

A Praxeological Approach to Dogon Material
Culture

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Abstract

Grounded in long-term fieldwork, this thesis develops an ethnography of two aspects of Dogon material culture: the Dogon landscape and the Dogon habitation, both of which are defined as containers. The examination of these two discrete metaphorical and material epistemologies, which are conceptualised as '*skin envelopes*', seeks implicit forms of worldviews that are objectified in their materiality. In other words, the research focuses on the expressions of a daily generative cosmology as it is grounded in pragmatic, material and routine embodied activities that relate to the 'making' and 'doing' of these two forms of container. Framed within an Anthropology of Techniques, the study employs a combined praxeological and phenomenological approach entailing the participant observation of body-kinetic and sensory experience of containers. In addition, observations of the body movements involved in the making and storing of things in the compound expose the containers in a visual sequence called '*chaîne opératoire*' that also constitutes a frame of analysis, one devised through the recording of the manufacturing and use of the containers. Thus, through an empirical, descriptive, reflexive, and processual approach to Dogon containers and related worldviews, my research elaborates theoretical perspectives on a Dogon philosophy of containment that is defined within a materiality perspective. In doing so, I demonstrate that particular local ways of 'being-in-the-world' or 'being-at-home in a world container' are generated through the material qualities of the Dogon landscape, or cosmoscape, and the domestic sphere of the compound. These operate through a gathering process and boundary-making devices that create the inside/outside locales in which people dwell and which generate a sense of ontological security in a particular scarce environment.

In the memory of Boureima Saye
(c 1940 - 1998)

Uncle Desiré Rivoux
(1912 – 2004)

My grand-mother
Fernande Thiry
(1916 - 2005)

Aunt Laurence Douny
(1912 - 2005)

Boubacar Thiam
(c 1971 - 2006)

Uncle Albert Frankart
(1917 – 2006)

Aunt Cécile Francis
(1922 - 2007)

Professor Dame Mary Douglas
(1921-2007)

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“We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast body, of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremors run through our smallest veins. The moon is a great gleaming nerve-centre from which we quiver forever. Who knows the power of that”.

D.H. Lawrence

“Writing is easy. You only need to stare at a piece of blank paper until your forehead bleeds”.

Douglas Adams

1. Introduction:

Dogon containers as material practice and embodied metaphors

September 2002:

On one of those heavy and bright clear mornings, I wait endlessly and desperately, to one side of an empty parking lot in the small town of Bandiagara, for transportation to the village of Tireli, which lies on the escarpment where I will conduct my fieldwork. In the shade of a tree, I share a wooden, wobbly bench with a young boy who offers me the first glass of the bittersweet and boiling hot Chinese Power Gun tea that he is making. Some bags, jerry-cans, a goat and some chickens packed in an elongated wooden cage are piled-up next to me. There is, however, no sign of the other passengers or even of the car. As the time passes by, they start to arrive, smiling, making their way towards the bus stop and after interminable greetings of each other, they gather, sitting on their bags. The dusty arrival of an old, cream-coloured Peugeot 504 animates the litter covered ground and, after a long wait for the passengers to process their baggage, the car, which is of a dislocated and rusty aspect, departs.

Overwhelmed by the moist heat of the end of the rainy season, I sit in the body of a car, packed in with eight other people, from which sounds of mechanical disorder emerge each time the metallic body smashes down onto the ruts of the ferrous and dusty track. The tires, half deflated, threaten to give way under the pressure of the immense weight of its load of passengers inside and the jumble of luggage, goods, goats and chickens roped firmly to the rooftop. Local travellers obviously used to the experience, embark on lively chats and expansive and loud discussions. The slow motion of the car, continuously interrupted by untimely attempts at braking as a means to soften the impact of the vehicle on the unevenness of the ground, helps me, however, to forget for a brief moment, the internal chaos of the car.

My Western eyes frantically snap the outside world, which in the manner of magical scenery unfolds itself on the other side of the window frame against which I lean. The rocky landscape of the plateau, scattered with isolated rocks of various dismantled-looking shapes, surrounded by patches of green composed of cultured plots and trees, gives the impression of a living disorder in which human life manifests itself through indistinct body movements within the thick swathes of millet and sorghum stalks. Alongside the road, embodied by their gracious gait and the slowness of their motion, a group of women line up with their babies wrapped in multiple layers of cloth against their back. They carry a series of massive baskets and modern plastic or metallic containers, piled up in an infallible balancing act on the top of their heads that cannot but impress. As the car progresses on its journey through the bush, the details of the shiny and sparkling colours of the women's outfits and receptacles fade away with their greetings. The journey has started for me. I know where I am going yet the whole endeavour remains a guess.

The car arrives at the escarpment and the sand envelopes the wheels giving the impression it might leave the track at any moment. I am sick and distressed. I try to stay focused and to benefit from the incredible view of the Bandiagara cliffs. After a long and exhausting journey, the car finally stops at the local school in Tireli, where I sit and wait for the chief who is the only person/point of reference I have and whom my supervisors have recommended I see. He is attending a meeting and it is endless. The heat bears down upon my face as the flies colonise every bit of it. The place looks completely empty. While waiting again under a baobab tree, a young teenager comes up to me and asks in good French what I am doing here. He looks at my bags and comes to the conclusion that I am a tourist. I explain that I am here for research and that I am waiting for the chief because I have been told that I can probably stay in his compound. The young man called Balugo says that the meeting is not about to finish because they are discussing important issues about the field limits with the villagers of Ourou. He tells me, if you want you can come 'en famille' (i.e. to their compound) and wait 'y a

pas de problème (it is not a problem). He goes and returns with some friends who help him to carry my heavy bags to his compound, which, it appears, is located at the top of the scree. I can barely manage the climb because of my anxiety and exhaustion. The children put my bags in a room located on a terrace and Balugo says that they have plenty of space here. So, I can stay with them if I want. Extending in front of me is a magnificent view of the village and its public place and, further down, of the plain. Behind me, the cliff stretches up, massively and imposingly. I remember Ernst Gellner's advice to Sandra Wallman before she went into the field: 'Wherever you go, always choose a place with a nice view'. Suddenly, I shiver. I know that this is where I want to be.

The morning following my arrival in Tireli, Balugo, who offers to be my guide, proposes a reconnaissance walk, which leads us to the top of the escarpment from where I will be able to see 'everything'. As an inexperienced climber, I struggle along the steep stony path whose vague outline gives the impression of disappearing under the pressure of my awkward steps moulded by a rigid and useless pair of trekking shoes. Standing at the top of the cliff, Balugo observes, quite amused, my acrobatic attempt to move on. My legs are shaking and I am out of breath. The air of the aborted rainy season remains heavily moist and the sun starts to burn my skin dramatically. Sitting on a prominent flat rock, I gaze at the landscape while recovering. From that vantage point my eyes embrace the whole panorama. I immortalize it directly through the eye of my camera as a way of getting started with an obsessive recording of the village sites framed within a typical Western schedule, which will fail the day after. As a conscientious guide, Balugo maps out the different elements and places that make-up the view. As a point of reference, he indicates his compound, which I can easily identify because it is situated near the public place. Then, while listening to his endless enumeration of places and features of a quarter that I cannot spot, my vision drowns itself in a maze of discontinuous paths as they wind around clusters of built elements. Instantly, a question carrying the weight of all the anxiety and confusion of this first day of fieldwork in this unknown place comes to me: how am I going to find my way in this interwoven place? Without a doubt, this thought was masking a more fundamental uncertainty. Will I

manage to live here? With this thought in mind, I realise that the quietness of the place, that I had taken for silence and which had made it appear empty to my eyes (and ears), is, in fact, animated by the distant sound of the echoing of pestles hitting the bottom cavity of the wooden mortars.

The women pounding millet are hidden behind the enclosures. These I can now clearly identify by using the zoom of my camera. The houses with their roof compartment containing potteries and various plant elements are surrounded by a series of granaries wearing pointed thatched hats. It is then that we are joined by a group of women. Balugo greets them as they are climb up with a confident walk. I try to hide my ignorance about local greetings with a smile. As midday approaches, I throw a last glance at the pale bright sandy plain, covered with patches of green, that extends itself towards the horizon. I try to relax by taking in this panorama before refocusing my concentration on the sinuous and dizzy path that faces me on my way back down to the compound.



Fig. 1.1. View of the village of Tireli



Fig.1.2. View of Tireli from the escarpment

1. An ethnography of Dogon containers and related worldviews

In September 2002, I embark on a 17-month journey into the Dogon land in Mali, West Africa. At the outset, I am scared and have doubts about this fieldwork I am undertaking. On arrival in Mali, the time passes slowly, the climate drags me down and I feel completely alienated by the environment of the '*gare routière*' or taxi station from which I am to depart to go to the village of Tireli (Fig.1.1). I have been lucky to find this transport, the driver has to deliver things for a construction project in the village. As I am driven across the landscape, I feel that I too, like this antique Western car, am falling apart. I am observing the Dogon world from this moving container which functions in some ways as a refuge, a boundary between me and the unknown, outside world. In this inner space, I try to collect myself and to recover some confidence. Every second, I am confronted by this new world that is unfolding through the car window. Then, the driver drops me within the confines of Tireli where I sit and wait, not knowing what to do or where to settle down.

I did not choose the place where I lived. A Dogon family chose me; they accepted me to share their quotidian lives with them. As I stood on the rooftop of their house, the landscape and the village lay in front of me, a single continuity. They offered me a 'room with a view' in the centre of the village and at the core of its daily life.

* * *

My host family's compound constituted one of the best places possible to do my project, which was originally on Dogon architecture. The room that I used as a storage space and where I wrote my notes served as a space of reflexion upon life in the Dogon, our shared worldviews and to some extent the anthropological quest of understanding a people's world. Therefore, I see the room they gave me as a symbolic container that expresses a particular dialectic of inside/outside through which worldviews and the experiences of the world are constituted, i.e. the act of

collecting data in the outside world and subsequently writing in a self contained inside space.

As I began to explore the environment and became more familiar with it, my project rapidly expanded into a broader examination of the local built environment in relation to the landscape. Hence, the ethnography that I propose here is grounded in the particular dialectic between these two spaces that compose the territory of Tireli, an area located approximately in the middle of the Bandiagara escarpment. Through daily shared embodied practice of the place – by taking part in the villagers life and in particular that of my host family – I became interested in local conceptions of the place and more specifically the dwelling processes that are objectified in the materiality of the conceptual and physically bounded landscape and built environment. Therefore, I envisaged this process of dwelling that is a philosophy of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger 1962) through an examination of the material and symbolic forms of these two types of containers: the Dogon landscape and the Dogon compound. The notion of dwelling refers to the making of ‘*a small chosen world of our own*’ through life experience and the sharing of common values (Norberg-schulz 1984:7). Thus, dwelling in daily life (Highmore 2000; 2002) enfolds both the act of building (Heidegger 1962) that is both the material action taken upon the landscape through, notably, architectonics and the experience of the place: ‘*Dwelling is the activity of living or residing, and dwelling in the place or the structure which is the focus of residence*’ (Oliver 1987:7). Thus, I explore here, the building process or act of residing through an analysis of the Dogon village and more specifically through the compound as the nexus of daily agencies.

I begin by looking at the containment properties of the landscape as revealed through the existence of conceptual and experiential boundaries that enclose the territory of Tireli. This constitutes a cultural process that involves a dialectic between two aspects of human life, those of a social, ordinary, concrete, everyday life made of subjective places and those of a potentially social, existential

background seen as an idealized and imagined objective space (Hirsch 1995:4-5). The Dogon landscape stands as *both a medium for and the outcome of action and previous histories* (Tilley 1994:23). Therefore, I am interested here in the ways Dogon people engage and act upon the materiality of the landscape (Bender 2001; Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995; Ingold 2000; Tilley 1994). The first aspect of the Dogon landscape I shall examine here concerns the built environment and more specifically the constitution of the village of Tireli. Dogon architecture is defined as a human socio-cultural practice that consists of: *'an attempt to create and to bound space. It creates an inside, and outside, a way around, a channel for movement'* (Tilley 1994:17). Being invested with the body (Blier 1987; Tilley 1994), it forms an absolute, finite, and fragmented entity that is constitutive of places and filled up with objects (Arnheim 1977, Tilley; 1994). Following Johnson, architectural space is: *'a moulding of the landscape and the expression of a cultural attitude towards it'* (Johnson 1994:170). The village of Tireli, or its interior territory, as a bounded space generates a sense of ontological security through the act of building, that is the clearing, appropriation and attachment or fixing of the place. The second dimension of the Dogon landscape I explore here regards the outside bush that constitutes *'a life-giving reservoir'* (Van Beek & Banga 1992) from which Dogon people extract their daily resources and therefore upon which they intimately depend. The outside of the village mostly concerns the space of the domesticated bush that is overpassed by the wild bush to which particular beliefs are attached. Consequently, I propose that through embodied experiences, manifested through walking (Ingold 2004, Edensor 2000, Tilley 1994) and through daily taskscapes (Ingold 2000), the Dogon landscape, as humanised container made of an inside and an outside and that remains the property of the ancestors, constitutes what I shall call a *cosmoscape* in which Dogon worldviews are objectified in its materiality.

Second, I explore the domestic sphere of the Dogon compound. As Bourdier indicates, this notion refers to *'a plural entity formed by a number of households*

organized on the basis of agnatic descents cultivating separately and/or collectively the farmland, and residing in the same composite habitat' (1997: 2116). This built element acquires its meaning from the activities and objects that it contains and the particular network or shared agencies of its occupiers (Lane 1987). In other words, I propose that the compound gains its shape through people's daily, shared embodied and material practice in the place. To expose this process, I examine the Dogon compound in terms of its substantial content such as domestic waste and one aspect of its material content, a female earth granary. By focusing on the storing aspect of these two containing forms or technologies of containment, I explore the production of a daily cosmology through the making and use of the compound and granaries.

As I proposed in the snapshot of recollections and fragments of my diary with which I introduced this chapter, during the first part of my stay in Tireli, I experienced the place as a Western tourist who stood at the top of the escarpment endlessly shooting the landscape as if it would disappear the next minute. I technically appropriated the view (Fig.1.2) in the belief that I would capture the essence of the place through the eye of my camera. Unconsciously, I reproduced the landscape in the same way that the Dutch archaeologists and architect did twenty years ago. That is, in a series of pictures and blueprints similar to how Marcel Griaule encapsulated the place, some seventy years before them, by lying on the edge of the *Bandiagara* cliffs (Clifford 1988). I am re-contextualizing the site with the same ambition of documenting and mapping out the place, to find my own reference points in space and therefore in the Dogon world. However, this overview does not provide any clear insight into the spatio-cultural logic and configuration of the terrain. On the contrary, by adopting this formatted Western and external standpoint, the site presents a lack of visibility that instantly triggers a feeling of vagueness. Indeed, Jackson (1989) relates in *Paths towards a clearing* his own experience of a similar landscape in a *Kuranko* village in Sierra Leone. Here he suggests that what is actually observed from such vantage points is a reduced size mosaic of geometrical patterns which do not tell much about

local life. In fact, although it is conceptually possible to imagine the human presence moving within the walls of the compounds, through the sounds that come through the pillars, the people remain invisible. Hence, finding one's way in this interwoven place requires that one lives there. This implies that we must go back down to the compound enclosures and place ourselves at the core of domestic life. Knowing the place is thus also about experiencing the structures and the paths of the village that canalize and contain the flow of daily life.

Through a long and trying adaptation, my 'blindness' progressively disappeared by discovering, childlike, this new environment through my senses. After three months, my host family returned from the plain to the village and I received my host-mother-name *Yabemu Saye* which means: '*Now we all stay together*'. My writing, here, about the place comes from having embodied the paths through my own experience of walking up and down, right and left. I am therefore, writing things seen from within the same continuity as my host family and friends, a continuity based on a shared experience of 'walking together'. Although the conversion of my perception of things will never be complete because of my Western cultural background, I can give here an account of Dogon daily life worldviews, with a greater 'closeness' that comes from a shared experience of the material forms of containers. This, I recount in an embedded dialogic and phenomenological form of writing (Jackson 1989, 1996, 1998). In other words, I intend to develop, by use of ethnographic descriptions of shared and experienced fragments of quotidian life, an empirical and self-reflexive narrative about native daily life, dwelling and ontology (Highmore 2000; 2002, Ingold 2000). My research develops from a grounded phenomenological and praxeological approach. It then moves on to consider pragmatic Dogon worldviews that confront both perceptions of the native and of the outside ethnographer. This expressive analytical framework allows me to highlight the synchronic and the contextual dynamic of present-day Dogon worldviews. These refer to the ways of looking and thinking about the world (Kearney 1984). I do this by examining the

material and immaterial dimensions of the Dogon landscape and compound, envisaged in terms of a self-contained system that defines through a boundary making and a gathering process that brings things into a unity and therefore generates a sense of collectedness (Heidegger 1962). Hence, my ethnography on Dogon containers leads to an exploration of local embedded worldviews that I shared with the Dogon through my permanent presence in their domestic life. This, I shall gather conceptually into a daily and experienced cosmology that remains ‘in the making’ (Barth 1987). In other words, I consider the Dogon cosmology as a creative, generative, and transformative process that emerges through particular activities.

2. Thinking and doing through containers

Containers are good to work and to think with. As portable work tools, they are traditionally found in the form of calabashes, clay pots, baskets or wooden mortars and carved bowls. In a similar utilitarian continuity as these locally made artefacts, though with a contrastive aesthetic and with a range of volumes, the aluminium cooking pots, the plastic and metallic basins, jugs and ladles, tend today to constitute a more practical, yet relatively costly choice, that, equally, appears as an idiosyncratic signifier of modernism and thereby of social prestige. All these customary material forms assist men and, mainly, women in their routine activities. As the Dogon, with whom I worked, frequently stated: ‘without these we cannot work’. Acting as symbols of intensive and straitened exertion as well as of the sustenance of life, the containers assume the transport of goods, the processing of matters, the consumption of meals and drinks as well as the storage of water supply. The stony house, which shelters various daily objects and people during the rainy and the cold dry seasons, operates similarly but on a larger scale. As do the gendered mud granaries that constitute the second fixed container existing in the Dogon compound – either juxtaposed to it and intersected by its walls and, thus,

together forming the compound enclosure or standing, unsupported by the compound's walls, within its inner space. These two types of container are mostly used to store and to preserve food resources as well as personal belongings including the ancestor shrines that also fit within the category of receptacles. These are solid and inverted containers that receive sacrificial substances in exchange for god's benefits. The bounded landscape holds daily resources. It acts as a life-giving reservoir (Van Beek & Banga 1992) from which people extract the material and substances that they need to live. The boundary system acts as a protection device that provides a sense of ontological security. Dogon containers constitute a self-contained system that enfolds multiple scaled material forms to assist and protect men and women in their daily life. However, I suggest that containers also define through their content. People, things, matter, and substances such as earth, millet, water, and domestic waste enable us to understand the ways Dogon people exist within and make their own world. The content connects the multiple forms of containers and therefore people's lives.

Containers are good to think with. I propose here that containers cannot simply be reduced to their material forms *per se* but that they also stand as material metaphors (Tilley 1999). In fact, Ogotemmêli's basket in Griaule's *Dieu d'eau* (1965) is grasped as an object to explain his view on the world. The basket as a mnemonic device constitutes in the old Dogon philosopher's narrative a metaphor that he uses to illustrate his point of view of the world. From this perspective, containers are objects that translate the reality of people through their embodied practice and they stand as an active ground for Dogon agency (Jackson & Karp 1990, Gell 1998). In other words, containers, as such, do not really matter but the idea of the container as a means for people to contain substances, matters, people, activities, and ideas does. Indeed, the clay pots of deceased women are left to be destroyed on the cemetery path; families leave their mortars in a compound when they move out; old calabashes and pots are sold for cash; and when a granary is destroyed by the

weather, there is no compulsion toward maintenance if the edifice is no longer useful, i.e. practical or meaningful. Therefore, containers are not cared for in the long-term as cultural heritage because this does not relate to an immediate use. In other words, containers in the Dogon world are not part of a tradition that perpetuates by necessity such as sacrificing. Consequently, I view Dogon containers not exclusively as material forms, but according to their content and what they objectify in terms of worldviews that encompass people's daily practice and experiences of the world. To put it in a different way, I propose that containers consist of material interfaces between the world and people that enable them to act in the world as well as to think about it. This is the view I have come to have through the people I have been working with and the observations made in the village of Tireli as well as in some places on the Plateau area, mostly the Kamba villages and Pelou.

3. Dogon containers as a material practice and material epistemologies

I have framed my examination of Dogon containers within a material culture approach, which seeks an understanding of people's everyday life-object world that takes shape in a particular space and time. The human material world is constituted by the objectification (Tilley 2006) of socio-cultural structures and processes that encompass individual attitudes, behaviour and agency (Miller 1987, 1997; Tilley & Shanks 1992; Gell 1998; Latour 1999; Attfield 2000; Buchli 2002). Objectification as an ongoing active process and dialectic between the subject and the object is defined as: *'the manner in which objects or material forms are embedded in the life worlds of individuals, groups, institutions, or more broadly, culture and society'* (Tilley 2006: 60). Therefore, the study of material life as a process of objectification emphasizes the ways in which human cultures are constructed, transformed, and experienced through their object world (Dant 1999). This dialectic between people and their object world enables the examination of how the materiality of objects

(Attfield 2000; Buchli 2002; Meskell 2004; Miller 1987, 2005) defines people and how it is appropriated by them in order to communicate ideas and values, to act upon the world (Arnoldi & Hardin 1996; Chilton 1999, Graves-Brown 2000) and eventually achieve particular goals and ideals.

In my project, containers fundamentally stand as material practice (Bourdieu 1990). In other words, containers as both metaphors and material forms are defined through daily embedded and embodied praxis. That is, they are products of the Dogon's *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990; 1980). Through the daily making and uses of containers, Dogon people make themselves 'being-in the-world' (Heidegger 1977). In the same way, I propose that containers allow people to think about the world. Hence, containers stand as both material practice and epistemologies that regard particular ways of doing, making and thinking about the world. In other words, containers objectify in their own materiality as well as in their substance, matter, and ideological content cosmological principles in a given space and time for a given people (Miller 2005).

4. Conceptualizing containers: skin-envelopes and inside/outside worlds

Before introducing the perspective on containers that I adopt in this thesis, I offer here an overview of three approaches that I found in the related literature. As a starting point, I develop the psycho-analytic perspective that focuses on the idea of skin-envelope. Then, I introduce the body-container metaphor found in the African and West African literature. Finally, I introduce the concept of symbolic reservoir that refers to containers as ideological receptacles.

The French psycho-analytic literature on the self focuses on externalization processes as mediated by the skin. In Anzieu's *Skin Ego*, the skin is defined as a sensory envelope that protects the individual from the external world and in which

the inner self is retained and constituted. Therefore, the skin as a sensory interface, acts in the manner of a surface of inscription, of identification and of interaction of the self with others. This, Anzieu defines as '*a containing, unifying envelope for the Self; as a protective barrier for the psyche; and as a filter of exchanges and a surface of inscription for the first traces*' (Anzieu 1989:98). In other words, Anzieu proposes the making of the subject or how people make themselves through their skin. Under the same perspective, Benthien following Anzieu, views the skin as a surface of contact and as a boundary that encloses the self and enables its encountering with others (Benthien 2002). In fact, the skin constitutes a mediated ground of the relationships between the self and the world. It constitutes '*a standing for 'person', 'spirit', or 'life', as a pars pro toto of the entire human being*' (Benthien 2002:13). The skin as a large visual and haptic surface creates social identification, acceptance, and separatedness. The same perspective is proposed by Winnicott (1956) in his work on infant development in which the author proposes that human beings create a sense of subjectivity by a shared envelope with the significant other that is, in the context of children, the mother. The skin, being porous, defines particular inside/outside dialectics (Warnier 1993, 2006) between the subject and the world. Through the skin-envelope and thus body container, people do and make things (Warnier 1999, 2006; Julien & Warnier 1999) they become 'being-in-the-world' through their sensory experience and motricity, people act in the world (Warnier 2001, 2006). Under a similar perspective, as Lakoff and Johnson put it: '*We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside of us. Each of us is a container, with a bounded surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus, we view them as containers with an inside and an outside*' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 29). The body appears as a container that is wrapped in a somatic envelope or skin envelope that remains porous. The skin develops and builds against the others and as a means to interact with the outside world. The skin,

like a folded surface, is physically created through design, painting, cloth hanging on walls inside a house or even through scarification and tattoo (Gell 1993). Layer upon layer another skin is put upon the building, the canvas or the body. In other words, skin acts in the same way as a material surface or layers put upon things as a means to protect, but it also interacts with other body containers.

Metaphors about the individual's body as a container for life essence and substances such as breath, saliva, blood, and semen that generate and maintain structures of power, wealth and life transmission are found in the Grassfields of Cameroon (Warnier 1993). In a similar view and cultural context, the Bamileke woman's womb is seen as constituting a space from which metaphors of inside cooking develop. These refer to ideas of procreation and gestation, to marital relations, and women's roles. These are also associated with the compound kitchen (Feldman-Savelsberg 1994, 1995, 1999). Similar ideas are expressed in the Central African ethnographic literature on divination and healing cults, in which the body is defined through its interwoven relationships with the society and the world. Healing and divination as self-generative practice considered as 'a mode of world-making' (De Boeck & Devisch 1994:100) reveal the fabric of cosmologies through bodily experience of the *womb world* in which a regeneration process of vital forces and of the sensory body's interactions with the social world, takes place (Devisch 1993; De Boeck & Devisch 1994). In the same view, the body and its skin – material containers as folded surfaces – constitute an inside space for the individual's body and self as well as a touchstone for its sensory experience and interaction with the outside world.

As Benthien underlines it, in many societies the material form of containers such as the house are often associated and conceptualised in terms of a human body. In this view, built forms constitute 'a house for body and the body for house' (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995: 43). Thus, built forms, like a second skin or a piece of cloth,

protect the body (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995: 3; Littlejohn 1960, Bourdieu 1990; Deffontaine 1972). In the same view, as it has been put forward elsewhere (Pader 1988; Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995; Malaquais 1994), people often design their habitat as an image of themselves. In West African societies, anthropomorphic symbolism is commonly attached to the material structures of the house/compound (Blier 1987; Malaquais 1994; Griaule & Dieterlen 1966; Bourdier & Minh-ha 1985). Graphic systems based upon conceptual correspondence between the body and the material forms of containers are found in Cameroonian house decoration, body scarification, textile patterns (Malaquais 1994) as well as in pottery decoration and body adornment (David, Sterner & Gavua 1988). Furthermore, anthropomorphic ceramic vessels portraying the ancestors and containing their spirits, legitimate, and maintain social networks (Berns 1990). From within this perspective, mud granaries and pots as storage facilities symbolise the womb and express concepts of fertility. In that sense, a full granary signifying pregnancy is reinforced by the burying in the granary womb, of a sealed pot containing seeds as a guarantee for further successful harvests (Prussin 1999 referring to Lebeuf 1961). Containers might also be identified as the extension of human bodies as such, as in the case of Tchokwe! divination baskets that assist the body and through which Angolan refugees reinvent themselves in a context of human displacement (Silva 1994).

The last perspective on containers that I propose to examine concerns the concept of symbolic reservoir. It refers to '*a long-held reservoir of symbols, myths and beliefs...[which] different subgroups of a society dip into...In order to extract, craft and visually display a legitimating tradition to serve their own sectional interests*' (McIntosh 1989:77). This concept has been explored by McIntosh in his examination of the stylistic variations of middle Niger terracotta from which he postulates the existence of a common symbolic reservoir that originates from the Jenno-Jene area in Mali and which would date from the 1st century AD. According to the author, this symbolic reservoir contains shared ideologies produced by an elite

who would have subsequently spread them over the different communities in Mali and possibly elsewhere in West Africa. Traces of these ideologies can be found objectified in the material culture of Mali, such as in terracotta. Similar considerations could be further investigated on an architectural level by looking at common stylistic traits that exist in the Mande world (Brasseur 1968). The concept of symbolic reservoir is also adopted by Sterner and David in their examination of Northern Cameroon (Mandara Mountains) ceramics, architecture, body decoration and mortuary practices (Sterner 1992; David, Gavua & Sterner 1988). The concept is used in an attempt to define regional stylistic variations and shared symbolic structures objectified in materiality. In sum, the authors proposed a generative metaphor of symbolic reservoir from which certain things are extracted. It contains all possible conditions of which ritual ideas can be drawn from good and bad things. The idea is developed from the perspective of the archaeological records as long enduring and changing. The reservoir does not change (MacEachern 1994) but people draw different patterns on it to meet the event or a situation.

5. Containers as embodied metaphors

In this project, I consider containers as embodied metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1999) and will, therefore, focus on the relatedness of containers and domestic praxis. In that sense, the body is conceptualized as an active ground rather than a container, while the metaphor of containing is seen as a cosmology that is a gathering of worldviews. I do not examine the Dogon compound in terms of anatomy (Blier 1987), nor as the objectification of body part images or anthropomorphic schemas (Griaule & Dieterlen 1965, 1966). Rather, I consider the household as a gendered material container for people, things, and activities that is experienced and shaped daily. The house and the body are, therefore, seen as contiguous and metonymic. In short, containers are considered here as part of a containment process or action of containing which is concerned with the material

and immaterial structure of Dogon receptacles or containers as boundaries, and which concern on the one hand the landscape and on the other the built environment and, more specifically, the compound. In the same way as the skin-envelope, containers are defined in terms of folded surface of contact that interconnects the individual's inner self to the external world by means of its body sensory experience of material forms. I propose that containers constitute the individual's self as unified and contiguous to the social world through an inside/outside dialectic because they are indissociable from their material or substantial content. Following on from which, I suggest that, through containers, people draw the boundaries of their lived environment and engage themselves in the world. Containers create locales in which social networks and transactions and, also, socio-cultural meanings about native worldviews are interwoven.

Grounded in an 'animist'¹ complex of thought that ensures the continuity of life and maintains the society's cohesion. Dogon worldviews are built upon the relationships between the individual, millet, and water. These two stand as the main constituents of the sustenance of daily life around which other subsidiary and short-term foodstuffs such as condiments, pulses, and locally grown cereals, revolve. Moreover, within the precarious context of on-going drastic climatic fluctuations that cause long and unpredictable periods of drought that make the land infertile, water and millet remain relatively scarce and therefore represent a fundamental survival concern. These two living resources are the Dogon's prime concern, determining the location and the production of the built space in terms of access to them, as well as in the design of storage space and facilities dedicated to their conservation. Additionally, both generate specific secular temporalities based upon agrarian cycles which intrinsically rely on the rain. Furthermore, they determine a ritual calendar, lying at the core of religious practice characterised by sacrifices

¹ See chapter 2 for a definition.

devoted to god in return for sufficient rain and a successful millet harvest. As such, they dictate the local economy and order the society through an accurate organization that, through a segmented, agnatic, exogamous, patrilocal, and patrilineal schema, is still perpetuated today. Thus, millet and water bridge the human and natural life cycles, the world of the dead and of the living as well as producing a space-time continuum. They both create particular ways of thinking, of doing, and of living in a harsh environment.

As a complementary element to millet and water, the soil constitutes the third primordial matter that ensures the continuity of life in the Dogon as the host substance for the millet seedling. However, because of its increasing impoverishment due to intensive exploitation by humans and the considerable advance of the desert, the sterility of the soil constitutes another important preoccupation, as it is also crucial to human life. In addition, clay, wet mud, silt, and the other types and forms of soil intervene according to their properties and qualities in the manufacturing of pots, granaries building, wall coverings, and, finally, house bricks, altars and shrines. Therefore, soil as the main component of these domestic containers and receptacles and in the manner of a folded surface similar to a 'skin envelope', constitutes a system of material interfaces which mediate and interrelate the surrounding, natural Dogon-environment to the individual's self and the society. This operates through its own materiality, its praxis and finally through its substantial content, millet and water. Likewise, with soil containers, this approach can be applied to the containers made out of material produced by the soil such as fibres, calabash, fruits, and wood. It is worth mentioning that the substitution plastic and metallic forms tends for these natural materials generates new conceptions about the person, the society, and the environment that is externalised and expressed on a more individualistic and urban scale but in the same continuity as local values and sense of tradition.

Consequently, as a unifying principle, I suggest that containers in their very physicality or materiality objectify a broad range of implicit forms of worldviews through their seasonal making and daily uses. The focus of my research thus lies in the mutual shaping of Dogon individuals and their containers. In this exploration of Dogon containers, I invest containers as devices with the following dimensions: boundary making, gathering process, embodied practice and temporal. I will show these to be interwoven in the chapters that follow. The first aspect of these local material epistemologies explored in this study revolves around the idea of material forms as boundary making devices that create particular locales and ontologies. The emphasis here is upon the reversible inside/outside dialectic (Warnier 2006) that is created out of the praxis and motion within these contiguous container boundaries. Their dynamic of change as a direct effect of modernity occurs in terms of the porosity of the containers' boundaries. The second aspect I consider is the embodiment of containers. That is, I explore how particular senses of materiality are generated in the making of earth granaries, through body praxis and the objectification of body rhythm in the making of material forms. I then propose containers as active agents mostly in collective tasks. This is conceptualised in terms of a gathering process (Heidegger 1962) that refers to the way things are retained inside the containers' boundaries, around the body, constituting the Dogon self and its relationships to the society. This is, notably, explored through an examination of the compound and domestic waste. The gathering process is also investigated in the daily uses of granaries that highlights the way men and women relate to each other as well as to the outside 'other' (Strathern 1995, 1998) through embodied praxis of gendered granaries. The dimension Time recurs throughout my analysis, as materialised in these domestic forms. Time is articulated by temporalities that imply segmented daily human tasks of a relative *durée*, synchronised, repeated day after day with the same constancy and therefore aggregated into cycles. These are co-

ordinated by the seasons and therefore the life cycle of the fields which in a similar view symbolically refer to the human life cycles.

6. Daily worldviews as a cosmology in the making

In his inspiring fictional account *The Aleph*, Borges (2000) refers to a mysterious object through which the protagonist can see all the universe. In fact, *The Aleph* contains all human experiences of the infinite space-time continuum. By being observed, the object conveys a sense of participation in the world that is intensively felt by those who approach the artefact. Similar to *The Aleph*, I propose that for the Dogon the container is the bounded landscape and the compounds constitute a spatial and temporal ground in which a daily cosmology is constituted and routinely experienced in shared domestic activities through the practice of containers. Thus, I am proposing an alternative to the cosmogony of Griaule's (and followers). They employed a linguistic approach to explore Dogon metaphysics as it is objectified in visual metaphors or graphic systems, which they see as relating to an intricate corpus of myths accounting for the mechanisms of the creation of the universe, of earth and of humankind (Griaule & Dieterlen 1954, Griaule & Dieterlen 1965, Griaule 1966). For them, the Dogon cosmogenesis initiates '*the expression of a correspondence between (this) the social organization and the world as they conceive it*' (Griaule & Dieterlen 1954:83). However, subsequent criticism apropos of the field methods used, the multiple contradictory, differing interpretations and inconsistencies found in Griaule's colossal thesis, make his ambitious work questionable (Douglas 1967, 1968, 1995; Clifford 1988; Doquet 1999; Ciarcia 1998, 2001, 2002; Amselle 2000; Piault 2000; Apter 2005) and have led elsewhere to its dismissal (Lettens 1971; Van Beek 1991, 2004). Thus, the Dogon cosmogony remains today as a historic or a cultural heritage left by ethnologists.

