running all the work. The different activities are assigned respectively to other members chosen among the elders. Other village clans can be associated with activities such as research, or sourcing the building materials, or complementary work that does not directly concern the hut's physical conservation.

The death of the head of the Dökala Kouyate clan, the guardian of the Sosso-Bala, and the ceremony to enthrone his successor are the most important events in the management of the site. Extra attention is paid to the hut at this time. After a meticulous inspection, it is restored if deemed necessary. This is a very important decision which involves numerous meetings of the Council of Elders. The Sotii Kemoo, the eldest among the generation of fathers, is consulted concerning the relevance of the proposals put forward. Although he has no ownership rights over the Sosso-Bala, he can propose amendments to those decisions of the Council of Elders concerning the organization of restoration activities for the hut. The same is true for the public showings of the Sosso-Bala, important events that require meticulous preparation.

Today and tomorrow

Until now, the traditional conservation of the Sosso-Bala and its ritual hut has been jealously ensured by the Dokala Kouyates. But this site also embraces some of the most symbolic evidence of the Mandingo Mediaeval period. It also offers a prime example of the transmission of the traditional culture of the Mandingo peoples who now live in various countries in West Africa.

However, the cultural environment of the Sosso-Bala is today at risk of deterioration or even destruction from an adverse climate, from insect activity, and from the activities of dealers in antiquities. Moreover, the traditional cultural and popular values attached to the site are gradually dwindling, resulting in a gradual loss of the know-how and techniques used to conserve the Bolon and of the transmission of this knowledge to successive generations of the Sosso-Bala. The teaching of traditional 'archives' is also dwindling, i.e. the history and oral culture of the Mandinga which the griots of Kouyate have astutely preserved and transmitted from the time of the Mansas of the medieval empire of Soundjata Keita.

The State of Guinea holds the site in great interest and has requested that its Heritage Division study how to safeguard the site. With this in mind, the Heritage Division is considering setting up a 'Museum of the Sosso-Bala'. The idea for this project has been largely inspired by requests from the Kouyate family and the state has agreed to provide initial funding. The idea of the Museum of the Sosso-Bala is to set up a creative institution that will take into account not only the conservation and restoration of the immovable cultural heritage but also the safeguarding of the cultural practices that help sustain this heritage.

The Prefecture of Siguiri (which includes Niagassola) proposed a concrete structure for the museum. The Heritage Division, in agreement with the National Museum of Sandervalia-Conakry, chose a more suitable conservation structure that took into account the technical constraints and advantages of traditional conservation. The shelter for the Sosso-Bala should be able to cope with the natural conditions of this tropical zone as well as or better than the existing structure. It should also ensure the physical and secure protection of the site while enabling the site's intangible values to be safeguarded and developed.

For some years, officers from the Heritage Division have promoted the Niagassola site at national, sub-regional and regional meetings concerned with the protection of African cultural heritage. During these meetings, the idea of a project to develop the Niagassola sites and monuments was often brought up. Based on the work of the Heritage Division, a mission of the Guinean National UNESCO Commission then drew up terms of reference for the building of a museum of the Sosso-Bala in Niagassola.

In 2001, thanks to the joint efforts of the state and officers from the Kouyate family, the Sosso-Bala was among the first nineteen listings of UNESCO's 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'.

It is important to underline that this listing involves the development of the Sosso-Bala cultural space. In fact, large-scale work will be undertaken with the help of conservation and heritage management experts. An integrated process of re-identification, documentation and participatory management will also be implemented so that a suitable management plan can be drawn up.

Although the UNESCO proclamation gives priority to the value of the intangible (traditional knowledge and know-how), the objectives of the 'Project for the safeguarding and conservation of the Sosso-Bala and its environment' involve a certain number of activities that naturally affect the material support (immovable cultural heritage). As the project states, it will be a question of building a museum complex where the modern exists side by side with the traditional.

The task is all the more delicate since examination of the feasibility study shows that the connotation of modernity has taken on greater meaning. In other words, against the background of a participatory approach, in which the beneficiary families will play an important role, the experts will have to institute conservation and management mechanisms (in the global sense of the term) based on the principle of a healthy cohabitation between the modern and the traditional. These mechanisms must leave intact the present shelter, the hut, which remains an essential component of the Sosso-Bala system.

This then raises the unacknowledged problem of whether the necessary skills are available locally to take the best decision on the subject. This is no easy task since the project is full of paradoxes and contradictions which need to be analysed well before a definitive decision on the site's future can be taken.

On the one hand, the role and the importance of the site are fundamental for the whole Mandingo society whereas, on the other hand, the site appears not at all monumental. If one considers its intrinsic fragility, you can understand that its very vivacity and small size have enabled it to be conserved easily and in a sustainable way that combats the weather so well. Thus the site represents important historic evidence, as well as providing a lesson on the abilities and wisdom of Mandingo traditional social organization.

Against this background, should the site be developed through projects that run the risk of erasing the traditional, non-monumental character of the site, perhaps one of its most important characteristics, if not the most important from a cultural point of view? What would the real impact of such changes be on the site's symbolism, on its message, but also on the organization and social cohesion of the Kouyate family, and beyond, on the whole of Mandingo society? How beneficial will these changes be for society and future generations?

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Endnotes

[1]A 'lou' in the Maninka language signifies a compound inhabited by one family group comprising of several households. Several lous make up a Kabila (a clan or housing quarter) and collectively form a village (So) which is ruled by an elder, the Sotil-Kemo.

[2]The term Dolaka must originate from the name of Gnankouman Doka, the father of Bala Fasseke. He also appointed the Kouyates griots, descendants of this line.

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11. The Nankani tradition of decorated dwellings

Distinct building traditions in Western Africa have produced visually striking vernacular architecture and decoration. In Northern Ghana, before the rainy season, groups of Nankani women render the wall surface of their mud dwellings with colourful painted low-relief adornments. The decorations executed in the area of Sirigu village are unique, sophisticated, and of an extraordinary quality, reflecting a high technical knowledge of the use of indigenous materials.

This distinct Nankani tradition, which strikes the visitor to this part of Northern Ghana or Southern Burkina Faso, is also a social event. As it involves a lot of work, the women gather as a team every year, with the most talented and experienced women leading the work. Different generations of women work together, with the older, more experienced women, transmitting their knowledge to the younger ones. Apart from being an opportunity for them to express their artistic talent, the ability to decorate is also seen as a sign of a hard-working woman who is in a position to take good care of a home.

However, the impermanent nature of these wall decorations and the effects of modernization have brought about a rapid decline of this tradition. Further more, this is leading to the gradual loss of women's social cohesion and the identity of the community. Fortunately, this traditional art form is beginning to receive international recognition as being of an outstanding universal value. As a symbol of indigenous cultural wealth it also represents an important potential for the sustainable and harmonious development of Nankani society.

The construction and decoration of a typical Nankani Compound

A typical Nankani compound is made up of a number of individual rooms linked by walls to enclose a circular compound. The building material is earth and wood, and the compounds are closed off to the outside like protected fortresses. The number of huts that make up a compound depends on the size of the family living in it. A compound generally houses a large extended family consisting of several brothers and their families. This often results in a complex system of sub-compounds.

Construction work is often carried out in the early part of the dry season (January to February). This is followed in the latter part of the dry season by the decoration activity (mid-March to April). The decoration work is done at this time because the early part of the dry season is characterized by strong, dry and dusty winds. These make the plaster and the paints dry too quickly, causing the surfaces to crack. Traditionally, the men are responsible for the actual building of the compound, while the women are responsible for the decoration.

Decoration is applied to both of the outer walls of the compound as well as the internal walls inside the actual buildings. There are basically four ways in which the walls are decorated. The painted designs represent the prevailing form of decoration. They constitute the outlining of the basic motifs in black, and the filling of the created areas with alternating colours. The result is a pattern made up of contrasting forms and colours. The colours are applied with brushes made out of feathers.

FIGURE 84
Women decorating a house.

FIGURE 85 (top left) A decorated house in Sirigu.

FIGURE 86 (middle left) A recently decorated house.

FIGURE 87 (bottom left) Similarly decorated houses in Tiebele, Burkina Faso.

FIGURE 88 (top right) Polishing the decoration with a stone.

Incised designs are used to accentuate the outlines of the designs. These are achieved by a set of parallel lines or filling spaces created with cross-hatchings. They are sometimes also used to depict the scales on the skins of animals. They are applied using small stones with a rounded tip and are more frequently employed on the interior decorations.

If bas-relief is executed, it is modelled onto the plaster while still wet. It is raised above the remaining surface by about 1 cm. Bas-relief designs are done by a few skilled women, as they demand a special artistic talent.

Polish is achieved by smoothing the wall surface with a small flat stone, and by applying a final surface treatment of a special *dawa-dawa* concoction. Surfaces are usually finished to a high polish and tend to be much darker with subtle colour contrasts.

Often the above mentioned methods are used in combination. This is particularly so in the case of interior decorations where you often find a combination of all the above mentioned elements.

Since interior decorations are considered more important and personal, greater attention is given to their realization. They are often more elaborately decorated and finished to a high polish. They also tend to be more durable because they are not exposed to the effects of the weather.

Wall painting as surface protection

The wall painting is however not merely a form of artistic expression but more importantly a form of surface protection:

- the incised and bas-relief designs break the flow of water rushing down the walls thus making them less destructive;
- the action of smoothing and polishing compact the wall surface and make it more resistant to the influences of the weather;
- the final surface treatment applied (a decoction derived from boiling the pods of the locust bean fruit) helps to render the decorated surfaces impervious to water, thus protecting not only the paintings but the structure as a whole.

Materials and techniques

Traditionally all the pigments used in painting are natural substances found in the environment. In Sirigu, a village near by Navrongo, decorations usually comprise of four colours: a black and a laterite red which are obtained from specifics soils, a dark red derived from crushing particular pebble-stones, and a white which is obtained from a chalk-like stone.

After plastering, the laterite red is applied onto the wet plaster covering the whole surface and giving the background colour. The outlines of the motifs are usually painted in black using feather brushes. The spaces created are filled alternatively with black, white, dark red, or left unpainted, allowing the laterite red background to show.

