

Forum

Festival on the Niger

Ségou, Thursday January 31, 2008

08h30 in Ségou Town Hall

Contents :

Programme

Concept

Summaries of interventions and of the speakers' CVs.

Programme

- 08h45 – 09h15 :** **Opening**
- 08h45 – 08h55 : Welcome by the Festival Director, Mr Mamou Daffé
- 08h55 – 09h05 : Welcome speech by Segou's governor
- 09h05 – 09h15 : Introduction to the theme by Mr. Ibrahim Maiga, Forum facilitator
- 09h15 – 09h55 :** **Presentations on the first sub-theme: « *Local knowledge in a context of globalisation* »**
- 09h15 – 09h35 : « Ville de Mexique, nombril culturel du monde », by Mr José Luis Cruz
- 09h35 – 09h55 : « The Adobe Renaissance », by Mr. Madani Niang
- 09h55 – 10h25 :** **Discussion on the first sub-theme**
- 10h25 – 10h45 :** **Presentation of the second sub-thème**
- 10h25 – 10h45 : « *Local knowledge as a factor in development of agricultural production and improvement of the GNR* », by Dr Modibo Keita, and Mr. Kô Samaké
- 10h45 – 11h15 :** **Discussion on the second sub-theme**
- 11h15 – 11h45 : Coffee break
- 11h45 – 12h05 :** **Presentation on the third sub -theme : « *Local knowledge and the education system* »**
- 11h45 – 12h05 : « Local knowledge and the Malian education system », by Dr Hamidou Magassa, Mme Catherine Touré and Mr. Denis Dougnon
- 12h05 – 12h35 :** **Discussion on the third sub-theme**
- 12h35 – 13h05 :** **Presentation of the fourth sub-theme : « *Local knowledge and social peace* »**
- 12h35 – 13h05 : « relationships and joking in Malian culture », by Professor Youssouf Tata Cissé
- 13h05 – 13h35 :** **Discussion on the fourth sub-thème**
- 13h35 – 14h00 :** **Closure of the Forum by Mr Ibrahim Maiga, Forum facilitator**

CONCEPT FOR THE SEGOU FORUM , FEBRUARY 2008

Local Knowledge, the Engine of Development

The topic for the 2008 forum concerns “Local Knowledge, the Engine of Development”. Within this concept we will first define what we understand by “development”, and then explain why we think that local knowledge can, or even must, be the engine of this development. After these explanations, we will introduce certain sub-topics, on which we wish to focus at the forum. We are still seeking speakers. Your suggestions will be welcome.

Our definition of Development

Local knowledge and development are, at first sight, two paradoxical concepts; the concept of development generally refers to a concept of modernity whereas that of local knowledge refers rather to tradition.

Examination of these two concepts comes within the prospect for a new approach to “development” which breaks with the traditional approach based on transfer of technology. Without condemning all that is covered by the concept of development, it can be said that for some four decades, the activities and programs around this concept have forged a “specific culture”. This culture is based on a rationalist and technological vision that believes in the monetary economy, the market and in technology which is considered necessary for the welfare of the human race.¹

For us, the concept of development is based on the action of man seeking to improve his living conditions. Consequently it covers all aspects of the needs which, once satisfied, contribute to men’s wellbeing: health, food, habitat, education, environment, etc Of course, the concept of development is a relative one (nothing indicates that Paleolithic mankind felt less happy than their 21st century counterparts), insofar as it is constantly equated with progressive improvement of the socio-economic living conditions of human beings.

The importance of Local Knowledge in the process of Development

Local knowledge is defined by *systems of knowledge specific to each culture or society*. This knowledge constitutes the base of the decision-making process in all the fields and activities which characterize the life of rural communities. Such knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation, and contrasts with the system of modern or scientific knowledge. The terminology can be pejorative, restrictive at the very least, especially when it is opposed to universal knowledge. But the criterion for universality should not be the only criterion for appreciating the efficiency of knowledge. What is essential is that it should occupy the various areas of mankind’s cognitive field. Various reasons, especially historical, sociological, and economic ones, can explain the closed nature of local knowledge, without calling into question its scientific character or effectiveness.

¹ http://www.iim.qc.ca/html/body_glossaire.html

How then can this local knowledge be a factor of development? Developing countries should have a mission to work out for themselves a harmonious and sustainable form of development, built on traditional knowledge which can sometimes offer unexpected answers to certain questioning. But, developing countries should not remain inward-looking or reject modern scientific knowledge. We think it is possible to identify the beneficial aspects of local knowledge as well as those which can be improved through technologies based on science. Local knowledge is complementary to modern science, which often has often showed its limits in solving certain problems of rural development.