I do not intend to present here a re-evaluation of Griaule's work as this has been undertaken in the past (Letkens 1971; Van Beek 1991, 2004). Rather, from a different perspective, I look at secular Dogon worldviews that are the product of everyday life and therefore remain changeable and relational. As proposed by Lovin & Reynolds (1985), worldviews consist of a dynamic network of shared knowledge which defines the society's order, its political structures, its attitudes towards nature and, finally, its ethical and moral values. Worldviews enable individuals to achieve particular goals and ideals (Lambek 1993) as well as serving to guide people in their world and their choices as they stabilize their surrounding environment (Matthews 1991). In other words, worldviews offer '*a picture of the way things in sheer actuality are by encompassing the dimensions of the self, nature and society*' (Geertz 1973: 127).

In my thesis, I propose Dogon cosmology as a set of worldviews that tell how people perceive, conceive, do, and make the world in which they live. My focal point rests in the network of relationships between people, objects, and the environment. The Dogon cosmology concerns the particular processes of making and doing daily life in a landscape and a compound container. The Dogon generative cosmology is always in the making (Barth 1987), reproduced and reshaped over time by individuals and through material praxis (Bourdieu 1990). The Dogon cosmology is envisaged here through multiple aspects, such as in the making of the landscape, the village and the compound, the embedded technological process of making granaries, the re-cycling, production, management and uses of domestic waste and, finally, the storing process in gendered granaries. All these dimensions contribute to the definition of a cosmology that relates to how Dogon people make themselves in the 21st century world through practice and beliefs in a changing society that, notably, is being reshaped through modernisation, religious conversion, tourism and education. I expound, in all chapters, this perspective on change as it relates to material culture, practice and ways of thinking. Hence, I propose Dogon

society as being ‘in the making’, that is changing. This opens the way to new forms of containment and worldviews.

7. Towards a philosophy of containment

I propose that Dogon containers objectify a network of embedded worldviews that gather into a cosmology. I do so through an examination of the landscape and the built environment as material forms. This I define as a philosophy of containment² (Warnier 2006:188-191) that concerns ways of being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962) or being-at-home in a world container³. A philosophy of containment concerns the making of bounded protective spaces that create a sense of ontological security that is a stabilising or fixing, an ordering of one’s world and therefore an attributing of meaning to it through continuous experiences of the world (Giddens 1991). I suggest that containment consists of a process of gathering (Heidegger 1962) that designates the way people engage, dwell, and organize the world for and around themselves through their daily embodied experiences of the materiality of containers that define through boundaries. I express containment here through the metaphor of containers as a system of envelopes (Anzieu 1989) that are stacked or self-contained in a successive and contiguous way. This system encompasses both the material forms of containers as well as containers as metaphors that possess a spatial and temporal reality as they objectify daily, seasonal, ritual, secular, environmental, and human rhythms and temporalities. In other words, a philosophy of containment encompasses particular conceptions of space and time that are seen as a continuum through the materiality of the containers of the Dogon. Time is seen here as cyclical

² This concept does not refer here to a political or military tactic of isolating an entity. I borrow the term ‘containment’ from Warnier (2006: 188-191). While referring to container forms (ex.the body), Warnier defines it on a subject level as a technology of power (see page 35-36). However, containment is used in my ethnography as a process and mode of existence or ‘being-in-the-world’.

³ Inspired by Michael Jackson’s book *At Home in the World* (1995).

while space is seen as an expansion. However, as I show in my ethnography, containers' boundaries always remain porous. In fact, containers as interactive folded surfaces that create particular inside/outside world dialectics (Warnier 2006), materialise, through practice, a form of containment that adapts and changes according to contingencies, events and peoples' agency. Although it appears relatively abstract, this notion of a philosophy of containment that I explore in the present ethnography is grounded in a pragmatic daily experience of containers. Before revealing it, I shall introduce the ethnographic background as well as the methodological aspect of this research.

2.

Doing fieldwork in the Dogon Land

The Dogon of Mali (West Africa) occupy the South West area of the Niger River bend. Dogon people live in a physical environment characterized by a massive, 300 kilometre long escarpment that reaches up some 600 metres high in places. The escarpment crosses the region from Southwest to Northeast dividing it into two distinct geological zones: an arid rocky plateau and sandy plain called Seno Gondo (Fig.2.1). The Dogon ethnonym refers to a cluster of 700 patrilineal villages based on a self-subsistence economy, as well as to a population of 250,000 inhabitants (Bedaux & Van der Waals 2003:7). Millet, the staple crop, is cultivated from May to November and onions are grown from December to March to be sold at markets and in towns. Located in the Sub-Sahara zone, the seasons in the Dogon land consist of a cold dry season from November to early April and a hot dry season that lasts until the first rain falls around mid May. The rain normally falls from mid May to the end of October. It falls irregularly and is generally followed by long periods of drought that inhibit the growing of plants. Therefore, Dogon people are frequently facing food crisis.

Dogon people exhibit a great linguistic diversity with about 86 dialects that include *Toro so* (spoken along most of the escarpment), *Dono so* (spoken on the Plateau) and *Jamsay* (a dialect spoken on the Plain). In Tireli, people speak *toro so*, the official language of the region, as selected by the Malian Government. However, as the villagers migrate to the plain seasonally and have relatives there they also speak *Jamsay*. This linguistic diversity often leads the Dogon to adopt the Peul language as a vehicular language (Huet 1994). Adding to this eclectic mix, the young Dogon

learn *Bambara*, the national tongue, and French at school. They use both, often practising the latter on tourists.



Fig.2.1. Map of the Dogon Land

The religious beliefs of the area add to its cultural diversity, with Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam and Animism, the original belief system, all being practised.

The Dogon, who are called *habe* or pagan by the Peuls, became known in the West through European explorations that were launched from the 1850s on (Desplagnes 1907; Arnaud 1921). However, it is mostly thanks to the holistic academic work of the French ethnologist Marcel Griaule and his followers as well as the efforts of the Dakar-Djibouti Mission (1931–1935) that the Dogon became known in the West. Westerners tend to hold an idealized view of the Dogon as a model of authenticity and purity (Doquet 1999, 2002). However, Dogon ethnicity is an ongoing

endogenous political, social, and historical construct (Bouju 1994, 1995 (b), 2002, 2003). It does, in fact, result from a long cultural mixing with nearby ethnic groups through exodus to neighbouring countries such as Ghana or Ivory coast, as well as through contacts with Westerners, in particular the French due to Mali being a former French colony. The diversity of their culture can be attributed to two other main factors: Islamic influences and the multiple West African/Mande influences caused by the settling of successive migrations to the region on the escarpment, plateau, and plain, and their encountering and mixing with the established local groups (Ciarcia 1998: 103; Goody 1967; Amselle 1991; Schulz 2002). Hence, rather than constituting an homogenous entity, the Dogon communities offer a great cultural diversity that can also be observed on a material-culture level such as architecture (Lauber 1998).

1. Overview of the Dogon system of thought

Although Dogon communities are progressively converting to Islam, Catholicism or Protestantism, their traditional religion, defined in the West as Animism, still plays a significant role in Dogon daily life (Van Beek 2003 (b):95). I propose here to reveal some elements of this Dogon system of thought to which I shall refer throughout my thesis, notably in my account of the making of the protection boundaries that enclose the village which are managed by a material system of altars positioned at significant points in the landscape of Tireli. I will introduce three Dogon cults, those of the *Wagem* (the ancestors), the *Binu* (the protection of the environment), and the *Lebe* (the ancestor of the name) in the chapters that deal with these issues. I have omitted many aspects of Dogon system of thought that do not concern the ethnography proposed. These include the funeral rituals of the cult *Awa*, such as the *Dama*, a celebration of the end of mourning and the passage of the deceased's soul into the afterlife, and the *Sigui*, a celebration of the renewing of the world that occurs every sixty years.

Dogon thought is something that I discovered progressively through my fieldwork and certainly still do not understand fully. As a woman, I was not allowed to approach the ritual objects and, in most cases, the men did not want to tell me about them. I did manage to grasp what could be termed common knowledge during the village celebrations such as the *Lebe* and the *Buro*. I was also able to collect local discourse and thoughts on this religious system by observing and participating in people's daily life tasks. Here, I was and am interested in how people relate to the objects rather than the objects *per se*. In other words, I emphasize the social relationships and the ways these objects and the boundaries they generate, constitute, renew, and maintain social relationships (Colley 2001). Or, to put it differently, I take into consideration the efficacy of these material forms, i.e. the impact or effect they have upon people. The Dogon system of thought tells us fundamental things about the way Dogon perceive their social and natural environments. That is to say, ritual objects as active principles play a part in the making of a local cosmology.

Writing about what I have so far called the Dogon system of thought and the objects involved in it, poses a series of problems of terminology that I wish to discuss briefly now. The first time I heard about the local 'religion' was in terms of 'Animism': a term that, along with its Western conceptualization, abounds in the related popular literature such as tourist guides to Dogon people. Indeed, the Dogon themselves largely employ the concept of animism to define their ethnicity and identity. They describe it to Westerners as a traditional and 'authentic' mode of thought that they inherited from their ancestors whose origin is attributed to the mythic *Mande*. Most Westerners entwine the term and concept of Animism with notions of sacrifice and fetish: words that are themselves indicative of problematic Western conceptualizations. Imbued with colonial prejudices, these anachronistic terms (MacGaffey 1977; Pietz 1985, 1988; Tobia-chadeisson 2000), tend nowadays

to be replaced in the related scientific literature, when used to define ritual objects, by alternatives such as the ‘god-object’ (Augé 1988), the ‘power-object’ (McNaughton 2001) and its French equivalent ‘*objects forts*’ (Bazin 1988). My solution to this problem of scientific terminology is to rely on vernacular terms (Chanda 1992) and therefore to ground my discourse in the conceptions and definitions provided by my informants.

The dimension of the Dogon system of thought that I have attempted to gather is common cultural knowledge as opposed to expert knowledge, it focuses on the idea of protection and networking and, as such, it is oriented towards what Dogon thinking conveys in terms of ideology and practice, i.e. that which constitutes the way people relate to each other. Thus, I give particular attention to the ways my male informants define their system of thought, as well as to its material components, with which they frame the Dogon community of Tireli. The three elements provided by them and which I examine here concern the notion or representation of their monotheist god *Ama*, their principles of sacrifice, and, finally, the four main cults (*Wagem*, *Binu*, *Awa*, and *Lebe*). The Dogon refer to *Ama* as the creator and manager of all the things of the world. *Ama* exists in everything and ‘everything’ is considered to be living. In most of the definitions I collected the Dogon placed a strong emphasis upon the vitality of the materiality of things and beings, their order and their cohesion. They believe that every living feature of their world is animated by a vital energy called *nyama*⁴. Often defined as a vital force that flows through the organism of the things and beings of the world, *Nyama* ensures their equilibrium and wellness-of-function/ing. The harmful consequences of a loss of *nyama* for a human were often recounted to me as madness, death, or a trauma

⁴ This concept is equally found in the *Bambara* tongue which might indicate its possible borrowing by the Dogon people and which means ‘life’, ‘spirit’ or ‘character’(Calame-Griaule 1968:205-206).

that can be generated, for instance, by the breaking of a prohibition during a violent verbal or physical conflict (Calame-Griaule 1968: 205-206; Dieterlen 1941).

Ama bulo or *omolo bulone* are the Dogon's generic terms within their monotheist thinking that designate the array as well as the management of both collective and individual ritual practices dedicated to *Ama* and to other supernatural beings. Generally speaking, it is translatable by the term 'sacrifice'. The sacrifice therefore, situated at the core of Dogon ritual practice, determines its efficacy. By extension, *bulomo* means 'to revive', 'to make something living again' or 'to regenerate' as the name of the sowing-feast for the village of Tireli, *Bulu* or *Buro*, indicates (Calame-Griaule 1968: 49-50). This annual celebration performed before the first rains and dedicated to the ancestors is characterized by the sacrificial act as well as its function of re-engaging the regeneration or the reordering of the society, i.e. to reinitiate good social relationships and therefore to maintain as well as to strengthen its cohesion (Van Beek 2003(b):95). Equally, the concept of *omolo* conveys the idea of reinitiating the order of things. While the general term *bulo* indicates the practice of regenerating society through sacrifice, the term *omolo* refers to the set of objects *geru*⁵ that, in a simplified way, refer to the mud altars called *ama*, which are often accompanied by a set of wooden statues called *degue*, as well as to their function: to mend the transgression of a prohibition. Therefore, it refers to both the result of rule-breaking (a state of impurity) and the apparatus activated to reinstate the correct order (the state of purity). It can be both collective and thus dedicated to whole village (*omolo bulo*), or individual, i.e. belonging strictly to a male member of the group. When individual, the domestic altar, often a stone enveloped in clay or a simple cone made of clay, serves to protect the man's family against malevolent entities and evil people (Van Beek 2003(b):96). The *omolo* serves for an individual,

⁵ The various forms of *omolo* object are often kept in a nook of the compound, for instance, in the men's granary *guyo togu*, in small shelters built for that effect or, most commonly in the great family house

a family, a clan, or the villagers. The contrast between *bulo* and *omolo* is worth mentioning because it relates directly to a third type of practice called *dugu* which is sorcery that relies on similar practical proceedings and sometimes employs or diverts the initial *geru* artefacts to do harm.

The Dogon thinking that is made manifest in the sowing-feast celebration *bulo* is based upon the relationships between the Dogon people and their environment. The invocations they dedicate to their monotheist god *Ama* relate to everyday life concerns. These are essentially of two kinds and relate directly to the natural and supernatural realms. In the natural realm, the unpredictability of the Dogon climate leads to a constant shortage of food. Indeed, the millet-based foodstuffs that constitute the main survival means of the Dogon grow with hardly any success and thus provide insufficient rations to sustain them for a full year. Added to which, the intense climatic conditions invariably damage the paths in the escarpment, leading to various accidents, as collapses and other forms of climate induced habitat-destruction are the norm. Because of this, the rainy season is feared by the Dogon. Thus, its immanent arrival usually generates a mixed feeling of anxiety and excessive enthusiasm that is both expressed and released during the celebrations. The Dogon dedicate many sacrifices to the protection of the community, the individuals within it, and to protection against natural phenomena. In addition to these protections, the Dogon commonly ask *Ama* for a second type of protections against supernatural occurrences. These pertain to the evil influences, malevolent spirits and epidemics that strike the villagers throughout the year, especially during the hot dry season, which they refer to as the period of 'resting'.

I have introduced this description of the Dogon system of thought called *bulo* as if it were no more than a system that protects but also renews and maintains the cohesiveness of the social order through collective celebrations ruled by sacrificial practices. The *bulo* system does emphasize the relationships between the individual,

society, and nature. However, this system of thought, referring to *Ama* as well as to the ancestors and various spirits (Van Beek (b) 2003:100-101) does not only refer to a system of beliefs about the world, but is also a way of being-in-the-world⁶. Thus, *bulo* designates an active cosmological principle of dealing with and acting upon the world through ritual practice, and is thus constitutive of what it is to be Dogon people existing and living in the world.

2. The research site

I undertook the core of my ethnography in the village of Tireli, which is located on the scree of the Bandiagara escarpment. However, I shall also refer to the village of Kamba Sende, located on the Plateau and to Nombori, another village of the escarpment. Tireli is part of the *Cercle de Bandiagara* or District of Bandiagara. It is composed of two districts, Sodanga and Teri-ku that are divided into three sub-districts, which I shall discuss in chapters three and four. Tireli is the village of the Saye people (common ancestor origin). It possesses a local primary and secondary school. The students of the village generally go to Bandiagara to finish high school and to attend the BAC, the final exam in the French system. There is one clinic in the village and one NGO called *Projet Joliba* that deals with multiple local issues such as environmental management such as the construction of dykes. The village infrastructure includes three wells and a pump that is often broken, a bridge that allows access to the village during the rainy season (until recently the village was cut-off during this period). There is, of course, no electricity but the three main hotels of the villages have a generator. However, a few villagers possess a solar panel, and I came across two televisions and one person with a DVD/CD player (all

⁶ Ingold - UCL Material Culture Seminar 07/09/2006

in Teri-Ku). However, radios are more common in Teri-Ku and widespread in the Dogon Land.

As I recounted in the opening passage of the introduction (chapter one), I had the opportunity to live with a Dogon family. Their compound is located at the top of the scree near the public place. In 2002 the family was composed of Balugo (the 17 year-old head of the family), Yabemu (the 52 year-old mother), Akasom (the 13 year-old daughter), Domu (the 24 year-old daughter), her son Ogotemmelu (4 years old), Rebecca (the 5 year-old daughter of Yasiwe who lives at the bottom of the scree), and Brama (their 18 year-old cousin). The father Boureima had died in the mid-nineties. I worked mostly with my host family and the people (adults and teenagers) from Teri-ku, a total of 15 families. I carried out fieldwork between September 2002 and March 2004. I spent a total of 12 months in Tireli where my host brother Balugo assisted me, especially with the language aspect of my work. The last four months were spent in Bandiagara where I completed and cross checked my data through field trips, mostly in the villages of Kamba Sende and Pelou where I worked with my friend Antiamba Tembeli who was my assistant and interpreter. I had felt the need to frame the data collected in Tireli within a wider Dogon context – a Dogon friend had told me that I would ‘suffocate’ my work if I based my research exclusively on one village. I had the opportunity to return three times, once for Christmas to see my family, once in the rainy season for health reasons, and for a final four weeks to Tireli in February/March 2005 during which I checked if my interpretation and analysis were correct. In addition, prior to this, I had spent some weeks travelling in the Dogon land in 2002, carrying out a pilot study in order to define and to test the feasibility of my proposed research.

As I have mentioned, I conducted fieldwork in the *toro so* language-area with loan words I learned *in situ*. However, I was lucky in that most of my informants were fluent in French, added to which my host brother helped by translating for me. The

linguistic situation in the village of Tireli presented particular challenges for me, as its people also speak and use the *Jamsay* dialect spoken on the Plain, which was difficult for me to identify and to understand. To complicate matters further, some (mostly women) would give me the name of things or activities in *Dono so*, and the younger Dogon would also use *Bambara* words in conversation, probably to show me that they knew the national tongue. The few quotes I provide in the text are from untapped, daily conversations held either in French or simultaneously translated into French by my assistant. The use of a tape recorder posed methodological problems that I examine later in this chapter.

3. Research context and limitations

The village of Tireli where I carried out research is a popular tourist destination, in part because in 1989 UNESCO classified the Bandiagara escarpment area of the Dogon, on the scree of which the village is located, as a worldwide cultural heritage site (Cisse 2003). Its selection was due to the ‘originality’ and ‘authenticity’ of its unique cultural landscape. As a consequence, tourism has increased dramatically, with the area receiving between 20,000 and 80,000 visitors per year (Bedaux & Van der Waals 2003:12). As with many other places in Mali, the Dogon land has been plundered for decades, largely by art dealers who shop in the villages or buy objects from Dogon antiquarians (Bedaux & Rowlands 2001). The *Mission Culturelle de Bandiagara* has made many attempts to stop the squandering of Dogon material culture, notably through the creation of a local Museum (Konaré 1995; Sanhour 1995) in the village of Nombori. This project aims to preserve local patrimony *in situ* and *in vivo* by displaying people’s objects in a *Musée communautaire* managed by the villagers. In addition, the project constitutes an educational space that promotes the village’s local culture, its inhabitant’s historical knowledge, as well as the history of its families (Ardouin 2000). The museum does not only consist of an initiative for the protection of local cultural patrimony, but it also aims to develop

co-operative and responsible tourism through cultural exchanges (Ermert 2003). Similarly, in 2004 the *Mission Culturelle* created a local arts and traditions centre in the village of Ende (Diarrassouba 1995). This project constitutes a means of promoting both the production of the craft of and the techniques used by the crafts people of the village, i.e. the indigo dyers, the leatherworkers, and the blacksmiths.

3.1. Tourism and research in the Dogon land

Perhaps more crucially than its status as a tourist destination (Van Beek 2003(a)), the Dogon land also remains highly 'ethnographied' (Doquet 1999). The ethnographic conquest of the territory has contributed to the economic basis for the development of the institution of tourism in the Dogon. Tourism is appropriated and developed by both local and Western interests, and it is by ethnology that the tourist pilgrimages are largely inspired (Ciarcia 1998:108, Ciarcia 2001, 2003; Walther 2001). The various tourist guides and tourism agency websites invariably mention cultural-ethnographic dimensions such as the Dogon cosmogony, the divinations of the pale Fox or even animism. As such, French ethnology constitutes the starting point of the re-construction and manipulation of local folklore for economic uses (Doquet 1999). The case of the Dogon masquerade probably remains the most colourful example of this process (Doquet 1999, Richards 2000). In other words, the ethnographic tradition lead by Griaule produced, over time, the emancipation of a market based on the 're-cycling' of traditional and folkloric characteristics destined to attract tourists. In the same way, Dogon myth has been amplified through extensive research and tourism (Doquet 1999:116). The mythographic discourse found in Griaule's work on the Dogon cosmogony has contributed to the homogenization and the re-construction of Dogon culture as a cultural identity, ethnicity, and patrimony (Ciarcia 2001, 2003; Doquet 2002) that is negotiated between Dogon and Western encounters. The Dogon have understood the importance of the mythological and symbolic dimensions of their culture. Over

time, they have learned how to negotiate it in order to respond to the tourist's, the journalist's, the researcher's expectations. The long tradition of scholarly peregrinations has largely mysticized this escarpment culture renowned for its particular philosophical knowledge and views on the cosmos. In other words, the 'Griaulization' of the territory (Doquet 1999) has tended to see Dogon society as mysterious and static. Griaule's famous *Dieu d'eau* is in many places considered by the Dogon as the guarantee of their culture. In each of the country's tourist villages, it is not difficult to observe the locals extracting information from a copy of this book to satisfy Western enquiries (Doquet 1999; 207-241). Moreover, locals often deliberately embellish or idealize the information extracted to gratify the imagination of the visitors. The book has become a tool to legitimate Dogon cultural identity, ideologies, values, and implicit political power (Doquet 1999; Michel-Jones 1999). According to my experience, the materiality of ethnographic books serves to legitimize Dogon discourse and answers given to researchers. Young men and, more often than not, the chief of Dogon villages would frequently show me the books that the tourists left or sent to them, and would, for instance, on opening *Conversation with Ogotemméli* (Griaule 1966) say 'everything you want to know is in there'⁷. I had similar experiences, reinforced by a Dogon awareness of the development potential of their touristic, economic, and cultural identity, with these highly illustrated 'catalogues' (for example Joop van Stigt 1999).

The consequence of the Dogon people's ethnographic and touristic awareness is that doing research in their land remains a relatively difficult endeavour. In fact, during the pilot study that enabled me to evaluate the research site and to test the feasibility of my project, I came across an array of problems relating to the reality of the Dogon land of today and emanating from the locals' relationship to money that generally spoils interpersonal relationships and also hindered my collection of data

⁷ In French: 'Tout ce que tu veux savoir. Y à tout à tout la dedans'

through photos, observations, and interviews. This context persisted throughout the first four months of my stay in the village, the first part of my fieldwork. In Tireli and the Dogon generally, the generosity of tourists and of researchers has created a situation in which the Dogon people are dependent on the *toubab* (foreigner). As a result, villagers always have high hopes of Westerners, who are expected to bring cash, food, medicine, solar panels, radios, and cars or, in an analogous way, to build up the custom for a hotel so they can start up their own business. I often entered into interminable discussions with the locals trying to persuade them that I was just a ‘student’, my white skin betraying my repeated justifications that I was unable to give what they were insisting I should. As some Dogon say: ‘the white has made the Dogon used to money’⁸. Because of this, the villagers constantly and mechanically ask for something and the children pester the Westerners for pencils (*biki*), or money (*boudou*), or they follow visitors around trying to sell their drawings instead of going to school. In short, the impact of money cannot be underestimated. I will always remember my first months in Tireli, when collecting data by asking people questions or even attempting to take pictures was a complete nightmare. One young Dogon man told me: ‘The white is commercial. Here, everybody wants to have a white friend, because it brings money’⁹. Everything can be bought or sold, everything has a price: an interview, an observation, taking a picture. One of their best tricks to make a tourist pay for taking pictures is to say, once the pictures have been taken, of course, that the object or the place photographed is sacred. Thus, it needs to be purified and for this the price of a goat must be paid.

I found myself stuck in extremely complex and upsetting situations in which I felt aggressive because I could not ‘give’ to everybody, yet at the same time I felt guilty because I could not help people. Finally, I came to understand that if I gave nothing

⁸ In French: ‘ Le blanc a habitué les Dogon avec l’argent’.

⁹ In French: ‘ Le blanc est commercial. Ici, tout le monde veut avoir un ami blanc parceque ca rapporte’.

it did not matter, as another Westerner would be approached instead. The villagers were simply testing me to see what, if anything, they could get. However, from these tense, early contacts that consumed so much of my time, I rapidly learnt that being patient and more importantly understanding the local conception of as well as the local value of money would be the three 'rules' I would follow during my fieldwork. Coming to understand that £1 is still an immense amount of money for most of the villagers, meant that I could return the help they offered me through 'gifts', or as they put it *cadeaux*, of things that were needed in a particular compound. For instance, while working with women I would buy soap, spices, basins, buckets, cooking utensils, clothes for the children, medicines, stationary for the students...etc. My aim, because of the immensely negative impact it had on my relationships with people at the beginning of my stay as well as on my research, was to not spoil the village with money. However, by remaining in the village and taking part in everyday activities I finally gained their trust, confidence and, more importantly, their friendship, which was priceless. In contrast to this, my experience of living and working with my host family was completely different to that which I had with the villagers. Money matters were never debated in the compound and they never asked for a single thing. However, the research context of the village described above forced me to develop strategies and tools that I detail in the next section. Suffice to say that the context and the villagers taught me the methods I used: Cross-checking information, relying on observation followed by participation (with limitations), and not relying on open discourse or letting my informants decide the meeting time and place were amongst the strategies I employed. With these strategies and my three rules in place, I constructed my research schedule without rushing things according to the vilagers' availability, willingness, and time.

3.2. Failures and personal limitations

My fieldwork has, of course, limitations. First, my status as a young, Western, agnostic, single woman with no children posed problems in the sense that I did not have access to men's knowledge and rituals such as sacrificial practices. Therefore, although I observed men's activities, such as the construction of granaries, I did not take part in the process because they would not allow it. This led me to focus my work on the practices of, mostly, the women's everyday life and on the shared knowledge that is both accessible to everyone and known by the majority of people within the village. My multiple participatory attempts to assist with daily tasks such as pounding grain or collecting water or wood and carrying it back to the compound failed. I have to say that I was particularly awkward at doing these things, but they had a good laugh! I was also naïve to believe that everything could be visually recorded from the outset. At first, carrying a camera around conflicted with my aims, as people would not allow me to take pictures without my paying them. However, this situation remedied itself after a while, when they realized that I was there for the long-term. In the end, most of the photographs were taken by Balugo my host brother, with me duplicating and 'returning' those which the villagers wanted back. In fact, I rapidly became the village portrait photographer, as most of the villagers agreed to work with me on the basis that I take photos of their families in their compound. This turned out to be very useful for me, as I got to know more people and therefore expanded my network of friends and informants. However, I count the multiple technical problems I had with my cameras among my failures, and am conscious of the limitations of my work, as I would probably have done it differently had my status and circumstances been otherwise. One limiting factor that my outsider status made it hard to avoid, was that, for some people, I was seen as a form of entertainment, as I appeared and acted in unusual ways and generally asked 'strange' questions. In the end, some of the villagers tried to extract things from me,

some paid no attention to my presence after awhile and some were really annoyed by my being there.

It would still be interesting return to Tireli to test out my thesis. I would not be surprized if things had changed after three years, nor if people were to tell me things differently to how they had before. In fact, I am still convinced that, unconsciously, people always adapt their discourse according to the particular context from which they do and talk about things and their needs. I have already mentioned that the context in which I worked was very tense due to both the effects of tourism and the food crisis that remains the main daily concern of the Dogon people. As a result, this tension forms the core of my analysis and theme of my thesis. I suggest that my data might be different if collected in a context in which life were more stable. In such a situation, Dogon containers would probably mean something else and their daily cosmology would enfold other views on the world. This is why I propose a cosmology that is changeable and relative in the sense that it is shaped by people's life, contingencies, choices, and events.

3.3. Methodological limitations

On the escarpment the ethnographic interview as a tool for information gathering remains, in most circumstances, problematic. As mentioned above, my experience was that the information collected is biased and largely imbued with Griaule's ethnographic statements compiled into symbolic stereotypes which serve to substantiate the authenticity and the uniqueness of traditional Dogon culture and therefore to acknowledge and assert local identity (This has also been underlined by Doquet 1999: 207-241). Moreover, conducting interviews in the area of the Bandiagara escarpment often leads to local attitudes of suspicion, partial mutism, deliberate modifications of the information or even to lies and jokes. I was most certainly the dupe of some conversations on rubbish in which my informants told

me that the members of the cathartic/joking alliance or *alliance a plaisanter* that are called to resolve conflicts through obscenity dilute their faeces in millet beer that they subsequently drink to overcome and reinforce the self. When I checked the information with other people in Tireli they burst into laughter and told me that my informants were clearly pulling my leg! I decided after this, to conduct my interviews at the end of my fieldwork as a means to check the data I had collected through participant observations and daily conversations with the people I had known for a long time and whom I could trust. However, I did not do this in a systematic way. When I needed to verify some information, I set up a thematic or 'aide-mémoire' questionnaire that I employed in a 'chat context'. These interviews, I was allowed to record. I also found out that there is always a particular way to ask questions. This results from a learning process and of course, knowing the context and the people. Although I quote people in the text, my ethnography is mostly based upon participant observation and informal conversations. I will now present the main methods I used.

4. Methodological framework: towards an *Anthropology of Techniques*

This study of Dogon cosmology as related to domestic containers is framed within an *Anthropology of Techniques* (Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Haudricourt 1968, Lemonnier 1976, 1992, 1993) that is grounded in bodily experience of material forms. I have based it on and developed it here upon the assumption that there can only be a context-specific methodology. In this case, the methodology took into account the specificity of the Dogon present-day reality that I had evaluated during a pre-fieldwork trip in 2001. As I detailed in the previous section, researching in the Dogon Land remains problematic today. In fact, due to massive levels of tourism and the considerable impact of scientific research on indigenous daily life (in some places), the systematic use of traditional ethnographic tools such as the interview and, by extension, the collection of open discourse, is ineffective if used to the

exclusion of other methods. Consequently, I grounded my observations in my participation in daily life and framed them within two methodological threads: praxeology combined with phenomenology and the *chaîne opératoire* or operational sequence.

4.1. Praxeology and phenomenology

The praxeological approach elaborated by Warnier (1999, 2001 see also Julien & Warnier 1999) who borrowed it from Parlebas (1999) and which I apply in my project, stems from Mauss's *Techniques of the body* (1936) and Foucault's *Techniques of the self* (1989). It is defined as a way to explore the object world through the body's sensory and kinetic experience of materiality (Warnier 1999, 2001). In other words, praxeology deals with the idea that material culture constitutes the mediation of all of our bodily senses and motricity, and that these are grounded in the subject as the result of a daily process of learned skills in practice (Warnier 2001). Thus, this method asserts a constant mutual shaping between people and artefacts through a process of objectification of the bodily dynamic and likewise of material embodiment. My interest in praxeology is twofold. First, it enables me to underline Dogon '*savoir-faire*' or knowledge about *making* and *doing* things in daily life (Dobres & Robb 2005). In other words, praxeology constitutes a compelling way to highlight local life-style, as well as quotidian organization and temporalities. Second, by concentrating on people's bodily movements in the management of domestic and social space and forms, praxeology allows me to underscore the native worldviews as objectified and mediated by the material praxis of containers.

The praxeological dimension I wish to bring to my project differs from Warnier's subjectivation or constitution of the individual as a process or internalization of body motricity and sensory-affective-experience within an individual's 'psychic

envelope' that is operated through the mediation of objects (Warnier 1999: 161, Warnier 2001; Warnier & Bayart 2004). In my view, the psychoanalytical conceptualization of the African individual/self remains unwieldy, notably because of the application of Western models and categories to non-Western individuals in an *unlike* socio-cultural context. This has led for decades to the misconceptualization of the African self as diffracted and 'schizophrenic' instead of unified (Ortigues 1966). From a different standpoint, I think that it is social relationships or intersubjective processes that craft the individual's self as a directed outer self. Following Bourdieu (1993), I suggest that subjectivity is founded in everyday life practice and cultural transmission. In other words, it results from the socialization processes that I observed in the field. This is borne out by the simple fact that the 'doing' of things occurs in gendered, age-grouped activities that correspond to particular stratifications and organizations within African societies. Through the emulation and the co-ordination of tasks, the individual's self becomes indissociable from others. In this way, I do not consider agency as individualistic (Law & Hassard 1999). On the contrary, I prefer to see it as a grounded network of synchronized and negotiated interactions. These are mediated by the materiality of objects that are viewed as corporeal and, in terms of efficacy, as the capacity they have to forge or to act upon individuals in particular situations (Arnoldi, Geary, Hardin 1996; Gell 1998).

In this thesis I explore multiple forms of praxeology that emerge through various daily embodied tasks. In the first part (chapters 3, 4, and 5), I examine the Dogon landscape, the bush and the village, through both daily taskscapes (Ingold 2000) and walking through the land (Thomas 1990; Tilley 1994, 2004; Edensor 2000; Ingold 2004). The perception of the landscape through walking as a whole body experience constitutes a means of understanding the world (Tuan 1974). I describe the multiple areas of which the landscape is composed through the experience of crossing and acting upon the land. Through this, the Dogon landscape is known, conceptualized,

and bounded. Then, in the second part (chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9), I develop the praxeology as a making and use process of domestic containers. I look at the body involvement in the manufacture of a female earth granary and the storing process involved. In the introductory chapter on the compound, the praxeology is manifest through the description of the making of the compound, notably through objects, daily activities, their locations in the compound, i.e. the uses of the place that define the compound as an active ground. Finally, my account of waste shows the outcome of activities and daily, embodied practice in the home. Domestic waste exists here as a bi-product of activity. I look at the experience of rubbish and therefore its relation to the body.