Motifs

The decorative motifs often represent everyday utilitarian objects or animals. The painted decorations are predominantly rectilinear. The prevailing shapes are triangles and lozenges. These usually represent everyday utility objects e.g. the calabash rope net, a broken calabash, joined hands, men's cloth, a broom or animal motifs e.g. the wings of a bat.

The bas-relief decorations, on the other hand, usually depict animals and stand in contrast to the rectilinear painted designs. Among the common animal motifs are the coiled snake, the humpbacked cow, the donkey, the crocodile or the lizard. Other motifs include the walking stick. Although not common, there are also some examples of human figures.

Maintenance

Like the building themselves the decorations are not permanent. They are exposed to the influences of the weather, mainly rain which though scarce can be violent. Consequently, the decorations on the outer walls gradually wash off, causing the colours to fade and the contrasts to become more subtle.

Maintenance does not seem to play an important part in the mural painting tradition. A surface is decorated and then left to fade until it is painted again. The only form of maintenance is the re-application of the *dawa-dawa* concoction once a year, shortly before the rains start. If done regularly, this can extend the life span of a decorated surface up to five years. But in fact, the paintings are rarely repaired and there is almost never any attempt to preserve or copy the preceding design. Whenever a wall is redecorated, a totally new composition is conceived. This emphasizes the fact that this is a living tradition ,where no particular value is attached to preserving old and used objects.

Evolution of building and decorating techniques

The impermanent nature of these wall decorations and the evolution brought about by modern influences and a desire for change and development have led to the gradual introduction of new building materials and techniques, e.g. the use of cement or coal-tar plaster and corrugated metal roofing sheets, together with the introduction of more rectangular shaped structures.

This evolution is particularly evident as one gets closer to the bigger towns like Navrongo or Bolgatanga. The number of decorated walls declines and so too does the actual quality of the decoration. Often coal-tar is used in painting, resulting in less precise drawings and streaks of running colour. Motifs are often less traditional and represent a relative freedom of expression of the artist. In some cases decorations have even been carried out by men.

Today the women who can still perform traditional decorations are usually very old. Hence the skills are gradually dying out. Even though many younger women have inherited the basic skills from their mothers and grandmothers, they are becoming more reluctant to carry on with this tradition. Decoration work is time consuming and expensive, and materials are becoming more scarce. This is leading to a break in the transfer of skills from the older to the younger generations. The sad thing is that this is going to have dramatic repercussions for women's social cohesion, and for the identity of the community.

This evolution was confirmed by the difficulties in finding skilled women to carry out planned

restoration work on a catholic cathedral in Navrongo, a small town in the far north of Ghana close to the border with Burkina Faso.

Case study: the conservation of 'Our Lady of Seven Sorrows' cathedral

Constructed in 1920, following the arrival in 1906 of the White Fathers, 'Our Lady of Seven Sorrows' Cathedral is the last remaining cathedral in Ghana built of earthen materials, and is still in use today. While the cathedral is European in design, both the building materials and techniques employed were based on the local vernacular building methods. Another feature that makes this cathedral so special is its traditional interior decorations. These where carried out by a group of seven Nankani women almost thirty years ago. The group adorned the walls and columns of the interior with a mixture of traditional and new catholic motifs and symbols. This symbolizes the merging of two cultures in a very impressive way.

'Our Lady of Seven Sorrows' cathedral is a witness of the story of the city of Navrongo and of the surrounding region during the last century, and still remains one of the most important buildings in the area. These cultural significance and values of Navrongo Cathedral are now recognized by the major decision makers at the diocesan and parish levels, and there is a strong will to conserve it.

The ongoing restoration project of 'Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows Cathedral' attempts to address critical conservation issues. The most pressing of these is the preservation of skills and know-how, and of this traditional art form as a whole. The project presents a rare opportunity for older artisans to share their expertise with younger women.

Currently, as part of an overall assessment of the entire structure, a plan is under development for the conservation of the cathedral's decorated surfaces which, although still in relatively good shape, have suffered damage over the past years.

To evaluate the damage and develop the most appropriate conservation proposals, testing and assessment of local maintenance techniques were conducted. The group was made up of skilled artists from Sirigu and of younger women from Navrongo who now maintain the church. One of the older women from Sirigu had originally participated in the initial decoration.

To sustain these efforts, the possibility of extending the decoration to surfaces that had not been decorated in 1973 was considered. Traditional plaster and paint mixtures were applied to sample blocks and selected sections of the wall decoration. New decorations have already been applied to two small wall surfaces in the cathedral.

Key to the success of this project is the close relationship among the conservation team, decision-makers at the parish and diocesan levels, and the National Monuments and Museums Board of Ghana. By providing valuable information to the various stakeholders, the project has promoted a greater recognition of the cathedral's significance and provoked a strong desire to preserve the site.

Towards a sustainable development

It is particularly critical in projects such as this, where the work will ultimately be completed and the project team disbanded, that all the local stakeholders are involved from the onset as they will ultimately be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the site. However, trying to promote this artwork through the restoration of a unique building can not be considered enough, even if the cathedral plays an important role, reflecting the identity of the local society.

Therefore, the team is also exploring what might be done to support the preservation and transfer of these traditional skills. The most encouraging fact is that locally Nankani women are already making efforts to organize themselves. A retired teacher, Melanie Kasisi, has completed the construction of an 'Art Centre' in Sirigu for the exhibition and sale of local handicrafts. An organization called the Sirigu Women Potters' Association (SWOPA) has been formed by a group of experienced artists who, apart from producing local handicrafts, organize wall-decoration projects in the village. The main objective is to teach the younger women the skills and techniques of traditional wall painting.

All the above named projects, apart from being part of a comprehensive conservation plan for the cathedral, also aim to preserve the wall-decoration tradition of the Nankani women and, in so doing, contribute towards sustainable social and economic development in the community.

Innovative and complementary actions have to be developed. The choice of these activities has to be determined together with the women of the community and with all stakeholders. However, it can be foreseen that they will have to be developed simultaneously at the local, regional, and national level, and will have to include measures to help the women to organize themselves. It will also be important to sensitize the younger Nankani women to the need to preserve this tradition. The transfer of knowledge to the younger generations will help to ensure the continuity of this tradition.

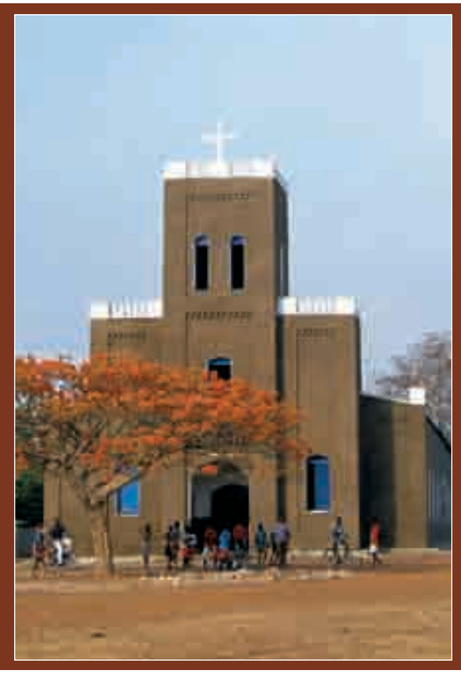

FIGURE 89 Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Cathedral.

FIGURE 90 Detail of carved surface.

FIGURE 91 The interior of the cathedral.

Initially, trial projects of limited scope should be carried out and then evaluated. This will provide a firm foundation for larger projects involving an increasing number of young women and local partners.

Finally, it is important to note that efforts to preserve this building tradition are not only aimed at the conservation of this visually striking vernacular architecture; the challenge is also to maintain the identity of this community in Northern Ghana.

The safeguarding of the building tradition of the Nankani women through sustainable local development also provides an opportunity to define a methodological approach, one which may be useful to many other communities in similar contexts, and so to contribute to the necessary improvement of conditions for the conservation of immovable cultural heritage in sub-Saharan Africa.

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12. The traditional conservation of the Mousgoum hutshells

The Mousgoum territory lies in the basin of Lake Chad in the far north of Cameroon, on the riparian territories of the Logone River which separates Cameroon from the Republic of Chad. The present administrative divisions place the Mousgoums more precisely in the canton of Maga,[1] where they have wrought one of the most remarkable building cultures in Cameroon.

The Mousgoum huts have been famous since the nineteenth century. Their grand size, curved features and slender shapes have surprised many travellers stopping in the Mousgoum villages. The explorers Heinrich Barth in 1852[2], Schweinfurt in 1868 and Nachtigal in 1872 allude to these structures in their writings as 'hutshells', a term that was later translated by the French colonisers as 'cases obus'.

The hutshell or tolek has stimulated the imagination of many European writers. The most famous is the ethnologist André Gide, who wrote in his book *Voyage in the Congo,* published in 1927, that it was not only strange but also beautiful:

'A beauty so perfect, so accomplished, that it seems natural… The pure curve of its line, which is uninterrupted from base to summit, seems to have been arrived at mathematically, by ineluctable necessity; one instinctively realizes how exactly the resistance of the materials must have been calculated.'

On the occasion of the colonial exhibition in 1931 in Paris, the French architect Fichet was inspired by the architectural shape of the hut shell when he designed the Governor-General's Pavilion that housed the Equatorial Francophone Africa section.

Unfortunately, this magnificent architectural culture is disappearing. The rare huts that are still standing, some in ruins, are in the villages of Mourla and Gaya in the canton of Pouss, and in the city of Maga.[3] On the whole, they are not as monumental as at the beginning of the century. They are in general demonstration models or huts used as kitchens in areas where the huts are mostly made with straw roofing. Nevertheless, they still constitute evidence of considerable intelligence in the building process as well as in the traditional activities employed in their conservation.

To date, no scientific survey has been carried out to investigate in detail all the components used in the building and conservation processes of this architecture. However, we can cast some preliminary light on these points, based on a summary of exploratory surveys gathered from the last Mousgoum builders[4] and on some written records describing and summarizing this building culture.