To integrate local knowledge in development planning is a first, decisive step towards true development; it emphasizes needs and human resources rather than purely material aspects; it makes possible the adaptation of technology to local needs. To integrate local knowledge in development planning encourages grass roots level communities to draw up the diagnosis of their own situation, raises the level of awareness and leads to well-founded local pride. It involves the recipients and allows for use of local skills in a system of management and monitoring, prevention and feedback. All these positive arguments (in addition to the negative ones, such as the probability of failure if local knowledge is ignored) constitute good reasons to integrate this knowledge into development programs.

Moreover, the success of a development project often depends on local participation. Familiarization with local knowledge facilitates comprehension and communication between development agents and the local population, thus increasing the possibility of an approach to development that is participative and sustainable. Taking local knowledge into account allows project employees and the local population to work as partners in planning and implementing development tasks; it also increases the project's chances of success.

Local Knowledge in the face of history

Even if today more and more people recognize the importance of local knowledge for development, this has not always been the case. In the past, and until a recent date, the essential body of research on local knowledge was carried out by Western social anthropologists. It involved "dilettante" research,, local knowledge being perceived as curiosities, or even relics or superstition. For the dominant development model of the time, i.e. the downward approach of technology transfer, preaching modernization, valid knowledge was only that generated in universities, research stations and laboratories, and then transferred to ignorant villagers and other poor communities.

The knowledge of rural population in this context was perceived as being "primitive", "un-scientific" and "wrong". Formal research was intended to "educate", "direct" and to "transform" the rural communities' strategies of subsistence and production, in order to ensure their "development", i.e. to modernize them. This model of development was unaware of, discredited or generally underestimated local knowledge.

Moreover, XIXth century social sciences were determinant in spreading the idea that human societies could be differentiated on a straight line of evolution, going from the simplest (called savage or primitive stage of development) to the most complex (called the stage of

civilization). Several social science researchers of the period established standard profiles of races corresponding to these stages prescribed in the evolution of forms of society, Blacks being associated with primitive societies, Red, Yellow and Brown populations being barbaric, and Whites being so-called “civilized”. These ideas contributed to justify the establishment of colonial empires by the European powers, motivated by what they called “improvement” of the colonies, a kind of granted development which resulted in domination and exploitation. It was agreed that all primitive and barbarous societies could upgrade to the status of civilized societies, through Western education and Christianity. The idea that primitive people spoke primitive languages, reflecting a primitive mentality, was not likely to arouse any interest in systems of local knowledge, either among the colonized or the colonizers.

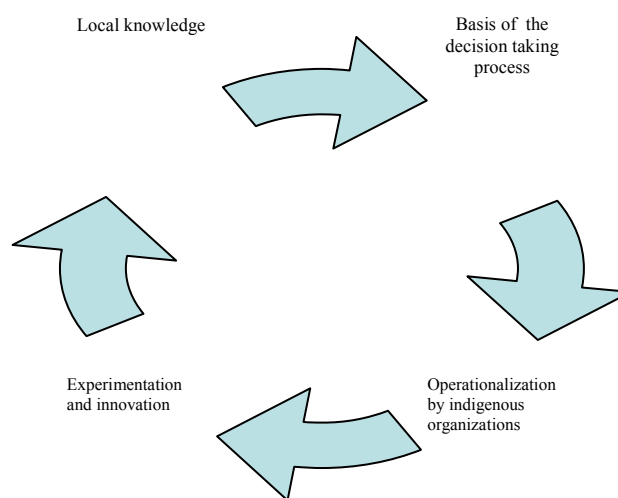
The first indications of early awareness of the importance of local knowledge were provided by Gregory Knight (1974) who, after a very revealing study on agricultural practices of the Nyiha in Tanzania, launched a call underlining “... the need to appreciate the thought of a society as being a body of coherent and rational knowledge, developed and proven throughout the ages, and bequeathed as a culture to successive generations... It could even be the case that Nyiha or other ethnic groups could teach us something about nature”. From the time of this call, a renewed interest in local knowledge systems and the way of life of populations known as indigenous, from Africa and elsewhere, was born in academic circles.

Nevertheless, until the beginning of the Nineties, the large majority of development researchers underestimated the local knowledge and aptitudes of rural populations. To them, and for a long time, “*the rural populations*” and “*what they do not know*” constituted the problem; and “*we the scientists*” and “*what we know*” represented the solution. But the impressive number of publications on local knowledge calls for humility, and underlines the need for us to learn from rural populations before trying to teach them anything. It is a reverse training that consists in “putting the last (i.e. villagers) first”. With hindsight, and taking into consideration the significant progress made in studies on local knowledge, scientists learn, to their cost, that it is indeed “they” who constitute the problem and “the rural populations” who constitute the solution.