Praxeology situates itself within the continuity of phenomenology that postulates the knowing of the world through the body's senses (Heidegger 1962; Merleau-Ponty 1962, Schutz 1967). In other words, phenomenology consists of knowing the world of 'others' through our own perception and experience of their world (Jackson 1996:29). It is a dialectical process of knowing which occurs between an object world perceived and a subject perceiving, towards which we project ourselves through our senses and actions. This process of knowing the world is defined by Merleau-Ponty (1962: 138) as practical knowledge. Therefore, phenomenology consists of a practical lived experience made of shared intentionality (Sartres 1958) and agency (Shutz 1989). By placing emphasis upon the body kinetic grounded into a systematic daily-life praxis of matter and of objects and the sensory experience of things, I stress the relationships between the materiality (Miller 2005) of containers and the body. In other words, I am interested in how Dogon people make themselves in the world (Heidegger 1962) and at home in the world (Jackson 1995) through their body sensory experiences of containers and their content. In summary, phenomenology in combination with praxeology provides a clear insight into the local understanding and bodily-sense of materiality through the examination of gestures and, more specifically, the tactile experience of matter in the emulation of

material forms which create particular ontologies. That is, the two together relate individuals to their existing world through matter. Thus, the body constitutes here a fundamental source of knowing, learning, and thinking about the world (Csordas 1994; 2002).

In this account of Dogon containers, I do not consider praxeology and phenomenology as only an analytical framework but also as a method of fieldwork. I am writing about shared embodied practice. By following people in their daily life, I experienced things through my body while observing and participating in Dogon daily life. Hence, it constitutes a way of collecting data. By doing so, I experience the Dogon world like a child who has to learn everything from the beginning. This involves walking on the scree, climbing the escarpment and even eating hot food with my hands. My body was constantly experiencing multiple strains, pains, and transformations due to the constraints of the place. This led me to a progressive embodiment of the place. Finally, I use praxeology and phenomenology as a means to write about bodily movement and experience. This appears in the *chaîne opératoire* scheme that I will now define.

4.2. 'Making' and 'Doing' processes as a *chaîne opératoire*

As proposed by Ingold (2000), artefacts are defined as the product of human agency and are, therefore, a 'coming-into-being' through human practice. In other words, the basket that he describes emerges through its 'making', i.e. through its being woven. From this perspective, I look, in chapter eight, at the making process of an earth granary that is designed by the body and without plans. The container is shaped day by day through the tactile experience of the earth matter and the builder's body dynamic, or body technique (Mauss 1936, 2006; Schlangler 1991), as objectified in the material form. The shape and measure result from learned skills in practice and, as pointed out by Ingold (2000), it requires the body's engagement

with the matter. This occurs fundamentally, through the emulation of forms, the pounding, grinding, and crushing as well as through the haptic experience of matter in which body rhythms, such as its motion inside and outside the container, are objectified. I suggest here that the Dogon sense of materiality is generated and constituted at its most fundamental level by body rhythms which attribute particular configurations to containers while the matter is processed, the material form is made and, subsequently, used. The notion of ‘using’ or *doing* containers consists of a series of experienced and participatory daily life habits defined by shared body rhythm that are expressed in collective or semi-collective activities such as in walking, cultivating the fields or pounding clay. In other words, I propose that on the one hand, ‘making’ containers consists of a creative and generative or ‘coming-into-being’ process through which material forms take shape, while on the other hand, ‘doing’ things concerns the daily practical uses of an existing object through which the object decays, i.e. goes through a process that is a ‘coming-to-an-end’. Both processes of ‘making’ and ‘doing’ as embodied practices are practices that define through body motricity and the sensory experience of the materiality of containers. I expose the ‘doing’ and ‘making’ of things through sequences of manufacture and uses of containers with particular reference to the ‘making’ and ‘doing’ of a female granary. These visual and descriptive sequences are called *chaînes opératoires* or operational sequences (Leroi-Gourhan 1943, 1945; Lemonnier 1976, 1980).

As a means to identify the different operational stages in the processing and the shaping of local material forms used in a compound, I frame my in-the-field observations within a *chaîne opératoire* scheme. This allows me to highlight the technical stages of the manufacturing process and the use of containers through visual recordings of activities as well as through detailed and empirical ethnographic descriptions. These sequences reveal the step-by step transformation of matter employed in the seasonal making of receptacles and of their daily uses. This

fieldwork method was originally developed by Lemonnier (1976, 1980, 1992) as part of the French archaeology and *Anthropology of Techniques* founded by Leroi-Gourhan (1943, 1945). This influential method was, notably, employed by Gosselain (1992, 2000) in his examination of the spatial distribution of technological style and social identity among the Baffia potters of Cameroon. Equally, this method constitutes a key analytical tool in the identification and the understanding of situated practice such as extracting, transforming, preparing, practicing, repairing, recycling or discarding objects (Dobres 2000). Hence, containers can be framed within a life-cycle sequence by recording everything from their birth or making, through the processing and shaping of matter, then on through their life or domestic use and, finally, right up to their death or, after death, through to their recycling. In that sense, the idea of *chaîne opératoire* constitutes a way of underscoring networks of implicit relationships between the life cycle of people, the environment, and objects as part of one same cultural process. I intentionally repeat and expand on this method in chapter eight, directly linking this to chapter nine in which I deal with *chaînes opératoires*, in order to provide greater clarity about the presentation and analysis of the data.

In conclusion, this thesis frames Dogon containers within an *Anthropology of Techniques* that concerns the making and doing of material forms through body kinetic and sensory experience of matter and forms. This *Anthropology of Techniques* is explored through praxeology and phenomenology with a particular emphasis upon bodies' relationships to objects as well as to objects in the making. These relationships define the 'making' and the 'doing' as shared embodied practices occurring in collective and thus participatory daily tasks or, in other words, as individual and relational agencies through objects (Law & Hassard 1999).

5. Subsidiary methods: mapping the landscape

I begin chapters three and four with the maps that I drew with my informants as an initial means of looking at the definition of the village's territory and its more generally at its boundaries. I then illustrate the paths that cross the village and the bush vertically and horizontally with a map designed by my assistant in Tireli. While the first map is a Western translation of the boundary mechanism of Tireli based on my informants' explanations, I decided to keep the second as it was designed by my assistant who regularly draws such maps for the tourists that he guides in the village. These maps were made by walking with my informants through the land as well as by standing at the top of the escarpment in order to visualize and to check the maps that as Western translations of the place they know cause the villagers problems in understanding and reading.

To better understand the local conception of the territory in terms of its symbolic spatial divisions and boundaries, I propose a scheme based on local notions of inside/outside. This scheme was designed with the help of my assistant, on the basis of various *in situ* descriptions by our informants from Teri-Ku. These were mostly men. In fact, although women would briefly tell me about the location of the altars, they would say that I should speak to their husband because 'they know better what it is all about'. Hence, it should be emphasized that the mapping of the land, as proposed here, remains a male discourse. Further, the scheme we designed constitutes a visual Western translation. The divisions of space are in fact embodied, i.e. experienced, through visual recognition of prominent elements that map out the land¹⁰. The mapping methods I use are based on a method used by the GTZ project based in Bandiagara and which was looking at the installation of water dams in the Dogon villages of the Plateau.

¹⁰ This aspect of cognitive maps is not explored in this work.

First, I asked my informants¹¹ to draw a map of the village, which they did in the sand¹² and which I could not read. Since the object of the exercise was to map out the altars of the village, I then retained a list of the protection elements they felt were the most important constitutive elements of the village. This was hard work since they could not spatialize the elements of the village within the approximate circle they had drawn on the ground to represent the village. From this point, we proceeded to define the village and its outside through questions about the altars that protect Tireli and its inhabitants. We then looked at how these protections divide the place and create an inside-village enclosure. However, because the drawing process failed, Balugo (who was assisting me) took a sheet of paper and reproduced the descriptions of our informants. To this, he added his personal experience and knowledge of the place. Finally, I reproduced a map from my informants' and my assistant's first draft. I completed this during my stay and subsequently re-checked it with the village. However, it should be noted that the material I present here was collected from Teri-Ku, i.e. one half of Tireli only. The political tensions which exist between Teri-Ku and Sodanga, the other main district of Tireli, prevented me from researching the conception of boundaries in Sodanga as it remained relatively difficult to work in Sodanga¹³.

It would be interesting to undertake further research in Sodanga to see if there are any other elements that would potentially complement the scheme designed by the people of Teri-Ku. Given the great diversity of altars and shrines in Dogon villages, I would not be surprised if there were altars complementary to those of Teri-Ku in the Sodangan half of the village. Consequently, the local model I propose – my

¹¹ I did not ask collectively but I discussed it with five different persons. I agree that the mapping process should have been done in a more systematic way. However, I am convinced that the result provides a fair description of the village territory.

¹² I regret not have taking any pictures.

¹³ See introduction of the thesis for methodological details and account on the fieldwork experience.

translation into a Western map – is based upon a shared daily experience of moving in and out of the village areas with the people of Teri-Ku.

6. Ethical considerations

I received full permission from the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique et Technique* of Bamako to do research in Dogon land N°65/CNRST/2002. I was affiliated with the *Institut des Science Humaines* of Bamako and the *Mission Culturelle de Bandiagara* from which I received full support and approval. The information I provide in my thesis is common knowledge that is known or accessible to everybody in the village. This thesis is about the discourse of everyday life. All my informants were aware of the motives of my research and the production of this thesis. I received permission from the villagers to take the pictures that are reproduced here. With regard to anonymity or the naming of my informants, I mostly mention my host family and the people who agreed and asked to be part of the work. To respect the anonymity of people who felt uncomfortable with their name appearing in the thesis I put ‘my informant(s)’.

7. Chapters, content, and organization of the thesis.

I have organized the present work within a ‘containment’ structure that has developed from the topic and content of my research. The system of containers I develop in the narrative is reflected in the organization of the different chapters. That is, in the manner of a system of containers stacked within each other or in the manner of a self contained model. Beyond, the introductory chapters one and two in which I expose the theme of this research, its conceptual framework, ethnographic background and methodological implications, the next seven chapters are structured within two containment scales. In fact, chapters three, four and five concern the landscape as a container, while chapters six, seven, eight and nine deal with the

compound and its content. Therefore, the first three chapters encompass the last four. Similarly, chapter three, which deals with the spatial scheme of Tireli, acts as a container for chapters four and five concerning the village and its outside respectively. In the same vein, chapter six, which introduces the Dogon compound, provides containment to chapter seven, which deals with the domestic waste found on its surface, and to chapters eight and nine on the granaries of which the Dogon compound is composed. Finally, in chapter ten, I conclude with a discussion of Dogon containers as the expression of a philosophy of containment.

3.

The Dogon cosmoscape.

Conceptual boundaries and inside/outside dialectics as a dwelling process

The landscape's characteristics and the aesthetics of the village of Tireli originate from a particular geomorphologic setting and configuration defined by the Bandiagara cliffs that cross the land from South West to North East. However, the magnificence of the place hides a dimension of absence that replicates itself and pauperizes local daily life. This extremely dry landscape of scarcity generates a local obsession with water that reinforces both humanitarian and environmental concerns about the fertility of the soil, the production of crops, and the prosperity of families. Undeniably wronged by an increasing desertification process triggered by dreadful climatic variations, the Dogon people are excessively dependent upon the natural environment, constantly facing fateful rain shortfalls that limit the natural growing of cereals. Every year, this generates localized food shortages that remain more difficult for certain families than others. Along with this common Sub-Saharan predicament and the impoverishment of the cultivated soil, the fierce human action exerted upon the land and native fauna through hunting and overexploitation of timber resources, have contributed to a regressive exhausting of the natural resources. This precarious Dogon landscape, is nevertheless, crossed daily and is seasonally embodied through agrarian taskscapes (Ingold 2000). It constitutes the harsh ground of local daily routine. This landscape objectifies a particular locale, the core of which possesses a constant ontological insecurity. Wars, raiding parties and

wild life determine the establishment of Dogon villages on the naturally defensible sites of the escarpment scree. Through the day-to-day experience of their landscape, the Dogon have developed over time particular worldviews that tell about how the world was and how it is today.

Based on this dialectic of the embodiment of place through daily and ritual practice, this chapter examines some of the dimensions of Dogon worldviews that relate to the ways they conceptualize the landscape or cosmoscape in which they contain themselves. To do this I explore the intensive and versatile human-environment dialectics that constantly reify local systems of beliefs and ritual practice. These have been elaborated over the centuries as a means of coping with environmental vicissitudes and thereby ensuring the continuity of life. Indeed, based upon a close-knit human dependency on natural resources, the Dogon spiritual complex of thoughts, laws, and prohibitions, namely *omolo*¹⁴ rules both the sacred and the profane. Although a renewed outbreak or even partial eradication of this ‘traditional’ system in some villages, by an expanding modernism and sporadic religious conversions (notably to Islam and Catholicism), this spiritual doctrine still orders and regulates much of the society as well as the land by interconnecting their life cycles. The Dogon cosmoscape fundamentally constitutes the memory and therefore the property of the ancestors and spirits. It is through these ancestors and spirits as vital forces that the land is animated and mapped out. In other words, as a living and humanized container in which people dwell, this landscape forms a folded surface into which people’s realities – encompassing the dimensions of self, others, and nature – inscribe themselves with the passage of time.

¹⁴ See chapter two

1. Introducing the Dogon cosmoscape

The Dogon cosmoscape is framed within a particular space-time continuum that is considered here as cultural and context specific. The spatiality of the landscape involves the way it is bounded and conceptualized through bodily movement. My long-term participation in domestic Dogon life throughout an agrarian cycle enables me to give depth to the experience. Therefore, through the embodiment of workaday tasksapes, I progressively integrate a closer, native conception of their own space. Thus, the way I understand the local cosmoscape is forged out of repeated walking as well as by learning the ways of decoding the environment and its particular configurations (Ingold 2004). This allows me to locate myself within the everyday. Thereby, it is in terms of ‘the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them’ (Ingold 2000: 193) that I consider the notion of landscape and hence of cosmoscape. In other words, as an active ground, mapped out, transformed and consumed, the landscape becomes known and familiar to its users. This praxis, canalized by multiple paths, constitutes an act of appropriation (Tilley 1994). That is, the land is marked down through people’s ‘footprints’ and those of the ancestors who founded the place (Ingold 2004, Prussin 1999). To summarize, knowing the landscape is about acting upon it and placing ourselves within various embodied boundaries that create particular inside locales and outside worlds.

The symbolic protection of the Dogon cosmoscape by a series of altars that enclose its territory, as defined in chapter two, involves a particular philosophy of action (Blier 1987). This philosophy concerns the activation or re-activation of ontological boundaries that make people ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger 1962), a world that

belongs to the ancestors and to God (*Ama*) but that is made by people for themselves.

2. Spatial enclosures and inside/outside dialectics

The Dogon live in a milieu that is conceptually and materially bound by a series of contiguous semi-circles in which they dwell and thus gather their own world around themselves (Heidegger 1962). These enclosures create particular liveable configurations by forming a system generated through a series of symbolic and ritual elements that map out the land. Indeed, the local system of thought emerging from the relationships between people and their god, ancestors, and spirits organizes and defines the place (Vincent, Dory, Verdier 1995). On the one hand, it institutes a network of protection for its material and human content. On the other, it constitutes a behaviour control device as well as attempting to act upon the unpredictable environment. Thereby, the Dogon conceptual boundaries account for an ontological principle of self-containment by which people locate themselves and act in the world. The structure and mechanism of these enclosures define a local dwelling perspective (Ingold 2000). Furthermore, they create particular spatial divisions which reflect perceptions and conceptions of the world. Enclosures can therefore be said to reveal environmental concerns as well as objectifying indigenous social organization in terms of kinship, gender, and age group strata. Hence, these boundaries serve to give a particular sense of attachment (Serfaty-Garzon 2003) to the land and incorporation into the world. They convey principles of cohesion and continuity for the society that I shall define in terms of a gathering process (Heidegger 1962).

As place making devices, these container boundaries give rise to particular inside/outside dialectics, the conceptions of which result from a daily bodily shared experience of the place (Strathern 1998). They define the ways in which people of a

particular culture empower a 'safe inside' in which they live. This is conceptually opposed to a contiguous 'outside' world standing beyond their fixed yet fluid boundaries (Cohen 2000). In other words, the inside/outside spatial dialectics produce a particular ontological security (Giddens 1984, 1991) of the inside as well as an insecurity of the outside as it is objectified in immaterial space containers. This insecurity is rooted in the harsh environment. Overlaying this is a latent social instability generated by tense relationships between the individuals, which constitute recurrent and long-term fatal conflicts instigated by witchcraft practices. Additionally, the Dogon see the multiple external misfortunes and calamities such as the epidemics, roads, local wars, and malevolent spirits that threaten life and distort society as permanent and latent sources of disorder. Consequently, in order to cope with such a climate of uncertainty and shifting contexts, people and villages (in this case Tireli) enclose themselves materially and conceptually as a means of maintaining the permanence of life and the stability of the whole system.

The conceptual and physical boundaries of the Dogon territory of Tireli are defined by acts of spatial appropriation that frame a material practice. A sense of place is established by the planting and yearly activation of a series of altars that symbolically attach people to a place. While the three altars called *muno* protect the village space, the *Lebe* plays a particular role in regenerating social cohesion and maintaining its continuity. Within this, the system of altars enact as a gathering process that creates a sense of 'togetherness' (Heidegger 1962). Together, these four ritual elements made of stone and/or mud, that I shall describe in detail later, constitute sacred places and are loaded with local history as well as identities. In the following section, I explore, through an examination of these altars, Dogon ideas of containment that designate the way people include themselves in as well as dwell in the world through embodied practice. This involves a particular making of space that I describe in terms of the conceptual bounding and division of Dogon village space. Furthermore, I look at the particular ontological security that this system

generates to ensure the continuity of Dogon society. I propose that the altars preserve a certain sense of local unity by acting upon nature through the control of boundaries. Through their materiality, the altars fix these social and existential principles¹⁵, revealing a primary condition of Dogon cosmology: the relationships between the surrounding environment and local community that define through a process of ‘making oneself in the world’.

3. The definition of Tireli territory: physical limits and space divisions

As part of the 30 villages of the Bandiagara escarpment, the village of Tireli extends over a scree slope approximately 400 meters in length that creates a natural protective niche. The settlement is comprised of two main districts: Sodanga in the North East and Teri-Ku in the South West. Each of these is then subdivided into three sub areas: Sodanga, Tatara and Gudjoguru, and Dama, Sâpo and Komanga respectively. The distance between the two furthest points of the village is about 1.3 km. Tireli is delimited by a series of prominent features that make its landscape unique. While the village is characterized on its North side by a 600-meter -high escarpment, in the South it is bounded by dunes. These natural features create a furrow running parallel to the escarpment as well stretching along the edge of the Seno Gondo Plain. The field boundaries of Tireli border those of the villages of Ourou (1km) and Komankani (4.5 km) on the West and of the village of Amani (3km) on the East. These land delimitations are known to the respective owners of the fields and regularly generate vivid conflicts between the three villages. The zone sandwiched between the escarpment and the dune is a patchwork of fields. These wet season fields are turned into gardens during the cold dry season. They contain dispersed trees and the cultivated fringe in the vicinity of the settlement is sliced in

¹⁵In their edited volumes, Vincent, Dory, and Verdier propose a ‘Religious construction of the territory’.

two by the river that is straddled by a number of Dogon villages. These boundaries are crossed daily by people moving vertically and horizontally along paths that are constantly in use. Paths in the sand are also marked out and consolidated into wider routes by the constant passage of four-wheel-drive vehicles that bring the tourists to Tireli; these wider routes are also used by local mopeds, bicycles, and carts¹⁶. These natural limits stand as reference points in space that are redesigned through human movement as well as the change of season¹⁷.

I will define Tireli territory as a humanized portion of the landscape that is naturally and symbolically bounded. In this chapter I will show that this results from a long process of appropriation and settlement. Although it is humanly occupied and transformed, the territory is owned by the ancestors and spirits that created it and still animate the land (Vincent, Dory and Verdier 1995). Thus, the inhabited and cultivated areas constitute what I call the territory of Tireli¹⁸ while Tireli itself is defined by the locals as the built zone that is called the village (*ana*). In fact, as expressed by the villagers the fields, gardens, and orchards located in the domesticated bush (*oru*) ‘belong to Tireli’ while Tireli is “where we live”. The limits of the territory of Dogon villages as proposed by Petit: ‘(...) are characterized by altars or shrines (often a conical bollard made of earth) that protect the village against epidemics,[and] bad spirits¹⁹, (Petit 1998:39). In Tireli, the village space that is bounded on the East and West by the protection altars is also physically delimited by the escarpment that is located to the North of the village. As proposed by Petit, Tireli territory as in many other areas of the Dogon land can be conceptualized ‘[...] by considering the village as a central point that stands in the middle of series of concentric circles. As we leave the central point of the settlement, we leave the

¹⁶The idea of mobility and crossing the boundaries is developed in chapter three.

¹⁷This point is further developed in the second part of the chapter five in which I cover the multiple elements that constitute the cultivated area of the village.

¹⁸I did not find a local equivalent term that would refer to the whole of it in its entirety.

¹⁹Translation by Laurence Douny

civilised world [...] to penetrate into an increasingly unknown and distant dangerous world²⁰ (Petit 1998: 39). This invisible boundary is materialized by the altars that distinguish the natural and ‘dangerous’ space of the bush from the ‘safe’ cultural space of the village and its surroundings where most social and domestic activities take place. This ‘domesticated bush’ is referred to by Tireli people as the “outside” of the village and is passed through in order to reach the undomesticated bush. Hence, the village is contained by a symbolic boundary within which the surface of the settlement is delimited and protected. In other words, the definition of the Dogon territory involves a conjuncture of ‘physical’ and ‘symbolic’ space.

4. Local inside/outside conceptions

As described by the inhabitants of Tireli, the space they occupy can be defined conceptually in terms of an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’. This is illustrated in the map provided below (Fig 2.1). The ‘inside’ is commonly designated as the village which is defined as “The place where people live. That is where you find our compounds”. The village, therefore, corresponds to the built area called *ana koro* which is sometimes also called *ana bere*. Its verb form translates as ‘to surround with’ as in the following example provided by Calame-Griaule: *surrounding a plant with a hedge of thorns to protect it* or from the same perspective *to surround a herd with a fence to prevent it running away* (Calame-Griaule 1968:162-163). While *koro* refers to the calabash container, *bere* signifies the village as its stomach or entrails. The term is often used in the daily expression *bere joo*, that is, the filling up of the body with food or drink. The term that often designates the container used for domestic purpose in Tireli is *koju*. This word is borrowed from the *jamsay* language spoken in the North-East zone of the plain. Although in Tireli, the association village-calabash

²⁰Translated by Laurence Douny

is not made conceptually, in some other places, such as in Nombori, the inside of the village is deliberately conceived of as being a container. As reported by Jolly and Guindo²¹ who assisted in 1989 at the enthronement of the spiritual chief or *Hogon* of Nombori, one of the story tellers sitting in the assembly, recounted that the world is represented by a full calabash (Jolly & Guindo 2003). The firmament is identified with the half of the container that blew up into space and the earth corresponds to the other half that stayed down. This explains why, as conceived in Dogon thought, the sky became a vault and the earth became hollow or container like. Such a solid metaphor indicates that the village is thought of as a containing figure. A similar description of the Dogon world as a container was provided by the old Ogotêmmeli in Griaule's *Dieu d'eau* (1966).

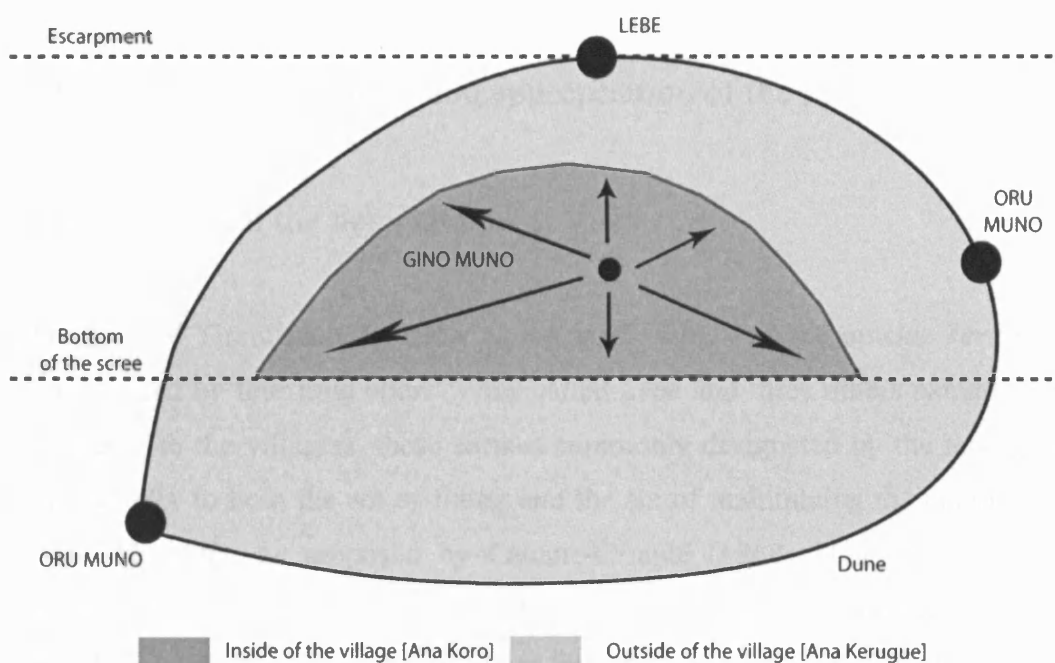


Fig. 3.1. A schema of the Village of Tireli.

²¹Nohoum Guindo is a local self-trained ethnologist who currently practices as a research assistant. He is specialised in ethnobotany and linguistics.

I suggest that the metaphor of the village as being like a container can say something about the physical, defensive qualities of the site and therefore how Dogon people benefit from the natural protection of the scree as well as from their own built environment. In fact, while the rocky slope is difficult to access, the Dogon compounds and in particular their granaries create ramparts that have prevented assaults from humans and wild animals in the past. The ‘outside’ is called *ana kerugue* which means ‘on the side of’. On the one hand, this includes the fringe situated between the village and the dune cord that contains, notably, the gardens, the fields, and the trees. On the other hand, this outside portion is also made up of patchy cultivated areas amongst the rocks which weave around the top and sides of the ‘inside village’.

5. The *pegu*²² altars: fixing and appropriation of the place

5.1 Definition of the *pegu* altars

The space of Tireli, named locally as the inside *koro* and the outside *kerugue*, is characterized by four mud altars²³: one called *Lebe* and three others named *Muno*. According to the villagers, these shrines commonly designated by the term *pegue* or *pegu* refer to both the act of fixing and the act of maintaining the continuity of things. However, as proposed by Calame-Griaule (1968: 217) the term refers strictly to the altar at which the village or its built-up area was founded. In Tireli when I asked if there was a general term for the four altars I was investigating, my informants gave me the term *pegu*. Hence, following their naming, I would suggest

²²It can also be designated by the term *pegue*.

²³There are surely many other altars in the village. However, the objective of this account is not to list and analyse all the elements.

that the term *pegu* relates to any altar that delimits and protects the village. In other words, they relate to those sites that mark out the space of the bush surrounding the village. The first of these altars is located where the settlement was first founded and is also the most important for protecting it. These *pegu* mostly reaffirm the idea of a shared common ancestry and therefore the unity of the *Saye*²⁴ people.

Located in a relatively inaccessible area, the *pegu* altars are either literally ‘planted’ in the ground or stood upright on the surface. The term *pegu* relates to a particular process of constituting the object and was described to me as follows. The foundation of a *pegu* is reported²⁵, in the past, to have been accompanied by the sacrifice of a person standing in a hole in the ground and in whose skull a metallic hook had been ‘planted’ (Bouju 1995(a): 355). This hook would then communicate with the mud altar and convey to it the male victim’s *nyama*, that is, the vital force or energy that flows through his body and ensures the individual’s equilibrium (Calame-Griaule 1968:205-206). Released from the victim’s body, the force is transferred to the shrines as a means of empowering the artefact. The protection qualities are simultaneously conferred to the mud cone through declamatory words which activate the object²⁶.

The empowered altar is then sited on a chosen location generally out of reach (on a promontory). A similar process regarding the individual *guerine* statues was recounted to me by a blacksmith from another village. His cast was originally in charge of producing these statues dedicated to an individual, a family or a clan. The objects are still used for protection so as to prevent harm, to defend when attacked, to conjure when reached as well as to offend in the case of sorcery. The making of a *guerine* required the burying alive of either a child of the family (for his purity) or

²⁴ *Saye* is the family name of all people from Tireli.

²⁵ This was told to me by two informant blacksmiths.

²⁶ I have been told that the making, functioning, and practice of the collective *pegue* as well as the individual shrines function in the same mode.

an enemy (for his strength). The victim transferred his force to the statue while dying. Human sacrifice would then be used to reactivate or reinforce the statue, via the pouring of the individual's blood on the object. According to my informant, this practice has now changed to the using of dogs which possess a high *nyama* that is similar to humans. This is an interesting point in relation to the materiality of the shrine as mud can be made here. In fact, as it is made of earth, the same material used in the making of the house and granaries, the altar undergoes the same process of repairing as the built environment. This consists of the seasonal re-plastering of the artefact with a layer of mud. There seems to be here a strong connection between the body of the altar and that of the house²⁷. Fusing into the landscape, the mud altars located in dune and the rock altar standing in the scree take on the camouflage qualities of the landscape²⁸.

5.2. The *muno* and *Lebe* altars

The first village altar described to me was the *ginu muno*. It constitutes an inner-areas protective device that covers all the *ana koro* or inhabited areas. According to one of my assistants, the term *muno* signifies the action of 'wrapping'. This conception clearly demonstrates that the altar literally wraps the surface of the village by protecting it. The *ginu muno* is located in the oldest quarter of the village called *Tatara* (Fig. 3.2). As the term *ginu* indicates, the altar refers to the place where the houses or compounds stand. It protects the inside of the village against the various forms of evil influence that mostly penetrate the village during the hot dry season or live inside the village from where they are generated. These malevolent forces trigger conflicts between the villagers by, in their words, "mixing up our souls". Social distortions are therefore seen as external to the individual. They are

²⁷The idea is further developed in chapter eight on the making of Dogon granaries.

²⁸The pictures that illustrate the altars reveal this particular lack of visibility of the artefact.

not humanly produced. Rather they intrude the village space and, by seizing them, push people to act negatively. These beings possess the capacity to cross the village threshold. Their efficacy, however, is neither reduced nor cancelled by the protective field created by the altars. As part of the same view, witchcraft is seen to occur between compounds or even within them, as, for instance, in the case of co-wives. One wife for example may be accused of poisoning the children of another in the same compound.

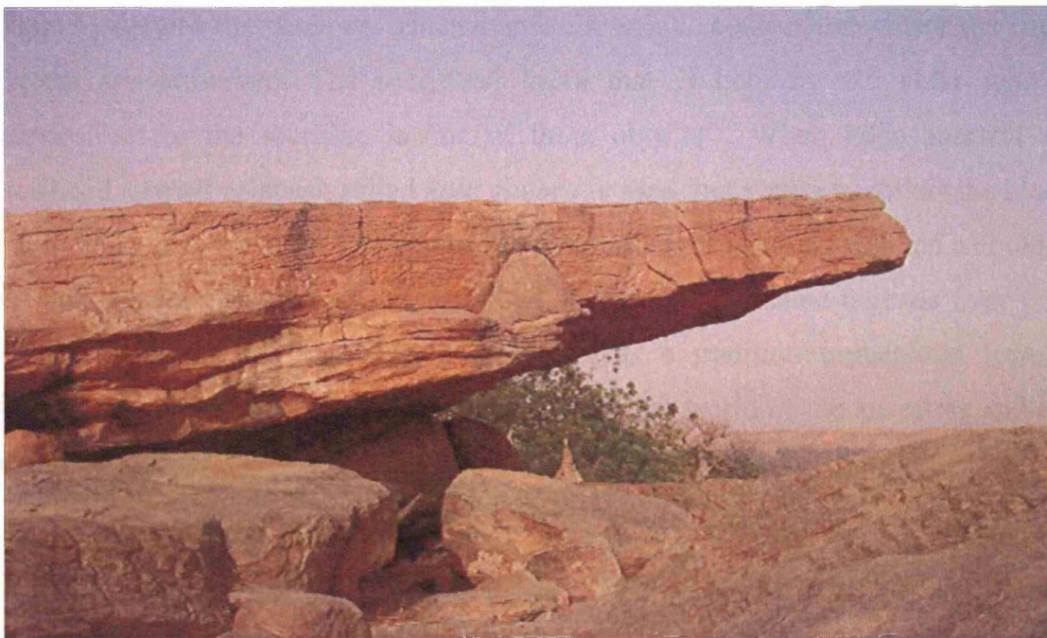


Fig. 3.2. *Ginu muno* of Tatara

The small cone of mud that is the altar is affixed laterally to the west side of a prominent elevated flat rock in order to be preserved from the bad weather. A sacrifice will be made there at the end of the hot dry season in mid May. It is visible to anyone who passes next to the site. However, its particular elevated location makes it unreachable, and thus this prevents physical contact with people who would be immediately killed by the power of the object. In comparison with the three others, *the ginu muno* is described as generating a shield that extends from this unique point to cover the whole settled area completely. In the past, this altar used to

mark the limit of the village. According to my informants, the second *pegu* that was established by the ancestors at the foundation of the village space is called the *Lebe*²⁹. It is located above the village in an outside area. This artefact is considered by them to be an element that serves to maintain the cohesion of the society which gets disturbed by evil forces coming from the outside of the village. It creates a dividing line between the village of the living and the escarpment in which the dead are buried. The *Lebe* stands upon a prominent rock that overhangs the escarpment scree in the district of Teriku Dama. The *Lebe* promontory called *Lebe dala* (Fig.3.3) defines the place on which stands the small round house where the ritual objects are preserved. The sacrificial knife that is held by the elder who is responsible for the sacrifice is one of these objects³⁰. When large animals are sacrificed a small calabash called *koju gogoro* is used that serves to collect the blood and to bring it to the altar. The place also contains a series of clay jars and a cooking pot that are used to brew the sacred beer. The use of the same utensils over time renders the fixity to the function that also, as a tradition transmitted from a generation to another, creates continuity between the world of the ancestors and the people of today.

²⁹ I pay particular attention to this shrine because of the proximity of its location to the compound in which I stayed. At the time, the elder responsible was the uncle of Balugo. Therefore, I accessed most of the data thanks to him.

³⁰ Every altar possesses its own knife.