A simple and intelligent design

It is very difficult to date the origin of the toleks. The origin of the first Mousgoums who built their villages in this architectural style is still a mystery today. According to oral traditions, the settlers were mostly fishermen who arrived in the fourteenth century in a region frequently flooded by high waters from the Logone River (Goodhue 1995b). They probably emigrated from northeastern Chad, fleeing the tribal wars between the kingdoms of the Baguirmi and the Bornou (Seignobos 1982).

The hutshells were always very slender, up to five metres in diameter and eight metres high. One of the reasons for this height could be the absence of other building materials in the region. Only earthen clay was available in sufficient quantities. As expert potters, the Mousgoums decided to build their huts using the same shaping techniques. But in using this technique, the hut could only be closed up gradually and thus they had to go up very high.

FIGURE 92
Plastering a newly-built hut.

FIGURE 93 (top)
The mouldings provide permanent foot- and hand-holds.

FIGURE 94 (bottom)
Building one of the last courses.

FIGURE 95 (above) Small balls of clay are tossed to the builder.

FIGURE 96 (top right) The final stage in the construction of a compound.

FIGURE 97 (bottom right) Carrying out the maintenance work of replastering.

Despite its apparent simplicity, this type of hut satisfied many needs in a judicious and economical fashion, and also helped confront very serious problems. First of all, in this part of the Sahel where forest fires are frequent in the dry season, protection against fire would have been a major concern, as well as protection against raids from marauding tribes. Designed in this way, the Mousgoum villages could be mistaken for termite hills and therefore not attract any attention. The height was also beneficial, as the least movement from far away could be espied by climbing to the top. Warning messages using a large animal horn could also be sent from one village to another. Finally, the top of the hut always had an opening which enabled smoke (from cooking or heating) to escape and helped regulate ventilation. If it rained, this opening was closed with a 'hat' made from basketwork to protect the inside.

Making the most of these benefits, the mouldings (which are used when the hut is being built and maintained as we shall see later) enabled people to climb to the top of the hut. This was made easier by using a rope that was permanently anchored around the small opening on the roof.

The steps preceding hut construction

Before beginning the building work, the family and the builder agreed on the number of huts required. This process took into consideration the family's importance, the number of cattle the family owned, and their ability to undertake regular maintenance work. This approach gave rise to a consistent conception of how the lot would develop; it provided consistency in dealing with the territory around, in integrating family practices and its household economy, and it also reflected the scale and splendour of the setting.

The selection of the building plot was based on the terrain's metaphysical resonance. In effect, a certain number of incantations and requests to the gods[5] were carried out in the middle of the night (close to

FIGURE 98 An abandoned hut reveals the slenderness of the casing.

FIGURE 99 An abandoned compound.

midnight) to ensure the site was not haunted by bad spirits. The soil had to emanate a sense of freshness that symbolized safety and peace with nature. On the contrary, if the land gave out heat, a symbol of disturbance and trouble, it was wise to find another site. In general, the Mousgoums favoured flat land or alluvial terraces to build their huts.

Spatial organization

A plot or concession could include up to fifteen perfectly circular huts. Together the huts also made a circle, the centre of which was flanked by an enormous granary to store the annual millet and sorghum stocks. The building of the granary was the cornerstone of any concession. Around this structure, the interior space was limited by the perimeter, marked out by the circular organization of the hutshells. All the huts were not the same size. The largest huts were used as stables for livestock or bedrooms for women and men. For some people, the huts were connected to smaller ones used as kitchens, sometimes linked together through a transit space called 'Amlaikata'.[6] The Mousgoums always built an Amlaikata without any opening. The darkness inside enabled the inhabitants to hide without the enemy being able to find them, and so to prepare a counterattack. Seen from the outside, this secret space was designed to look like the fencing wall so as not to attract attention.

The remaining space between the central granary and the huts had several zones with different uses. The surveys of the Mousgoums carried out in 1952 by ORSTOM showed zones for men where family councils and initiation rites took place (ORSTOM 1952).[7] There was also a zone for livestock and another where children could play their usual games.

Before being occupied, the huts were always blessed with a sacrificial ritual: the head of the family slaughtered a cow, recovered its blood, and then sprinkled it on the floor of the concession. This represented a way to strengthen the protection of the family environment.

A systematic analysis of the inside of those huts that can still be visited (even those falling into ruin) leads to the following conclusion: the hut has always been arranged to accommodate a bed shaped from earth – with a heating system for very cool weather – and a site for livestock (cows, goats, etc.). Above the entrance doorway, niches are arranged that were beautifully sculpted when the hut was being built in order to store precious possessions (necklaces, money, etc.).

Materials and construction technique

Everyone was involved in building the Mousgoum hutshells. The settlement members (women and men) were responsible for preparing all the material that would be used to build the walls. Only the experts with inherent know-how were responsible for building the walls, thereby making sure they would be solid. As in the building of the potteries and the granaries, the hutshell was built using successive unbaked layers; it had to ensure a minimum of durability and especially be able to withstand the rainwater. Thus, quality materials were required, and it was vital to choose appropriate materials and to prepare them meticulously.

The materials were collected from the surrounding area, namely clay, a special grass called *Sousouki* in the Mousgoum language,[8] and goat dung. The preparation of the mud to build the walls was done very carefully. Spread into five or six small heaps, the fresh earth was wet and kneaded until a paste-like consistency was obtained. Once this was finished, the heaps were mixed with goat dung and grass that had been cut up neatly beforehand in cuisine style. The whole mix was then watered and mixed again until a homogenous mix was obtained. It was usual to let this last mix macerate for seven to eight days, humidifying it from time to time. The dark colour of the mix and the strong odour it gave off indicated that the mixture was ready to use.

One way to check if the preparation had been correctly mixed was to check that the straw was almost invisible.

The technique for building the hutshell can be summarized thus: armed only with a hoe, a rope and a calabash, the builder began by cleaning the ground; then he traced out the hut's circumference; a shallow foundation about 15 cm deep was dug to prepare the wall erection; the material used in the foundation was similar to the one used to build the wall.

From the early stages of building, the work to shape the wall was carried out regularly and precisely. More often than not, the builder was helped by one or more assistants.[9] Their job was to prepare the layer by placing balls of earth on the previous layer and to ensure that the calabash was always full of water so that the paste could be humidified when it became difficult to mix. The builder then began to smooth and stretch out the balls of earth so they would stick together well. It was advised to build up one layer by day and to let it dry for at least twenty-four hours. The layers shaped in this way had to be of a certain thickness, height and slope to match the particular shape of the section at the given height.

At its base, the wall was 15 to 25 cm thick. As the building was taken up and as the hut began to close up into a vault that only the builder could check, this thickness progressively decreased to only 5 to 8 cm at the peak of the roof.

As soon as the walls were about two metres high, the builder had to start creating the moulds,[10] which he could use as scaffolding when building the upper parts and sections. They were made in two main steps: the tracing of the outline and the definitive shape.

During construction, the door consisted of a minuscule opening that was only enough to mark its final position. Once the building was finished, the builder widened and then strengthened this small opening until a large door emerged that was flared towards the top to satisfy two constraints: on the one hand, to allow the cows to sleep in the huts and, on the other, to provide some form of protection (Goodhue 1995a).

Conservation of the Mousgoum huts

Three months of annual rains in the region take an inevitable toll on the progressive erosion of the Mousgoum huts. The masons recommend three measures to prevent a hut from suffering severe degradation: a precise curvature and slanting of the hut, special care in building the moulds, and annual maintenance of the outside.

A precise slanting of the walls

To resist the effects of rainwater, the hut must have a slope that only a trained builder could determine. As the hut went up, its slant became more pronounced until the hut closed up on itself again. It was important to build up a slant from the bottom which would limit the direct impact of rain on the wall and favour drainage to the ground.

The role of the moulds

Two types of mould design are present in the Mousgoum hutshells: the *mourla* type which are perfectly upright, and the *gaya* type with an upside down Y-shaped mould. Set out on alternate lines around the hut, they did not have the ornamental role one would assume. In a very elegant way, they strengthened the hut structure and more importantly helped to brake and fan out the rainwater evenly from the top to the bottom, thereby limiting wall grooving. Hence their shape needed to be very accurate and they had to be built very thoroughly. The moulds were also used to ensure permanent access to the whole surface area of the hut and to carry out regular maintenance.

Regular maintenance

Women were in charge of maintenance. When it was deemed necessary, a protective sealant coating was applied just before the rainy season began. Using earth from the banks of the Longone River, the women had to prepare a fine earthen paste mixed with cow dung. When the walls were very damaged, they added fish oil.

Even if the inside did not necessarily need work, they would touch up the decorations damaged by the animals. They used the same sealing mixture as for the outside. The colours were obtained with quinqueliba leaves, white clay, ash or even slag. Since the floor was constructed with two layers,[11] only the surface was touched up, using a smooth mixture of fine earth from Logone mixed with fish oil.

The need for more research

The conservation of the Mousgoum hutshells was a phenomenon that neatly reflects the living dimension of the surrounding territory, its constraints, physical and human potential, but also its threats. It was part of a structure in which animist beliefs and ritual practices played an essential role in maintaining social equilibrium.

While we may rue the progressive disappearance of the Mousgoums huts today, it seems very difficult to halt it. According to anthropologist Dana Goodhue, this progressive disappearance can be explained by several causes related to the Mousgoums' requirements for modernity and conformism. She wrote (1995a) that:

'Towards the 1940s, the colonial administration strengthened the power of the traditional heads as the tribal wars were disappearing. Thus, the population abandoned building the hutshells on the one hand because fortresses were no longer necessary and on the other because the Mousgoum started to emigrate in order not to pay colonial taxes. The concessions were then abandoned when the elders died and new ones were not built anymore… Besides, toward the 1960s, speculative monoculture, encouraged by the Cameroonian government, was favoured by the Mousgoums because it made money. Hence they did not have any more time to build new huts. The Mousgoums also wanted to live in new huts, wishing to imitate the models they had seen with the colonialists, the Muslims who converted them or the other ethnic groups during the migrations.'