This new interest created a diversified field of knowledge which has taken several successive names. The concept of “Local Knowledge” is the most tempting because of its simplicity. Thus, local knowledge can be compared to knowledge known as modern or scientific. But the only weak point of such a concept is the common perception that local knowledge refers to the knowledge of a given locality rather than to the knowledge of populations as a system of concepts, beliefs and training mechanisms.

Whatever the term used, there is a shared vision that rural communities in Africa and elsewhere have a specialist and extended knowledge of the physical and cultural environment in which they evolve. They also were able to develop mechanisms for sustainable use of this knowledge and of natural resources. This body of endogenous knowledge has been developed and transmitted over generations as the product of interaction between man and his environment. In their development process, the knowledge of rural communities and their natural resource management strategies are shaped and modified by assimilating the knowledge and strategies of neighboring cultures.

The knowledge of rural populations has a holistic dimension, including a broad range of human experience with tangible and intangible entities. Their knowledge includes all possible fields, such as history, linguistics, economics, sociology, political and administrative science, communication, energy technologies, soil water and climate sciences,, biology of plants, domestic and wild animals, insects, etc, medicine, classification systems, time, crafts, religion and many other aspects. In all these fields, each social group developed knowledge capable of attaining an unsuspected degree of sophistication. Such knowledge is so reliable that these traditional societies exploited it successfully and for a long time to ensure the group's survival. Local knowledge thus represents an important side of the culture of rural communities and so constitutes a capital which has potential virtues that are even capable of driving development. Indeed, local knowledge is the starting point of a dynamic cycle of development:



This cycle is facilitated by the endogenous communication system.

Proposals for sub-topics which could be treated by speakers at the forum

Local Knowledge in a context of globalization

Today several indicators demonstrate the goodwill of researchers, decision makers and development partners in integrating local knowledge in the development paradigm. Formerly marginalized, local knowledge is nowadays at the center of development efforts. To give only a few examples: the importance of integration of local knowledge in development programs, was recognized by *Agenda 21* (defined at the time of the *Earth Summit*, in Rio, in 1992), and by the conference on *World Knowledge: knowledge in service for Development in the era of information* (Toronto, 1997). Also, important multilateral and bilateral development institutions like the World Bank (with its Program *Local Knowledge in the service of development*) are more and more interested by the role that local knowledge plays in development.

We ask ourselves if this recognition of the importance of local knowledge has come at the right time?

It is finally recognized that local knowledge and Western science cannot in any case be regarded as monolithic knowledge (neither of them is sufficient on its own); they are, rather, complementary. To deal with this topic does not mean becoming inward-looking, culturally speaking, because no culture is ever isolated, but grows rich in contact with other cultures. What is important is that no culture should let itself be “swallowed-up” by another culture. But has our local knowledge not been “swallowed up” already? Can it still play a great part in this context of globalization where Western knowledge seems to impose itself ever more insistently.

Local knowledge as a factor in development of agricultural production and improvement of natural resource management

Much research on local knowledge is focused on natural resource management and agricultural systems. We would like to invite a specialist to speak about the richness of Malian knowledge in these fields, but also about the problems local knowledge has to adapt itself to climate change (which seems to be caused for more than 90% by the Western world), and other natural problems.

Local knowledge as an element of the educational system

The domination of our local knowledge systems by those of the colonizers is very visible when we analyze the contents of the educational system inherited from the colonizers and perpetuated after Independence by nationals formed in a mould which taught them the supremacy of Western knowledge. This Western bias and the arrogance which urban elites often express towards the rural poor, sadly remind us of the strength of this negative attitude towards local knowledge; knowledge generated for hundreds or even thousands of years by local communities.

Is the integration of local knowledge in the Malian educational system desirable and realizable?

Local knowledge and social peace

Mali is a country where social order reigns. Do we owe this peace to local knowledge of our different people in the fields of politics and sociology, to our democracy (a concept which was brought to us from outside) that we have known since 1991, or to yet other things?