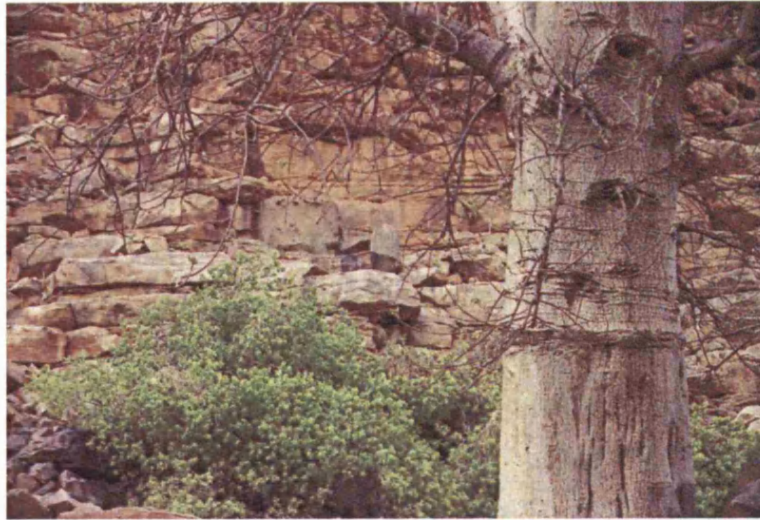


Fig. 3.3. *Lebe* altar in Teriku Dama

As previously stated, the *Lebe* is considered to be the oldest altar in the village. It legitimizes the village because it was created at the foundation of village. A particular cult is dedicated to it. According to Dieterlen (1941), it refers to the mythical ancestor *Lebe* who represents the forces of nature. However, the altar has never been described to me as such. Rather, the description I was given was simply about an element of regeneration without any particular references to the myth.

The altar stands as a symbol of identity that relates people to the ancestors who founded the village. The shrine, as an artefact, objectifies two types of temporality in its materiality. First, it constitutes a symbol of ancestor worship that reminds the villagers of the history of Dogon migration and of the origin of the foundation of their village. Second, it materializes the natural cycles and, by so doing, the seasonal activities relating to the land. A function demonstrated by the fact that the *Lebe* cult occurs yearly and constitutes the most important element in Dogon ritual life. As part of the cult a sacrifice dedicated to the ancestors is enacted before the first rains. This is termed the *Bulu* period. It celebrates the regeneration of nature and therefore of the agricultural cycle. It corresponds to a rebirth of the earth, of the vegetal environment and, more specifically, of the growing of millet with the coming of the

rain. Symbolically, this ritual serves to re-order the society. According to my informants, this altar guarantees good health, the regeneration and multiplication of the families of the village, the fecundity of the earth and of the women, and, finally, it ensures the longevity of the elders. Thus, the continuity and prosperity of life lie at the core of the *Lebe* agency. One particular family is in charge of it. Generally, the oldest man of that family is responsible for leading the sacrifice. He is assisted by a few other men of the same family who carry out the ritual practice while he gives instructions and provides a ritual speech which is exclusive to him. The ritual also involves the participation of the young men of the village who transport fresh mud to the *Lebe* site to repair the altar. The families of Tireli offer a quantity of cereal that contributes to the making of the sacrificial beer that is brewed by the guarantor of the ritual. The virgin girls of the village are also convoked to bring fresh, clean water to the *Lebe* site where millet beer is brewed, sacrificed on the altar and, finally, drunk. Hence, the *Lebe* involves the whole community of Tireli. The celebration of the altar institutes a breaking of daily routine and re-engages the seasonal cycle of cultivation tasks. If the altar can be conceived as binding together the past and the present, the *Lebe* can also, analogously, be considered to play a central role in both the production of space as well as in creating a sense of boundedness. Indeed, as a principal element of the foundation of the village, the altar is revealed as an act of appropriation of place which creates particular senses of attachment to the land and therefore acts to materialize identities³¹.

In some villages of the plateau, such as in the Kamba areas, and other places of the escarpment, such as in Nombori, the *Lebe* occurs in two forms. These are the altars of the ‘inside’ and of the ‘outside’. The first form, the altar of the ‘inside’, called *dehun Lebe*, corresponds to the domesticated zones of the village. This type of altar acts upon the inside of that part of the village in which it stands. The second form,

³¹This point is further developed in the section dedicated to the migration schema.

the altar of the 'outside', called *para Lebe* designates the bush area and, therefore, stands in this zone. In Tireli, one single *Lebe* gathers together the two portions of the village and its surrounding area³². Griaule defines the *Lebe* as a series of altars that according to him, demarcated the territory of the settlement and beyond. This constitutes a particular schema of reference points in space which objectifies elements of the Dogon cosmogony (Griaule 1965: 226-230). However, I did not come across this schema as described by Griaule.

The two *oru muno* are planted in the domesticated bush, outside of the village, (Fig.3.4). One of them, situated on the East side³³ of the *ana kerugue*, is buried in the scree and signalled by a standing rock that connects to the submerged element. The other one is entombed in a similar fashion in a cleared area on the West side of the bush right below the dune cordon. If one follows the literal meaning of the term, the *muno* would symbolically wrap the village or enclose it from all directions including from above. The two *Oro muno* perform the function of insulating Tireli, notably against epidemics brought in by bad wind and by the evil spirits of the bush (*jinu*), which compromise social relationships and kill humans. They are also used to protect against the wild animals owned by the bush spirits. As a consequence of their intrusion of the domesticated zone during the rainy season, they prompt accidents which strike people while they work in their fields as well as when they travel to the plain. Several accounts, about people found unconscious in the bush or in a state of convulsion and then losing their mind, were told to me.

In local conception, the two *oro muno* or bush altars create a boundary which separates the 'wild' space of the bush from the cultural space of the village (surrounding domesticated bush and village). The altars objectify a conjuncture of

³²A comparative study of the villages located in different zones of the plain, plateau, and escarpment would be worth doing.

³³No picture available

temporalities which are ritual and seasonal as they are related to the agrarian cycle and the renewal of nature. Similarly, they recall the history of boundaries through the multiple threats against which the Dogon protect themselves. Hence, the two bush altars constitute an initial barrier to block the entrance of malevolent forces by containing them within these obstructions of external nuisances. However, according to my informants, this enclosure remains porous since the *jину* or diseases still penetrate the boundary if their power is stronger than the protection provided by the altars.



Fig. 3.4. *Oro Muno* of the West located in the bush, in the place in between the two paths

The *oro muno* act as obstacles that stop malevolent entities that attempt to gain access to the inside of the village. As suggested by Bouju, these dangerous invisible elements occupy a parallel world that constitutes the space of the ancestors, sorcerers, and wandering souls. In other words, when this invisible world interferes with the wild bush, it dramatically affects human life (Bouju 1995 (a): 355). This interesting point raised by Bouju emphasizes a dual conception of the environment that rests in the coexistence of the human world, including the physical space of the wild bush, with a second, invisible world of the dead and of the spirits that is tangent to the first. As these two communicate it becomes necessary to control the boundary

and, thus, the entrance of negative elements through symbolic protections such as altars. In his account of Dogon territoriality, Bouju proposes that the meeting points of these two worlds can be seen as tangential and is materialized by the two bush altars located at the Eastern and the Western ends of the Dogon village. These are conceptualized by the author as two doors through which malevolent entities enter the living space (altar of the East) and are expelled from it at the other (altar of the West). In the Dogon conception, bad things always enter the village from the East and are expelled from it through the West. Therefore, Bouju advocates a linear circulation of malevolent entities that he defines as an inverted modality of space and time. As the author puts it: ‘Dogon people attribute to the invisible space (more precisely to the trajectory of invisible forces) a property that in the visible world only belongs to the dimension of time, i.e. the irreversibility of its orientation³⁴, (Bouju 1995 (a): 355). The unbound, invisible world as fundamentally temporal exists, however, outside human time, which is made up of, for instance, daily seasonal cycles of activities. The meeting point of these two coeval (Fabian 2002) worlds is often described as an inside/out passage that is operated through particular initiations, witchcraft, hunting or mask rituals (van Beek 1992:68). Through this reversible movement from one sphere to the other, people who possess the capacity of seeing or experiencing the invisible may benefit from particular forms of knowledge such as the medicines they bring back to the village. Based on the material I collected from a blacksmith in the village of Ende, physical elements such as rocks and trees that stand in the ‘wild’ bush constitute the meeting points where people encounter invisible beings. This means that, whilst moving outside or in crossing the various areas of the village, people can experience an increasing sense of danger.

³⁴Translation by Laurence Douny

A series of sacrifices that are referred to as *Bulu* are carried out by the appointed persons in anticipation of the rainy season. The order of ritual practice is based on a logic that starts with the *Lebe* as the oldest. Sacrifices at *ginu muno* are then followed by those at the two *oru muno*. During the *Bulu* period in May/June, the regeneration of nature as well as the sowing season is celebrated. I, however cannot provide any details about the ritual proceedings of the *muno* because I was told that women are not allowed to enter the site where the altars are located. Hence, the coordination of the sacrifices, and therefore the complementary nature of these altars, institutes a renewal of society as the consolidation of social relationships.

The fact of being enclosed by this system of overlapping protection reinforces the ontological security that is partly and naturally provided by the site of the scree, which does indeed constitute a natural defensive system, by making access to the village particularly problematic. Furthermore, the altars exist to fix and guarantee principles of social cohesion through prohibitions associated with reordering the world and protecting against chaos. This order creates a conformity, comparable to the objects as the system of prohibition that ensures proper-functioning and stability, forcing people to adapt to and respect their own intrinsic principles. In this way, the altars create a generational continuity through the embodied transmission of the rules applied in everyday practice. They impose their authority by standing in the village. Interrelated as they are, these altars complement each other and maximize the strength of the protection field. As proposed by Bouju, the malevolent entities are contained by these altar-obstacles (Bouju 1995 (a): 363). Hence, the altars act as receptacles that canalize negative elements and subsequently have to be repaired and purified. This occurs before the rainy season and therefore before the sacrifice. Beyond their protection qualities, these altars symbolize the cohesion of the village as well as the renewal of social networks. And, finally, the *muno* and the *Lebe* as a gathering process, convey a sense of collectedness.

6. The foundation of the Dogon village of Tireli

I will now examine the formation of these protective boundaries starting with the constitution of the enclosed interiors of the village. The enclosures of Tireli have been created over time, beginning with elements from the foundation of the village. I will also attempt to demonstrate how the whole system of enclosures or ‘wrappings’, consisting metaphorically of a series of self-contained circles, was originally generated from the inside of the settled space. Therefore, I will examine how these boundaries were set up over time. As seen above, the built surface or village of Tireli is bounded or wrapped by the *muno ginu*. The village designates a place of social cohesion, that is, a place to live in community. This involves obligations to recognise reciprocal and complementary assistance between people. I propose here that the village altars materialize the attachment of the villagers to each other as through them they recognize a shared common origin that stems from a long migration history.

6.1. The Dogon migration and the foundation story of Tireli

The Dogon village of Tireli possesses a common story of migration³⁵ as well as a similar village foundation story. These stories testify to a common *Mande* ancestor origin for all present day Dogon. The story is presented in the form of a complex and tortuous journey, animated by a perpetual movement towards the North East of the country. In it the Dogon migratory group divides into multiple ramifications as the clans, often due to the pressure of a quarrel, separate and spread over the land and eventually establish their own villages. As explained by two informants, the

³⁵ I confirmed this story in the plateau villages of Kamba, Pelou, and Wedje.

general plot of the Dogon migration is based on a tale of one family that got divided and subdivided as people moved along the escarpment, the plain, and the plateau settling in those areas which constitute the Dogon settlement as we know it today. I shall not dwell on the history of Dogon migration as this has been done elsewhere (Dieterlen 1941: 23-72; Huet 1994; Petit 1998). Rather, I want to look at how the village was constituted over time through stories about the origins of material and, notably, through architectural elements. Taken together, these elements serve to legitimate Dogon identity as well as their ownership and control of land. Equally, the tracing back of human displacement enables us to understand the very idea of belonging to the place, and the particular Dogon sense of attachment to the land. The physical appropriation and the particular logic of dwelling lead to the formation of contiguous boundaries that generate local ontologies of containment. I am not aiming to reconstruct the ‘true’ story of the Dogon people with this account of Dogon migration history and, especially, of the foundation of the village of Tireli. Rather, I am simply taking the tale as it has in the past and is now frequently recounted by the Dogon to the Westerners – for example as found in a simple form in tourism publications and website – as the basis to legitimize local identities.

1. The migration schema

As can be discovered in the multiple versions of the history of the Dogon people found in the literature, the locals commonly believe that they originate from the Mande (Bouju 1995 (b)). This area, sometimes called the ‘fruit of the person’ is widely believed to be the West African cradle of humanity – a world from which races, knowledge, and religion scattered all over the world (de Ganay 1995:38-41). It is accepted in Mali that this place corresponds to the town of Kangaba located near Bamako (de Ganay 1995). The term Mande refers to an ethno-linguistic entity that would have developed with the Ancient Keita Empire. This name refers to its founder Soundiata Keita and dates from the 13th century. The Keita Empire

developed from the more ancient Ghana Empire, which extended over a large part of West Africa between Mauritania and Niger. This area includes various ethnic groups such as the Mandinka (Maninka) and the Bamana (Bambara) communities as well as distant groups such as the Senufo, Mossi, and Dogon (Fcourse 1994). In general, the term Mande includes some 44 communities³⁶ (Ganay de 1995:14; Dieterlen 1957, 1951). Beyond linguistic similarities, these groups share some similarities in their patterns of material culture, such as in, for instance, architecture (Prussin 1970; 1982, Fcourse 1980), pottery and leatherwork (Fcourse 1994; 1998), and smithing (McNaughton 1988). According to Dieterlen (1959), people who claim Mande origin should share a similar mythological background, the content of which would reveal the religious, political, and social axis of the society (Griaule 1948, 1966; Dieterlen 1951; de Ganay 1995). They would, therefore, partake of a common symbolic reservoir. That is, ‘a long-held reservoir of symbols, myths and beliefs... ‘which’ different subgroups of a society dip into ... in order to extract, craft, and visually display a legitimating tradition to serve their own sectional interests’ (McIntosh 1989:77).

Around the end of the 12th century, the Dogon, formed of three families³⁷, the *Dyon*, the *Ono*, and the *Arou* (said to be part of the Malinke group), left the Mande, refusing Islamic conversion³⁸ (Dieterlen 1982:9). They migrated³⁹ to the towns of Segou and Djenne before arriving in Kani Na, of which only ruins remain near Kani Kombolé, where they settled temporarily. The three ancestor groups then separated

³⁶ These are found in Mali (Maliné, Bambara, Dogon, Bobo, Minianka, Sénoufo, bozo, etc), in the Eastern Senegal and Gambia (ex. Wolof, Sérèr), in Guinea (ex. Koniagui-Bassari, Malinké, Guerzé), in Sierra-Leone and Liberia (ex. Toma, Dan), in Ivory Coast (ex. Djoula, Baule, Bété), in Ghana (ex. Santi, Fanti), in Burkina Faso (ex. Mossi, Bobo, Lobi), and finally in Niger-Nigeria (ex. Haussa).

³⁷ In the version collected by Dieterlen (1941), a fourth family, the *Domno*, is mentioned which migrated to the plain area, however, my informants did not recall this.

³⁸ In certain versions, the cause of the departure of these groups from the Mande would have been a quarrel between the families (Dieterlen 1941).

³⁹ Other versions about the Dogon migration exist (Desplagnes 1907, Huet 1994, Petit 1998).

and progressively migrated towards the plain, the plateau, and the escarpment⁴⁰ where they founded the present-day Dogon villages. As far as the migration-line history of the people of Tireli is concerned, I was told that they originate from an ancestor called Arou, who founded the present-day political site of Arou, his descendants then divided and decided to found their own villages. All of my informants agreed to define Arou as a site rather than a village. By using this translated term they indicate the importance of this shrine that literally constitutes and defines this place of power from which the protection of all Dogon communities is managed, and which is occupied by only two families. In addition to their roles of authoritatively representing the Dogon people, the *Hogon* or the spiritual chief and his assistants are responsible for calling the rain. They also assume the legal function of ultimately settling conflicts occurring mostly between the villages. Thus, Arou as symbolized by its shrine represents and centralizes the power of everything.

The versions of the Dogon migration story that I collected from the Saye people of both Tireli and Pèguè (another Dogon village) provide a concise story of the migration that forms a straightforward migratory schema. Contrarily, the versions collected by Dieterlen show, in a notably detailed way, the great complexity of the migration process, as based on the ramification, multiplication, and separation of the descendants of these three ancestor families. Moreover, the tales collected from the 1930s based on mythical elements indicate the desertion of certain villages due to invasion and their subsequent reoccupation. They also give accounts of the great complexity of the migration process and multiple occupations of the escarpment.

⁴⁰ The details of this series of migrations during which the descendants of these four families founded the present Dogon village were not recounted to me, but are related in detail by Dieterlen (1941).

2. *The village origin story*

Some versions of the origin story state that one of *Arou's* sons *Argo* settled along the escarpment and founded the village of Pèguè. Due to a conflict with his clan, his son *Enein* decided to leave the village. He went searching for a new place to establish his home and came across Tireli. According to Dieterlen, reporting in 1941, the ancestor *Arou* and his five sons moved along the escarpment where the sons founded their own villages, Tireli and Pèguè, separately while *Arou* went further north to found the site of *Arou*. The occupation of the escarpment and the plateau areas by the *Arou* clan continued with the subdivision of these groups. Dieterlen's version of the Dogon migration process indicates that the villages of Tireli and Pèguè were founded before the site of *Arou*. Two of my informants recounted that Tireli's origins are found in the village of Pèguè, which is located further North and from which *Arou* would have emanated. As Dieterlen indicates, the village of Pèguè must have been abandoned following an invasion, a frequent occurrence at that time (Dieterlen 1941: 49), and would have been reconstructed recently, i.e. around the middle of the 19th century by some *Arou* people. By extrapolation, the people from Pèguè who originated from *Arou* and the descendants of the *Arou* ancestor (the *Argo* family) would have settled subsequently in Tireli. This village was in turn abandoned by *Arou* who would have been forced to leave because of an incursion.

The people of Tireli recount the story clearly. Their village was founded by two brothers *Enein* and *Koou*. The first was a hunter, the second a cultivator. *Enein* the older of the two arrived first. He was hunting in a place with abundant game and in

which his dog found a water reservoir⁴¹. Moreover, the area possessed a large area of cultivable land. With the discovery of these three resources, the hunter *Enein* decided to settle down. After clearing a place at the top of the scree, he built a shelter or *togu* under one of the prominent flat rocks from which the name of the place *Tawara* and its derived term *Tatara* (the name of the first district of Tireli) comes from. Therefore, the name refers to the geomorphological characteristics of the site, which is made of massive rocks. *Tawara* refers to the flat rocks used as a vantage point, notably for hunting and on top of which the first *togu-na* or men's house was subsequently constructed.

Since *Enein* had not been heard of for some while, his younger brother, a cultivator, went searching for him and found him well settled. He decided to join him. They fixed a first altar on top of the scree as a means of protecting themselves from wild life, supernatural beings, and enemies. Together, they progressively cleared the site by cutting down the trees and the bush. This action is named *ter* or *tere*, 'to cut or to clear', a term which was subsequently given as a name for the village⁴². The place where *Koou* established his own *togu*, a couple of meters up from his brother's settlement was named *Tere ku*. This refers to a 'cleared place up' or 'at the head of'. As they settled down, the *Lebe* altar was fixed on a promontory as a safeguard of life.

My informants defined the *Lebe* as the most important element of the village. It symbolizes the acquisition and 'possession' of the place, by the two ancestors, for the foundation of Tireli, as well as symbolizing its cohesion. In due course, they returned to Pèguè to collect their families and bring them to their new place. After a

⁴¹ In the version collected on the plateau area, the village founder was either accompanied by a blacksmith, who made tools and weapons for him, or was joined immediately after his settling down by a blacksmith who would have first indicated to the founder the site to establish himself.

⁴² I have been told that Tireli is a name given by the French. Originally, the village was called *Tere* which gave *Tereli* and today Tireli.

while, however, part of site was occupied by another group, allegedly by the *Kor* family. This family belonged to a sub-group descending from the *Ono* clan, who came from the plain but were renamed locally and became known as the *Ongoeba*. The *Kor* family came to settle in Terili after their clan was massacred by a neighbouring plains clan called the *Douna*. The survivors of this massacre had had to disperse across the plain due to their defeat. One of their factions, the *Kor* family, moved, instead, along the escarpment scree and found refuge in *Enein's* Tireli. However, their coexistence quickly came to an end as the *Ongoeba* were constantly stealing food from the *Enein* and *Koou* families. A conflict between the two clans (*Ongoeba* and *Arou*) broke out and led to the expulsion of the *Ongoeba* from the place. The name the two founders gave to their families, *Saye*⁴³, derives from this event. This term literally refers to the act of 'cutting something from its roots' or 'to cut off and to knock something over', that is, 'to chase someone away'. As the place became safer, clusters of families from Pèguè joined them and organized themselves properly into a village. Thus, a first *Muno* altar was fixed to protect the inhabitants, and they built the men's *Togu na*, followed by the *Yapunu ginu* or menstruating women's house and, finally, the *Binu ginu*.

As the families grew, the other places on the scree were occupied successively and the present-day districts of Tireli took shape. At that time *Koou* settled in the place called Teri-Ku. This name has been kept today to designate the three districts of Dama, Sâpo, and Komanga. *Koou*, however, decided to move his shelter further down and named the site Dama which means to push, as in 'pushing his house down on the scree'. One of his sons then created the district of Sâpo by one of his sons, who decided to build his *gujo* next to a wild raisin tree⁴⁴ with branches so frail that they threatened to break when people climbed up it to pick the fruits. Those who

⁴³ The term of *Saye* – *say* also means bright and clever, with a lot of instinct or feeling (Calame-Griaule 1968: 238).

⁴⁴ It is known in the West as the *Lannea acida*.

named the site took this anecdote into account, naming the site *Sapoy*, a reference to the fragile (*sa*) tree. Then, the third sub-district of Teri-Ku, Komanga was created. This naming also refers to the geomorphology of the place, which is characterized by sparse hollowed rocks. This place constituted a temporary habitat for the people of *Dama* who had decided to move in because of a lack of space in their former district. Thus, the term *komo-anga* indicates the first habitat of these people. As far as Tataru is concerned, it gave birth to the districts of Gujoguru which refers to the *gujo* or house (literally a 'room') of one of *Enein's* sons who left the family to start his own compound from this 'room'. Finally, the third district called Sodanga was founded. Some people say that it contains Tataru and Gujoguru. There are existing political tensions between the two districts of Teri-Ku and Sodanga. For some people, Sodanga, as a sub-district, was built recently and makes up a separate political entity that does not contribute to the village 'affairs'. The tensions make it difficult at times for the question of the village structure to be dealt with as it triggers political protest and claims to the chief's position. Thus, potential sources of conflict are silenced. Hence, the foundation of Teri-Ku's districts of Dama, Sapoy, and Komanga are attributed to one of the two brothers, *Koou*, while the other three of which Sodanga is composed, Tataru, Gujoguru, and Sodanga, are said to have originated from *Enein*.

Consequently, the history of the Dogon migration reveals a state of continual movement. This is animated by the logic of clan ramification that consists of fleeing a place and finding refuge in another. The uneven escarpment was chosen because of its natural defensive plateau of fissures, caves, and hidden paths that are particularly difficult to access. In fact, the migration schema is characterized by a context of menace and escape. The formation of the village of Tireli is characterized by the setting up of the ancestor *Lebe* altar and the naming of places. These toponyms constitute a way of appropriating the land in order to fix or legitimate a people's occupation of it. As the name Tireli indicates, the clearing of the place

through the felling of the trees illustrates the powerful capacity and efficacy of appropriating the site. This is also expressed in the family name *Saye*. In fact, this name signifies the act of uprooting which is concretized by the scattering and deportation of the *Ongoeba* occupants. From this perspective, the appropriation of the place constitutes a political act that generates conflicts and migrations. Thus, the village altars objectify the foundation of the place in the same way as the architectural elements. Together they objectify the long term constitution of the place since they fix its history and identity.

6.2. The legitimation of material identities

As shown, the *Lebe* constitutes the element through which people legitimate, according to the principle of lineage and ancestry, the appropriation of the place by a group of individuals. It fixes them conceptually to the land. The *Lebe* thus objectifies an act of dwelling. It mediates the establishment and expansion of a community in a place made viable by its having been cleared and already having satisfactory water and game resources. Furthermore, the altar materializes particular ancestor affiliations that relate all Dogon to a common mythic Mande origin. In this way, the altar materializes Dogon identity, and create a 'sense of Dogoness'.

According to my informants, the first *Lebe* brought from the Mande was made of the soil of the tomb of the ancestor from whom the three *Dyon*, *Ono* and *Arou* clans were descended (Dieterlen 1941). When they arrived in Kani Na these three clans shared out the divided altar, each taking a fragment. They used the piece of mud to create many series of *Lebe* altars as they migrated separately North and East, settling and founding villages and families whose sons perpetuated the migration and foundation process. Thus in the beginning the altars were made of a small portion of the first mud cone which was added to some mud of the place where they settled. However, due to the scarcity of fragments of the original *Lebe*, alternatives were

developed to create new altars with similar power. This is the case in Tireli, where the *Lebe* was made of local mud found in the '*marigot*', a pond, the mud of which is particularly appreciated for its plastic qualities of good resistance. Dieterlen reported an existing association between wet mud and the *Nommo* water spirit. This does not occur in Tireli. However, the importance of humidity in relation to fertility exists not only for technical reasons but for symbolic ones as well. Only mud is used for building work. In some of the villages I visited on the plateau, the *Lebe* is made out of an long, upright stone found in the scree, and collected for its particular parallel shape given by the *yeban* spirits. In some cases, the stone cut by men destined for the building a house, was saved to build a *Lebe* altar (de Ganay 1937: 208). As reported by de Ganay, a rock of a specific shape, said to be inhabited by the same *yeban* spirits, is found in other places. According to her findings, in some villages the *Lebe* simply refers to a place that used to be occupied by the ancestor founder where locals make sacrifices (de Ganay 1937: 208). From this perspective, the *Lebe* of Tireli is also defined in terms of a site delimited by the altar as a central element. Here it either defines the place, creating a locale of ritual practice, or it is substituted by a physical element of the landscape such as a rock or a portion of stony ground.

In addition to the particular association of a natural element of soil or rock to an ancestor or a spirit, objects become *Lebe* through the name attributed to them by evoking the ancestor *Lebe*. The name is given through the very act of the sacrifice that is meant to confer on the object a formidable force, and is constituted through words kept secretly by either the *Hogon* or, alternatively, the patriarch⁴⁵ responsible for the cult's proceedings and the object's maintenance. Therefore, if there is a lack of original *Lebe* element integrated with locally found materials, substituted materials are incorporated into *Lebe* altars through the process of naming or evoking

⁴⁵ There is no *Hogon* in Tireli.

the ancestor as well as through declarations of intent. The speech and the sacrificial substances, constitutes the main principle of the object's activation.

The *Lebe* consists of an intrinsic, active force that acts upon individuals, society, and nature. By extending one of its mud or stone elements to stand as the whole Dogon lived environment, the altar materializes the village and its surroundings. It creates particular senses of attachment to it as a founding element of 'civilization'. Equally, it materializes identities by standing as a guarantor of ancestral Mande origin. Similarly, it objectifies the genealogies of the village families that stem from the common ancestors who founded the village and by the recalling of these stories about their own origins. It creates particular networks of solidarity between the Dogon villages of the same *Arou* clan. Notably, such alliances exist for ritual practices as well as to mitigate conflicts with external communities. Hence, people who share a common origin find allegiance in its name. The *Lebe* stands, also, as a symbol of cohesion on a village level. In the words of two young Muslims of the village, the altar, as it is the oldest, functions as the most important element of the village. As stated by the young men, the *Lebe*: 'keeps people together whatever, whether you are Muslim or Catholic or Animist. It is for everybody together. It stands for the amity between the villagers. But, the day the *Lebe* is left by the villagers, that will be the end of the village'. By this, my two informants indicate that the *Lebe* constitutes an important element of solidarity between the villagers and the multiple religious groups of Tireli. According to these two young men, the day the sacrifice on the *Lebe* stops, the village will lose the values of the community, such as the good relationships between people and the reciprocating of help.

7. Conclusion

As I have shown, the Dogon dwelling process operates through a diachronic appropriation of place. This implies a clearing of space that is subsequently materialized and substantiated by the fixing of the altars of the *Lebe*, the *ginu* and the two *oro muno*. These altars mark the foundation of the territory of Tireli as well as the protection of its space. This is notably recognized in the history of Dogon migration and settlement of the escarpment, as recalled by the men and, mostly, by the elders of the village. As fixed inside and outside of the village, Tireli's altars map out the land and divide its cultural space, including that of the domesticated bush from the wild bush. As I have demonstrated, these objects of power and control define a particular model of containment through the enclosure and protection of the cultural and domesticated space of human against the world of the invisibles. Tangentially, following Bouju's thesis (1995 (a)) these two worlds interface through two openings that are materialized by the bush altars. The protected surfaces I have described are made effective through a process of 'wrapping' the territory's surfaces that is generated by Tireli's altars. In this way, it creates a particular ontological security. Through this account of the mechanism by which enclosures are achieved by Dogon people from Tireli, I have also underlined the conjuncture of temporalities that is objectified by this system of altars. They endow the temporality of the environment, i.e. the regeneration of the land, of ritual practice, as well as the 'history' of people. This was notably recalled to me through accounts of the settling of Dogon on the escarpment. Consequently, the model of containment, as a process of 'making oneself in the world', is defined as flexible. In other words, the boundaries have to be understood here as a device for protection that remains relatively open. In fact, depending upon circumstances and events, people seal off and enclose the world of the living in a more rigid way when they feel threatened. The boundaries of the territory of Tireli always remain fluid since they always let bad things get in depending on the efficacy of the altars. Total control over the

village space remains impossible. Finally, I have proposed that the altars materialize Dogon cultural identities. In fact, their reactivation through ritual practice constitutes a gathering process that symbolizes the cohesion and the protection of the Dogon society of Tireli. Therefore, the altars convey through ritual a sense of collectedness and ‘Dogoness’, that is, of the unity of the villagers with other Dogon communities to which Tireli relates through ancestor affiliation. Hence, the bounded territory of Tireli enacts as active ground in which Dogon identity is re-initiated and consolidated. In the same view, it seems to me that the villagers discourse on the foundation of the village seems to reinforce the Dogon identity of Tireli as well as a sense of attachment to the place.

In the next two chapters, I explore the two areas of inside and outside of the village that are contained by these boundaries. I examine local conceptions of containment under a building and dwelling perspective (Heidegger 1962). I shall start with the foundation and the constitution of the escarpment village of Tireli. I propose an examination of the Tireli landscape container by first looking at the inside of the village. I then pursue an analysis of the expanding and permeable concentric semi-circles that constitute the village ‘outside’, that is, the natural space of the bush and which holds the village of Tireli. Globally, I place particular focus on the notion of fixing elements and the concept of attachment, both of which define the ways the people of Tireli relate to the world as well as to each other. Similarly to a system of calabashes where the largest one contains a series of smaller ones, the conception of society and the world occurs within a centripetal and anthropocentric spatial logic. In other words, the Dogon metonymic conception of the world defines it as unified rather than diffracted. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts that constitute it is the frame for this particular Dogon sense of containment.

4.

The inside of the village (*ana koro*) as a cultural matrix.

Building process and material symbolism.

The village of Tireli extends over the Bandiagara escarpment scree on a slope of about 600 meters. Similar to other Dogon villages, Tireli displays a particular camouflage aesthetic, as the built environment literally fuses with the surrounding landscape. In fact, the minimalist Dogon habitat retains similar natural colours and textures to that of its surrounding environment. The village is made of stones, earth, and wood that are extracted locally. While wood was once collected in the bush, today it tends to be imported from the plateau, however, the earth and stone come straight from the foot of the scree as well as from the slope. The peace and quiet of the day is regularly interrupted by the sound of rocks being blown-up in order to be used in the construction of houses. Hence, the building of the village depends on a particular process of containing and de-containing. While the first aspect relates to the scree milieu that shelters the village by disguising it, the second aspect concerns the exploitation of the substance scree, as a means to build the home⁴⁶. Subjected in the past to many raids and other threats, notably wildlife and slaver-traders, the site of Tireli offers particular defensive qualities through the height of the site and the unevenness of the steep topography. Transformed naturally by a renewal of its vegetation during the rainy season, the village landscape gets progressively more

⁴⁶This is further developed in chapter eight on the making of earth granaries.

hidden by the growth of its verdant amalgam of local flora. Consequently, the tourists and the villagers stand out when moving only by wearing flashy clothes and shiny containers on top of their heads. Another form of homogeneity between the built environment and the scree is to be found in the warmth that fills up the atmosphere and, at the same time, accumulates in the materiality of the habitat. This is felt while sleeping on the compound's rooftop or by going inside houses. Similarly, the sound of daily activities echoing back at the village from the escarpment cliff constitutes another element that animates the landscape. Hence, the containment and hidden nature of the village becomes defined through a particular natural aesthetic and qualities of the place that makes things invisible.

In this chapter, I focus on the daily dynamics by which people make a sense of a place through a building process (Heidegger 1962). To a certain extent, I attempt to contextualize and to define the village or *ana koro* through the daily movements of people between the built features, as they walk up and down the escarpment or along the furrows around the compounds. Movement is introduced by the villagers through local daily practices, and by the tourists as they visit the place. Hence why I present it here, as it makes the village a living place as well as an object of curiosity. From this perspective, I propose that the original disguise although still efficient is betrayed by tourism and modernism. A point from which I centralize my argument around a dialectic of fixity and fluidity of boundaries that enclose the multiple built elements. These I detail according to the epistemic relationships that are objectified in the materiality of these features as well as in the paths that connect them.

First, I will examine the architectural system operated in the past as a control device. It was effective notably in the maintenance of gender boundaries and social organization. These have however become more flexible as the conceptual boundaries objectified in material boundaries have reified over time. My objective here is not to provide an account of Dogon architecture in the manner in which it has

been done in the past. These accounts began in the middle of the 19th century, during the French installation in the Sudan (Desplagnes 1905; Arnaud 1921). Subsequently, the Dakar-Djibouti Mission (1931-1935) launched a series of systematic ethnographic investigations, which included extensive studies of the Dogon habitat with a particular emphasis upon the symbolic aspect of architecture (Griaule 1949; 1960; Calame-Griaule 1955). His interpretation of the Dogon habitat revolves around the anthropomorphic qualities of material forms (Lane 1997) as they enfold local cosmogony. The work of Brasseur (Brasseur 1960; 1968) provides a descriptive view of the Dogon habitat within a wider Malian or West African context. Along the same lines, N'Diaye (1970) proposes a social and functional approach to Dogon built forms. The work of the Dutch architect Schijns (1979) has provided a systematic formal analysis of Dogon habitats while Lauber (1996) under the same architectural perspective offers a more interpretative view of the Dogon's built environment in his edited volume. The long-term ethno-archaeological project of Bedaux (1972, 1988) has examined Dogon built environments including its spatial organization, the planning of constructions and granary construction, in relation to Tellem architectural forms (11th–16th century). The whole project also proposes a study of the functional and spatial aspects of Dogon material culture such as pottery and textiles, its seasonal and geographical variability. Finally, Lane's analysis of the spatial and temporal organization of Dogon settlements (1986; 1994), which I shall return to later, and Huet's (1994) examination of Dogon architectural diversity should, also, be mentioned if only to note exhaustively that which I do not intend to emulate. Rather, in this chapter, I look at the built elements that constitute the inside of the village of Tireli as they are experienced, shown, and described to me by the villagers through ontological movements, canalized by the built features and that generate a particular sense of attachment to the place. I propose that the Dogon built environment stands as a material symbolism that does not imply material forms *per se* but which they enfold, instead, in terms of *implicit assumptions and practices* (Rowlands 1985:203). Although the architecture of the

village is physically and conceptually fixed in space, its temporality and agency is recreated daily through its use by men, women, old people, children, and foreigners. Consequently, I shall consider the inside of the village as a living cultural matrix that is defined through particular active processes of movement. Thus, by walking you (the reader) through the village of Teri-Ku Dama where I lived and by starting from the top of the scree, I look at how the village is configured overtime. Then, through an examination of the spatial layout of Dogon architectonics, I show how this living system organizes daily social life and thought.