It appears clear that the technical and organizational aspects of the hutshell conservation were perfectly controlled and integrated into the physical and sociocultural context of the region and that the reasons for its loss lie elsewhere. Besides the historical and cultural interest of these huts, it is important to realize that we are faced with authentic technical prowess. The result is simple but above all aesthetic, and can address many needs. It is a lesson in architecture and construction with full respect for the environment. All these considerations facilitate conservation. Beyond the physical conservation of the few remaining huts, it appears that their conservation in good condition depends more on preserving know-how and knowledge. This obviously involves carrying out more research and collecting (from various sources) information from the elders and above all from the last repositories of know-how, and on the consideration of sustainable activities to enable this know-how to be conserved in the long term.

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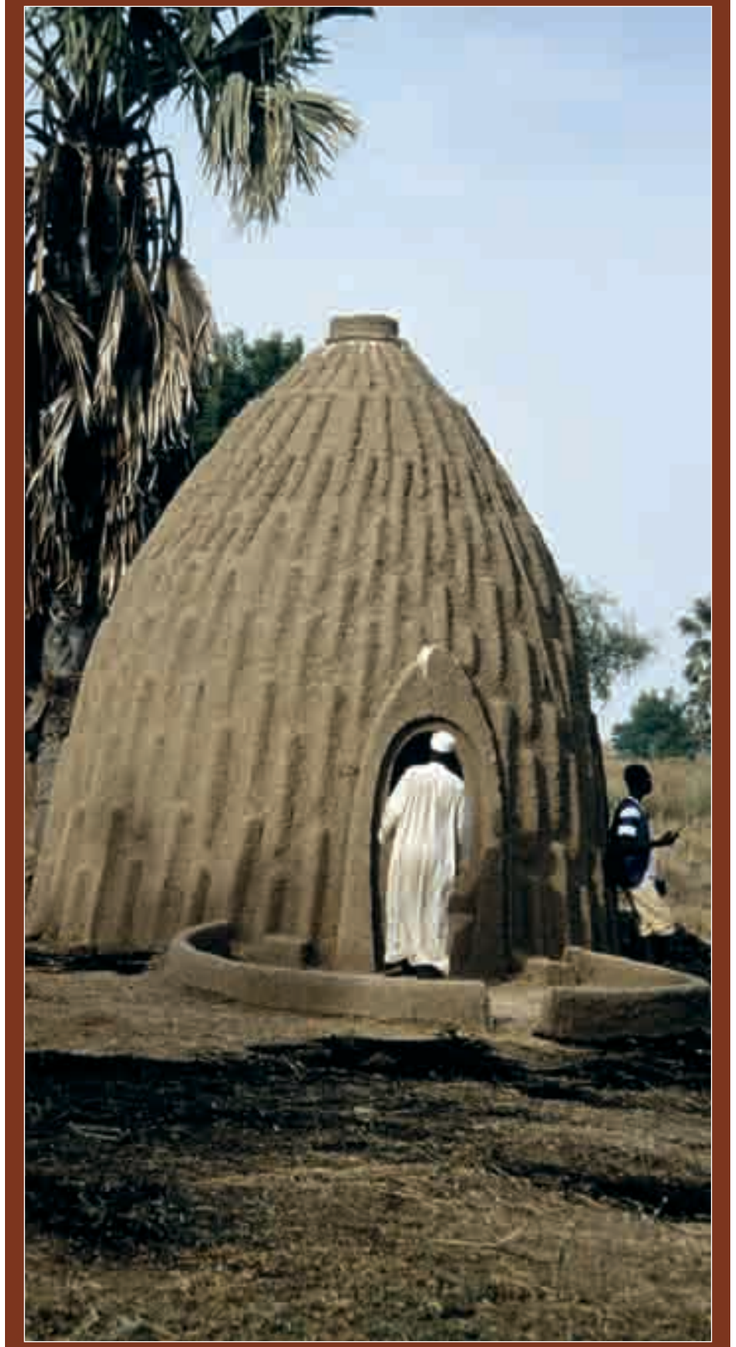


FIGURE 100 A single hut, the start of a compound.

Endnotes

[1] Maga is one of the administrative districts within the Department of Mayo-Danaye, and is located 90 km from Maroua, the administrative capital of the Far Northern Province.
[2] According to the translation by Paul Ithier in 1861 of Barth, *Voyages et découvertes dans l'Afrique Septentrionale et Centrale pendant les années 1849*.
[3] This refers to the ruins of the household of Mr Azao, recently deceased, at Mourla, and the ruins of the 'Semry Camp' at Maga.
[4] The first survey was carried out in October 1995, within the framework of a voluntary mission carried out by the organization *Heritage without Frontiers*.
[5] The Mousgams have five nature gods: *Aloa*, the creator of the world; *Zigla*, the god of fertility; *Math*, the god of woods; and *Mana* and *Gangang*, gods of water.
[6] *Amlakata* in the Mousgoum language has the meaning of a secret room.
[7] The initiation rites consist of teaching the young men the secret language of the adults, the art of warfare, how to fish and hunt. The concluding rite was circumcision.
[8] This grass, also known as *Moumouss*, is a fine short grass which occurs naturally. It is recognisable in the dry season by its reddish colour.
[9] Most frequently, the assistants would be members of the family owning the concession
[10] Called *Azi* in the Mousgoum language.
[11] The first layer was in the same material as that used for the walls; the second layer was clay from the riverbank, and needed crushing before use.

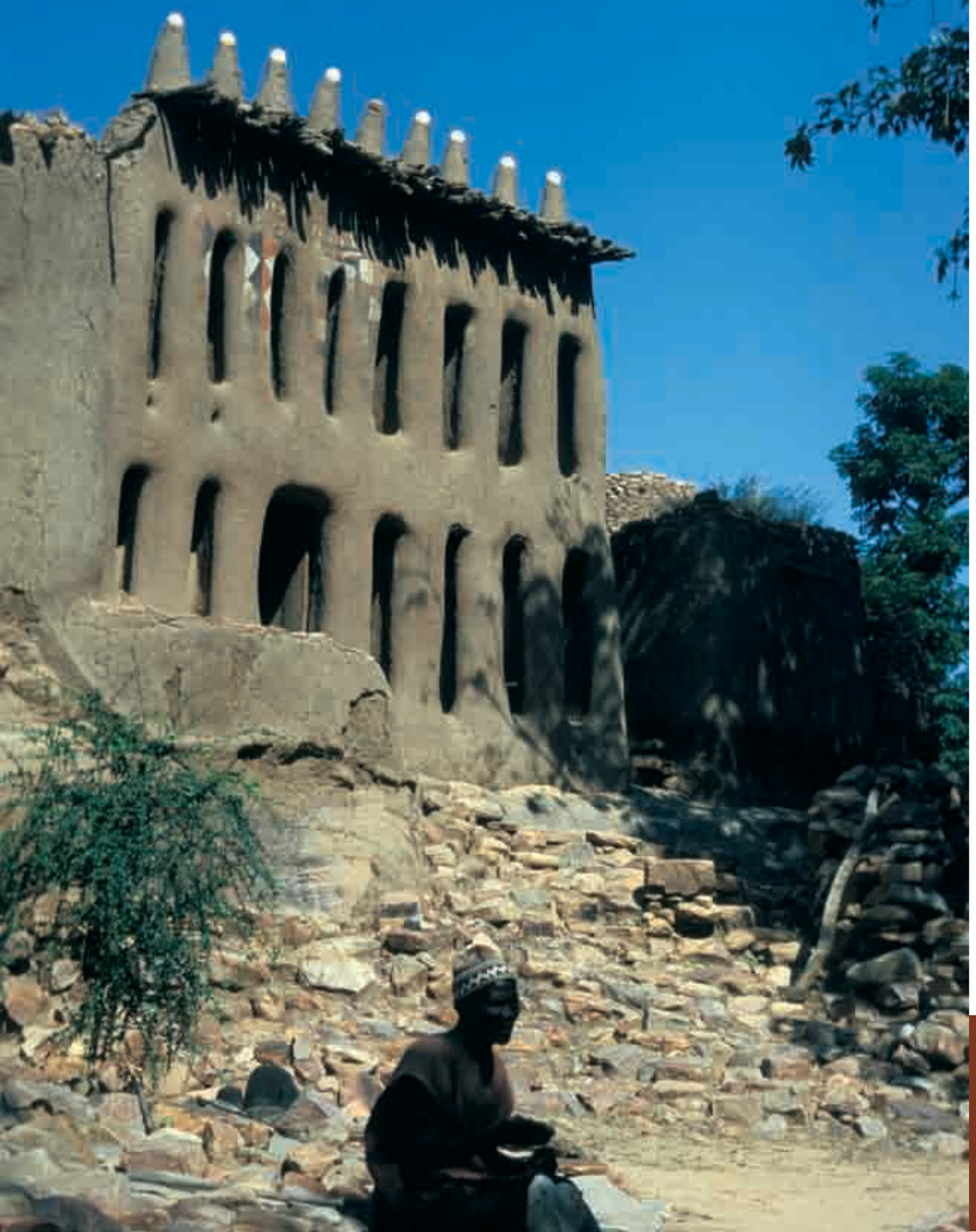


FIGURE 101
The Dojon in front of the temple.

LASSANA CISSE, Chief of the Cultural Mission of Bandiagara

13. The annual festival of the Bulo of Arou

THE ROLE OF CEREMONIES, RITUALS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS IN THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF DOGON CULTURAL HERITAGE

Arou is a revered place of history, worship and power for the Dogon people. Its name is often associated with Dogon myths, and it is therefore an important centre of Dogon mythology and cosmogony of which the Hogon temple is an important physical manifestation.

Arou itself is located in an area of cliffs in the northeast of Mali, about eight kilometres from of Sangha, close to Kundu. It has been a celebrated religious area since the long and difficult migration of the Dogon-Mande in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries AD. The locality was densely populated, but since the region was pacified following French colonial occupation at the end of the nineteenth century, migration to the fertile plains of the Bombu has emptied it of inhabitants. Currently, only the Hogon, the temple guardian, and the Kajane, the chief sacrificer, live there together with their families.