Comité scientifique du Forum 2008

- M Mamadou Ndiaye, Economist, IBC Mali
- Dr Basga Emile DIALLA, Directeur Exécutif du Centre d'Analyse des Politiques Economiques et Sociales (CAPES) à Ouagadougou
- Dr Hamidou Magassa, Linguiste au SERNES à Bamako
- Dr Mamadou Fanta Simaga, ancien Député Maire de Ségou
- Prof Youssouf Tata Cissé, professeur en retraite
- M Abderamane Dicko, Economiste à l'USAID
- Me Mamadou I Konté, juriste
- Mme Liesbeth Daffé, anthropologue, Directrice du Forum

NB To develop this concept we took as a starting point the the study: Local Knowledge: an Often-hidden Cultural Capital, by Dr. Basga Emile DIALLA, CAPES (Center for Analysis of Economic and Social Policy), Ouagadougou, 2004

Presentations

Ville de Mexique, nombril culturel du monde, by M José Luis Cruz

We didn't translate the text of this speaker yet. Please find the French text below:

DÉS ANTÉCÉDENTS. IDENTITÉ CULTURELLE DANS MÉXICO

La culture est un processus de phénomènes sociaux, ethniques, psychologiques et communicationnelles au moyen du se forment des identités, des groupes, des régions des pays, contenants et de civilisations. On peut analyser le dit processus avec outils comme la sociologie, l'anthropologie, l'histoire, la psychanalyse, une mythologie, la philosophie, les religions, les sciences exactes, la communication. Le concept de culture peut être si vaste et complexe comme réductionniste et pédestre.

Dans Mexico notre expérience comme état-la nation que plusieurs niet par les courants Néolibérales d'une pensée, nous nous permet de rapprocher du concept de la culture comme de propriété communierai qui se rattache et se diffère avec l'autre, sans cesser de reconnaître et sans connaître les processus aux quels nous a porté la globalisation et lesquels nous vivons dans cette état volatil où l'information fait sauter une aile une vitesse de la lumière nous permettant de cohabiter avec le village et avec les migrations multiculturelles.

La diversité culturelle de notre pays est la richesse plus appréciée de notre patrimoine intangible qui se manifeste au moyen d'une multiplicité d'expressions rituelles, linguistiques et plastiques, symbolismes qui dénotent un univers complexe en évoquant les échos d'un vaste continent qui se contient dans ses fêtes, traditions, cuisines, qui réfléchissent l'énorme créativité d'un peuple dans la résistance qu'il a su préserver et développer sa plus sophistiquée sensibilité. Le plus apprécié de nos trésors consiste en cela, cosmogonies qui survivent plongées dans les veines de la terre, de courants souterrains qui marquent le temps de l'histoire. Cosmogonies vivantes qui survivent dans le temps à travers de ses chants et ses langues. De tout cela nous nous nourrissons et avec tout cela nous vivons ensemble. Les Mexicains nous appartenons à cette communauté enracinée dans les enfers et limbes injectés de lave et de poésie. Par cela, il peuvent exister les chants de la forêt, les sons des mers, les vents du désert et les neiges surgelées des volcans Iztaccíhuatl et le Popocatepetl.

Donc, Mexique est un pays multiculturel un produit d'infinité de métissages, de rencontres, de chocs, des soulèvements, des utopies, des révoltes, des rejets, racisme, des conquêtes. Cet énorme complexe culturel est un creuset de miroirs, de couleurs, de parfums, de goûts, qui nous caractérise comme un cocktail qui va éclater depuis le fond de la terre si nous ne lui donnons pas de voies libres, pour que cet espace multiethnique s'exprime. La ville de Mexico est un reflet microcosmique du reste du pays. le district fédéral réfracte les clair-obscur de nos manques et de tristesses, et de nos réussites et vertus, et les cultures urbaines, communautaires et élitistes pendent à un fil très délicat qui permet d'établir un pont qui ne communique pas paradoxalement à une de ces trois formes de concevoir la vie que l'on ne consiste plus que des définitions en ce qu'il divisent à différents groupes qui habitent dans la Ville de l'Anáhuac. Nous subsistons dans le labyrinthe de la solitude illuminé par ce fil doré d'espérance. ¿Pourquoi ne pas abandonner l'idée bucolique romantique d'être la "ville de l'espérance" pour incarner la ville de la tolérance, de l'inclusion, de la vie en commun, des alternatives, de

l'internationalisation, des relations interculturelles avec les groupes ethniques du Mexique et du monde ? Pourquoi ne pas récupérer le leadership que non il y a beaucoup d'années le Mexico avait comme capitale culturelle du continent ? La tâche est ardue mais possible. Ce sont des rêves réalisables d'une signature pendante que la "démocratie" a mutilée.

Jose Luis Cruz, actor, director and playwright. He has directed more than 50 plays from classic authors of contemporary and occidental theater presented in several countries around the world. His personal adaptation of Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist is now considered a classic moment of the Mexican University Theater. He has been Director of the Theater and Dance Department of the Mexican National University and Director of the Cultural Department of the National Anthropology Museum. Since October 2003 he is the General Director of the Culture Department from Tlalpan South City District, as well as the General Director of the Ollinkan International World Cultures Festival. In February 2004 he received the award for a life of achievements in Theater given by the Unesco's International Theater Organization of the Mexican Theater Center.