1. Introducing the village spatial organization

The village of Tireli or Tireli *ana* is divided into the two main districts of Teri-Ku and of Sodanga. These are designated by the term *togu* or ‘district’ which also refers to its subdivisions. Both *togu* are subdivided into three. Thus, while the first district is composed of the sub-districts of Dama, Sâpo, and Komanga, the second includes those of Gujoguru, Tatara, and Sodanga. As a result of migrations, several families left the escarpment, installing themselves on the plateau and founding Daga, while others, among which Gimeto and Binesoy, congregated in the Seno Gondo plain. The top of the escarpment scree forms a surface containing people’s dwellings that offers an interesting spatial layout in which the development of the village or its demographic logic can be read. The top of the scree is occupied by the oldest known built elements that have founded Tireli. The spatial layouts of times past, the troglodyte Tellem sites, can also be seen on the face of the escarpment. However, these are not considered to be part of the village⁴⁷.

The social organization of Dogon villages is objectified in the distributions of the compounds. From a broad perspective, Paulme (1988) examined the complexity of

⁴⁷ See chapter five on the outside of the village.

Dogon social organization as it is grounded in daily and ritual life dynamics. The relationships between social organization and built forms are further developed by Lane (Lane 1986; 1994) who proposes a construction and representation of Dogon history in space. Lane's work raises the question of the temporalities of Dogon material forms as well as the active role of architectural space *in the reproduction and the transformation of the society* (Lane 1994:196). This is achieved through an examination of the use and the material organization of Dogon habitat. Hence, the author provides an archaeology of Dogon settlement which provokes a *structuring effect of Dogon temporalities* and which allows an insight into the way *Dogon perceive and construct their past* (Lane 1994: 210). Dogon temporality is therefore examined through the analysis of architectural space: time as bound with space. Aspects of genealogical identity, and biographical temporality, along with the importance of the historicity of material culture, are explored in his work. From a different perspective, grounded in a daily praxis and observation of the village architectural spaces uses and making, I propose here an account of the social organization of the village that allows me to understand how the constitution of the village operated over time.

As explained to me by my informants in Dama, the *ginna* generates the village architectural matrix. These 'family' houses, located near the sacred sites and multiple sanctuaries, count as the first elements that can be found right at the top of the scree. The two houses that I refer to were the meeting places of the members of my host family. The two built elements that stand immediately below these at the very top of the scree, support part of the oldest patriarch's house called the *tire togu*. In the broadest sense of the term, *togu* refers to a cluster of compounds or patrilineal groups that originate from a common ancestor. In other words, they relate to the same *ginna*, or the ancestral house, from which the village has developed. As proposed by Paulme, the term *ginna* results from a contraction of *ginu na* which means 'big house' (1988: 123). Therefore, the *ginna* or parent company, standing

for the whole group, materializes all the genealogies of the descendant part of an extended line of agnatic groups that relate through intermarriages (Lane 1986). The *ginna* constitutes and maintains the solidarity and the cohesion of its members on the levels of ritual practice, economy, management and field tenure (Paulme 1988: 47-49). The *ginna* develops into *tire ginna*. This term originally described as a group families or compounds of common descent. Thereby designating a kernel of *ginna* which originated from a common ancestor. The *tire ginna* therefore gathers several *ginna* and each of them divides into a series of a *tire togu*. 'Tire' means the ancestors that were known going back three generations according to Calame-Griaule (1968: 275). The *tire togu* designates the family in the strictest sense of the term. It comprizes a father, his sons and their own compounds. These are not necessarily located in the same space but are often found in different districts of Tireli or even on the plain. Thus it refers to a patriarchal unit whose organizational design is based on the same model as the *ginna*.

The specificity of the *tire ginna* system and *tire togu* is that they inter-relate people on a kinship as well as on an economic level (Paulme 1988, Lane 1986). This aspect concerns, as mentioned previously, the distribution of the fields and their exploitation. The four *ginna* of Teri ku gather the families that stem from them on a same area of the scree, the families that stem from them. However, due to a lack of space and interest, the *tire togu* schema that initially reproduced this same logic, of being surrounded by either the sons or the patriarch's brother, has ceased to function. If in the upper part of the scree, the schema seems to be applied, as we move further down, it can be observed that *tire togu*, simple *ginna* and *ginu* units as well as *gujo* share the same space randomly. The origin of the *ginu* is found in the *gujo* or the smallest unit of the Dogon habitat that corresponds to a room that a young man occupies on his own or shares with his wife and small children. As his

family extends and he progresses in life, he turns his *gujo*⁴⁸ into a compound or *ginu*. The house becomes enclosed by walls and the granaries increase. In summary, the term *gujo* refers the basic element from which a compound is generated materially, though its meaning also relates to the lineage of its inhabitants. If in the past, there was an existing physical proximity between the *gujo* of the son becoming a *ginu* and the family house *ginna*, today, young people tend to build at the foot of the scree regardless of family relationships.

Today, because the village has expanded considerably, people build where they can find a place. The zones located at the foot of the scree are prized for practical reasons. The top of the scree has become increasingly deserted by the villagers. In fact, it is sparsely occupied by older members of the family or is left in ruins that allowed to remain until nothing survives and are not re-used because of the uneven topography and the difficult access to resources. But these sites still constitute the property of the ancestors of the place. They can be re-used by others by asking permission from the family descendants to occupy the place or to re-build a house there⁴⁹. The manner in which these compounds relate to each other tends to be random due to the occupation of convenient places at the foot of the escarpment and because of the availability of space. In addition, young people increasingly desire to be free of the whole system. They are keen to develop a more town-like habitation, which they attempt to reproduce at the bottom of the scree on town-like habitat. As they explain it, this architectural type requires space that is only available at the bottom of the scree because it is flat. Hence, walking back down the scree, the young and youngest generations can be observed occupying a *gujo* or a 'room'. The young men share these habitations not only with new wives and small children but also with other young men. In this way they can be used, when the time comes, by

⁴⁸ See chapter six on the Dogon compound

⁴⁹ See chapter seven on domestic waste and the re-use of ruins.

one of the young men to settle his family while he helps his friends build their own *gujo* to host their own families. The people of Tireli fear that one day the foot of the scree will be overpopulated, and they will have to spread out on to the space used for agriculture.

Beyond an impression of homogeneity, the foot of the scree offers lots of variations in architecture. Although Dogon compounds are built and spatially organized in a similar way, they really differ in their style and shape (Schijns 1979, Lauber 1998). In addition, one can observe new households built to other variations of style and shape borrowed from the towns outside the area. As shown, elements of the demographic logic of Teri-Ku Dama⁵⁰ can be visualized vertically as it is animated by a movement down toward the foot of the scree. I have shown that the Dogon foundation schema, as realized through people's accounts, is materialized in the spatial configuration of the village. In fact, the traditional institutions of social control objectify the origin of the village and its development on the scree. Most parts of the *tire togu* are randomly surrounded by younger generations of various *ginu*. As the sons of the head of a *ginna* leave it, they set up their own compound where they live with their family. Animated by a descendant movement that leads to the bottom of the village, the vertical spatial layout of the compounds bears witness to an ideological detachment from the *ginna* families and the tradition. This can also be observed, with some exceptions, in a considerable change in the style of habitat adopted. Overall, when walking through the village and referring to individuals, the villagers operate a distinction between the 'people of the top' (*da*) and the 'people of the foot' (*donyu*). While the first refers to the 'old families', the second refers to the 'youth' of the village.

⁵⁰ It can be argued that this works for the other districts and might also work for the other villages of the escarpment.

2. 'The first' house of the village

Returning to the notion of the *ginna*, I shall now look at the principle by which the *ginna* house is 'fixed' to the scree as it was recounted to me by my informants. As proposed by the men of the village, the first *ginna* of Tireli corresponds to the first house of the first district of the village that is *Tatara*. In that place, the founder of the village called *Enein* would have built his shelter under the *ginu muno* rock. On one side of it, a mud cone was affixed to protect the village as well as to indicate the place that, in the past, sheltered the ancestor of the Saye people, who first discovered the site and founded Tireli. Similarly, I have been told that the house of the ancestor from which all the compounds of the village descended exits on the plateau. It is a small house with a low ceiling or a rock cavity that was used as a temporary shelter and occupied by the original ancestor, a hunter, on his arrival in the village. It was then substituted with a proper compound or *ginna* he built at the top of the scree where nothing remains today. However, the identification of his compound remains problematic. The precise location re-told here has been contradicted by other sources, which maintain that the original house was located further down and would have been abandoned over time. There are many reasons why it is difficult to track down the story of the foundation of the village. To start with, the district of *Tatara* is mostly composed of ruins, due to its inhabitants having permanently settled in the plain where they founded new villages. Compounding this, I learnt via my *Sodangan* and *Teri-kuan* informants that the place of the 'original house' is often claimed by each district to be in their own district and not on the other side of the village. Through the multiple conversations I had with my informants, it occurred to me that the idea of the 'first house' of the village operates as a 'myth'. In fact, as it was recounted to me, the village foundation tale sounded to

me as an appropriation and political validation of origins and identities as well as a form of prestige.

As observed by Paulme (1988), the idea of a common ancestry is a way of gathering people to ensure the continuity, cohesion, and, therefore, strength of the group. Thus, the idea of the 'first house' of the village might be more likely to be a part of an origin myth than a reality. Furthermore, the fact that there is competition over its location suggests rivalry exists between the districts over the location of first settlement. In fact, the myth does empower a system of rules and social organization as well as determining coalition in case of war. Although the myth serves to constitute a relatively coherent whole, it can be observed in Tireli that the more the group ramifies the less united the unit becomes. If the *ginna* house originally constituted a form of unity that reproduced, on a different scale, through the *ginna* houses of the village, the present evolution of the built environment translates into an outburst of sorts of the social structure and relationships.

2.1. The *ginna* of Teri-ku Dama as the fixing material identities

A 'first house' was built at the foundation of each Dogon village, from which stemmed all the existing houses of the village. As stated by my informants 'the *ginna* is the first house of the founder of the village'. From this original building, which is a ruin or an empty place in most villages, other *ginna* houses were built. These represent a later family, which might, in turn, be subdivided into other subfamilies. In theory, each *ginna* enables people to trace the genealogy of their families (Lane 1986), as well as the demography of the village. Extrapolating from the villagers' discourse on the development of the built environment, the concept of the 'first house' can be said to fix local identities and the ontology of the village. This is supported by one of the functions of the *ginna*, which is to define, through multiple altars and protection systems, a particular sense of attachment to the past

and to the place as well as objectifying a sense of relatedness. Thus, the *ginna* conveys a sense of containment through the spatial logic of fixing and bounding families. It also creates and maintains a sense of unity between the families of Teriku Dama that, today, tends to manifest itself only on a symbolic level, as the younger generation tend to live away from where they were expected to settle according to the traditional logic of settlement. For young people the *ginna* is a concern for those who follow the (animist) 'tradition'. Those who convert to Islam, Catholicism or, even, Protestantism, do not contribute to the family ceremonies and, in particular, to sacrifices. These links to the *ginna* are perpetuated, therefore, by the old people. Although the young people maintain and verbally express their relatedness to and descent from a particular *ginna*, this is contradicted in practice, by an increasing sense of individualism. For instance, as a head of the family at the *ginu* family level, a young man should work for his wife and children. But, today the young people (and not just the men) turn themselves into entrepreneurs by setting up small business selling things to the tourists or on local markets. As young people often put it: 'Here, everybody looks for his/her future. It's up to you and it's every man for himself ⁵¹'. Therefore, the transmission of knowledge regarding family affairs, genealogies, and ritual practices as well as the allocation of the fields and of the harvest is increasingly controlled less and less by the *ginna*. The young men and women I met are searching for self-fulfilment, autonomy, individual economic achievement, and personal growth. This applies for the young women too, who show considerable willingness to set their own businesses, which they are likely to gather into a women's association rather than the *ginna*. Imported religions and modernism have, indeed, introduced new ways of relating, new forms of socializing, as well as new values.

⁵¹It was expressed in French as: '*Ici, chacun cherche son future. C'est chacun comme il veut et pour soi*'.

The *ginna* building distinguishes itself from other houses by its location. It stands in the oldest part of the village, which can be the village centre or, in the case of the escarpment, the top of the scree that was occupied first. The other significant characteristic lies in its architecture. This offers a particular style that sometimes varies according to the escarpment or plateau. These are two contrastive examples of *ginna* (Fig.4.1 & Fig.4.2).

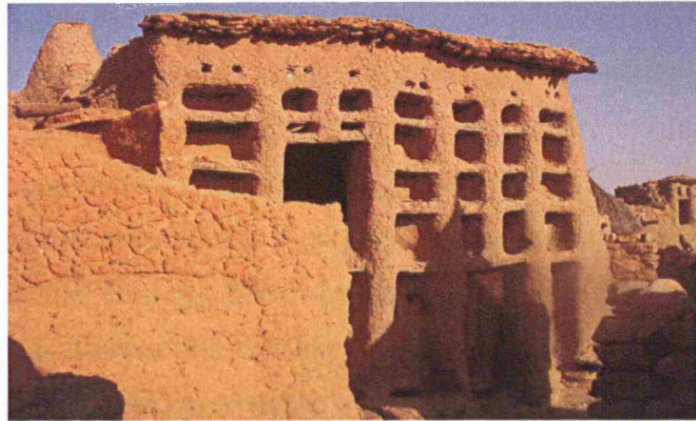


Fig. 4.1. Village *Ginna* of Wedje

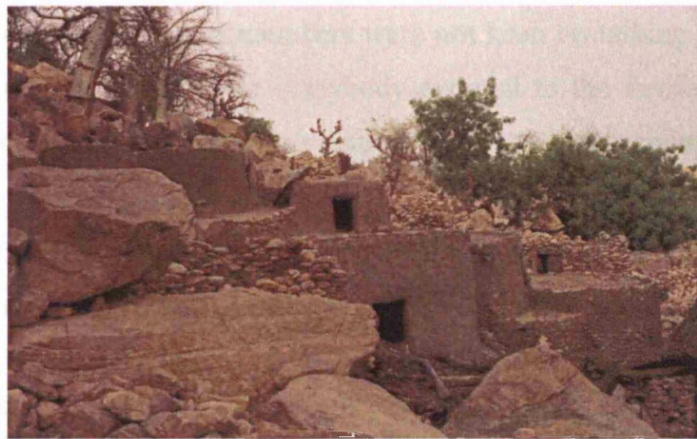


Fig.4.2. *Ginna* of Gineku -Tireli Dama

While one only *ginna* may be found in some village districts, in others several buildings of this type can be observed. Tireli Dama comprises four *ginna* of the *Gineku* divided into two, the *Ginedonyu* and the *Banongu*. Thus, as detailed in a

simplified verbal schema by my informants, the people of Teri-Ku originate from the common ancestor *Koou* who founded a *togu* and from whom the descendants of the three *ginna* listed above can trace their origins. The ruin of their ancestor's house stands, according to them, on the very top of the scree. This assertion constitutes an abstract site or reference point that testifies to their common origin rather than offering material evidence. While the oldest *ginna* of the *Gineku*, i.e. the 'head house', stands at the top the escarpment scree, the *Ginedonyu* meaning 'the house below' is located a few meters down from this. The *Banongu* is located further down in the middle of the scree. I was told that the location of these houses related to their order of foundation. Therefore, the oldest would be the *Gineku* standing at the top (Fig.4.3). The building possesses two characteristics. The first one relates to its particular architectural style of successive terraces leaning against the rock. The second concerns the co-existence of two *ginna* on one same site. In fact, the *Gineku* is divided into two families whose houses are semi-detached. The reason given to me for the co-existence of two *Gineku ginna* was hypothesized as a quarrel inside the family. It was extremely difficult to gain details about these houses as long-term tensions still exist between the families. Added to which, the chief of the *ginna* as well as its members were not keen on talking about the house as it contains the family's secrets – anybody external to the family does not have access to it. As they say, "the *Gineku*'s matters are the *Gineku*'s matters alone".

Although the *Gineku* used to be enclosed by walls in the past, today the site remains relatively open, as the fence has collapsed. This transforms the way the people of today and, in particular, the younger generations relate to their *ginna* and their ancestors. I have observed that although the building gets repaired by the men of the family, the site was in a relatively bad state as the granaries had collapsed. Thus, although the *ginna* house system tends to be less and less effective today because its control structure has less impact on young people, it still legitimizes the symbolic

gathering of Teri-ku Dama families. The houses as objectifying material identities convey a sense of common origin and of unity.



Fig. 4.3. The Gineku site in Teriku Dama.

2.2. The ancestor's house: the protection of families and the fixing of genealogies

As I observed in Tireli as well as in Pelou and Kamba on the plateau, the Dogon *ginna* are said to be founded by the construction of an altar or *Ama na*, which in most places takes the shape of a prominent rock upon which the foundations of the house are erected. This emphasizes the notion of attachment or fixing of the house and hence of the family to the place. It also highlights the establishment and the future development of a district. Alongside the *ginna omolo* or the family shrines that symbolize the cohesion of the family as well as ensuring its prosperity and well-being, the house contains a series of clay pots called *buno* that materialize similar

principles of fixing and continuity of the family. As described to me⁵², the containers are kept in a cabinet made of mud inside of the *ginna house*. This constitutes the house of the *wagyem* or ancestors, a term which means ‘*those who are far away*’ (Calame-Griaule 1968: 293).

A cult carrying the same name is dedicated to them. It is generally celebrated during the *Bire* or celebration of the end of the harvests. People go to pray and to address the ancestors to thank them for their assistance in transmitting their will to God. Similarly, the filling of the pots occurs before the rainy season, at the time of the *Bulu*. This celebrates the regeneration of the environment as well as the start of the sowing period. It signifies the revival of social networks, the remembering of the ancestors from whom protection and good will for the coming agricultural cycle is requested. In other words, the *Bulu* constitutes a re-reconnecting of the people to the ancestors in order to gain their support for the cultivation season. According my informants, every time a patriarch died, a *buno* is placed in the *ginna*. Therefore, these symbolize the genealogy of the family back, in theory, to the ancestor founder of the place (in reality most of the pots are broken). The container, filled with water or millet beer, enables members to host the soul of the ancestor who is invited to alight on the liquid and to drink it. The pot and more specifically the liquid it contains consists of a receptacle destined to receive the ancestor’s soul. If the pot gets broken, the house manager will die. Therefore, he has to sacrifice a goat and to apologize for the incident in order to repair the offence done to the ancestors. A new *buno* is then brought in to replace the broken one⁵³. Consequently, the pots fix the genealogies as well as fixing the cohesion of the families, by hosting the ancestors during significant moments of the agrarian cycle. Similarly, it was reported to me that the *ginna* house possesses a protective system that is laid in the foundation of

⁵² I was not allowed to visit the different houses. Therefore, my informants from the related families listed and described the main elements that it contains.

⁵³ I do not possess any information about the making or provenance of this new pot.

the house. It generally consists of plant mixtures that act as a magic to prevent attacks by malevolent spirits and witchcraft. At the same time, it symbolizes the continuity and success of the families. I was told that the system also applies to the compounds or *ginu*, for which I possess more data⁵⁴.

3. The architectural composition of the village

Using the paths designed for the tourists to circulate through the village and between the compounds, I propose to examine the built features that stand in the way in Teri-Ku Dama (Fig. 4.4). By focusing on the architectonic content of the district of Teri-Ku Dama in Tireli, this section examines the Dogon spatial logic of these fixed and bounded built elements, which are dedicated to all the villagers.



Fig. 4.4. Overview of Teri ku Dama.

⁵⁴ See chapter six on the compound.

The built system is symmetrical but not identical for each district of the village. That is, it occurs in each sub-district but with more or less the same features. This is because the architectural elements and their style are relatively fluid due to an increasing modernism. The schema of spatial relations proposed here enables us, first, to highlight the demographic, gendered, and geographical divisions of the community, as it is reproduced in each area of the village⁵⁵. Second, it underlines some implicit structures of control and of regulation that are objectified in the built environment and in their spatial and visual relationships. Third, the system delineates the material limits of the inhabited surface. Thus, it gives an indication of the expansion of the village of Tireli. Overall, this section looks at the containment principle on a community level by showing, through material connections, the social relationships in which they are objectified, through an examination of the dynamic of the built forms.

3.1. The village paths: canalizing daily life and tourism

Although the cliff appears as a fixed and stable container element, the escarpment scree and in particular the big rocks of which it is composed, are the result of the collapse of sections of the escarpment that, in some places, still threatens to detach from the cliff. On a symbolic level, as it was told to me, the rocks that are located outside of the village and which constitute this escarpment slope are said to be 'living'. In fact, in their materiality they host benevolent but formidable spirits in the same way as the trees. As recounted to me on our way to Komokan *ibe*, that is the night market (*ibe*) of the village of Komokan, rocks and trees move at night: "When everybody is asleep, the trees and the rocks gather in the bush where they chat". Hence, the villagers avoid walking nearby the tree areas early in the morning in order not to disturb their intimacy. As we shall see in the next section, because they

⁵⁵ It is always applied in the same way in most of the villages of the escarpment and of the plateau.

endow particular life forces (Van Beek & Banga 1992), rocks and trees function as a metaphor for humanity and social life.

As shown above, the village layout, with its distribution of the compounds, starts with the oldest built elements at the top of the escarpment due to the particular natural configuration of the escarpment scree. It then extends towards the foot of the scree, where the recent and modern style compounds congregate. In many villages on the plateau, the spatial layout of the built environment starts from the centre and expands outwards like a circular maze, revolving around the first house of the village (Lauber 1998). The built environment is interlaced with paths that weave around and through the compounds, connecting them and through which they communicate with each other. Although most paths are abandoned because the compounds they enclose are in ruins, the main arterial paths that cross the village horizontally and vertically are used daily by both tourists and locals. These are regularly re-shaped in order to maximize safety (Fig. 4.5) as well as to facilitate the visits by the tourists, and are, therefore, considerably improved. They contrast with the paths that are used by the locals, the access and use of which remains less easy (Fig. 4.6). As shown by Walther (2001), paths are re-designed and created over time to ensure tourists circulate between the multiple elements they come to see in the best way for the villagers. Hence, they guide the visitor in particular directions to guarantee they do not miss elements, as well as to make sure that they do not enter sacred places. These improved paths also ease the villagers' mobility, notably so for the women who carry water jars of about 10kg on their heads from the bottom of the scree to supply their compound up to three times per day.

As underlined by Walther '*the spatial schema of the village does not correspond to those of the tourists*' (Walther 2001: 73). In fact, the mobility of the villagers through the village does not correspond to that of the tourists. There is here a reinvention of Dogon architectural culture at work, which is characterized by a re-

design of space and, as I show further down, of built forms. Consequently, spatial logics as they are being redefined by tourism, demonstrate particular practices of doing and undoing the environment as a means to promote a certain image of local culture. As suggested by Walther referring to Balandier (1992; 1988), ‘Dogon people have over time appropriated and learned to *interpret the dynamic of modernity and transformed it under an appearance of continuity*’ (Walther 2001: 111).

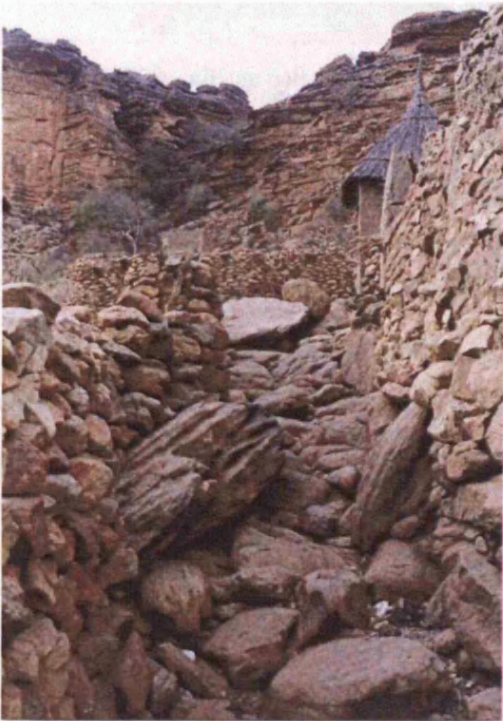


Fig. 4.5. A village path

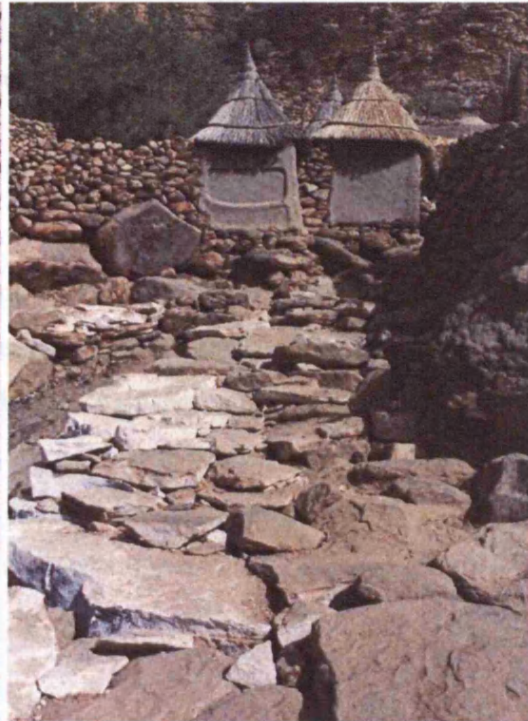


Fig. 4.6. Path recently rebuilt

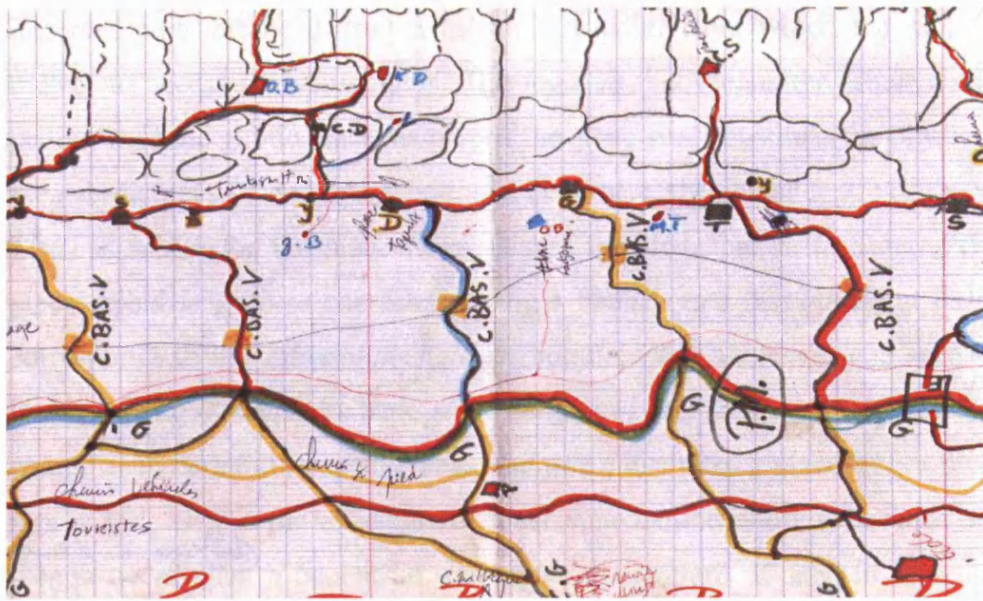


Fig.4.7. Map of the village paths designed by a young guide

As shown in the following village map (Fig.4.7), was designed by my host brother who regularly takes the visiting tourists on tours of the village, the place enfolds a great number of paths. These have multiplied over time as the tourists accessed the village from the top of the escarpment (vertically), from the plain (also vertically) or (horizontally) from other escarpment villages. Consequently, these paths provide easy access to the main attractive features of the village such as the *toгу na* or men's house, the menstruating women's house *yapunu ginu* and finally the *Binu* priest's house. Similarly, the doubling, crossing or superimposing of local paths by tourist ones shows the mobility within Tireli.

3.2. The Dama built features of Teri-Ku Dama

In Tireli the built features concentrate horizontally on the top of the scree near the *ginna* houses. However, in many villages on the plateau, the spatial layout of the built environment starts from the centre and expands outwards like a circular maze, revolving around the first house of the village. The public place interconnects the

different parts of the district as a juncture point from which the multiple paths radiate to access the compounds. The *togu na* that means the ‘shelter with a low ceiling’ and the public place, as part of the same site, constitute the physical core of the sub-district of Dama. As mentioned elsewhere, the actual centre of the village of Tireli is said to be the place where it was founded, that is, in Tatara. The public place called *te goro* is characterized by a baobab tree that stands at its centre. It corresponds to the *Adansonia digitata* (bombacaceae). Its leaves and seeds are used in the making of sauce; its bark in the making of rope; its branches in the making of compost. In certain therapeutic rites, the tree constitutes a place where food for the *jinu* is left, as it is the residence of these supernatural entities, because of this the Dogon never plant a baobab in a compound courtyard. If seen in a dream, it is a prediction of death. As a species that survives for over a century, the baobab commonly symbolizes the longevity of life of the elders who stand as the guarantors of Dogon culture. The public place is defined as the cultural centre of the village. It is a place where young people gather at night. They play under the moonlight while the elders watch from the *togu na* house. Indeed, the place itself plays a crucial role in the socialization of youth as well as in the meeting of future spouses.

As shown in the schema (Fig.4.8), the place is physically divided into various locales in which young people and children gather according to age-groups. In the same way, one side is attributed to the girls (V) and other to the boys (IV). They play at night, separately, as each gendered group possesses its own games. While the youngest of both groups play continuously until late at night, the older ones will sit on the sides of the *togu na dumadein* stones to rest or discuss more serious matters. While, in the past, this use of the space meant that the elders could easily control the meetings of teenage boys and, particularly, those of girls, today the youth of the village tend to meet in new places at the foot of the scree. Slightly set back from the compounds, these are seen as free places appropriated by the youth and therefore not imposed on by the system. Out of reach from the gaze of the elders, they chat freely,

smoke, and court each other. Alternatively, small groups of friends meet in the young men's *gujo* for more privacy where they listen to music, play cards, drink, eat, and watch black and white television.

The main gathering on the Dama public place generally constitutes the last step of a series of meetings. These start in *Sapo* or *Komanga's* places or alternatively in a formerly, deserted and open compound site. In these locations, two or three young people start a game by singing and clapping their hand, *gingpomu* for the girls and the *bambam* for the boys. For the first, the young girls gather in circles with both hands joined and hit their loincloth producing a particular sound that is followed by songs. The second game consists of throwing a ball or something similar at someone who then becomes the thrower. The aim is to avoid being hit by the projectile. After a while, they stop and begin jumping together. One girl goes into the centre of the circle, dances, then, takes her place back in the group. They carry on like this in an anticlockwise direction. The procedure is repeated, becoming ever faster with each repeat. The aim of this game is to dance together and to keep the timing right. They are then joined by other children from the three sub-districts as they move from one public *te goro* to another. The Dama, the main public place, is also occupied during the day by small children and groups of tourists who watch the masquerades under the cover of the shade. The *te goro* also acts as a ritual site where funerals take place during the hot dry seasons⁵⁶. Particular corners are dedicated to men and women while they perform rituals. Women stand in the left area (I) and men stand opposite them on the right side (II & III). The *te dumo* rock is dedicated to the dead body on which it lies during the performance before being taken to the cave. Finally, the *emena dumodin* constitutes the place where the masks sit and the *tigne tangua pagui*

⁵⁶ It would be interesting to study in detail the use of the place and the way people are distributed during these particular ritual/tourist activities, so as to better understand their complete function and meaning. I however, give here only a description of the place as well as the detail of its daily uses.

is the rock dedicated to the stilt mask. The public place is the most touristic area of the village. In fact, the Tireli masquerade has become over the past seven years a veritable industry as the tourists arrive up to two times per day and up to four days a week to watch it. The event is organized via the tourist agency, who book the show once the tourists arrive on the site. The tourists rest in the local hostel or visit the village while the dancers get into costume. Or, the organizer of the masks, who runs the main hostel of Dama, is informed by telephone or note from Sangha that the tourists are on their way and wish to see the show. Hence, the public place becomes animated for about thirty-five minutes. The tourists sit in the shadow of the compound walls that enclose the public place and prepare their cameras and video cameras to record the event for which they pay an extra fee⁵⁷.

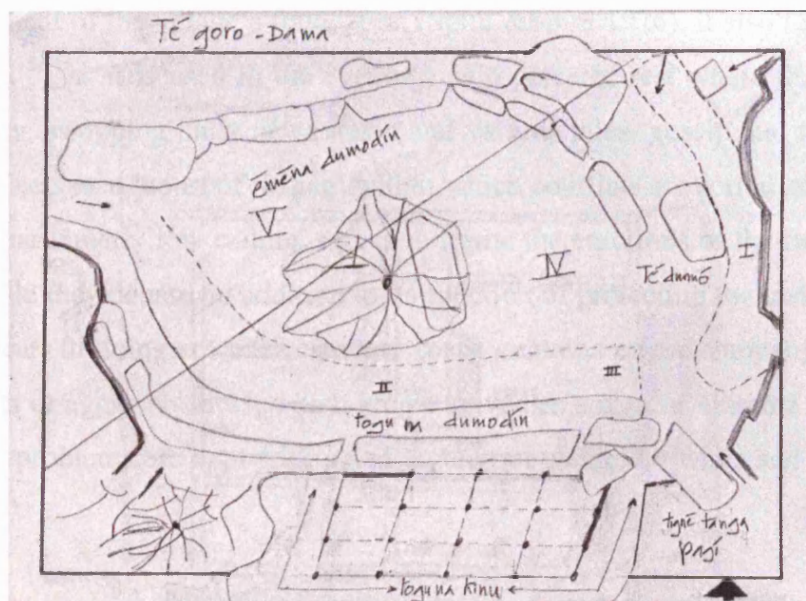


Fig. 4.8. Map showing the space division of the public place

⁵⁷ I was told by my host brother that the money the masks association earns is never revealed in order not to create conflicts between the villagers and the dancers/organizer since they do not necessarily benefit from it. According to a tourist, it costs about 70.000 CFA or £70 for a large group. But, they do not dance for less than 30.000 CFA even if there is only one tourist attending the show.