Arou is one of the three (or four) clan groups which swarmed into the area that became the present-day territory of the Dogon. These groups were the Dyon, the Domno-Omno and the Arou. Villages or village districts such as Yougo Dogorous, Yougo Piri, Tyiogou, Dyamini, Madougou, Pegue, Tereli, and Nomboris are all populated by direct descendants of the Arou clan.

According to local oral traditions and some written sources, the magico-religious power and importance of Arou ritual heritage are famous and well spread:

'As for the current supremacy of the Hogon of Arou, it is attributed to his exceptional mastery of magic, a necessarily ambivalent practice which is difficult to separate from sorcery; this does not mean that the Hogon of Arou is presumed to be a sorcerer; he is simply supposed to have sufficiently powerful 'magical resources' to display and exercise his authority over the whole Dogon region' (CNRS 1993).

To this end, Arou and its sanctuary of the Lebe is an important temporal centre for Dogon mythico-religious symbols and cosmogony.

The Temple of Arou is above all the place of worship of the Lewe or Lebe, which is directly linked to the Hogon as its unique priest.

'Lebe is the oldest ancestor mentioned in Dogon mythology, he is said to be the first who died in human shape… Transformed into a snake, he followed his descendants in the migration that drove them to the cliffs of Bandiagara… Every year, the most important moment of the seedtime festival is when the Hogon, guardian of the cult and leading member and head of the community, offers in the name of all present a sacrifice on the altar of Lebe, evoking the ancestor who died first but came back to life, just as plants die each year to be reborn at the end of winter with the arrival of the first rains.' (Paulme 1940)

The sanctuary has existed since the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, following the cliff region's occupation by the Dogons. Arou was at that time a vital decision-making centre in the social, religious,

FIGURE 102 (top) The Arou Valley, with the temple on the hill to the left.

FIGURE 103 (bottom) Eastern elevation of the temple (from W. Schijns).

economic and political life of the various Dogon communities living in the region, owing to the presence of the Hogon, a highly-respected religious dignitary of long standing.

The Temple of Arou is one of the rare intact examples of traditional Dogon religious architecture. It is above all an imposing building, both in its original architectural style and for its spiritual and cultural value for many Dogon communities. For this reason, for centuries the monument has been the object of annual conservation work during the ceremonies and rituals linked to the festival of the Bulo (seed-time festival), which reunites all descendants of the Arou clan. The Bulo is part of a series of traditional agrarian ceremonies concerned with the fertility of the land that take place across the entire Dogon territory.

The ritual ceremonies of the Bulo take place in stages and last not less than three days: the ancestral ceremony of offerings to the altars of Amma and the totemic sanctuaries (binu); clay roughcasting on the large temple and touching up the traditional totemic drawings; the celebration of the seed-time festival (bulo or bulu) with chants and dancing in the temple courtyard, during which all the dignitaries and traditional heads greet the Hogon; and the gathering together of all members for a mutual blessing for a good rain season and bountiful harvests.

Description of the Temple of Arou

Built on a rocky spur in the centre of the cliffs more than four hundred metres high, the Temple of Arou, or House of the Hogon, is an exceptional architectural jewel. It is built in the traditional style of the gin'na Dogon (large lineage houses), with façades covered with square or rectangular niches according to the cultural area. It stands more than four metres high, and is flanked by nine conical pillars covered with ostrich eggs.

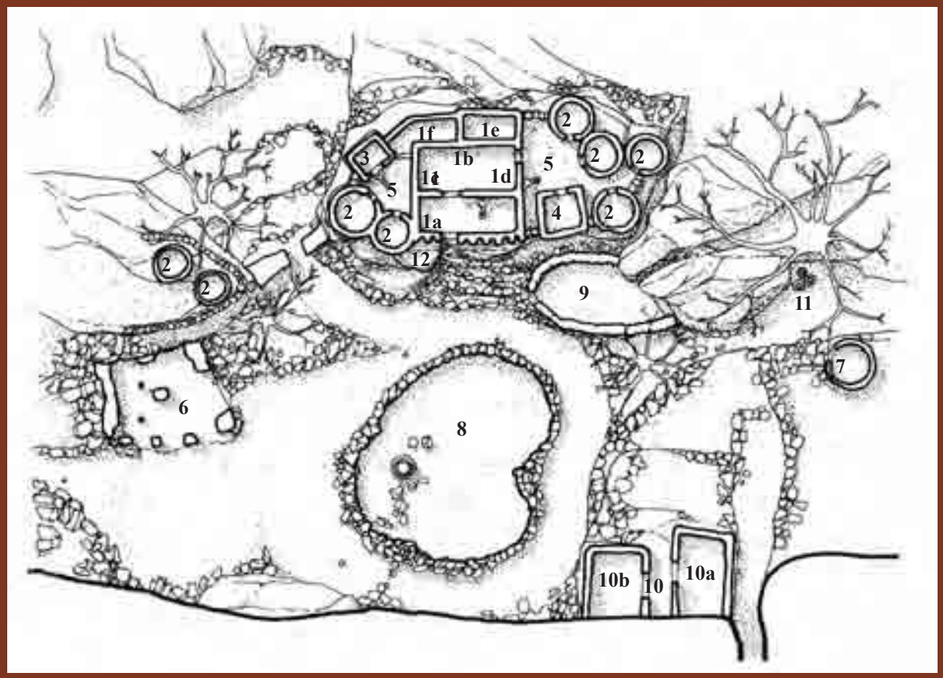
'The general shape of the home recalls the arch of *Nommo*, in the shape of a upturned basket, *tadu*, the terrace being noticeably squared off and the home rounded (with the exception of the façade). The grooves of the façade recall the arch's compartments, everything they contained, and which flowed onto the Earth. The nine pillars, *arsobo*, that rise above it are the eight seeds of cereal and the calabash tree, created in heaven by *Amma* as well as the stars of the Pleiades that are its celestial symbol. These pillars are covered with ostrich eggs which represent the 'egg of *Amma*', namely the breast where the Creator created the universe' (Dieterlen 1982: 45).

Stone and clay were used to build the temple. A platform is located next to the main entrance gateway facing east. This is reserved for the Hogon during large audiences, for his rest time or for certain solemn ritual ceremonies. Millet storehouses are built all around the building, as well as a sheep enclosure (the sheep are generally offered for ritual sacrifices). On the southeastern side of the temple, a circular *toguna* (house of words) is available for the dignitary and his main counsellors.

There are other buildings in the vicinity of the temple; most are sanctuaries (binu) that shelter ritual objects and material or dwellings.

Every year during the feast of Bulo, which takes place on the sixth moon of the year, the main façade of the temple is roughcast with clay. The trichromatic totem-like drawings representing the world system, are also touched up using the traditional colours of ochre red, coal black, and white from crushed local rice.

1 Hogon's house (ginna)
1a entrance (day)
1b space reserved for the hogon (de bere)
1c sleeping quarters of the hogon's wife
1d sleeping quarters of the hogon
1e warehouse (kana)
1f veranda
2 circular granary
3 fetish house
4 kitchen (obolo)
5 patio (gonno)
6 council house (togu na)
7 chicken house (ene ginu)
8 pool/dancing area (tay)
9 enclosure for animals (belu)
10 host's room (dunoy)
10a sleeping space
10b kitchen (obolo)
11 wooden mortars (kuna)
12 altar



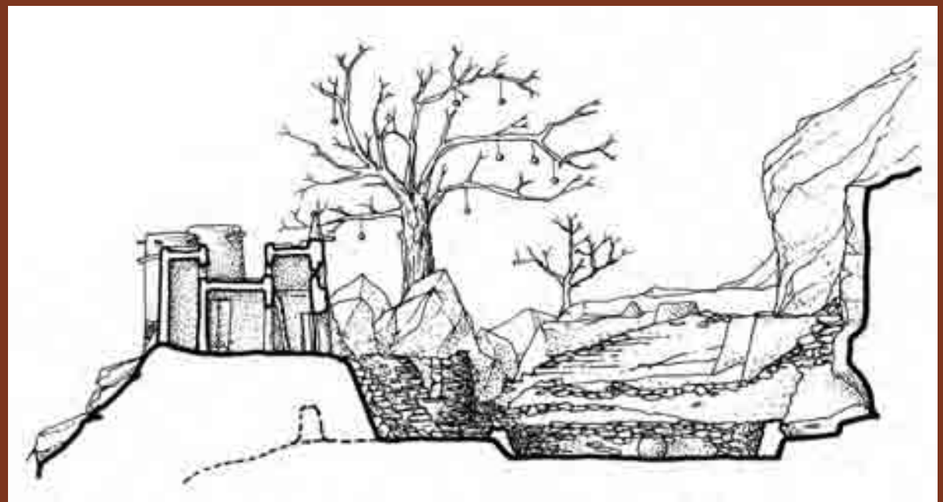


FIGURE 104
Plan and elevation of the temple.

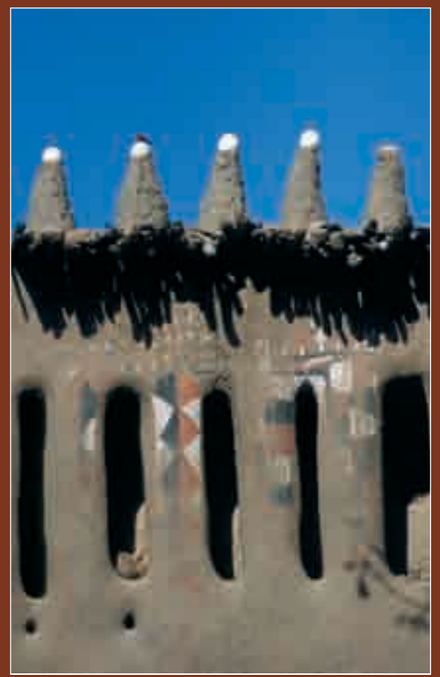


FIGURE 105 (top left) The faded paintings before repair.

FIGURE 106 (top right) The temple, with the area for dancing in the foreground.

FIGURE 107 (right) The paintings being repaired during the third day of the Feast of Bulo.

