

A guide for
African Local Governments

Cultural heritage & local development



Published by
CRATerre-ENSAG / Convention France-UNESCO



ISBN 2-906901-66-6

FAVORING CRAFTSMANSHIP AND INDUSTRIES

100

MALI
FRANCE



A riverine brotherhood: the Niger dugout and the Loire futreau



PRACTICED ON THE NIGER RIVER IN AFRICA or on the Loire river in France, sailing is an irreplaceable heritage associated to a unique traditional know-how, traditional songs and traditional mythologies.

Although still very present on the Niger river, sailing on flat-bottomed dugouts has been progressively replaced, and is at risk today. In France, it has not been practiced since the 1930s. It was brought back during the 1980's and 1990's on the initiative of a group of keenly interested people. It became popular in the year 2000, with the inscription of the Loire Valley on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The similarities in both sailing practices, and the general will to make this traditional heritage last, encouraged a number of associations to create a collective association: "Cousinage the Loire - Niger" in order to establish a programme for the exchange of knowledge between the two countries, Mali and France, more precisely between the area of Mopti and the area of Angers.

This programme was first conceived in 2004, during a series of exchanges and meetings in Mali, on the banks of the Niger river, in the framework of the co-operation programme between Angers and Bamako. The mayors of Mopti and Farimaké expressed their wish to host the festivities related to this cultural exchange. The programme intends to encourage the establishment of an exchange of know-how and techniques between French and Malian woodworkers. It represents the alliance of two approaches in the field of woodwork, through the construction of two traditional boats:

- A "Djénné dugout" (traditional Malian boat) known as the "pinasse".
- A "Fûtreau" (boat from the Loire, featuring a square sail).

The construction of the dugout in France, in June 2006, made it possible for a large audience to discover the Malian techniques of construction, and also the originality of the traditional music of Mopti through the participation of a group of musicians associated with the operation. This first operation also made it possible to reinforce the mobilization and involvement of local French communities around the project. The construction of the "Fûtreau" in Mopti, in 2007, will be the second stage of this project. In parallel, the interactions between Malian and French woodworkers have already generated exchanges on the musical practices, very present in the corporations of navigation, as well as a research program on the mythology of the two rivers and the tales that are associated to them.

<http://www.cousinage-fluvial.org>