The public place and its elements thus serve to spatially organize the society and distribute people while they are meeting for leisure as well as during ritual activities. Through its particular spatial division, the public place acts as a system of control. In other words, it reminds people, through their occupying it and even through their crossing of it that, as part of the community, everyone occupies a particular place and plays a particular role. These roles must be maintained in order to ensure the cohesion and continuity of social life.

On the South Eastern side of the *te goro* stands the ruin of the smithy. A decade ago, this was moved down to the foot of the district for practical reasons. Next to it, facing the public place stands the *togu na*. Its shelter is considered to be the first public element of the village's foundation (Spini & Spini 1976). It also functions as a 'chat room'⁵⁸, as it is used in the evenings as a place of rest where the older men tend to stay, swapping daily news items and various tales, gossip and information. Equally, it acts as a 'court of justice' within which conflicts are sorted and decisions made. Its particularly low ceiling, serves to frame the emotions of the two opposing parties while they debate, in addition to its function of protecting the inside from the sun and heat. In doing so, this restricted space contains any accompanying violent movements or aggressiveness, which are perceived as a sign of extreme disorder. In this sense, problems are kept within and sorted out inside the walls and roof of this container.

The *togu-na* or men's house as an emblematic element of the Dogon village that stands at the core of the village quarters, is constantly re-appropriated by the locals to emphasize the Dogon culture. As the building attracts the curiosity of the tourists, it has been highly redecorated over the past five years. Its environment and pillars

⁵⁸ It is often described to the visitors as '*case à palabres*', that is where men chat.

are covered with symbols that represent Dogon 'culture' (Fig 4.9), such as the hunter, the blanket of the dead, and the masks. Mythical symbols such as the *Lebe* snake, group of stars, the wild fauna that used to be found in the bush and, finally, the architecture of Tireli such as the house and the granary, all are represented on the *togu na* walls (Fig.4.10).

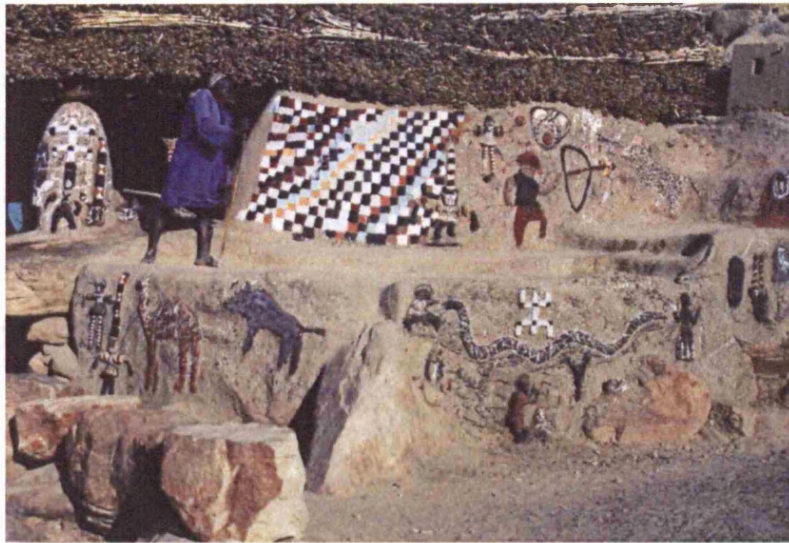


Fig.4.9. Symbols of 'Dogon culture' on the *Togu na*

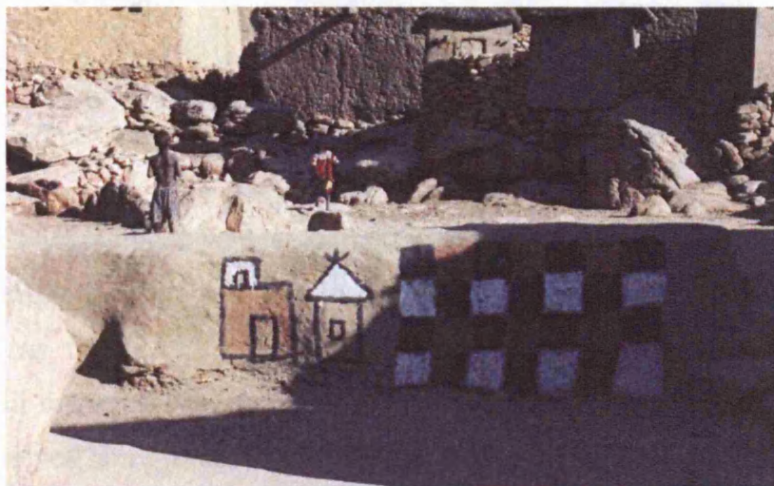


Fig 4.10. Representation of the architecture of the village on the *togu na* area.

In its 'showing' of the symbols drawn by the kids and in the way that the symbols are located in the environment of the *togu na*, it acts as a *mise en abime* or visual representation of Dogon village culture through the miniaturized symbols that highlight the Dogon habitat and 'traditional animist' culture. These graphic elements constitute markers of identity as well as the validation of the tourist economy. Similarly, I observed that the house located near the *togu na* (Fig.4.11) in the district of Sodanga is also highly decorated. The constant photographing of it by the tourists constitutes it as a source of pride to its owner and, therefore, it functions as an object of tourism through which it constitutes an income for the owner, as he can ask the tourists for money to take a picture of his house.

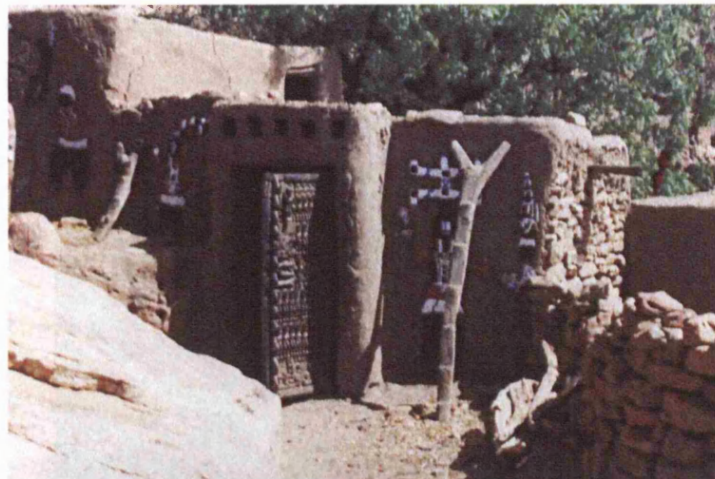


Fig. 4.11. Decoration of a house located near the *togu na*

Given its distinct, perched vantage point, the *togu na* acts as a panopticon, enabling a 360° surveillance of the activities in the district (Fig.4.12). The thick, low ceiling which darkens the inside, camouflages the men standing within the *togu na*. Therefore, all movement occurring in the village can be observed by them without being themselves being seen. This function is why, in the past, it was used as an observation site for hunting. As a lookout point from which the the night-time intrusion of compounds could be detected and therefore prevented, it also

constituted a safeguard against raids, notably from witchcraft. It was also used in this way as a means to control the women's house located behind it. It was also used to help intervene in kidnappings and to identify witches who would occupy a building alone. Today, however, the visual interconnectivity between these elements is considerably reduced due to extensive building activity. In fact, because all the space surrounding the *togu na* of Dama is inhabited, only far away views of the foot and face of the escarpment can be clearly observed. This control function is now largely irrelevant, as most of the recorded scourges have disappeared, with the exception, perhaps, of witchcraft. If the *togu na* remains to some extent occupied by the old men of the village, most men tend to gather at the foot of the scree under a tree in a place called *gahmaran*. This constitutes another place that seems to be occupied more for chatting than anything else.

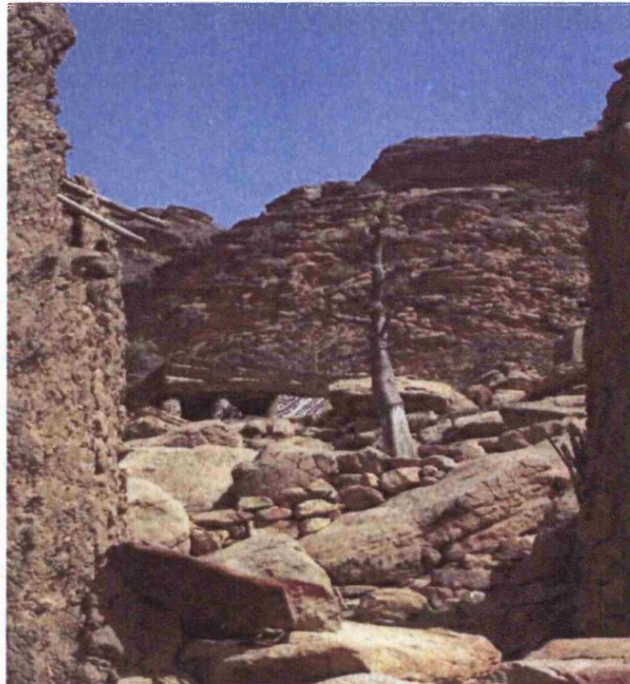


Fig. 4.12. *Togu na* of Teri ku Dama.

As we leave the public place and walk into the North East side, we end up at the *yapunu ginu* or the women's house (Fig.4.13). Here they would stay during

menstruation because their blood is perceived as impure. As a polluting element, it affects water as well as the power of magic and ritual objects⁵⁹. The house is enclosed in a circle of stones, indicating the impurity of the place. Inside the approximately square house, stands a bed made of a plank fixed on four piles of stone. This exists so the women in an impure state do not touch the ground and sterilize it symbolically. The *yapunu ginu* also contains the cooking utensils, which the women keep outside in a stony hut located on the site. Finally, the latrine is located outside the village in the scree. In the past, the house used to stand outside the village. Now, due to the expansion of the village, it is surrounded by several compounds. The building has two features particular to it alone. A series of *domolo*, wooden hooks which are symbols of virility, hang upon the façade. In association with these, the side walls of the house are covered with male and female figurines. These generally constitute a sequence⁶⁰. They symbolize the start and continuity of a family. Similarly, the house is also related to reproduction, as it signifies the situation of people who cannot have children.

The house is repaired only when the building has been completely damaged, i.e., when the rain starts to get in or when women simply ask the elders for its repair. This occurs before the rainy season. The task is conducted by young bachelors of a specific age group. The more young men participate, the better, since male youth represent the potential demographic increase of the village. When the job is done, the young men who are looking for a wife sculpt a female figurine on the outside wall with a small quantity of wet mud (Fig.4.14 & 4.15). Then, they bring a *domolo* that they leave hanging on the roof top above the door while they hope to find a wife during the year. The rite is also carried out by men who wish to have a boy or girl. Over time, figurines accumulate all around the house. These signify fecundity and

⁵⁹ Today, the house is not really occupied.

⁶⁰ See Fig. 4.14 of the house of the village of Pelou for more details.

therefore life. This system is, therefore, gendered. It concerns the wish for offspring or a spouse and, thus, it concerns men.

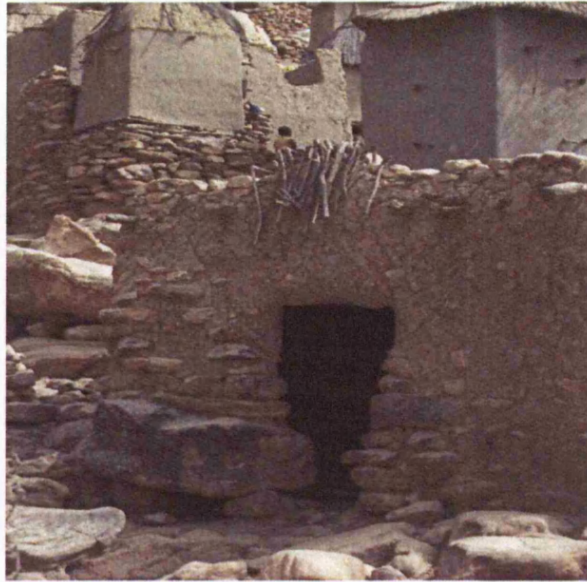


Fig. 4.13. *Yapunu ginu* of Teri ku Dama.

The building is repaired when nature ‘revives’ at the end of the dry season as a sign of regeneration and fertility. The enclosed place represents the reproductive cycle of women. Its surrounding stone boundaries contain the impurity within it. These therefore prevent contamination of the village. The walls give space to express a vital need or lack. Therefore, each *domolo* expresses the needs of either getting a wife or a child. The figurine is made directly after the repaired when the wall is still wet in order to increase the grip between the mud figurine and the wall it is pressed on to. Similarly, the humidity also signifies fertility. If over time a *domolo* falls off the front of the house, the women⁶¹ gather it and burn it as firewood.

⁶¹ Several women can occupy the house at the same time.



Fig. 4.14. *Yapunu ginu* in the village of Pelou



Fig.4.15. Details of the figurines.

By leaving the site and walking straight towards the East, we reach the *Binu ginu* house (Fig.4.16). This building acts both as bounded container and a receptacle for the shrines dedicated to the cult of the *Binu*. The *Binu Keju* of Tireli was in Ivory Coast when I conducted my fieldwork, therefore, the information I collected came from the son of the priest of Kamba Sendé (Fig.4.17). The *Binu* sacrifice I observed took place in another village of Pelou. It generally relates to a family, a village, or one of its districts that follow the same system of rules and prohibitions.



Fig.4.16. *Binu ginu* of Tireli

It is associated with the totemic animal that helped the community establish itself and develop, as for example the snake in Tireli. Hence, the *Binu* constitutes a series of prohibitions specific to a family, a clan, a village, or one of its districts. However, the *Binu* itself designates a shrine altar located in the building dedicated to it. To preserve the efficacy of the content of the house, the structure is built in certain ways. It is surrounded by a circle of stones, to prevent people from approaching. It is built with stone gathered from remote locations, as this preserves the building from

impurity. The stone is covered with wet mud that excludes certain components such as the fonio that is called *po* and corresponds to the *Digitaria exilis*, straws which would reduce the efficacy of its content. The need for purity is the reason why it is always constructed far away from the menstruating women's house. Finally, its shape, generally round and comprising a single room, is said to "preserve the secret in its inside".

If one of the prohibitions is broken, the priest *Binu Keju* is consulted and a sacrifice is done in order to appease the situation. The *Keju* priest is linked to the cycle of nature and he represents its regeneration. The seeds to be sowed are always brought to him, as well as a small quantity of the harvest in exchange for his services. It is he that is responsible for bringing the rain. He makes predictions about whether the harvests will be promising or not. He possesses excellent knowledge of the environment and regularly advises people on how to improve the harvest through the type of sacrifices they should carry out. He thus possesses the capacity to act upon agricultural practice. The powerful shrine kept inside his house makes its surrounding environment impenetrable and dangerous. This altar is associated with fertility in the *Lebe* cult. It possesses a judicial role and, therefore, of protecting people's food resources as they grow in the fields or on trees. As such, the shrine constitutes a force of nature. Alternatively, a similar crop protection system is undertaken and re-activated every year by the blacksmith.

The *Binu* is able to defend magically the crops until they are harvested, if various totemic plant species, known to people of the group, are placed on the part of the fields that need to be protected. In short, the role of the *Binu* is to protect the fields from intrusion until people can harvest their crops. It ensures the prosperity and the continuity of food resources. When a prohibition is broken or a crime such as stealing is committed, lightning will strike the culprit. The maintenance of the *Binu* building is complex. The selection of the material and the small surface repairs are

fairly easy operations, which are undertaken by the *Keju* during the dry season before the rains. Young men assist him by digging out the mud and bringing it to him. However, under no circumstances can they enter the enclosure. The shrines as well as the sacrifice objects are kept within the enclosure, in a compartment located on one of its sides. Motifs made of wet mud are said to be found on three of its sides. These constitute the cultural elements that represent most of the community managed by the *Binu*. Totemic animals and mask features are often found and offer a way of testifying to the local culture.

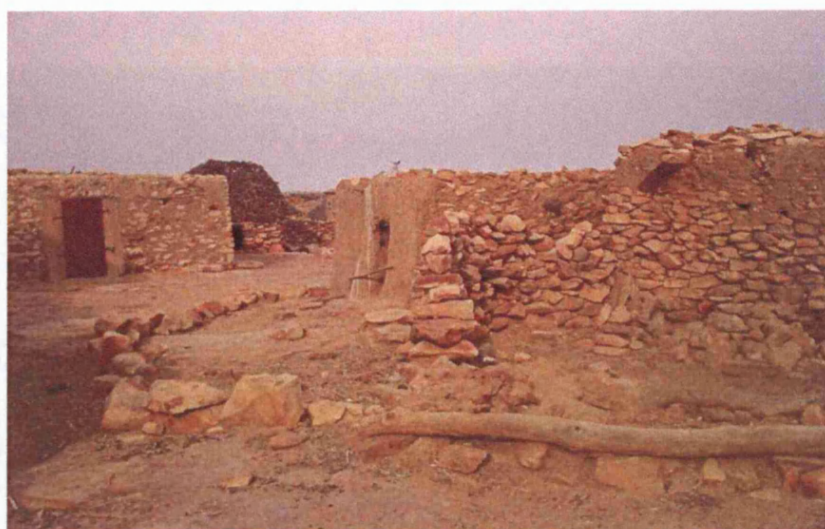


Fig. 4.17 *Binu ginu* of Kamba Sende.

As already mentioned, the oldest elements of the village are located at the top of the scree. These are gathered on a horizontal strip that is framed by two main paths used by tourists to visit the village. Originally, the women's and the *Binu* houses were situated in locations relatively to the village, as both objectify the particular force of the menstruation blood as an impure substance and thus the shrines contained within the *Binu* needed to be kept at a distance to maintain their purity. These two houses as well as the *toгу na* were elements that constituted the former limits of the village since they were located on its fringe. However, with the considerable expansion of the village, the compounds started to congregate around these elements while

keeping a certain distance from them, particularly in the case of the *yapunu* and the *Binu* houses. Hence, by looking at specific buildings of the village, it is possible to draw the former physical boundaries of the place and thus, to some extent, to trace its expansion.

A final element that manifests itself on our journey through the village of Tireli is the ruins. The upper part of the scree of the village of Tireli constitutes a large horizontal strip of deserted settlements. It extends from the district of Komanga through to Sodanga (Fig.4.18).



Fig.4.18. Ruins at the top of the scree

As my two informants pointed out to me, as we made our way through the ruins area, this part of the village is being forsaken due to the significant migrations to the town, the plain as well as abroad. In fact, according to Petit, significant numbers of villagers have drifted away from Tireli in search of arable land since 1945 (Petit 1998: 123). Referred to as *Ana yana*, that is ‘those who move far away from the village’ or, as translated by Petit (1998: 173) ‘those who move far away from the Dogon Land’, these people settled in local towns such as Bandiagara, in the capital

Bamako, in Ivory Coast or Ghana (Petit 1995: 173) where, notably, they worked as warehousemen or maids. As the village has expanded demographically, people have either drifted away, as above, or progressively extended the settled area on the scree to facilitate access to basic resources such as water.

Today, young Muslims or Christians have no interest in reoccupying their father's house after his death or even to settle next to it, as was traditionally done in the past. The lack of space, the discomfort and the substantial physical investment that required for the seasonally repairs to the wet mud habitat, largely discourages young people who would rather live in one of the new long-lasting, modern concrete houses. As pointed out to me by one of my informants, 'When the papa will die we will leave the compound. Nobody wants to live up here. It is too complicated [...] Also, all the friends have gone down now⁶²'. As the village expands at the bottom of the scree near the church and the mosque, new neighbourhoods based on social friendship networks have taken shape over time. As stated by an old man who lives near the *ginna* ruins and who we met on our way to Sodanga to examine a series of compounds, these sites 'belong to those of the past⁶³'. With a sense of nostalgia, the old man explained briefly ⁶⁴ that today, young people have their own life 'down there' (referring to the foot of the scree). In his view, one shared by many of my older informants, 'young people try to imitate the Bandiagara life style and they forget where they come from' (referring to the family house in a state of ruins). Most young people never make the effort to pay a daily visit to the elders even though they live in the same village. This neglect is perceived as a total lack of respect that demolishes the authority and power of the patriarch as it dissolves the family. In short, in Tireli, most of the compound ruins located at the very top of the

⁶² *'Quand papa sera mort, on laissera la famille. Y a personne ici qui veut vivre en haut. C'est trop compliqué et puis tous les amis sont redescendus en bas maintenant'*.

⁶³ This was said in French as '*çà c'est pour les gens d'avant*'.

⁶⁴ His words were not taped, as we just met him by chance.

scree are completely abandoned due to the unevenness and impracticality of the topography. However, the ones located in between the compounds in the middle of the scree are still reused either for dwelling, as a playground for the children, as dump pits or as a place to keep the pigs. Some people might also use these ruins to keep their domestic animals when there is a lack of space inside their own household.

According to Walther, the ruins validate the authenticity of Dogon 'ancestral' culture (Walther 2001), an authenticity that, as observed in Tireli, constitutes them as another 'photographic' target. This 'reification' is mirrored by their meaning for the locals, to whom the ruins represent 'things from the past'. As well as by the young people, who are indeed more preoccupied by constructing modern houses at the foot of the scree, rather than re-using the ruins as their location creates a particular isolation. By building a new house, the young generation are expressing their desire for emancipation and freedom from the traditional social system. As I will show in chapter 6, the 'modern' house testifies new values and a regeneration of local identity.

As discussed already, the Dogon built environment has been turned into a tourism object that is promoted by agencies and multiple websites as well as governmental organizations such as the *Mission Culturelle* and UNESCO. These organizations are involved with the protection of the Dogon cultural patrimony. While looking at the architecture of the village, my informants were clearly referring to Dogon people and less so to the architecture of Tireli. The built environment as a discourse fits more into the economic discourse disseminated by the guides and tourism agencies that tend to unify the conceptions about Dogon material environment. The village of Tireli has become over time not only a site of research but also a living museum in which everything can be photographed and constitutes a piece of 'authenticity'. Most of the villagers and especially young people have learned over time to use the

properties of their cultural milieu to promote and to commodify their culture of which they are very proud (Lane 1988).

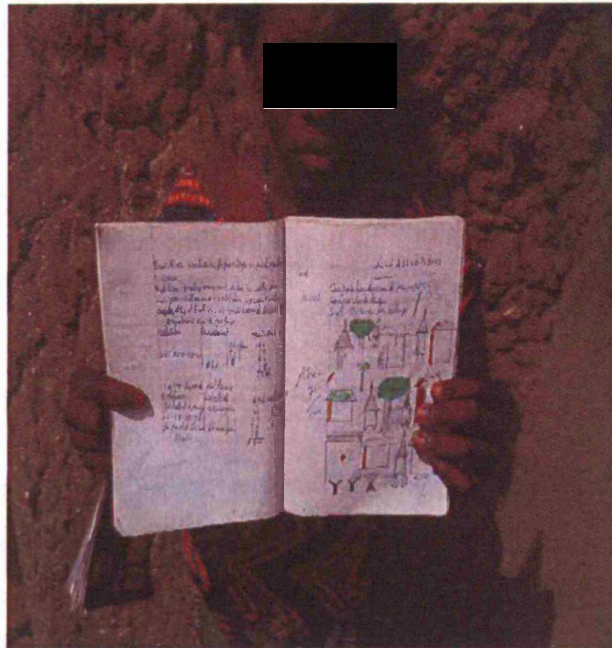


Fig. 4.19. Pupil's copy book showing drawings of the built environment

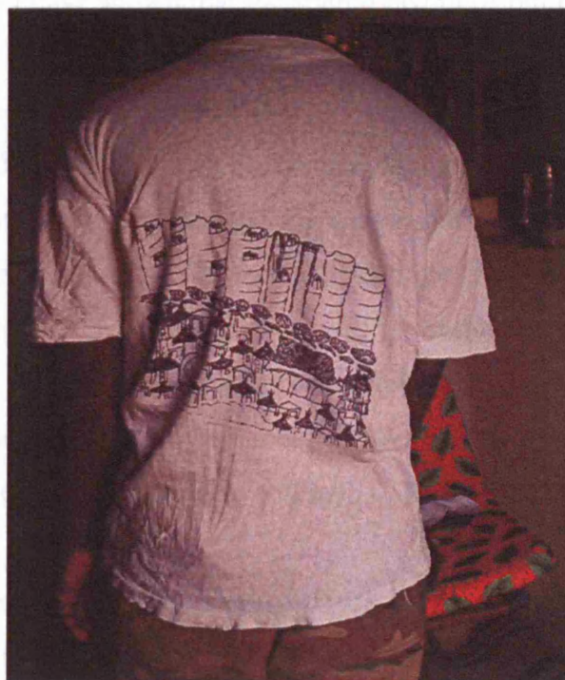


Fig. 4.20. T-shirt made locally with the village landscape

School book pages (Fig.4.19) on which the cultural and material features of the village appear are often ripped out to be sold to the tourists (Hollyman & Van Beek 2000; Schildkrout 2004). In Tireli, some of the young men and children received pencils and drawing paper and other stationary by post to express and develop their art. Indeed, Tireli counts several professionals who reproduce panoramas of the village on paper as well as on cloth and t-shirts (Fig 4.20). These are often displayed in the local hostels to be sold to the tourists.

4. Conclusion:

I have proposed an examination of the fixity and dynamic of built forms that compose the village of Tireli. I have defined this fixity and dynamic in terms of a material symbolism (Rowlands 1985) that concerns implicit forms of meaning objectified in the material forms and which are revealed through practice, i.e. through movement. I have shown that the spatial layout of buildings and compounds enfold a particular ontology and sense of attachment to the place created through their building processes (Heidegger 1962), and which was originally created through modes of fixing and bounding the elements. The first aspect manifests itself through, and is surely reinforced by, tourism and the concomitant promotion of the village's built units, as expressed by the local youth through drawings and by the adults through the redecoration of the *togu na* and, in some instances of the houses. Similarly, annual village celebrations contribute to the revival of the built environment, consolidating existing bonds between the villagers as well as reinforcing a sense of attachment to the village.

The bounding system constituted through bodily action and comprising the built units, in particular those of the compound, is becoming increasingly porous due to modernizing influences, such as the young people's progressive detaching of themselves from the authority of the patriarch. The system remains, therefore,

relative as young people do not use, conceive of, nor make space in the same ways as their parents. Hence, we are witness to a progressive form of de-containment. As the inside of the village and its multiple internal boundaries extend, it becomes more and more fluid with the passage of time and of people.

5.

The outside of the village (*Ana kerugue*) as a ‘life-giving’ and ‘life-threatening’ reservoir.

The village of Tireli located on the escarpment scree is surrounded by an area called *ana kerugue* that refers to the outside of the village. As pointed out by my informants, *kerugue* translates as the ‘side of the village’. In fact, this area is ‘separated from’ the village and therefore conveys an idea of a limit constituting a belt that circumscribes and holds the village. The *ana kerugue* functions as a framing device for the village because it contains life resources. In this chapter, I provide a description of the contiguous zones, and therefore elements, that compose the outside of the village. I propose that this area of Tireli’s territory defines a humanized landscape or taskscape (Ingold 2000) that is shaped over time through people’s daily embodied activities and experiences of crossing the territory. In other words, the human action made upon the land, such as the exploitation of natural resources as well as its management, confers particular configurations and meanings to it (Tilley 1994). By borrowing Van Beek’s and Banga’s (1992) argument, I shall conceptualize the outside of the village and more specifically the domesticated bush as the ‘life-giving reservoir’ of the village, i.e. as a place from which the Dogon people extract their daily means of subsistence and therefore depend on greatly. Hence, I explore the dimension of the outside of the village as a form of container for the inside or the village by looking at the elements of which it is composed.

As an immediate physical limit, the escarpment distinguishes the territory of Tireli from the plateau area. This zone is considered to be a wild bush, as it largely

remains uncultivated due to the rocky and uneven nature of the ground. However, the villagers of Tireli benefit from the fissures in a place called Tegu that retains the water of the rainy season, and around which they cultivate onions. This site is located about two kilometres away from Tireli. It is cultivated by villagers who do not have growing rights to the arable land at the bottom of the scree. The top area of the village of Tireli that extends on its East and West sides comprises some irregular farmable patches where old men cultivate millet. One well and the tree-scattered fields that are converted into gardens during the hot dry season are located at the bottom of the village. These fields continue on the other side of the river, where an old well is also situated. Finally, the domesticated bush just described is separated from the wild bush that runs down to the plain by a dune cordon that runs East–West, parallel to the cliff. Hence, I will refer here to two bush spaces. While the first called *oru* constitutes a cultivated area where human activity takes place, the second corresponds to a relatively mystic and threatening space called *saaou* or *samu*. While the first is defined as the outside of the village, the second would be defined as ‘the outside of the outside of the village’. This refers to the wildland. As one approaches the villages of the plain, the ‘wild’ bush space is squeezed into a considerably narrowed strip by the fields. Thus, this uncultivated area forms an intermediate strip, about twenty kilometres long between Tireli and the villages of the plain such as Gimeto, the residents of which originate from Teri-ku in Tireli. This portion of land creates a common outside space for the villages of the plain and of the escarpment.

I suggest that the inside/outside spatial schema of Tireli (Fig.5.1.) does not function within in a system of oppositions conceptualized as a ‘safe cultural’ inside versus a ‘threatening natural’ outside space. Rather, I argue that these two spaces reveal themselves to be contiguous and reversible through people’s daily embodied practice of space. Hence, through daily tasks, travelling, and also through modernism, tourism and, finally, the weather, the Tireli cosmoscape that

encompasses the land and the atmosphere defines through daily movements, and does so through the circulation of people and/or things.

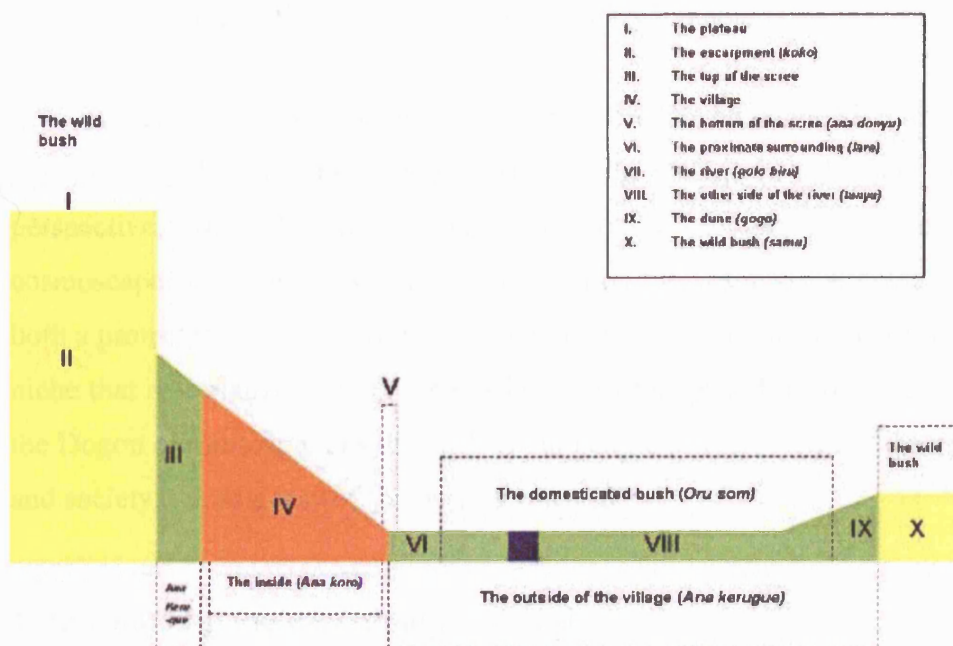


Fig. 5.1. Spatial divisions of the territory of Tireli

Consequently, I propose that the Dogon cosmoscape as a container in which people dwell, remains flexible. As we have seen in chapter two, although the Dogon conception of space reveals a certain form of containment that functions as a protection mechanism aimed at stopping the flow of, notably, malevolent entities or epidemics that create disorder within the village, the control and overall the efficacy of the symbolic boundaries of the inside and outside of the village is relative. In fact, the porosity of the containing function very much depends upon contingencies and the course of events. To that extent, the modernization of communication paths that traverse the land and which are emulated by those for tourist purposes, increase the accessibility and, therefore, the busy-ness of the place. This factor paired with

intensifying levels of cultivation that lead to an increasing colonization of the undomesticated bush tends to push at the existing physical boundaries, expanding them and, in the process, reifying the dichotomy of the inside and outside. In other words, the spatial divisions remain fundamentally mutable.

To conclude, I will, through an exploration of the Dogon conception of the weather, attempt to gather the inside and outside of the village in a broader containment perspective, which I have introduced previously (notably in chapter two) as a cosmoscape. Through daily praxis and mobility, the cosmoscape reveals itself to be both a protected milieu enclosed within particular conceptual boundaries as well as a niche that materializes through the gathering of things and people. Defined as such, the Dogon cosmoscape tells us much about people's worldviews of the environment and society, i.e. as a way of 'being-in-the-world'.

1. Introducing the escarpment container

The *falaise* or escarpment called *koko* is the main prominent characteristic of the territory of Tireli. It constitutes a limit between the fringe of the top of the scree that is domesticated and the plateau area. It is endowed with a particular geomorphology made of fissures and hollows. The villagers of Tireli have used these over time for multiple mobility and storage purposes as well as to a lesser extent as a calendar. The escarpment offers multiple, winding and precipitous paths that allow the villagers and the tourists to reach the Plateau area (Fig. 5.2). Although, the paths are repaired, notably to facilitate tourists' access to the village, taking these sinuous, steep and busy routes requires particular care, as the stones constantly threaten to destabilize due to frequent use. While the villagers climb up and glide down the escarpment paths with an astonishing agility and confidence, the tourists always struggle to keep their balance. The contrast is at its most eloquent when watching the Dogon women who never falter when transporting heavy loads of goods and the

jar of beer that they carry on the top of their head with an impeccable synchronicity of perfectly timed and balanced movements.

In contrast to most of the escarpment villages, the portion of the cliff on the scree on which the village of Tireli is established does not loom over the dwellings. Rather, the cliff appears at this point as a prominent cylindrical rock (Fig.5.3), which is often used by travellers to locate the village from the plain. The rock stands approximately between the two quarters of Teri ku and Sodanga, as a landmark of the whole village of Tireli. Some Tellem dwellings inscribed in the rock can be observed at on the top and side of the rock. In this way, the rock materializes the history of its human occupation through the visual stratification of three types of architecture of the Tellem⁶⁵ and the Dogon whose settlements occurred at different periods in time. The Tellem construction located in the highest areas of the escarpment can be observed in certain places (Bedaux 1972).