'The façade of the Hogon's house is almost completely covered with figures called *tonyu lelemu*, 'varied schemes', a term given to colour drawings. They are touched up every year before the ceremonies preceding the seed harvests. The three colours – black, white and red –in these drawings denote three of the four elements, water, air and fire respectively. The earth element is represented by the rock facade itself' (Dieterlen 1982: 49).

Development of the ritual Bulo ceremony of Arou

'The rituals start with a sacrifice carried out by the assistant of the priest Mangara, offered by all members of the Nommo 'maritime' clan. On this day, the date of the main ceremony is decided following a divinatory sitting' (ibid. 91).

The yearly seeding feast in Arou can be viewed from three different but interrelated perspectives:

- the ceremonial and ritual dimension, as illustrated by numerous sacrifices performed on the eight family altars (*vageu*), and within the main Arou sanctuaries (Mana-ama, Mangara, Lebe, etc.);
- the material dimension, dominated by the maintenance works on the temple and the different binu;
- the immaterial, spiritual and festive dimension, as characterized by numerous prayers, cultural vigils and dances, led by the Hogon and the three *Ogos tem* (Hogon cultic priests).

In 2002, the feast took place from 18 to 21 May. It was a gathering of a relatively large number of participants claiming to be from the Arou clan.

First day of the feast of Bulo

The first day of the Bulo is marked by ceremonies and rituals that take place around the various large idols placed inside the temple and in important sanctuaries such as *Mana-amas* and *Lebes*. The sacrificer slaughters sheep on these altars, and anywhere else where purification is needed, in order to ensure the rain necessary for germination.

These various places of worship are supposed to protect the whole community, and the sacrifices that take place are aimed at obtaining the protection of deceased ancestors for good harvests and plant regeneration.

The different sacrificial offerings are made by the three 'Ogos tem' (*Ogogene*, *Ogopani* and *Ogonkongo*) in several places inside and around the temple. Millet mush and animals (sheep, goats and chickens) generally constitute the two types of sacrifice offered.

On the same day, young members of the Arou clan come from several localities (often more than forty kilometres from the temple site). They transport clay on their head and lay it at the foot of the Hogon's house. Although located on the plateau of Arou, the clay quarry is quite a distance from the temple.

Second day of the feast of Bulo

From the second day onwards, the temple maintenance works begin in earnest. In the morning, the clay placed at the foot of the temple is kneaded and mixed with straw. Subsequently, the young people begin the roughcasting work under the watchful eye of the adults and religious heads. The plaster covers the whole building but especially the façade, which has to depict all the mythological and cosmological symbols that are important to the Dogons and to the Arou clan.

At the end of work, which continues for the whole morning, the three 'Ogos tem', or sometimes only one of them, proceeds to purify all workers who touched the temple by making them crunch coal.

In the afternoon, other rituals and sacrifices are carried out for the 'vageu' (ancestors) in the main *gin'na* of Arou. These ritual ceremonies are performed by the heads of the eight main families together, or by their representatives.

Third day of the feast of the Bulo

On this day, the trichrome painting resumes on the main façade of the temple. According to informants, this work is traditionally done by descendants of the Arou clan from the village of Neni (the district of Neni-Sese), a cliff area located five kilometres southwest of Arou

The existing paintings have usually been mostly washed away by the rains of the previous season, so local artists carve out a new outline using knives. Then, the young workers repaint the façade using millet ears as paintbrushes. The traditional colours are prepared beforehand and crushed on large millstones in the Hogon's courtyard. The white colour comes from rice that is crushed by the women on a millstone; the red ochre and coal are crushed by the men.

The importance of certain symbolic figures depicted in Dogon mythology and cosmogony in painting should be stressed. Cosmic symbols such as such as the sun, moon and some stars (the Pleiades and Venus most notably) are common; other symbols evoke agriculture and seed-times or the personality of the Hogon (the *Lebe* snake, the headgear of the Hogon, and so on).

On the third day in the afternoon, the main ceremony of the Bulo takes place in the court of the Hogon. This ceremony is attended by the priests, ancestral heads, the griot, and the current members of the three Arou clan sub-groups. In turn, each clan grouping begins a procession accompanied by chants and dancing before entering the temple to enjoy a communal beer with the Hogon. The Hogon ends the feast by throwing ears of millet from the terrace of his home to clan members assembled in the courtyard so that they can mix the grains from the Hogon's storehouse with their own seeds.

'The day after the sacrifice, all ancestral heads and dignitaries attending the ceremonies go to greet the Hogon, who awaits them inside his house. The descendants of the founders of the "Three thresholds of Arou' enter first. The other ancestral heads of each locality enter in turn. When everyone has entered and left, the Hogon's assistants cover the door entrance with a blanket and lay others around the platform. With the *kebele pey* cover on his shoulder, the Hogon is then helped by his assistants to leave the house and sit on his platform. The dignitary offers jars of beer to his visitors. His son goes up on the terrace and throw ears of millet from the field of Lebe, which is then picked up by the assistants. The Hogon thanks all the assistants; one of the assistants starts to speak and asks the Hogon about rain. The latter replies by telling him that everything necessary will be done for there to be rain for everyone and all the fields. He

then grants them wishes of wealth and prosperity' (Dieterlen 1982: 93).

The Bulo ceremonies of May 2002 took place under the authority of the interim Hogon, *Ogo Male*, in power since July 1997 as temporary priest of the temple. A new Hogon cannot be enthroned until the family of the deceased has held his funeral. Until then one member of the family (the brother of the deceased) takes up the interim authority. This funeral has still not taken place as the family has not been able to muster enough resources (financial and material).

The importance of rituals and ceremonies in safeguarding Dogon immovable heritage

According to the example of the Bulo of Arou described above, it is clear that tangible and intangible heritage are inextricably linked for the Dogons. The deterioration of one can entail the irreversible loss of the other. Just as nature and culture are dialectically interlinked, the immaterial very often issues from tangible and physical phenomena, serving as a guide to understanding and interpreting the world around.

These philosophical and religious considerations endow Dogon heritage with a conservation dynamic that is well anchored within man. It is one of the essential endogenous measures that has allowed Dogon culture to preserve its fundamental cultural values compared with cultures or ethnic groups in Mali and in sub-Saharan Africa that have left hardly any traces behind.

Several ritual ceremonies regularly take place in Dogon areas; their cyclical natures means they contribute effectively to preserving a category of immovable heritage (sanctuaries, *gin'na*, altars and millet storehouses).

The conservation of these ancestral practices and their transmission from generation to generation through the organization of ceremonies and religious traditions is a sure and lasting way to protect endangered physical heritage. Nowadays, this heritage bends but does not break under the weight of the irresistible sociocultural changes brought about by globalization. In some parts of the Dogon region, the heritage (tangible and intangible) still resists imported monotheistic religions such as Islam and Christianity.

The Cultural Mission of Bandiagara is keenly following the perpetuation of these social and religious traditions and genuinely believes that they constitute the cornerstones of sharing communal responsibility for the general conservation of cultural heritage. Current and future generations will certainly be able to re-appropriate this rich Dogon immovable heritage while granting full importance to the maintenance of rituals and ceremonies inherited from their forebears.

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FIGURE 108 (above)
The Hojon, Ogo Male, has been acting priest of the temple since 1977.

FIGURE 109 (top right)
The 'Toguna' in the temple complex.

FIGURE 110 (right)
One of the villages located close to the temple.

FIGURE 111
The interior of one main gate to Thimlich Ohinga.

ISAYA O. ONJALA, Architect, National Museums of Kenya
EPHRAIM K. KAMARU, Research scientist, National Museums of Kenya

14. Thimlich Ohinga

TRADITIONAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Thimlich Ohinga site is situated in Nyanza Province of Kenya, some 181 km south of the city of Kisumu. It occupies a gently sloping hill located 46 km northwest of Migori town, the nearest large urban centre. Accessibility to the site is through either Migori or Homa Bay, another town some 54 km to the north of the site. Fig. 113 shows the location of this site, referred to in this article as a 'cultural landscape'.

The cultural landscape is a fourteenth-century stone-built complex representing a tradition of stone wall construction that characterized the early settlement of the Lake Victoria Basin. The site covers a total of 52 acres of land surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. One entrance to the northwest provides the only point of entry.

The site contains monuments consisting of circular dry-stone walls spread over the hill (Fig. 115). The main enclosure (also known as Kochieng), the Blacksmith and the Kakuku enclosures share a common wall. These represent extensions of the main enclosure during phases of population pressure. The two extensions, however, stand as individual enclosures. Three other large enclosures are located further uphill and, together with their extensions, extend over large areas, particularly towards the eastern part of the hill.

Within the structures are smaller enclosures that were probably used as cattle kraals. The main enclosure has six of these while the others have at least one. There are also a couple of small circular walls, the function of which archaeologists have yet to determine. In addition to the kraals, the enclosures also contain external support ramps and buttresses against the walls. Within the enclosures are depressions that archaeologists have identified as house pits. The majority of these are found in the main enclosure, which seems to have been recently occupied. Between the enclosures are passageways and corridors lined with low walls of stone. Some of these have been reconstructed during the on-going conservation work at the site. A designated industrial area lies just outside the northern wall of the main enclosure. Here, iron smelting and working took place, as indicated by the presence of a furnace area containing smooth stones that are the result of iron shaping. Pieces of tuyere litter the area and there is also a mound of iron slag, refuse and pottery. An ancient version of the game known today as *Bao* was also found carved on a rock nearby, and could indicate that the area was equally used for leisure activities.

With respect to building methods (Onjala 1990), the walls have an outer and inner face of neatly arranged stones of all shapes and sizes and a core of smaller stones. They do not exhibit any clear coursing, as is common in modern stone walls or buildings. Stones were placed in an interlocking system that enhanced overall stability, without any bonding mortar or cement. The walls range in height from 1.5 m to 4.2 m, with an average thickness of about 1 m. The thickness of the walls increases at the entrances to about 2 – 3 three metres and rectangular slabs were used in the construction, improving stability at these much-used points.