The Adobe Renaissance, by Mr Madani Niang

Introduction

In Mali, mud architecture makes up the major part of constructions in towns as well as in the country, both for monuments, and especially for housing.

Certain localities are well known for this type of architecture, because of their ingenuity in adapting local materials to climatic and environmental realities to construct functional buildings.

In addition to this aspect, Ségou has paid particular regard to aesthetics and this has ensured its unique architectural identity both in time and space.

In this way, the first travellers such as Charles Monteil, Mungo Park... were astonished on arriving in Ségou, by the homogeneous nature of buildings, the harmony of architectural style and above all by the fine artistic quality of their surfacing. (Cf. Book of Travels in Africa by Mungo Park 1795 Pages 310 to 317)

The particularity of this architecture is still described by present day authors such as Adam Bâ Konaré, Lilyan Kesteloot and above all Maryse Condé in her novels SEGOU, THE EARTHEN WALLS, and SEGOU, THE CRUMBLING EARTH which describe the mud built houses marvellously with their succession of hallways.

We may take the risk of saying that the red mosque in Fréjus in France built in honour of French West African troops, shows a desire to link these black soldiers from the French Soudan and their earth that they must miss terribly.

How does Ségou distinguish itself in mud architecture ?

In the Bambara context, a building is not just meant to offer shelter from bad weather. It also acts as a showcase for the philosophies that are the foundation of society and ensure its cohesion.

This is why the location was chosen after consulting the spirits; in each of the four corners of the entry hallway there are ritually-buried cotton seeds and nguodjè leaves, while above the inner doorway, some amulets/fetishes are hanging.

In this way the surrounding wall is not only the sign of the limit of a land title, a frontier between men, but a belt that assembles the members of the same family – an African family is considered to include fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, around the patriarch – to strengthen them in facing a common destiny.

This is why the wall, even if it is not particularly high, is striking because of its breadth and above all because of the “elephant’s feet” SAMA SE that consolidate it. By their regularity all along the wall, these wide buttresses that are the sign of Ségou architecture provide an architectural charm and an enclosed atmosphere that is full of mystery, in Bambara BOLON DOGO DOGOW, where many intrigues are carried out at night.

This common destiny in the Bambara background is also at the level of the vestibule – FASO BOULON – a characteristic of Ségou mud architecture.

Indeed the surrounding wall ends with this entrance room where the major community decisions are taken. It is the symbol of family unity, cohesion and authority with « a single entry » Ka doh da kélé nfè, ka boh da kélé nfè (to speak with one voice and act together.)

This is why there were many very resistant wooden beams to support the imposing roof which should never fall.

The door to the Ségou vestibule has one truly unique particularity by being set in a reinforcement of the wall that is a sort of alcove. This shows the thickness of the wall. A veranda – Bambali – was set up at the door to welcome certain visitors, certain meetings, or served as a place to relax on very hot evenings.

According to the owner’s income, the brick pillars reinforcing the vestibule walls are a bit higher than the roof and the intervals were embellished with wooden gutters and other bricks forming geometric designs, producing an almost sculpted whole that stands out in the sky above a sea of vegetation and that C. Monteil and M. Park admired from the opposite bank of the river.

These building techniques and the finishing that are typical of Ségou mark a real difference between its architecture and that of other equally famous cities such as Djenné and Timbuctou.

Where did the charm of this architecture come from?

First there is the choice of materials.

The bricks were made of clay mixed with straw to consolidate the material and all masonry work was programmed in the least sunny periods to improve drying conditions.

The walls were covered on two successive occasions with adobe left to mature with some hay, nééré powder and other vegetable ingredients to make them more waterproof and soundproof and in order to create an agreeable indoor atmosphere of coolness or warmth according to outdoor weather conditions.

The third layer in red adobe enriched with shea-nut butter was applied with art and dexterity. To reach this level of refinement, the earth was sieved; impurities and grains of sand were extracted. The powder obtained in this way was mixed with expertly dosed water and then mixed with shea-nut butter.

The finishing layer was made with great care, and lovingly applied by hand and the traces of this technique once dried are at the basis of the wall's attractiveness, its lustre with a hint of darkness.

What happened to all this during colonisation?

For many people, Ségou architecture was renewed with the arrival of the colonial administration that gave rise to construction of the present day Office Du Niger buildings. These buildings are much admired for their volume, the harmony of shapes and their well-drawn lines.

In looking at these buildings closely, it can be seen that it is the most perfect evidence of local knowledge of construction, using precision tools that are the most adapted to masonry.

It is easy to recognise the difference between the purely western style of architecture and what was in place and has been improved in comparing houses of medium height with conical roofs made with tiles or iron sheeting (the Regional Health Authority, the Military Camp that resemble colonial houses in Dakar, Vietnam, Madagascar...) with the houses in question.