These cylindrical buildings, backed in the rock cavities, were used as storage facilities. The areas located above these constructions, consisting of natural hollows, requiring particularly acrobatic manoeuvres to access them, were used as a necropolis. Bedaux, in his study of Tellem culture, which he dates from the 11th century AD, and to which a Mande origin is often attributed others, shows that Dogon and Tellem habitats are clearly distinct and show no cross-cultural influences (Bedaux 1972; Bedaux & Lange 1983). According to the Dutch archaeologist, the Dogon took over the place and settled in the area around the 15th century (Bedaux 1972). The Dogon have used the cliff cavities over time for multiple purposes. Indeed, its fissures have been continuously in use, and still are today, as some of the

⁶⁵In his work, Bedaux mentions a third type of dwelling of the Tolloy which pre-existed the Tellem. The villagers only referred to the Tellem.

villagers use the hollows located close to the plateau surface to store the onion harvest.

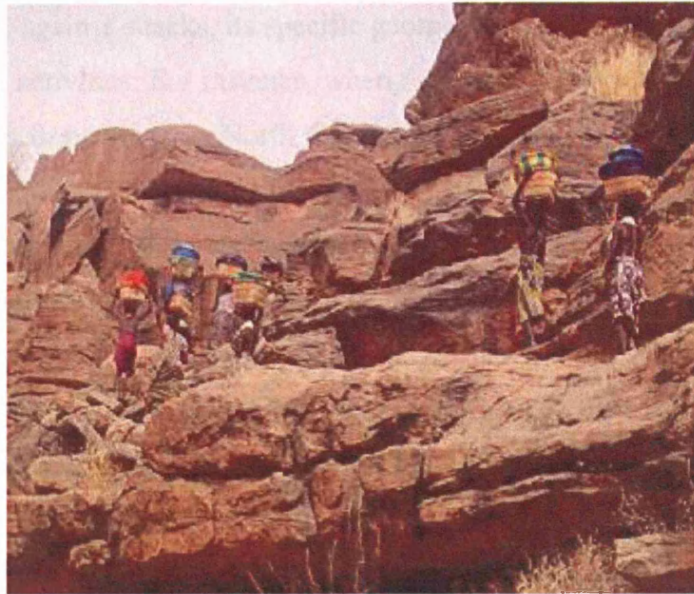


Fig. 5.2. Escarpment path that leads to the plateau

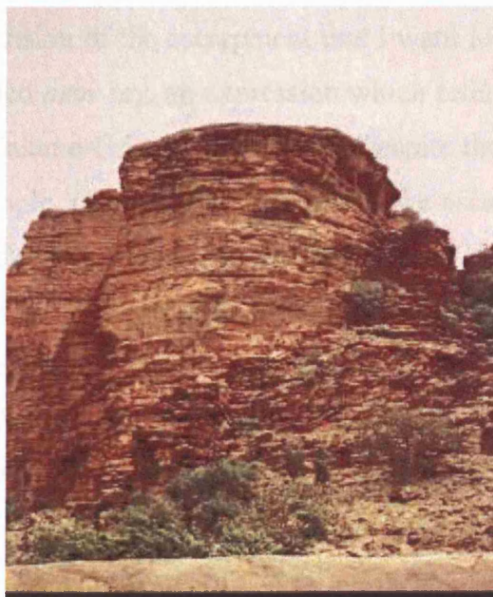


Fig. 5.3. The Tireli Rock

These naturally aired, storage facilities are particularly favourable to the drying out and, thus, the conserving of the bulbs. While some of the fissures were used in the past as a refuge against attacks, its specific geomorphology is still used as a calendar for agricultural activities. For instance, when the Milky Way crosses one of its main vertical fissures from South to North this indicates to the Dogon that their peas are ready for harvesting. Similar uses of rocks can be found on the plateau, in which rocks of particular shape enable the timing of agricultural cycles by reference to astronomical elements.

Having briefly introduced this unique landscape, I shall now explore two of the main uses of the cliff cavities: as cemeteries and as (a now abandoned) water reservoir.

1.1 Landscaping death: the cliff as a container cemetery

The first containing dimension of the escarpment that I want to look at concerns the cemeteries which are called *omo say*, an expression which refers to ‘the place where the living decompose’ (Calame-Griaule 1968: 211). Despite the increasing religious conversion of Tireli’s people, most of their dead lie in the escarpment chambers. In fact, the enclosed (Christian and Islamic) cemeteries located below the dune remain relatively sparsely occupied⁶⁶. The original burialgrounds are distributed along the escarpment in its cavities, where the dead are buried separately according to the cause or circumstance of their death (Dieterlen 1941: 187). The villagers separate the dead by category, interring the ‘normal dead’ in the escarpment and the ‘bad dead’ in the cliff. The ‘very bad dead’, those who did not grow to a height considered normal and those who were cursed by a blacksmith, are taken far away in the wild bush where the body is placed into the hollow of a baobab tree trunk

⁶⁶ This was investigated in 2003.

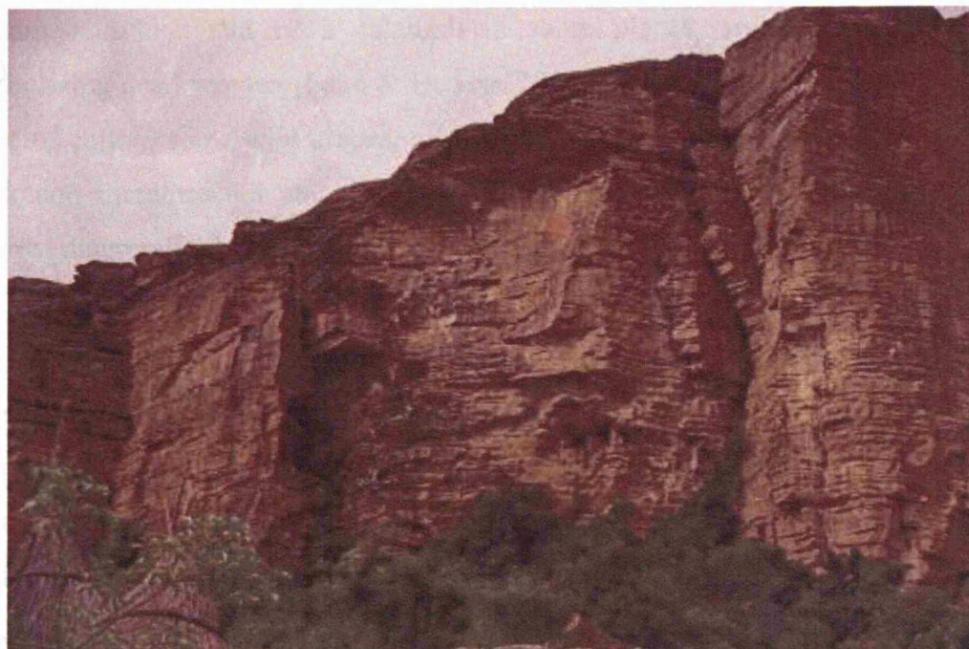
(Bouju 1995 (a): 363). While the main, larger fissure in the escarpment is dedicated to 'normal' deaths, smaller hollows are allocated to horses and the Peul⁶⁷ people. In other villages, spiritually important persons, such as the *Hogon* (spiritual chief) or the *Binu kediu* (priest), are also buried apart because of their status and spiritual power. In keeping with this, some hollows are allocated to those categories of the dead considered to be dangerous. The dead belonging to one of these categories are placed in the *monyu ongein* or the place of the 'bad souls/dead'. According to my informants, categories of death included in this are infanticides, stillborn babies, abortions, as well as deaths that occur when a woman is menstruating, pregnant or giving birth. In Tireli it is said that the dangerous, jealous souls of pregnant or menstruating women return to haunt the village, striking out at other women and children.

In the same vein, those who died of leprosy and suicides are all perceived as harmful. The same applies in other villages such as in Nombori. According to the *kediu* (priest) of Kamba who is in charge of the control of the village boundaries (Bouju 1995 (a)), these types of death emanate from the transgression of a prohibition. Other categories of death/dead have been enumerated by Dieterlen (1941: 188-209): those who died in the bush and whose body remains unfound, people killed during a war, those murdered, burned, or killed by a spiritual force and, finally, those who did not grow to a height considered normal by the Dogon. These categories of the dead are considered to be signs of failure and forms of impurity that threaten to repeat themselves permanently, contaminating the family. The Dogon perform specific ritual procedures⁶⁸ in order to prevent this happening. As reported by Bouju (1995 (a): 363), the altars, called *oru muno* in Tireli and located in the bush, enable the Dogon to 'contain' the bad deaths that attempt to

⁶⁷ The Peul (Fulani, Fulfulde) are a pastoral ethnic group that lives on the Dogon land.

⁶⁸ I do not possess further details on these particular rituals.

penetrate the space of the living. These ‘obstacles’⁶⁹ must be purified subsequently by the carrying out of maintenance tasks prior to the rainy season.



5.4. The cemetery or *komo*

Each quarter of Tireli possesses a *komo*, designating either a fissure, a cave or a hollow (Fig. 5.4.) dedicated to ‘normal death’. This mostly refers to old people who died from ‘natural death’. In Teri ku as in Sodanga, this cemetery is located at the top of the cliff. This dark spacious room is accessed by a forking path that zig zags across the escarpment face. The main branch of the path, leading to the plateau is used daily, while the bottom part of the path leads to the cave cemetery (Fig. 5.5). The room contains a place called *odu di* that means ‘to drink the soul’ where libations of millet cream are offered to the soul of the dead in order to appease them when they come to disturb the sleep or health of infants to whom the ancestor is ‘responding’. This is called *nani* or the ancestor who is in charge of ‘protecting’ and

⁶⁹ Instead of ‘altar’, Bouju employs the term *gidu* (*Dono So* dialect) that translates as ‘obstacle’.

growing the baby in which its soul is reincarnated and to which its vital force is transmitted. The place called *tonyon dani* lies below the cemetery entrance, and is where women's funeral ceramics are placed between layers of rocks (Fig.5.6.). These containers, which can be a calabash in some places, are left⁷⁰ as a way of symbolizing dead women (Lane & Bedaux 2003: 89). The small clay pots contain a piece of cotton, some wild grapes, oil and the spindle that symbolizes the woman's work and therefore her status as a woman. The pot is never removed and gets destroyed naturally, as time passes.

The entrance of the *komo* or cavity for regular death stays open permanently, due to its wide and high opening. The dead are generally brought to their grave on a stretcher that is abandoned in the space below the entrance after use. The inside of the cemetery⁷¹ consists of a large room. Its perimeter consists of one level that forms an uplifted recess in which the oldest bodies lie, as this is where bodies were placed in the past. Today, due to a lack of space, the dead occupy the space below. However, as this burial spot is also relatively full, the inhumed bones are exhumed to make room for a newly brought body. The bones are then replaced on top of the entombed body. The piles of remains, stacked up against the cliff walls, frequently collapse and crash out of the cave onto the rocks below forming a veritable open-cast tomb – a place where death is landscaped (Laviolette 2003). It is interesting to note, however, that as they are left on the scree these relics indicate that body remains are insignificant compared with the soul of the dead, which occupies a central place in the Dogon's belief system (Dieterlen 1941). The outside of the village is seen here as a place where the Dogon people leave the dead, the soul of which can always

⁷⁰ I was told that the reason why the pots are left outside of the cave is because of the lack of space inside of the crypt.

⁷¹ Only men are allowed to enter the cave. Therefore, I collected this information with two of my informants who have taken dead bodies inside the escarpment a few times.

return to the village. The rock endows a practical logic of power, containing death in the landscape, by excluding it from the inside of the village.



Fig. 5.5. Lower part of the path that leads to the cemetery of Teri-Ku



Fig. 5.6. Depot of funeral ceramics on the path leading to the cemetery

1.2. The *titin* as a water reservoir

The second characteristic place of the escarpment is marked by its function as a water reservoir. This place, called *titin*, is constituted as a cave two levels deep that is open at the top and therefore communicates with the plateau. During the rainy season water collects in its bottom cavity. As a relatively closed chamber, it preserves water from impurities and from evaporation. In the past, before the drilling of water wells and the installation of pumps, this reserve was exploited throughout the hot dry season when the ponds and river dried up. Annually rituals and prayers were made, at the start of the dry season, to maintain the continuous supply of water. The practice also included fumigations to make the access to the reservoir safe. The reservoir is entered from the top the cliff, via an initial platform, on the side of which the ritual potteries used for its purification and safety are located in a recess (Fig.5.7).

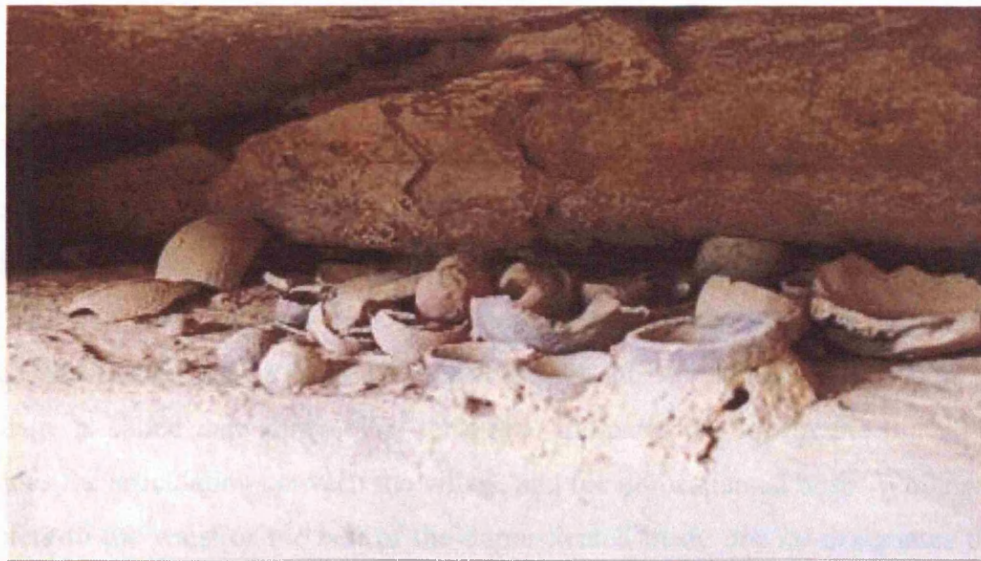


Fig. 5.7. Ritual pots located in a cavity at the entrance of the *titin*

Beyond this lie various forms of insects such as bees, and then, the stagnant water of the reservoir that is still believed to be animated by the water spirit called *Nommo*.

The *Nommo* whose name signifies 'giving a drink' corresponds to the spirit of water and, thus, automatically of the rain. It relates to the fecundity of earth and represents all forms of life (Calame-Griaule 1968: 203-204). This one is said to drown people when it gets disturbed. Therefore, the access to the water, formed by a table in the second level was restricted by certain prohibitions such as not wearing any red items, being clean, not wearing shoes, moving silently and calmly in the reservoir and not fetching water with a jar with a small opening that provokes a bubbling at the surface and, therefore, wakes the water spirit. The colour red might symbolically refer to blood and therefore the idea of impurity. This prohibition is also applied when pots are burned collectively. Today, the place is abandoned in preference for water wells and pumps, the access of which is free of danger and more convenient. These facilities are integrated into the domesticated bush which I shall now introduce.

2. Introducing the domesticated and undomesticated bush

Here, I propose to look at the area of the *ana kerugue* that spreads from the bottom of the village up to the dune. The outside of the village possesses an internal space division that relies upon the features of its landscape such as the river or the dune cord. Sometimes, the space divisions of the territory of Tireli that concern both the inside and the outside of the village are named according to human body parts. For instance, the village 'inside' called *ana bere* means the womb while the bottom of the village is called *ana donyu*. The term *lara* indicates the hip of the bush and designates the articulation between the village and the domesticated bush. While *oru som* refers to the waist or the belt of the domesticated bush, *oru ku* designates the head of the bush. Although these terms appear in the current namings of Tireli's space division, the analogy between the land and a human body as suggested by Griaule (1966) is denied by the villagers. I propose here to start with an examination of the base of scree and move progressively across the domesticated bush to reach

the dune cordon, from where I will take a look at the wild bush that extends beyond the outside of the village.

2.1. The Bottom of the scree as a social space

As we walk down the escarpment scree of Teri-ku Dama and reach its 'bottom' called *seje/ana donyu*, we come across the first large strip of the outside of the village called *lara* that designates 'the village proximate surroundings' or the hip of the bush. It starts where the compounds stop and it extends to the river. It constitutes a transitory space between the village and the domesticated bush and a social area where people gather for social events such as during the market, as well as where the tourists' cars are parked. As pointed out by my informants, the bottom of the scree is marked by two altars called *inegiru ama*. These are the goatherd altars that are sacrifice sites at the onset of the rainy season and which are 'symbolically' assisted by the young goatherd. Their function is to bring rain, good luck, and the prosperity of the compounds. These altars were both originally located outside of the village area, i.e. on the West of the village away from the compounds for the first and on the East next to the compounds for the second. Therefore, to some extent, their current location says something about the demographic growth of the village.

The *lara* is partly covered by fields during the rainy season. The place also constitutes a meeting place where men gather and drink tea in the shadow of a tree. The four-by-four vehicles of the tourists regularly shatter the tranquillity of the place as they park or depart from near the hostels. The foot of the scree is one of the most lively animated, or social, areas of the village, as people wander around and chat especially during the hot dry season that is considered a period of rest. To the side of the meeting place stands the water well, where women collect water a minimum of twice a day, and where they share the latest gossip. It was built in the 1990s from

money offered, as the villagers say by the 'toubabou', the tourists. Nearby, young girls often wash their cloth, leaving it to dry on the rocks from where they will collect it later on. The soil is relatively hard and impacted by human movement and activities and the rubbish (mostly plastic), which results from and testifies to the busy-ness of the place. Some of parts of the *lara* are also used by the women to process millet fingers during the hot dry season when the space is not cultivated. This collective task also takes place at the top of the scree or in spacious, airy places within inhabited areas of the village, as millet chaff causes quite dramatic skin and eyes irritations. As Lane has observed, in another of the escarpment villages called Banani, the practice occurs in the outside limit of the village in order not to bring the malevolent spirits that are responsible for these afflictions to the village (Lane 1987: 56). Another element that characterizes this fringe, more specifically in the Sodanga area, is the market place (Fig.5.8 & 5.9.)

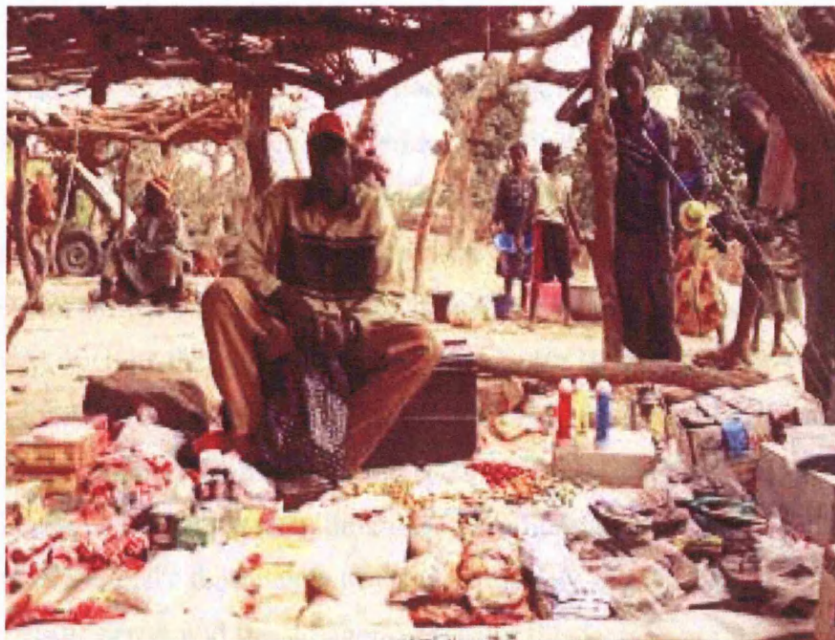


Fig. 5.8. A man's stall at the market



Fig. 5.9. Women's stalls at the market

The place becomes animated once every five days around four o'clock while the sellers start unpacking early in the afternoon. The stalls, filled with multiple colourful goods release the flavour of spices and soap, attracting the interest of the children who always attempt to get some free candies from the sellers. In the stalls, coffee, clothes, plastics containers, batteries, and flashlights meet various goods such as wallets, perfumes, and body lotion that have rapidly become the new craze of the younger Dogon. While the traders from the plain set up under these stalls, the women generally collect on the periphery where they sell pulses, vegetables, cooked food and drinks such as the famous *konyo*. I agree with Walter Van Beek who says that Tireli millet beer is the best! (Van Beek & Banga 1992: 63). The market is set up in a particular order, with goods in the middle of the market place and cooked food, grilled meat and drinks surrounding this. The abundance of products as well as the animation of the place materialized by the cacophony of the crowd, audible even from the top of the scree, and the villagers' dressing themselves in their best clothes often masks any dismay due to a lack of money or things to trade. In that respect, it seems that the market constitutes a necessary social environment in which people alleviate the pressure of their daily constraints and overall paucity of resources,

which is the norm for most of the villagers. Although, it is always well attended, the market is busiest during the hot dry season during which the major cultivation activities are suspended. Hence, people can benefit from resting and leisure time.

The market is also visited by those with some money to spend, mostly on beer. Small children are often excluded, as according to their mother they would steal from the stalls without understanding their act. The market of Tireli endows a longitudinal periodicity on Tireli, linking it with the other markets of the escarpment villages that occur one after the other at night or during the day. Thus, the markets as a network interconnect the Dogon villages through particular events that gather people socially but also for business purposes. The market constitutes a transit zone in which people come and stay for a while but leave at night. It is characterized by a flow of people and of goods that are bought and sold. New products enter the village space and contribute to the modernization of daily life, adopted by those who can afford it. However, generally speaking, the market constitutes a place where men and women gather to chat and mostly to drink beer until it runs out. The village of Tireli has a solid reputation for being a village of heavy drinkers. Everybody drinks the *konyo* even the youngest children! As put forward by my friends, a group of trouble makers with whom I got stuck several times in interminable drinking sessions: “Dogon people cannot live without millet beer. It makes you feel happy because you share it with your friends. Then, you have a good chat and you can exchange stories⁷²”. As rightly suggested by Jolly (1995, 2004) in his remarkable work on Dogon millet beer and drinking habits, the brew does not only create social networks, it also brings together the life cycles of the people with that of the fields, in both ritual and daily life, as a form of linkage and of regeneration of the individual as well as of the society. Finally, as we leave Tireli’s market and cross

⁷² ‘ Les Dogon ne peuvent pas vivre sans bière de mil. Ça te rend heureux parceque tu bois avec les camarades. Alors, tu va bien causer et bien échanger’.

the river, we end up at the local school. It is built of stone, concrete and a tin roof. The teachers' flats made of wet mud stand next to it. The children and teenagers of Tireli as well as those of the villages of the plain attend this primary and secondary school. Its buildings are also used as a meeting place for the villagers and the NGO where they can debate issues. Next to the school, which is physically isolated from the village life, is a water pump. It is often broken since according to the women of the village, the children always force the pump-handle. As its repair remains expensive and since there is no expert in the village to do the work, the pump is left unrepaired. The school is located in the area where the millet fields stand and just beyond the dune cordon in the 'domesticated bush', which I shall examine now.

As I have shown, the village's proximate surroundings constitute a lively social place where people and things gather and circulate. It tends to become busier as the tourists come to visit the village and more specifically to watch the masquerade that is organized for them on the public place. While some areas of the *lara* are cultivated during the rainy season, they are crossed and occupied by the cars of the tourists during the cold dry period. The kids of the village often rush into the *lara* when they hear the cars of the tourists coming into the village. There, they latch onto the visitors and beg for their plastic bottles, money or t-shirts. Tireli remains one the most visited villages of the escarpment due both to tourism and the numerous the paths that cross the outside of the village running parallel to the line of the escarpment. Hence, the *lara* constitutes a transitory place that is characterized by movement and which tends to become the most social area of the village, i.e. it is place of interaction for the villagers but also of interaction with the visitors, whereas, the public place is mostly occupied by old people and young children and tends to be regarded as a place of 'tradition', where the masks or funerals are performed. Social life during the day tends to congregate at the bottom of the scree and in the *lara*, the place through which the trappings and practices of the modern world are introduced to the village, creating new paths towards a modern lifestyle

through a greater mobility of goods and of people. The visitors, various companies, such as Coca-Cola, that supply the hostels of the village with drinks, the consolidation of the tracks to facilitate the access to the village or, as we have seen, the introduction of new commodities to the village, are just some of the elements that introduce movement to the village. In this way, the village expands its social boundaries and visions on the outside world, through a greater access to things and places. I propose now to leave the *lara* area and to look at the multiple elements that constitute the *oru* or domesticated bush.

2.2. The domesticated bush as a 'life-giving' reservoir

The domesticated bush, called *oru* or *oru som*, forms a belt of land that faces the village and extends towards the dune corridor. It is composed mostly of the fields and the trees that are located on both sides of the river. As proposed by Van Beek & Banga, the bush as ambivalent 'life-giving' and 'life-threatening' constitutes a place where people obtain essential, daily resources for living: 'From the bush people are fed, the sick are healed, knowledge is acquired and discipline meted out' (Van Beek & Banga 1992: 69). It should be emphasized, that although this definition of the bush might give an impression of abundance, crops fail regularly due to a lack of water or get eaten by the locusts or various parasites. Hence, the bush often turns itself into a landscape of scarcity, generating an ontological insecurity. As proposed by Van Beek (1993), the Dogon domesticated bush is the result of long-term interaction and adaptation by the Dogon to the physical as well as to the socio-political environment, which had over time been characterized by slave trading, colonization and population growth, and from which the Dogon people have developed their own particular, shared technical and practical knowledges that have emerged through an embodied practice of the place.

The division and pattern of the fields was originally modelled on the structure of social organization within the village. In other words, as they belong to the families, the fields are divided, as well as allocated, according to a kinship model. In this sense, the way the Dogon relate to each other from a social point of view is reproduced here in the structure and distribution of the fields. Therefore, the social cohesion, hierarchy, and organization are materialized through the spatial layout of the fields, as realized by their size, the quality of the soil, and their location. I was told that a re-distribution of land is carried out every three years when a new head of the extended family is introduced. The schema of the fields seems to vary slightly from one village to another. Although I was told that the social organization applies in the same way in all Dogon villages, certain types of fields do get re-distributed or included within other fields, because their classification and attribution has become or is irrelevant. For instance, in some villages the *Hogon* field is nonexistent because there is no *Hogon*. In the same way, certain types of fields do not exist anymore because the social organization and the political structures of the village have changed. When this is the case, the fields are redistributed 'internally' on a *ginna* level.

The cultivated area called *dine goru* is today entirely exploited. The term refers in practice to the fields that are cultivated alternately and located in a humid area, and which are in theory of a good quality. However, due to intensive cultivation, the soil that is alternately cultivated and located in a humid area and in theory of a good quality tends to be impoverished. The South West side of this area facing the escarpment and at the foot of the dune standing beyond the river belongs to the people of Teriku. These fields extend for some three kilometres and constitute the limit with the village of Komokan. Some of the *mine poroba*, described as the collective, or lineage fields, are located in the area between the foot of village and the river. These belong to the three *ginna* of Teri ku and they are divided between their members. They are of a particularly good quality as they stand in a fertile and

humid zone. Within this category, particular fields such as the *Lebe mine* and the *wagi mine*, the fields of the ancestors, are found. They are owned and therefore exploited by the head of each of the *ginna*. The other fields belonging to the *ginna* chief are located at the top of the scree. During his first year of ownership, the members of the *ginna* help him. In the following years, he manages his fields with his sons and grandsons. Individual fields, attributed to one family or individual are also found in this zone. They are often loaned to a member of the family in need of land for cultivating. These *woru mine* are of medium quality and are located on the border between Tireli, Komokan and Ourou in a place called *teranyu*. It was translated to me as the place where the *hibiscus* or *anyu* is largely cultivated by the old women. However, the zone consists of large millet fields, which lie at the centre of an unfinished conflict between Tireli and the village of Ourou. Both sides repeatedly contest the ownership of this cultivated land, each claiming their exclusive right to harvest it. The *ginna mino* are divided and distributed amongst the members of the lineage. They consist of vast juxtaposed rectangular fields located beyond the dune and around the plain village of Gimeto, a village that was founded by former inhabitants of Tireli. This zone also consists of small portions of land called *jo mine* of a poor quality, that are allocated by the *ginna* to young men who decide to cultivate on their own and exclusively for their compound.

The fields, and more specifically the millet grown in them, constitute the subsistence economy of the Dogon people. However, due to recurrent poor millet harvests, the Dogon increasingly tend to invest their energy and hope in onion cultivation, which can bring considerable cash as the product is transported to Bamako for commercial sale. In the Dogon land, millet cultivation starts in May and ends in November depending on the rain. Once the millet is harvested, the cattle go into the fields to eat the remaining leaves as well as to trample the straw that is mixed with the animal's dung and turns after a while into compost. The Dogon alternate the cultivation of Millet with the growing of onions, from December to March depending on water

stocks. The water they use gathers naturally in ponds, the bottom of which requires constant digging, to bring the small quantity of water, absorbed within the soil, up to the surface. The water gained in this way does not last long all before more digging is required. Once the millet fields have been harvested and cleared of the remaining plants, straw and roots, they are turned into gardens of, mostly, onions, tomatoes, and tobacco. Thus, these cultivated areas undergo a recycling of space (Fig.5.10), which operates between the continuity of two modes of culture and economy, individual millet consumption and onion exportation. Additionally, it binds the hot wet season to the cold dry one. The conversion of millet fields into onion gardens involves a complete reconfiguration of space that is characterized by the segmentation of the elongated rectangular portions of land into small squares. This re-cycling of space compartmentalizes the landscape as a means of retaining water and for the growing of onions.



Fig.5.10. Young Dogon cultivating onions

A multi-crop system is applied, combining elements such as millet and black-eye peas and/or hibiscus which can also be combined with the sorghum⁷³ in one field. Women grow hibiscus and beans or, alternatively, peanuts, fonio and cotton, which often constitute their personal economic means. These crops are alternated every year depending on the state of the soil. During the hot dry season, after the harvest, the fields are tidied-up. The field limits are known by the owners of the fields as well as by the chief of the *ginna*, who keeps the knowledge about the fields properties and their distributions. The Dogon often determine field-limits with reference to a tree or a stone lying in the area since the outlines of the fields tend to be blown away with the wind. Usefully, a plant called *yodiu*⁷⁴ is often found in the field edges as a boundary indicator that emerges at the beginning of the rainy season.

Various trees populate the field area. These are mostly used for their fibres and fruits, which are usually sold at the market by the women. The trees belong to the families who own the field in which the trees stand. In order to protect the fruits of a tree from theft, an *ama* artefact (Fig. 5.11 & 5.12) is attached to the tree. The object, manufactured by the blacksmith, often consists of a metallic straw. In some cases, the Binu Keju produces a small pocket made of plant species tied up in vegetal straws. The artefact signifies the property of the tree and casts a spell on the thief. In the same way, similar *ama* are placed on the large flat rocks lying at both village entrances, so as to protect the heavy and large bush resources or the harvests which cannot be brought straight back to the compound. The *ama* therefore constitutes a system of protection of people's foodstuff. Finally, the sacred trees or *timudon* on which sacrifices are done are located in this domesticated bush space, surrounded by a low fence made of stones that indicates the sacredness of the place, which most of

⁷³ *Sorghum vulgaris*

⁷⁴ Unfound

the time relates to an ancestor. Therefore, stepping beyond the fence endangers the life of those who enter the place. The trees, especially the tamarind *omunu*⁷⁵, the *oro*⁷⁶ or baobab and the *ji*⁷⁷ (*fromager*, or cheese tree) indicate a sacred site, a cemetery as well as announcing the physical proximity of a village. As emphasized by one of my informants, trees often stand as a metaphor for humanity as they always come in groups. As I have mentioned previously, the rocks and trees are said to be animated by vital forces that cause them to move at night; trees have their own sociality just like humans.



Fig.5.11. & Fig. 5.12. Ama to protect the fruits of the trees.

The cultivated area proximate to the village called *golo biru* is crossed by a sinuous river, named *golo*, that runs parallel to the cliff. The place name refers to the sides of

⁷⁵ *Tamarinus indica*

⁷⁶ *Adansonia digitata*

⁷⁷ *Ceiba pentandra*

the river where people ‘work’. The river stands as a sandy empty furrow during the dry season and a water reservoir during the rainy season. Interconnecting, almost continuously, the villages of the cliff, it is supplied instantaneously during the rainy season by the waterfalls that crash down from the plateau above. The Teriku section of the *golo* is segmented and each part is used for a different purpose, watering the fields, washing clothes or for separate bathing by men and women. In one segment, access to the river is strictly forbidden, this is the place where the water spirit called *Nommo*, who represents fecundity and life forces such as rain (Griaule 1966, Griaule & Dieterlen 1965, Bouju, Tinta & Poudjougou 1998), is mostly found. In the past, the use and crossing of the river was allowed only if several prohibitions were observed, such as not wearing red clothes or jewellery, not using soap and not shouting so to prevent an outbreak of the spirit who owns all the water elements. Aside from these now defunct prohibitions, today, the *golo* is always crossed at the same place to avoid incidents caused by tree roots, the current or the irregularity and dip of its sandy bottom (Fig.5.13). Thus, the river constitutes a social ‘in between’ spatial element on the sides of which activity is concentrated.



Fig. 5.13. Tireli's river.

In 2003, a bridge made of concrete and funded by a British project was built in the district of Sodanga. It helps the cars notably those of the local NGO to access the village during the rainy season. In fact, the area tends to get flooded due to the narrowness of the river as well as the flow of water that is intensified by the waterfalls that pour over the top of the escarpment into the river below.

Between the river and the dune stands a space called *tanya*. This expresses ‘the movement of going beyond or to the other side’. In fact, it constitutes another transitory space that lies at the limit of the undomesticated bush space. The far end of this strip becomes less domesticated as we get closer to the dune, due to its relative good soil quality and its difference in level. The tourists’ four-by-four vehicles have caused this area to be furrowed by a series of tracks, these are re-used by the villagers and backpackers while travelling from one village to another. The villagers have also created multiple paths that run between the fields, allowing access to the cultivation area. Finally, the Christian and Muslim cemeteries are located in this area. These ‘modern’ graveyards, enclosed by bushes, are not very heavily used and co-exist with the traditional system, called *omolo*, described in chapter one. The choice determining whether one is interred in the cliff or the dune is determined by one’s religious conviction. Interestingly, the proportion of bodies (as determined by grave markers) in the dune compared to those in the cave is relatively small, although the number of practising Muslims and Christians in Tireli is proportionally larger. Clearly the traditional system still holds relevance for those referred to as the ‘fake’ Muslims and Christians’ because they still take part in the traditional rituals.