The entrances measure about 1 m by 1.5 m (Fig. 111). The main enclosure has three entrances. Kakuku, adjoining the main enclosure, has one beautifully preserved entrance with engravings on the external stonework. The adjoining Blacksmith Enclosure had two blocked entrances facing east that have been restored. Several of the uphill enclosures have had their entrances opened as well. There are buttresses in the wall, and other features associated with the entrances, such as ledges high up in the interior stonework that might have served as watch-

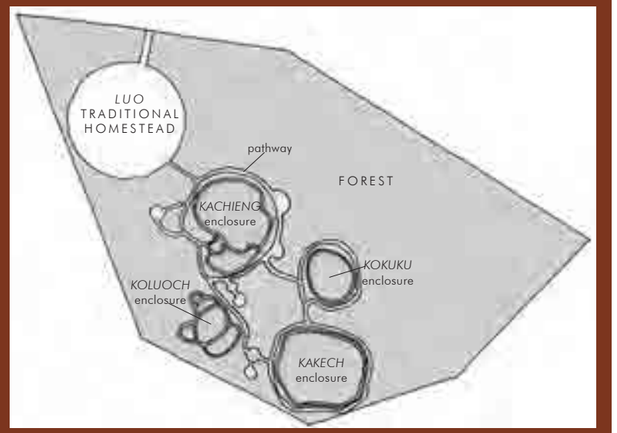

FIGURE 112 (top left) The main gate, with large slabs used for the lintel.

FIGURE 113 (bottom left) One of the enclosure walls.

FIGURE 114 (top right) Plan of Thimlich Ohinga.

stations. These are large enough to take a single seated or standing person.

The description of the site is not complete without a mention of the traditional Luo homestead that was constructed in the early 1980s as an exhibition. This has the first wife's house facing the entrance to the homestead, with houses for the second and third wives on each side. Towards the gate are the houses (simba) for the sons, a cattle kraal, and a food storage area or granary (dero) at the centre. About twenty metres from the homestead is the new facility, the ticket office, located at the entrance to the cultural landscape. The ticket office serves both as information centre and ticket sales point.

The magnificence and layout of the site leads to the question of how it was used. The general aspect points to uses that went beyond the confines of the current boundaries of the site. In its construction, the political and population movements of the time built it as a village complex: a home to the earliest settlers who later spread to the other parts of the region. As a village complex with a single leadership, it probably became a centre from which territorial conquests into neighbouring areas were conducted. It also developed as an administrative centre where leadership consultations and labour organizations were carried out. Magic, which was an important element of the leadership at the time, was also centred on this site. Other important activities also took place here such as the exchange of goods and trade, organization and control of agricultural activities including animal husbandry, the offering of sacrifices and prayers to the supreme beings, co-ordination and settling of new immigrants and the manufacturing of required goods. Elements of these activities are archaeologically visible. The site therefore functioned as a small urban centre, combining administrative, social welfare and economic activities or functions. The functions were repetitive until the last groups occupying the site broke from the traditions when colonial rule interfered with much of the traditional patterns. The abandonment of the site then became inevitable, leaving it as a place for occasional visits to communicate with the ancestral spirits. By the time the Government of Kenya took over the management of the site in 1983, the use of the site had changed, with it existing only as a link between the surrounding communities and the powerful and innovative past that created the monuments. This link makes all the communities within the surrounding areas claim ownership; all feel a sense of belonging to the site and its history. However, the National Museums of Kenya (NMK), acting for the Government of Kenya, is the current legally recognized owner of the site under the Antiquities and Monuments Act CAP 215 of the Laws of Kenya.

History of the settlement

The history of the site goes back 500 years (Wandibba 1986, Onjala 1990). Oral tradition mentions early Bantu groups, including the Wagire and Kamageta, as some of the site's occupants. This pushes back the date of construction and occupation of the site to between 1590 and 1680, when such groups are known to have settled the southwestern Kenya Lake Victoria region (Ayot 1979). These dates also correspond to Carbon-14 dates of 110±80 and 200±80 BP on charcoal samples from Thimlich, which when calibrated give us a long possible range of c. 1650 to 1900 AD (Wandibba 1986).

According to oral traditions (Ayot 1979; Onjala 1990), successive occupation by different groups has been the norm at the site. Its history is characterized by periodic occupation and out-migration until it was finally abandoned in the early twentieth century. By the time the Nilotic Kabuoch-Kachieng group took over some time after 1688, mainly Bantu groups occupied the site. The newcomers expanded the existing structures and built others further uphill. On hearing of prospects of better land elsewhere, this group later moved away. The site then fell into the hands of the Kanyamkago people led by Chief Ndisio, who was a magician, as they expanded their territory southwards. They eventually became established across River Kuja some 20 km away. Here, Ndisio established his headquarters and controlled much of the region that included the Thimlich area. The control of such a wide territory, especially land across the mighty River Kuja, could not be sustained for long and soon the coveted settlement site of Thimlich fell into the hands of the Kadem people, another group that was also expanding southwards from their Raguda settlement in the present-day Karungu region. For reasons that are not clear, the Kadem people later handed over the site to the Kanyamwa people who remained there until the beginning of twentieth century. While not living on the site after this period, they continued to use it for various other purposes.

Throughout the periods of occupation, the site experienced modification in terms of additional walls, repairs and general maintenance. Additional structures were constructed uphill. These were mainly built by the Kabuoch-Kachieng' people. The main enclosure has a demolished wall on the northern side where an extension was built, probably as a response to an increasing population. Enclosures to the main one, especially to the northeast, were also constructed to meet this particular need.

Complete abandonment of the site occurred in the early twentieth century. There was no further active occupation within the enclosures. Families that lived nearby continued to use land within the enclosures for livestock grazing and cultivation. This period coincided with the end of inter-clan conflicts and land acquisition demands. There were no major population movements across the land in the region. People opted for smaller or individual open settlements as the area also became free of dangerous wild animals. But perhaps more important is the fact that after World War I (1914-1918) and the establishment of British colonial rule, there was a breakdown of the traditional systems and family lineage ties upon which the maintenance and sustenance of the complex depended. It was no longer possible to construct or maintain such massive stone structures. The site fell into decay and only survived the threats of time because of its unique in-built stability and favouring traditions of the communities living around it. It has survived and become a world-recognized cultural heritage site.

Conservation Practices

In gathering information on the traditional conservation practices at Thimlich, a number of resources were used. These included oral traditions recorded by past researchers (Ayot 1979; Onjala 1990) and verbatim oral narrations about the building process, uses, the attached belief systems and maintenance practices by surviving elders who saw or were in touch with those who lived during the occupation of the site. Information was also obtained from ethnographic analogies where a number of southwestern Kenya residents continue to use similar architectural styles for enclosures within

their homesteads, especially as cattle pens. These use similar principles of construction and maintenance and therefore form a bridge to the past which we exploited in order to recreate past activities that took place at Thimlich. Apart from these sources, the results of the African 2009 Projets situès in other parts of the continent have also been taken into account. Examples of conservation practices, and the methods applied in recreating life in such sites, inspired us to do the same at Thimlich. After the Africa 2009 training session which took place in Mombasa, Kenya, in 1999, plans to conserve Thimlich were put in place. Traditional masons were located, interviewed and hired to start the process. They were involved in the conservation work that took place between 2000 and 2002, resulting in the restoration of the walls and other features at the site. A the same time, information was also gathered on aspects of community life, including the decision-making process, belief systems, and on construction and maintenance.

Traditional conservation practices seem to have been embedded within a complex social system of behaviour that defined society. The site, particularly the walls, formed part of the society, without which disintegration and outside attack was seen as inevitable. This led to the establishment of prohibitive and taboo systems that became part of the invisible laws that protected the site and its walls. The whole village complex was considered feminine, playing the motherly role of providing the needs of the people. The walls, however, were seen as masculine and played the role of protection. They were thus not to be interfered with or destroyed in any way. The chief or elders of the communities at the site had the responsibility of ensuring and protecting this position. To do this, there were rules, prohibitions and taboos that ensured the well-being of the walls. These included, but were not limited to i) awareness of the sanctity of the walls which was to be respected by all, ii) tales and proverbs told mainly to children to discourage interference with the built structures, iii) stipulated punishment and or curses for those interfering with the walls, iv) entry through designated points only, and v) the responsibility of each resident to guide visitors and enlighten them about the rules ensuring non-destructive behaviour towards the complex.

Like other built structures such as houses and shrines, walls within the site were believed to be a link with the ancestral spirits. This knowledge made all the occupants respect the walls and avoid any activity that would destroy them. This respect helped protect the site even after it was completely abandoned during the early twentieth century. It is taboo to destroy on purpose an old homestead or house. In the case of the walls, any direct interaction was avoided to minimize chances of interference that could cause destruction. Interaction was mainly at the permissible points, such as the gates, and with permission from the elders who also acted as a link between the people and the spirit world. Disobeying the rules governing the safety of the walls meant coming face to face with the spirits that lived in and on the walls from where they protected the people. It also meant facing the wrath of the spirits and this is one thing that the people would not want to happen. The belief system played a major role in the protection of the site.

Maintenance and repair of the site's various elements was done through four major stages namely, i) regular inspection and monitoring, ii) assessment of the problem, iii) mobilization of labour and resources, and iv) actual maintenance and repair work. Inspection and monitoring of the walls to identify any threatening problems was the responsibility of all residents. On spotting a problem, a report was made to the chief or the elder(s) who would continue to map out an appropriate action to solve the problem. Such reports were mainly in the form of alerting the authority of a problem, such as a fallen section of the wall or a section that was about to collapse. Inspection and monitoring was also done by the chief himself, as well as the elders at different times. Chiefs took occasional walks around the complex to inspect the condition of the walls along the way. This was a regular practice done at regular intervals in the company of the elders. Such inspection also became mandatory in times of enmity with neighbouring groups who might be planning to attack the settlement. As well as the chief and the council, elders occupying various sections of the complex carried out daily inspections. It was a traditional practice for each elder to wake up early before the others to survey the compound and walls just in case something had occurred during the night. They would also make another inspection in the evening, when they would also close the entrances. This system ensured quick detection of problems with the walls, as well as quick action to sort them out.