The improvement concerned bricks of larger size, made of a mixture of laterite, sand and lime, all fermented. For better ventilation and lighting, the roofs were heightened and openings were widened, particularly if the roof was of iron sheeting.

Les autres éléments d'esthétique comme les SAMA SE, les colonnes verront leurs lignes plus régulières, plus symétriques mises en évidence au point que sous certains angles, ils donnent à voir le masque Ndomo (résidence du Gouverneur).

At the same time, mud architecture continued to develop for the population with the means to profit from new techniques of construction.

In this way, some some people made bricks from adobe and plastering with sand, mud and lime left to ferment (the house of Cheik Oumar Fing, those of Cheik Douanza, of Souleymane Diakité, Edouard Fau and the shops in the Central Market whose walls are still intact). The roofs were high, openings wide and decorative elements such as pillars and their ledges have been preserved.

This gives a different appearance to the architecture without calling into question the materials and basic principles.

In the populous neighbourhoods, some people brought these new touches to their houses, such as the height, the width of the openings, interior pillars separating rooms to make the living space more agreeable.

Other, richer citizens adopted laterite bricks and whitewashed walls (Villa Marie Léa, the houses of Dr. Badjè Keïta, de Brière...)

Administrative services, the rich and less well-off remained attached to typically Ségou-style adobe architecture with style, local materials and a concern for more comfort and beauty.

At what stage can we talk of a rupture in building styles?

Adobe architecture remained itself even if external influences changed its appearance.

Cement and concrete only affected the Ségou architectural landscape towards 1975 with Asian, European, Latino-Hispanic building styles according to the degree of prestige the promoter wished to express.

Possessing a house built in cement brick became everyone's ideal. Reduced rainfall and availability of wood, shea-nut and suitable earth reduced maintenance of housing to a strict minimum, to such a point that adobe architecture was called into question, including its social and economic advantages and the knowledge it entailed.

So should we really be talking of an adobe renaissance?

We think not!

Ségou adobe architecture has survived despite all the invasions that have imposed their varnish on it, without ever seeking to substitute themselves for it. .

It has perhaps been in hibernation and it is a matter of rubbing the surface and polishing it with the help of new techniques and technologies adapted to local materials and traditional knowledge.

The promoters of the Galerie KASOBANE were the first to move in this direction in 1999 in giving renewed value to the embellishments of the Bambara entry hallway, then in using red adobe to build the Conservatory of Traditional Dyeing, the Ndomo in Pélangana

The initiative has had its effect as the Association "Ségou laben" has restored the town's emblems in red adobe while the Kamalen Blow of the Esplanade hotel, the Bajidala Cultural Area and 13 compounds of the old Somono neighbourhood, all in red adobe, enrich Ségou's architectural and tourism landscape.

In confronting globalisation, we are sure that the resistance of our culture will be maintained through reviving our ancient local knowledge and giving value to local materials adapted to our needs for architectural modernity.

We are reluctant to draw conclusions because the debate is yet to be launched through the following questions:

- What should be the national strategy for a return to local building materials and architecture that respect our culture, environment and financial capacity?
- What policy should be adopted to conserve and give value to this heritage?

Madani Samba Niang, born in Ségou in 1954, took up his first post as French teacher at the Lycée Abdoul Karim Camara, known as Cabral, in Ségou. He plays an active part in social and economic development in Ségou through associations such as Ségou-Yeleen, Baara-Damu, Solidarité Handicap...

Mr Niang is chief of Hamdallaye (Ségou) neighbourhood, he was elected a Municipal Counsellor from 1992 to 97. In connection with town twinning activities, he has stayed in Angoulême (France) for teaching exchanges and the initiation of a tourist circuit around Ségou. On secondment to the Ministry of Crafts and Tourism, he has been in charge of the Ségou regional tourist office since 2003.

Local knowledge and the Malian Education System, by Dr Hamidou Magassa, Mme Catherine Touré and M Denis Douyon

In the very lively international competition between promoters of ideas, products and globalized values, is integration of local knowledge into the Malian education system desirable and feasible?

This question was posed by the 4th Forum of the Festival on the Niger and we reply yes through this Bambara proverb: « kooro bè a monyoro fari da » (the iguana takes his appearance, his colouring from the place where he was brought up.”)

Integration of local knowledge into the Malian education system has aspects that are historical, linguistic, economic, political and socio-cultural.