Once a problem was spotted and reported to the higher authority, the relevant people converged at the location of the problem to assess it further. This involved looking at the causes of the problem and how to solve it. This stage must have involved seeking advice from experts, mainly the traditional experts within the complex or others who were staying elsewhere if need be. The experts advised on the methods and materials needed to solve the problems without causing further damage to the standing walls and other elements of the site. Proper diagnosis of the problem paved the way for the mobilization of labour

FIGURE 115 The enclosures at Thimlich Ohinga.

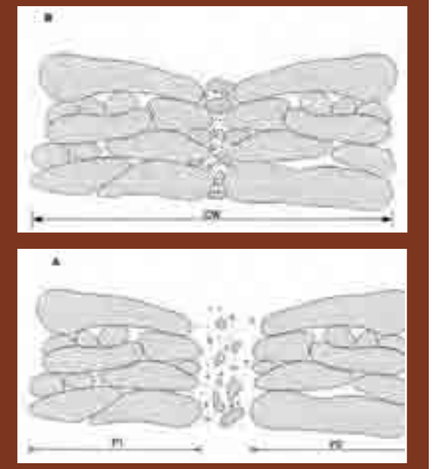

FIGURE 116 Schematic sections showing bonding patterns.

and resources required to perform the maintenance and repair work. This was the responsibility of the elders and, in some cases, the authorization from the chief(s) was required. Playing the role of linking people to the spirit world, the elders had to give authority to the people working on the walls where the spirits lived. Small repairs were done by members of the enclosure affected, using materials from the same portions of the wall that had fallen. Repairs of greater magnitude, however, involved the use of additional materials, mainly stone that had to be transported from distant areas such as from outside the perimeter of the complex. In such cases the elders mobilized labour to collect the material. This was done through traditional work support groups known as *saga*, a system whereby members of the community came together to perform a task for the benefit of the entire community or part of that community. The same system was used in the construction of the stone wall sites. Combined with a call from the chief, which meant a command to perform a task, *saga* groups would quickly assemble and accomplish their task in the shortest time possible.

Actual maintenance and repair work was definitely a community affair. Both men and women participated in *saga* tasks. In cases of fallen walls, men worked on the walls, closely supervised by the experts and elders, while women and younger men transported or supplied the required building materials at respective points. Older women prepared food, which was consumed at the end of the day and followed by the drinking of traditional beer. *Nyuka* (a traditional form of porridge made of a mixture of flour and water) was prepared in large quantities and served throughout the working period.

The *saga* system was a cornerstone of the construction of the stone-walled sites, as well as other tasks that required quick action. It was the only quick way to carry out major maintenance and/or repair work and to construct other facilities such as houses and storage facilities. It solved the problem of labour in the construction and maintenance of the massive stone walls, making it possible for both the strong and the weak to enjoy the safety of the high walls around them as well as protecting their property (which included cattle, sheep and goats as well as other domesticates such as dogs, cats and chicken). The system was also used in all extension procedures whenever the site experienced a population increase. The conditioning of most of the elements of the site revolved around the use of the *saga* system as a deeply rooted traditional system. It thrived until the establishment of colonial rule that broke most of the traditional systems and scattered people in all directions.

Organization and Change

The physical layout of the site as illustrated in Fig. 113 reveals a well-organized settlement and society. Oral tradition and archaeological studies indicate that the

FIGURE 117 Unrestored walls.

FIGURE 118 Restored walls.

nature and outlook of the site evolved through time. The main enclosure, which is the earliest within the complex, has played a major role in this evolutionary process. Its high walls, elaborate security details, large number of interior enclosures and spacious compound, within which numerous houses were constructed, indicate the central role this enclosure played. The patterning and the changing face of the entire cultural landscape were most likely monitored from this enclosure.

A number of events characterize and define the history and organization of the site. The first of these is the settling of the region, which caused the emergence of the site some time in the fourteenth century and after (Ayot 1979). This was the result of two major migration episodes, the first of which involved the expansion of Bantu groups from the Southern and Central African region northwards. This saw the occupation of much of the land within the lakes region including Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi and parts of southern Kenya and Uganda. The second episode involved the expansion of the Nilotic groups of people from the north southwards along the Nile Valley. These people settled much of present-day Uganda and eventually moved to Kenya's Nyanza region. This second episode saw the replacement of the Bantu groups with the Nilotic groups within the southwestern Kenya region. It also led to major changes and shifts in the existence of Thimlich as a site. Because of their number, for example, they expanded the settlement and created new elements to meet the population needs.

The arrival of the Nilotic groups also introduced another event that became a common feature at the site. This was the inter-clan rivalry which led to successive occupation of the site by the Kabuoch-Kachieng', Kanyamkago, Kadem and, lastly, Kanyamwa groups. It is this event that saw the site through major changes including expansion and modification of various elements to suit particular needs. It is also this event that led to the preservation of information on various aspects of the site and activities that were carried out at the site. Various groups have memories of how they struggled to gain control of the site and the nearby lands. The leaders, mainly the chiefs, made important decisions that the subjects obediently followed. The high degree of loyalty to the leaders made it easier for the people to carry out major duties and responsibilities.

The third event was the establishment of the colonial rule. As the British established their rule in the nineteenth century, traditional systems collapsed and labour patterns changed as well as family ties. This contributed to the abandonment of the site and the entire tradition of stone wall construction that heavily relied on easily available traditional labour through the *saga* system. The site remained unattended until the NMK took over its management. In 1999 it was recognized internationally by being included in the world's 100 most endangered sites. It received funding from the American Express Company through the World Monuments Watch program for conservation work, which has restored most of the elements of the site that were in the process of deterioration.

The events that characterized the history of the site created a scenario of evolving social, cultural and economic environments. The social environment that can be defined by the aggregation of various groups of people at the site for periods of time changed each time a new group came in. Different groups, population densities and leadership made this inevitable. The demands of the various groups impacted differently on the site, leading to a constantly evolving picture. The cultural environment, on the other hand, changed less since the groups shared similar cultural backgrounds. The introduction of cultural practices such as iron smelting came into existence as the need arose and was carried into the social set-up of all the groups. Both social and cultural environments created a dynamic economic environment that thrived until the site was abandoned. This began with the creation of the site, which meant control of the resources around the site. This further led to the development and control of agricultural areas for both crop and animal husbandry. Additional animals were acquired through links with the Maasai, with whom trade was established. Presence of trade links has been established by the recovery of foreign beads at the site (Wandibba 1986). The site therefore developed as a trading or economic hub, which created a totally different economic environment. It is clear that the dynamics of the social, cultural and economic environments are complex and will be better understood only after research work currently going on at the site is completed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The traditional approaches to conservation of stone wall sites in Kenya's southwest involved complex social behaviour and rules, not all of which have been described in this short paper. Conservation was the responsibility of all members of society. Thus, communities occupying the site seem to have possessed characteristics of both hierarchical and heterarchical societies. The position of chiefs and/or distinct leaders who made important decisions in society classify these groups as hierarchical societies. However, when it came to issues of conservation, the groups behaved as heterarchical societies. A heterarchy system involves a horizontal social differentiation, where each element possesses the potential of being unranked (relative to other elements) or ranked in a number of different ways. Such a system upholds elements of horizontal differentiation as occupational specialists, moieties, sodalities, ethnic groups, city-states and peer polities (Crumley 1979). Heterarchies have many information specialists and this makes it possible to establish a streamlined information network with relatively few major decision-makers at the top. Another important characteristic of heterarchies is that information is not lost or altered from its original form. This is the opposite of what happens in hierarchical societies.

The cornerstone of conservation at Thimlich was the inspection and monitoring of the walls and the relaying of any identified problem to the relevant people. Such information was of signal importance to making sound decisions and judgments in the face of changing social, cultural and economic environments

of the site. There were no monopolies in information management. Information was quickly and horizontally relayed, leading to appropriate responses such as assessing the conservation needs, gathering relevant expertise, labour and resources and eventually executing the task. Limiting bureaucratic behaviour in information management and conservation procedures created an efficient way of maintaining the site complex. This became a key element in the practice throughout the occupation periods.

Monitoring and traditional labour arrangements such as the *saga* system also created efficient and adequate ways of tackling conservation problems. Although labour depended on the loyalty of the subjects to the leadership, more often than not, cooperative action and togetherness compelled people to make themselves available for community work, even in the absence of recognized leaders. This again echoes the characteristics of heterarchical societies. The joint ventures, as became the practice, involved an array of specialists. They provided opportunities to learn some of the skills possessed by such specialists, but not a detailed knowledge. Most of the traditional masons giving advice at the site were the products of this learning system. Its weakness was that there were no clear-cut standards for doing things. Experts worked using methods that were not strictly followed by their students, with the result that most of the experts we have today do things in different ways, even though the end result usually bears the same degree of authenticity. This situation makes it difficult for modern professionals to master the methods used in the traditional conservation. A variety of methods end up creating some confusion and this has magnified the temptation to resort to the use of modern building knowledge. There is a need to synthesize the traditional conservation methods and create a standard way of doing things throughout the process.

The management of the site by the NMK has led to important revelations and links with interested professionals. The site enjoys the protection of the Antiquity and Monuments Act CAP 215 of the Laws of Kenya. This has also allowed for research into different aspects of the site. The results of such researches remain important in defining other activities such as conservation, education programs and the marketing of the site as a world-recognized heritage site. To ensure the success of the activities that have been initiated, the NMK should develop a system of inspection and monitoring in line with the traditional approaches. The workers currently stationed at the site should do this, but with a team of site inspectors that includes trained professionals. The inspectors should have a timetable for their inspections and surveys of the various elements of the site, and act appropriately in tackling any identified problems. The NMK should also establish a conservation unit equipped with resources for conservation work. The inspectors should be part of this unit and together carry out detailed conservation assessment and work on all sites requiring their attention. This unit, in collaboration with researchers, should then help to harmonise the various methods and to develop standards that can be followed by any conservation worker in the modern set-up. This will require training. The NMK in collaboration with international conservation bodies such as UNESCO World Heritage and other partners should make it possible for many young Kenyans to receive such training.

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