1. The historical aspect

At the end of the 19th century, France conquered a large number of countries, including French Sudan, and introduced a new type of teaching together with colonisation. In Senegal, Jean Dard was the first French school-teacher in French-speaking Africa for the first school registration in Saint-Louis, on March 7, 1817. With the encouragement of the colonial administrators Gallieni and Archinard, numerous schools were set up and organised in the territories to be pacified.

From 1885, Victor Duruy, an eminent figure in Public Instruction set out the programme: " *if swords subjugate bodies, and ploughs enrich peoples, it is books that conquer souls. Behind every regiment there has to be a teacher, close to every fort a school to prepare: agents to help our traders, interpreters to serve as links between our administration and indigenous peoples, scouts for our troops to ensure they march straight ahead in enemy country... when*

indigenous peoples learn our language, markets open up for our industries; civilization arrives and transforms barbarism ².

In French Sudan, then in Mali, a modern education system, with very little involvement of local knowledge, went through five main phases

1. 1882 (foundation in Kita of the first school) to 1903 : schools for hostages, for sons of chiefs, administrative districts, learning manuals and Catholic Missions.
2. 1903 to 1944 : synthesis phase, with systemisation and unified organisation based on the indigenous population ;
3. 1944 to the Gaston Defferre Outline Law in 1957: significant changes concerning programmes henceforth aligned to those in France “the Metropolis”;
4. 1962 : the Reform taking the unilateral decision to *«produce education to decolonise minds and rehabilitate Africa and its own values and whose content will be based not only on specifically African and Malian values, but also on universal values³ »*

The principles of the 1962 Reform were that:

- « All education will be technical and vocational education »
- « A student will only learn so that he/she can take action »
- « The school is at the same time this workshop, this factory, this field thanks to which the student will confirm and use his/her knowledge within the normal operations of these production units.”

The major characteristic of the 1962 Reform is the installation of fundamental education and colleges of higher education to make up for the lack of functionaries in the civil service;

5. 1996 : creation of the University of Mali, renamed the University of Bamako.

2. Linguistic aspect

- When national languages, spoken by Malians, are used as written languages for teaching, the internal effectiveness of schools is improved, as amply shown by the experience of Converging Pedagogy (PC) launched in the Ségou region in the 1980s ;
- It should be noted that 11 Malian languages (Bamanan, Fula, Songhoï, Tamasheq, Dogon, Soninké, Kassonké, Bozo, Bomu, Senufo and Minianka) have already been developed in written form and used in 2,050 out of 7, 270 PC schools and that the level of attainment of results is unfortunately only 28.20% (the rate of literacy was 24% in 2004) ;
- Various missions by the Ministry of Education have noted that teachers have much difficulty in using the new PC curriculum because they have so little training in transcribing national languages, understanding the concepts and they have no word lists, manual and guides to correct these weaknesses. As a result, it is sometimes

suggested that extending PC to more schools should be stopped in order to reinforce training of those in existence ;

- The taste for reading, or lack of it, is a result of the way in which the learner has experienced learning at school in connection with his/her own local cultural world;
- As a consequence, it is important that teachers should practice reading activities properly on the basis of writing with pedagogical content, newspapers and official publications in national languages.

3. The Economic Aspect

- As a stake I the economy, local knowledge is the subject of requests by users for reasons of proximity, accessibility, which make up the linguistic market of a given cultural area. The interest of speaking a local language, Malian or any other, is therefore implicitly linked to commercial, economic or political forces.
- No Malian economic development is currently foreseeable in the present state of the education system which is in urgent need of vigorous action for qualitative rehabilitation at all levels : access, institutional, pedagogical, training of students, teachers and researchers, infrastructure, equipment and consumable materials, research funding, school governance, management of population growth etc...

4. The policy aspect

- It is recommended that all possible financial technical, human and material resources should be mobilised in order to write the teaching curriculum in Malian languages.

5. Social and Cultural Aspects

- Writing, literacy teaching and teaching in national languages.
- Scientific, general and technical research
- Creativity and multimedia communications
- Public extension of results, and public recognition (official acts, scientific, cultural and artistic writings and other works)

Conclusion

Developing apart from local knowledge, Malian schools have directly involved only a minority of individuals who have gradually appeared to become too numerous in the economic model and the society that they are supposed to transform.

In Mali, the largest sector that provides employment is essentially rural. It is above all informal, and formal to only a very low degree, with the few active wage-earners in the State and Private sectors.

In the present social and cultural conditions, internal and external effectiveness of Malian schools produces very little knowledge or goods.

Conclusion

« Education as we have seen it functioning in the different periods of Malian history has never affected more than a very small proportion of the population. This education, not integrated into the economic and social framework, has been unable to transform this framework and encourage economic and social development.»

« But if schools are a factor in change, sometimes an important one, it would be an illusion to believe that change comes first of all from schools or that it is the schools that determine the change.»

M. Magassa Hamidou is a linguist and anthropologist, specialising in studies and advice. He has much field experience in Mali and in the West Africa sub-region, particularly in rice and cotton development. The many missions he has carried out demonstrate his expertise in analysis of development institutions, and Malian social organisation and management of human resources in rural associations and businesses. He is the author of scientific and literary publications on small farmers' perception of the problems of rural development, particularly in the Office du Niger.

Local knowledge as a factor in development of agricultural production and improved management of natural resources, by Dr Modibo Keita and M Kô Samaké

Unlike scientific or universal knowledge, local knowledge is owned by a given society or community. Indeed, it provides the cultural groundwork for development of the societies and communities that produce and apply it. In general, the various forms of local knowledge are the product of the history of the society in question, and perpetuate its culture. Over the centuries, communities have accumulated knowledge and expertise that constitute the proof of their economic, social, cultural and political development.

Even now, this phenomenon continues and Malian society is no exception to this rule. It is in the systems of production and management of natural resources that instances of this knowledge are still most easily seen in our society. In the field of agriculture, farmers survive thanks to their own techniques that do not originate in scientific laboratories. This local knowledge is passed down by word of mouth or in practice. This knowledge and expertise are not static, they do not come out of nowhere and they are improved over time and the area

where they are practised as a result of endogenous and exogenous usage. It is in this way that small farmers know how to differentiate between types of soil and that they have valid ideas of weather forecasting (as do farmers in other cultures, too). Farmers' techniques for seed production and conservation, frequently unknown to modern structures, have generated very satisfactory results for those who apply them. In the context of global warming, small farmers do not throw up their hands and behave like passive victims. On the contrary, they have succeeded in developing anti erosion techniques that promote the restoration of soil. Tools are used according to the nature of the soil. Throughout the world, pastoralists and farmer-pastoralists have highly detailed knowledge of breeds of animals, the type of pasture, animal diseases and the appropriate medicines to treat them, etc. In the domain of fisheries, traditional fishermen possess techniques concerning knowledge of their activities. They are well aware of details of cyclical river floods and their recession. They know the regular cycles of fish and know which instruments should be used to fish in such and such a location and for such and such a fish. They are aware of the finite resources of fish stocks and take the appropriate measures as a result. In some cases, local expertise has been capable of conserve natural resources for thousands of years (the case of the Alamandjou in the Dogon country). Unfortunately modern development policies draw on western models and have contributed greatly to weaken or even run certain examples of local expertise out of existence (« libraries on fire » according to Hampathé Ba). This has happened to such a degree that many people are no longer aware of our own society's ingenuity and of its capacity to produce the solutions to its own ills. The constant failure in Africa of Euro-centrist development policies because they are at odds with local knowledge and expertise should no longer surprise anybody. For all sustainable development activity must necessarily be based first of all on local practice. This is what development support organisations seem to understand more and more clearly. Our message here is not to give blind credence to local knowledge, but rather to insist that they complement modern scientific and technical knowledge. For each type of knowledge has its advantages and its limits and the salvation of mankind resides in their integration.

Dr Modibo Keita was awarded a doctorate in Social Sciences by the University of Tübingen in 1983. In 1986, he set up a Consultancy for Education and Development Studies (CED) and in 1996 CEK – Kala Saba Consultancy. His recent experience has concerned areas of support for rural and urban community self-management, planning, implementation, participative monitoring and evaluation for projects/programme, support for NGOs, associations and local government bodies, training of trainers and facilitators (animation and communication) and communications and advocacy.

M Kô Samaké was awarded a master's degree in social sciences in 2003, and has been a research assistant at CEK – Kala Saba since 2006. His experience has involved decentralization in Mali, and specifically decentralised natural resource management.

Relationships and joking in Malian culture, by Professor Youssouf Tata Cissé

In the framework of the sub-theme « local knowledge and social peace» Professor Youssouf Tata Cissé will speak about relationships and joking in Malian culture: the origin of these phenomena, and their implications in Malian history.

Professor Youssouf Tata Cissé has the status of one of Africa's great wise men and scholars. He is a retired researcher of the CRNSS, and began his career at the Institut Français d'Afrique Noir in Paris. To begin with he was not intended for a research career or for

sociology because he worked as a technical advisor in the Office for Development of Agricultural Production.

He is the Vice Président of the Cercle Amadou Hampaté Bâ, a member of the scientific committee of the SCOA foundation, he holds a DSS and has published a thesis which was published in a famous document and was entitled « the fraternities of Bambara and Malinké hunters». He was the initiator in the 1970s of a colloquium on the great empires of Mali, Songhaï, Ghana, and the great kingdoms that succeeded them