Thus, as we have seen, the domesticated area of Tireli constitutes a place where the villagers extract most of their daily resources such as cereals, fruits, and water. Medicinal plants and timber for building also count amongst the benefits of the domesticated bush. The space is converted strategically throughout the season with

fields being turned into gardens to maximize the cultivation potential of the land. While the first crop mostly consists of the villagers' means of subsistence, the second crop provides them with economic means, as the harvests are sold in town. Consequently, the domesticated bush is revealed as a form of containment through the process of gathering the means to subsist round the 'outside' of the village.

2.3. Liminality: approaching the wild bush

The dune marks the transition between the domesticated bush and the wild bush that stands beyond it. The place is used by the elders of the village to carry out the divinations of the Pale Fox (Dieterlen 1963) that are framed in rectangular and compartmentalized boards designed on the sand and called *yuguru golo*. In these, small artefacts are planted that make material the questions left to be answered by 'the Pale Fox' at night (Paulme 1937). The answers left by the Pale Fox are interpreted in the morning, generally in a group, by the elders. Finally, as we continue to walk away from the village, we come to the liminal space of the dune cordon, called *gogo*, which announces the 'wild bush' of the Seno Gondo plain where various occult practices take place such as witchcraft, circumcision, and traditional medicine is practiced. This fairly clear area of bush is known as *se samu* or *sau*. After this zone we come to the *omna*, a more densely 'bushy' space that announces the village of Gimeto. This is symbolically marked by a red tree called *kire dumo* (said to be on its knees). These two zones constitute the borders that frame a potentially 'dangerous' environment that is crossed through interrupted and ramified paths which often get erased by the rain and the sand storms. Thus, the natural features characterizing these two zones constitute some reference points that provide directions to the traveller.

2.4. The undomesticated or 'wild bush' as 'life threatening'

These areas comprise two zones. The first is located at the top of the escarpment (the plateau) and is characterized by a rocky soil and by large and deep fissures. The second concerns the extended sandy area located behind the dune. On the Plateau, the young shepherds lead their goat herds to the edge of the escarpment while some people cultivate onions in the remote area called *Tegu*. For the villagers the meaningful part of the Seno Gondo is that where the hamlets of Tireli are scattered. Hence, the people of the plain have conceptually defined their own boundaries that enclose their habitat. The colonization of the plain has led, over time, to an intensive exploitation of the land, which, in combination with frequent periods of drought, is continuously causing a drastic desertification of the bush space. As a direct consequence, hunting remains today a form of folklore since there is nothing really to catch. The bush is crossed daily by groups of women – often young women who go to collect firewood. I have, in the same hot, dry season, collected wood with my host sister Akasom in the domesticated bush, when finding anything for the fire was a particularly challenging task. The wood, once collected, is destined for cooking, brewing, and firing pots. The collection of firewood operates, in theory, according specific rules such as not collecting the green wood that is always uprooted by women. In this respect, in his account of Dogon eco-cosmologies, Van Beek recounts the regulation operated by the masks about women's cutting of green wood when trees and shrubs become scarce (Van Beek 1991). Hence, conflicts related to environmental issues between men and women occur concerning, notably, erosion issues, as the trees retain the soil that is blown away by the wind or eroded by the rain.

I was told that women always collect (Fig.5.14) in groups as a measure of security. However, while, some say that they could easily get lost, others say that it is simply more fun in a group. On the occasions that accompanied the young girls of Tireli

Dama to collect firewood, our journey often turned into a period of recreation punctuated by singing and laughter, though it must be said that the task remains particularly laborious. Indeed, beyond the long walk to reach the site, up to 7 km according to Van Beek & Banga (1992: 58), I counted about 2 hours of walking, as dead wood tends to be rare. Thus significant levels of attention and extensive wanderings in the heat are involved. The subsequent packing (Fig. 5.15 & 5.16) as well as the carrying of the faggots on the top of the head requires a particular praxeology.



Fig. 5.14. Young girls collecting wood.

According to Van Beek and Banga, a load of wood, around 20 kg, would last for 10 or 11 days (Van Beek & Banga 1992:63). When walking, the load extends in front and to the back and tends to be moved by the wind (Fig. 5.17). When I counted, a similar load of wood lasted about the same amount of days in my host family's compounds. However, women who use '*fourneaux améliorées*' (improved cooking rings), consume much less wood. The places where the firewood is found are known

by the young girls through repeated trips. They often consult each other about the direction to be taken in order to find a place where firewood can be gathered. A few elements such as a tree with a specific shape or a path in the sand act as reference points.



Fig. 5.15. Picking up fire wood



Fig. 5.16. Attaching the bundle with a rope



Fig. 5.17. Walking with fire wood bundles on the head

The bush space is perceived as dangerous, though probably more so in the past than today. In fact, the lack of plant life gives a greater visibility, and the absence of wildlife has made the environment safer. However, witchcraft and rituals are still practiced in this zone, which is also considered a place where spirits are encountered. As I have shown in a previous chapter by following Bouju's argument, the physical bush as tangential to an unbound metaphysical space of the spirits and of the dead, generates a constant interaction between the two worlds (Bouju 1995 (a)). While the spiritual world is abstract, the space of the bush although open, can be mapped out through daily crossing. Today, the bush space is increasingly colonized by Dogon hamlets, and thus by the associated intensification of agricultural activities. However, beyond the fact that the environment has become relatively safe from wildlife due to deforestation, the conception of the bush as a mystic space is still very much alive. Multiple stories were recounted to me notably on our way to Gimeto, while collecting in the bush as well as when working in the fields. Furthermore, the 'wild' is still perceived as a space where sorcerers and criminals operate. In that respect, stories about rapes and trafficking, notably of artwork, exist amongst the multiple stories that circulate in Dogon villages. It would be worth examining what these tales from the bush and whole discourse that frames them generally is hiding. Hence, the bush space still denotes a certain insecurity even though its cultural boundaries are constantly reified through actions. In fact, according to a group of men working in the fields, the bush space is animated by spirits that they call *jinu* or *jinagu*. The *jinu* are esoteric beings that cannot be seen and which live in the bush. They move through the air or the water, as in the case of *Nommo*. The full range of material things of which the human and natural realms are composed constitutes a potential host for these supernatural entities. The *jinu* possess great magical capacity and live with the humans. The syncretism between Islamic and Animist thought suggested by the correspondence of this term to the Islamic term (*djin*) is tantalizing. As I was told by a blacksmith, these invisible entities inhabit the trees of the bush but are also found in the village and in the

compounds. Therefore, they possess a certain ability to penetrate the boundaries of the village. The bush spirits assist people in their life by offering medicine, found by people in the bush, or by communicating specific knowledge that enables the visualization of particular situations through divination processes that sort out daily life problems by determining the cause of a problem and offering a solution to it. They manifest themselves as a whirlwind of dust and sand, or as a softness and warmth. They remain invisible and signal their presence through manifestations of ringing or resounding, drum-like sounds, strains of light as well as the sudden appearance of objects such as dishes, a piece of wood or a stone with a particular shape. These manifestations constitute the *geru*⁷⁸ object that is used to cure or to do magic.

Dogon men get multiple forms of knowledge (such as magical and medicinal) from the *jinu*. These can be used against, amongst other things, sterility. This knowledge enables a Dogon man to increase his mental and physical capacities for action/s in his life as well as the life of others. In other words, it is directed outwards in the sense that this knowledge is mostly put to good use for someone else. Thus, the bush spirits play a considerable role in the village and possess high status and social prestige that, in turn, causes these spirits to offer the *geru*, which are objects of power. In this way, they assist the humans in their quest for protection and self-realization. Therefore, the spirits help the men gain a power and status in life and within the society that contributes to the good functioning of the community, and indirectly reinforces the living capacity of the village. I was told that *geru* are also partially manufactured or reproduced by the blacksmith. When the *geru* is found in the bush as a fragment of wood, fibres or stone of a specific shape, a support can be sculpted to contain and protect the element. Equally, its shapes can be reproduced in

⁷⁸ I could not find the term in Calame-Griaule's dictionary (1968). I suspect that the term is borrowed from another dialect, perhaps *Dono So* or *Jamsay*.

a similar material and a fragment of the initial object grafted onto it in order to fix it and to ensure its efficacy. This, practice of creating an extension to or duplication of the original *geru* explains the proliferation of these artefacts, given that the discovery of these objects in the bush remains rare. The *geru* can only be seen by people who possess the ability of seeing them, others encounter them only in terms of the effect that they produce on people.

The villagers avoid travelling at night. When they must, they do so in a group. According to some villagers, while the *jину* may also occupy the domesticated bush, there are malevolent spirits in the ‘wild bush’ that lies beyond the protection of the village. Consequently, the wild bush remains a place where esoteric knowledge can be obtained from the invisible world. Although the place is ‘life-threatening’, the source of the villagers’ insecurity does not seem to rest exclusively with the malevolent supernatural qualities of the place but stems instead from a more ‘mundane’ source: the deforestation process that leads to a considerable lack of resources. As told to me by my informants: “by cutting down the trees, the *jину* leave the bush and never come back”. This belief in bush spirits can be translated as a particular experience and attachment that the people have to the land, as well as providing us with an insight into the way the Dogon view their society and themselves. By exploiting the bush, they imperil their own life.

3. Gathering the inside and the outside: the weather as a substance container

So far, I have provided a detailed account of the spatial divisions and content of the outside of the village, which I have defined as a ‘life-giving’ reservoir that contains the daily resources of the Dogon, and which constitutes a framing device for the village. By walking through the multiple contiguous areas of the *ana kerugue*, I have shown local ways of dwelling in the landscape, i.e. how the villagers of Tireli

configure and delimit the environment in which they live through ‘making’ and ‘doing’ in a way that corresponds to the Heidegger’s notion of ‘being-in-the-world’. I have focused on the particular actions made upon the land as well as on the process of gathering resources, and social life that takes place around the village. Now, following Ingold’s argument (2005), I propose that people do not only dwell in the landscape but also in a ‘weather world’. The atmosphere that constitutes a medium for the rain and the wind (Ingold 2005 referring to Gibson 1979) stands as a substance container (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) for the village inside and outside. Hence, this it is from this perspective that I attempt now to examine the atmospheric elements on which food resources and, generally speaking, life depends so closely in the Dogon. I wish to highlight these two aspects⁷⁹ of the weather here. The rain is important because people depend on it yet it remains unpredictable and scarce⁸⁰. The wind is of relevance to my thesis because it brings malevolent entities inside the village. In other words, I propose to look at that part of the villagers’ conception of the weather that relates to the rain and the wind as they enfold the territory of Tireli, bringing either life or disorder leading to death.

The wind and the rain that emanate from the outside of the village remain ambivalent entities for the villagers. While they bring life to the fields, they also impact dramatically on the land by flooding the fields and destroying things or bringing dryness, epidemics and malevolent entities as they pass by. Similarly, the air circulates swarms of locusts which devastate the fields. The Dogon can only destroy the locusts’ eggs by pounding them heavily or through biological control, which remains expensive. The wind causes the air of the village to circulate and to contain evil spirits, the soul of the ‘bad dead’, and the epidemics that permeate the village when the efficacy of the symbolic boundaries is low (I have described these

⁷⁹ The rain and the wind are two elements, amongst others such as thunder and lightening, for which I do not possess enough data to include them in this account.

⁸⁰ I have not investigated religious and magic processes of rainmaking.

in detail in chapter two). Strong winds pushing occasional heavy rains followed by long periods of dryness have dramatic impacts on the landscape, eating away at the dune and the soil of the fields. I was told, that when it rains too much in one go, the seeds that were planted do not take. They either rot in the soil due to an excess of water or they come to the surface and dry out or get eaten by birds. The rain also has an impact on the built environment, while the heat affects wildlife by contributing, with drastic results, to the desertification that imperils the crops. The wind also creates a dusty environment that affects people's health and generates respiratory problems. However, the rain also gives sustenance to the land, reviving the plant life. It fills up in the river bed and creates major water reservoirs that are used to water the gardens during the hot dry season.

The wind is generally defined by the Dogon as a passing disorder, referred to as *jaw*, which makes people quarrelsome, a state that is known as when everybody "rises" like the wind. Euphemistically, the villagers say that the "wind has just past". When a quarrel takes place, people refer to it as the "dust coming out"⁸¹. It is often said, that the hot wind of the dry season brings epidemics such as plague and smallpox. These are, generally, occurrences of the past but, according to the villagers, could always come back. The diseases of which they spoke included physical diseases, as well as mental diseases that I could not identify. As the villagers put it: "there are those that cause weariness and then death when you are losing your mind". These diseases, called *nunu* or *jimu*, struck six people in the district of Dama when I returned in 2005. These diseases are always referred to as 'coming down' on people that is '*muy jiu sugay*' (Calame-Griaule 1968: 133). The wind also brings the soul of the 'bad dead' back to the village to harm people. Dieterlen (1941:193-194) records these as the *dyabu* that are defined as the formidable souls of those who are

⁸¹ These sayings were given to me in French. I do not have these expressions in *Toro so*.

condemned to wander in the bush. These are transported by the *vevey monyu* as well as the *onyu simu*.

Onyu simu also corresponds to a very destructive spinning wind that blows 'the granaries hat' away. When people are in the bush, this wind creates a thick obscurity that makes them lose their way. This bad wind constitutes a medium for the avenging soul of women who die while giving birth and who come back into the village to attack other women (Calame-Griaule 1968: 297). *Onyu jigili* stands as the bush whirlwind that is generated by and contains bush spirits or *jину*. This wind is dangerous or harmless according to the nature of the spirit. The Dogon also believe that certain people have the capacity to turn into a whirlwind in order to travel long distance.

As far as the positive forms of wind are concerned, I was told that *vevey* refers to the fine light wind, air stream or breeze that temper the heat. *Ana onyu* designates the wind that brings rain. It waters the fields and 'brings hopes' for successful harvests. The passage of this wind is viewed as coming in stages by the Dogon. First, it brings the anticipation that rain is coming, this is the 'incoming', when the air is humid and loaded with freshness. The rain is often considered as a cleansing and clearing element that stops all the contamination processes of epidemics and the diseases such as mental diseases that, according to people, rise and then hang in the air during the hot dry season. However, someone who is struck down by these always manages to socialize during the rainy season. The *ana onyu* is said to enter the village from the bush to the East, dragging the rain with it to the village. According to my informants, the rain is sparked off by the wind as it leads it and brings it down into the village. Hence, as the wind rushes into the bush, it picks up the topsoil. It then expands into a wall, lifting up sand, leaves, branches, and other light elements (Fig.5.18). As it falls over the fields, it spreads the organic components onto the fields and therefore fertilizes the earth. Hence, the rain that follows has a

complementary role to the wind in the fertilization process since it buries the organic elements into the soil thus aiding in the generation of life. As the sand wall hits the village, the light turns progressively to a pale yellow (Fig.5.19), becoming dark gold as the sand storm progresses (Fig.5.20). At this point, everyone hides where they can, as the tiny particles of sand suspended in the air damage lungs, cause burning sensations in eyes and scratch at skin. Time too seems to be suspended, until a dark brown light (Fig.5.21) announces the rain that washes the wall of sand away. When the sand storm is gone, the sky clears up, shedding a white light on the landscape (Fig.5.22).

The passage of the sand storm generated by the wind and followed by the rain all constitute elements that permeate the village and introduce temporary disorder. The materiality of the air acts as a medium for movement or transport of things from the outside of the village to its inside as well as by crossing it from East to West. The passage of light also creates a fluidity in the same way as the sun rises in the East behind the escarpment, spreading a pink and reddish light that turns into white at midday then gold and ochre at the end of the day, to vanish finally into the darkness of the night, as the sun disappears in the West behind the escarpment. As it flows through the territory, the wind and the rain bring positive substances to the land such as fertilizers and water. In the same way, they bring epidemics and diseases, as well as evil spirits that permeate the boundaries of the village. As it enfolds the place, the weather brings the sky and the earth, the inside and the outside of the village together in a cosmoscape in which things remain fluid and constantly get mixed up.



Fig. 5.18. The wall of sand approaching



Fig. 5.19. The sand storm as it hits the village



Fig. 5.20. Golden light during the sand storm

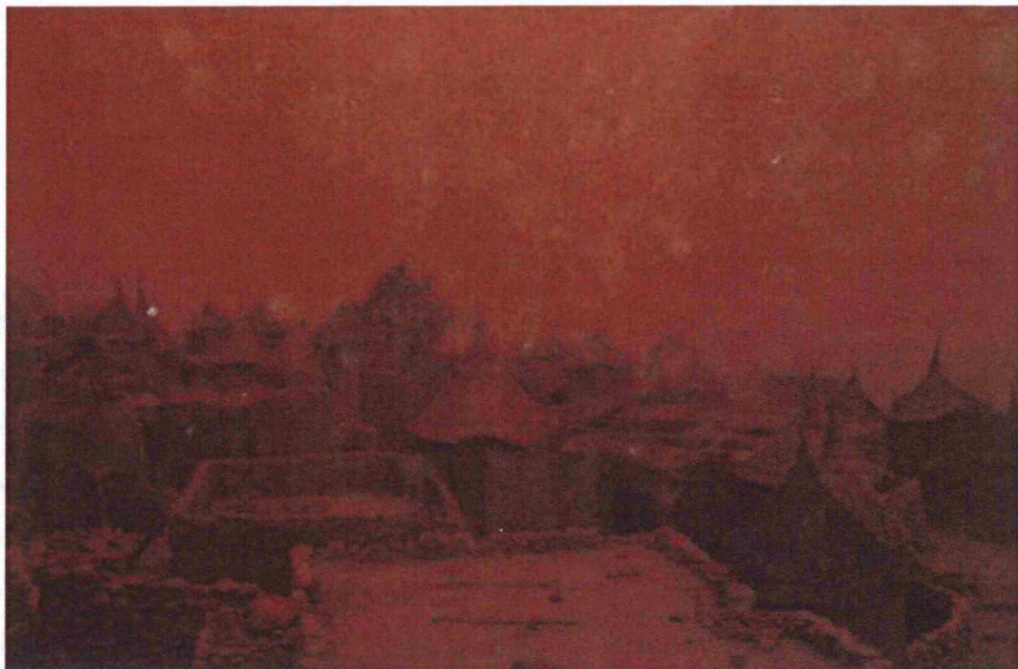


Fig. 5.21. The light darkens as the rain begins to fall



Fig. 5.22. The sand storm passes and the rain continues to fall.

4. The inside as the outside: reversibility and permeability of Tireli's boundaries

In this chapter, I have examined the outside space of the village called *ana kerugue*. By starting from the escarpment and by walking through the foot of the scree and then on through the fields and finally to the dune, I have defined these multiple contiguous, fluid and mutable zones in terms of the elements that they contain. I have examined human movement and daily taskscapes (Ingold 2000) through which Dogon people engage with the land and the living or invisible entities that this cosmoscape hosts. While the Dogon use the escarpment outside of the village predominantly as a container for death and to a lesser extent as a container for life (water resources), the domesticated bush that also lies outside the village contains

significant life resources. Death is allocated to the cliff or the dune outside the village where it borders life. As we left it on our walking tour, we entered the undomesticated and boundless, 'life-threatening space of the bush, from which particular forms of esoteric knowledge are transmitted to the Dogon men by the bush spirits. These two bush areas intersect in the liminal space of the dune cordon. Similarly, the foot of the scree acts as another transitory space in which aspects of social life are set. Finally, a sense of detachment towards the village can be felt as we cross the river and progress into the fields. These embodied boundaries of the outside of the village enable people to locate themselves within the world as well as to gather and to order life and death around them.

The two zones of the cultural space of the village and the natural space of the bush that constitute the territory of Tireli are not conceived to be continuous rather than antagonistic. The boundaries that divide and contain these two spaces overlap and tend to fuse due to an intensive exploitation of the land. From a similar perspective, as we have seen in chapter three, the young villagers will to build their house at the bottom of the scree, results in a progressive pushing back of the limits of the village's habitat. In the same way, the extension of the cultivated zones of the *ana kerugue*, or outside of the village, towards the dune indicates a constant search for space. This phenomenon is also driving the encroachment of Tireli's fields on the village of Ourou. This is a considerable source of conflict, as the villagers of Ourou claim the ownerships of the fields and accuse Tireli people of constantly crossing the border line between the two villages. Since both sides lay claim to the fields, the right to cultivate this area alternates on a yearly basis between the two communities. However, contentions over this area still lead to armed conflict between the villages. The 'wild' bush space is also a space of change, as it becomes increasingly domesticated due to its status as an intermediate zone lying between the territory of Tireli and Gimeto the village of the plain. Consequently, the considerably reduced boundaries of this zone, still visible today, will soon fuse into one cultivated zone

joining both villages. Furthermore, the intensity of agrarian action upon the land is also complemented by the significant 'touristification' of the place. This factor, along with others such as the presence of NGOs, contributes to a considerable amount of effort being expended in the management of tracks, bridges, and stone walls to keep back the sand. Therefore, the territory of Tireli is undergoing continuous modifications and its permeable boundaries are being constantly reified over time through mobility, the forces of modernization, religious conversions, and tourism. These factors also increasingly re-shape the village as I have shown in chapter three. This occurs through the making or repairing of paths for the tourists and the redecoration of architectural features. Consequently, the cosmoscape of Tireli is characterized by the circulation of things and people as well as by better access to things due to the multiplicity of paths that cross the land and that offer a greater mobility that expands social boundaries and local views on the outside world.

I have proposed that the territory of Tireli, which I have called a cosmoscape, reveals a particular form of containment that rests primarily on the existence of symbolic boundaries that enclose the territory and the village and protect against multiple threats. While in chapter three, I exposed, via an account of the making of the built environment, the sense of attachment to the place manifest in the fixity and fluidity of boundaries that enclose this built cultural matrix, in the present chapter, I have pursued this exploration of the making of space through an examination of the outside of the village. I have demonstrated that the form of containment that arises from the design and making of the symbolic boundary protection system, with which the Dogon protect themselves from threats emerging from outside the village, displays a process reliant on a particular process of gathering things and people. In other words, although the villagers carry out annual practices that re-active their system as a means of protecting themselves, the ethos of the system seems to show a greater sense of perpetuating and consolidating social networks, rather than fighting,

in the strict sense of the term, potential threats coming from the invisible world. Hence, this bounded cosmoscape defines a particular form of containment that manifests itself as a process of gathering people and resources through the consolidation of social networks that themselves act against the harshness of the place. The outside of the village as a 'life-giving' container often shows a lack of resources due to crops failing because of a lack of water or because they get destroyed by the locusts. The harvests are therefore not sufficient to feed the families which have to rely upon cereal deposits. Consequently, another factor pointing to the reversibility of the outside of the village and of the wild bush area transpires clearly in the fact that the ontological insecurity associated with them is frequently transferred into the 'life-giving' reservoir of the village, as the unpredictability of the rain has its impact on the cultivated land.

5. Conclusion

In the last three chapters I have explored the Dogon dwelling processes through an examination of the territory of Tireli. By exposing the villagers' conceptions of space as they relate to the inside and the outside of the village, I have explored a particular form of containment or 'being-in-the-world' that transpires through a daily and seasonally making of the place and to which meaning is attached. This I have referred to in terms of a cosmoscape, a world-container in which the Dogon live. This cosmoscape is composed of the built environment that is cradled by the surrounding natural environment, which is, in turn, contained by the weather. The Tireli cosmoscape, as bounded, fluid, and reversible constitutes a niche in which the Dogon people dwell and therefore create a sense of ontological security in a particularly harsh milieu. This sense of security shifts to insecurity within the context of extreme drought. Hence, food insecurity is made manifest by the Dogon both outside the village as well as within it, in its homes.

In the next series of chapters, I shall transpose the problematic of 'being-in-the-world' to the level of the compound. I am interested in looking at the daily fabric of domestic life, which I conceptualize as a process of 'being-at-home-in the world' (Jackson 1995). Through an examination of the Dogon compound which I consider as a 'home-container', I intend to draw out insights into daily worldviews as they are generated by the embodied practices of the 'making' and the 'doing' of the compound, through daily tasks such as the storing of domestic waste, the manufacturing of gendered earth granaries and, finally, their daily use as a storage facilities.

6.

The Dogon compound: fixing, gathering, and bounding the everyday.

The notion of a compound refers to a walled-in domestic space that contains multiple buildings and which is occupied by a family. In the Dogon society, which is fundamentally virilocal, patrilineal and polygynous, the term *ginna*⁸² meaning a ‘family’ is used to describe a single built unit or a compound where the family of the lineage head resides. The *ginna* is the place of the *wagem* (the ancestors), that is, the main house or the first house of the lineage, which is also called the ‘great family house’. Thus *ginna dagi* is the ‘little ginna’ as it is formed from the first as the family extends. Finally, the *ginu* refers in its strictest sense to a compound that descends from the *ginna dagi* (Paulme 1988: 48-49; Calame-Griaule 1968: 101-102). The *gujo* is the smallest unit found and it refers to the ‘room’ from which a compound, generally, grew. As suggested by my informants, the term *ginna* and its multiple variations – commonly referred to in the Dogon and in French as ‘*la concession*’, meaning the compound – is defined by my informants as: ‘Within an enclosure lives a family. This is the place where we were born and that belongs to our ancestors⁸³’. Thus, what is important for the Dogon is that the enclosure gathers people of a common ancestor in that place. What I am interested in here is the lived aspect of the compound within a wider life-cycle that concerns not only the life-

⁸² I propose here a schematic and summarized definition of the compound. In fact, the Dogon social organization as it is objectified in the built environment is more complex (Lane 1986).

⁸³ In French: ‘*A l’intérieur des murs tu trouves qu’il y a une famille qui vit là. C’est là où on est né et ça appartient à nos ancêtres*’.

cycle of people, as shown by Lane (1986, 1987, 1994) in his work on the spatialization of genealogies, but also that, through its own materiality, the compound is used, abandoned and potentially re-used.

I propose that the notion of the compound acquires its meaning from the activities and objects that this space-unit contains and, overarchingly, from the particular network of interactions that the occupiers weave in their daily life in this their home (Lane 1987). In other words, the compound gains its shape through people's daily shared, embodied and material practice in the place. I provide here a descriptive introduction on the Dogon domestic unit, as it is lived from the inside and primarily based upon the 'everyday' of my host family. The data I present here are also cross-referenced with my observations of the home of our neighbours and friends who live in the quarter of Dama and which I visited daily. Though made and owned by men, the compound is defined as a female element as it is mostly used by women. Although the compound stands as a place of intimacy and privacy, materialized through the high walls that enclose it, the compound remains relatively open and therefore public. Visitors constantly enter the place to greet the family or to catch up with the latest news. The compound defines through a particular process of gathering people, activities, and resources as well as boundary making activities. It does so in the manner of an interactive, folded surface between the family that lives there and the outside world. I reveal aspects of this process through the depiction of activities in the place and therefore the buildings that constitute it, aspects such as the fixing of domestic elements that attach and define people's roles and status, and some elements of the modernization of the habitat – revealed amongst the younger Dogon as a dreaming space, the boundaries of which expand through imagination. Finally, I look at the dimensions of the abandonment and, then, the potential re-use of the compound as a means to *re-place* the living compound within a life-cycle of its own materiality.

Hence, the compound as a shared active ground that is used and made by men, women, and children stands as the locus of everyday life. The house stands, as shown by Bourdieu in his analysis of the symbolic significance of domestic space in the Berber house, as the social and cultural expression of cosmology. In other words, the compound, as a container for dwelling (Pocius 1991: 65-67), objectifies particular worldviews that are expressed in the daily making and uses of the place. It is this that I develop in the next three chapters, extending the analysis I began in the first part of my thesis of the containing and containment functions of the Dogon landscape and cosmoscape. Thus, the present chapter serves a conceptual container device for the three following accounts of domestic waste as a bi-product of activities (chapter six), the making of granaries (chapter seven) and finally, the daily use of granaries (chapter eight). Consequently, through this 'self-contained' piece of writing, I intend to offer an insight into Dogon daily cosmology as it is produced out of daily activities in the compound. I will investigate the notion of home-container in the same way as I explored (in part one) the process of 'being-in-the-world' by looking at the Dogon cosmoscape as a form of containment. Indeed, I shall explore the daily making of cosmology, or the shaping of worldviews, by focusing on material practice in the compound. This orients my thesis towards the definition of a particular form of ontological security and containment that is a philosophy of 'being-at-home-in the world' (Jackson 1995).

1. The compound enclosure: protection apparatus and ontological security

As I have shown in the first part of my thesis, the entity Tireli, which I refer to as a *territory* for technical reasons outlined in (chapter 3), is bounded by a series of symbolic boundaries that protect it from external malevolence. I propose now to show how this idea of protecting elements and people through symbolic boundaries reproduce at the level of the compound and, more specifically, in its enclosure as

well as its openings. In fact, it is shielded by a series of magic elements that protect its internal content, notably from witchcraft and evil spirits who manage to intrude the inhabited space. Although these scourges always infiltrate and occupy the public village places and the compound, their power and field of action are cancelled or reduced by the magic depending on the efficacy of the artefacts.

The first protected elements of the compound are its enclosure and entrance(s). The walls of the compound enclosure and the room (that serves as shelter or bedrooms) are reinforced by a protection system that is diffused by a bulb or in some places by specific plants, the species of which is kept as a totemic secret. The bulbs are buried in the foundations of the compound. It is strictly forbidden, where two houses share a roof, to cross a neighbour's roof in order to go into their compound. This act 'breaks' the protection and is therefore perceived as an offence, as it metaphorically 'breaks' social relationships between the two families. It is said that the protection field acts on the intruder by fatally affecting them. Specific acts of renewing the shield are operated through sacrifice. Stepping over the compound walls or even its ruins is similarly forbidden. The compound entrance is similarly protected. A large wooden stick is placed on the ground covering the opening length. This constitutes a symbolic obstacle for night intruders. Also, if a witch acts, the stick ensure it will not affect the family, as it indicates that the whole compound is protected. Equally, if the object has been moved during the night, it indicates that the compound has been visited by a witch or a sorcerer, and the compound is automatically inspected, meticulously, in the morning. The entrance to the bedroom is also protected by magic items placed inside the front door. My information on this is vague, as the objects belonged to Balugo's father who died a few years ago without passing information about their identity and function to Balugo, who inherited the objects. However, Balugo knows that, like most people of the village, his father was protecting himself strongly against the *jину* and witches who finally killed him and which continue to attack the family today. According to Paulme, similar elements

called *nadullo* are placed in the *dori* or vestibule that frame the compound entrances in some places. This talisman, composed of a cow tail, an arrow, and a knife all tied-up together in baobab fibres and containing plant elements is made to protect against the *jabu* and *jinu*, which, notably, bring disease (Paulme 1988: 316:317). These protections are reactivated or reinforced during the year through sacrifices.

In order to protect the inside of the compound against these evil spirits, which are said to be living in the compound trees, a small clay pot *nigue dein*⁸⁴ is used to cook the baobab leaves sauce *oro nigue*. Its bottom is pierced and hung in the courtyard tree. The nauseating smell of the dried sauce covering the internal lining of the pot has repels the evil beings from the compound. The water jar is also protected against poisoning by burying a little bag of plant elements in the sand under the container. Finally, the hollowed joints of the compound walls are frequently stuffed with people's hair as way of preventing snakes from penetrating the compound. This is mostly done during the rainy season. It is said that the human smell repels the reptiles. These protective features neutralize the efficacy of a witch. If they have been spoiled or made inefficient over time, the head of the family consults the person who deals with the matter and increases the protection force. Thus, these magical boundaries reveal a constant ontological insecurity that is generated by unpredictable forces that coexist with the living and are located beyond the home boundaries, in other parts of the village⁸⁵, or in the unidentified unbounded 'outside' space.

⁸⁴I did not find the object or its name.

⁸⁵ Witchcraft also occurs in the compound itself, for instance in the case of rival co-wives. Although, this was mentioned to me, I did not obtain more information on this matter that remains extremely delicate.

2. Inside the walls: activities into place.

The enclosed unit of the compound is constituted by the granaries⁸⁶, which comprise both its walls, its inside, and the room(s) (as translated to me) that we, by referencing its architectural dimension, would define as a house in the West. However, as we have seen, here the notion of the house defines, rather, the whole compound, as life mostly takes place in the courtyard. Given that the compound is partitioned into men's and women's places, the principle of gendered division is also applied to the built and portable containers. The gendered built containers also constitute an inside space for men and women, as they generally occupy gendered places in the compound. In fact, they define, because they symbolize, men's and women's activities as well as the distribution of their respective roles. As mentioned throughout, although the compound is built and remains the property of men, it is defined as a female element because most of the women's daily tasks occur in the home. In this way women bring vitality to the home as they maintain the place in good shape, keep it lively as well as feeding the family.

2.1. Introducing the Dogon compound

The family that generously hosted me during my fieldwork in Tireli consists of three main 'characters' but extends to seven people in total: my host mother Bemu; her son Balugo (who is now the head of the family since his father died a few years ago) and Akasom my younger host sister. Domu, the middle sister, joined the compound with her son the little Ogotêmmelu three years ago, while the eldest sister Yasiwe

⁸⁶ See Chapter eight on the making of containers for more details about the granaries and chapter nine on storing in granaries.

has left her own daughter Beca under the household's care. It is common for the progeny of the family to 'give' their first child to the grandparents as a way of having them educated as well as to provide assistance with daily tasks such as drawing water from the well as the grandparents get older. Most of my host family were Muslim when I left the village, however they have since converted to Christianity because, according to my host brother, it is more social, though the celebrations and ceremonies are more expensive.

As a 22-year-old head of the family, Balugo owns the whole compound which occupies large portions of the top of the scree directly above the public place. It comprises two parts. The first concerns 'the family' where Bemu, Akasum, and the children stay. This place is dedicated to women and children. It extends into a large flat located behind, which used to be 'a guest house' for friends and tourists. While the ground floor constitutes Balugo's *gujo* (formerly his father's flat), the top space comprises a storage room where they offered to store my belongings. This space extends into a large terrace overhanging the *te goro* and from which the village and the Seno Gondo plain extend as far as the eye can see. The compound is juxtaposed to the grandfather's compound, now in ruins, which is used to keep some of sheep when there is not enough space inside the compound, and where the sweepings of the compound are thrown. It also includes a pit in which I burnt my waste⁸⁷. As a patrilineal society, the compound is transmitted from the father to his older son. When the older son marries, he is invited to build the first elements of his compound next to his father's, which he may, later, decide to take on as well when his father dies by joining his own buildings to it. However, the son may just leave his father's compound, or part of it, to fall into ruin, as was the case in my host family. The house and fields is, generally, redistributed after the death of the patriarch, by the men of the family who meet up and discuss the matter. The compound of my host

⁸⁷ See chapter seven on domestic waste.

family (Fig.6.1) is composed of a series of high walls of piled-up stone, partly assembled and covered with wet mud. This fence or *ginu gono jegue* in local terms, is made of the back walls of the bedroom and some of the granaries found in the courtyard called *ginu gono* or *gonute*.

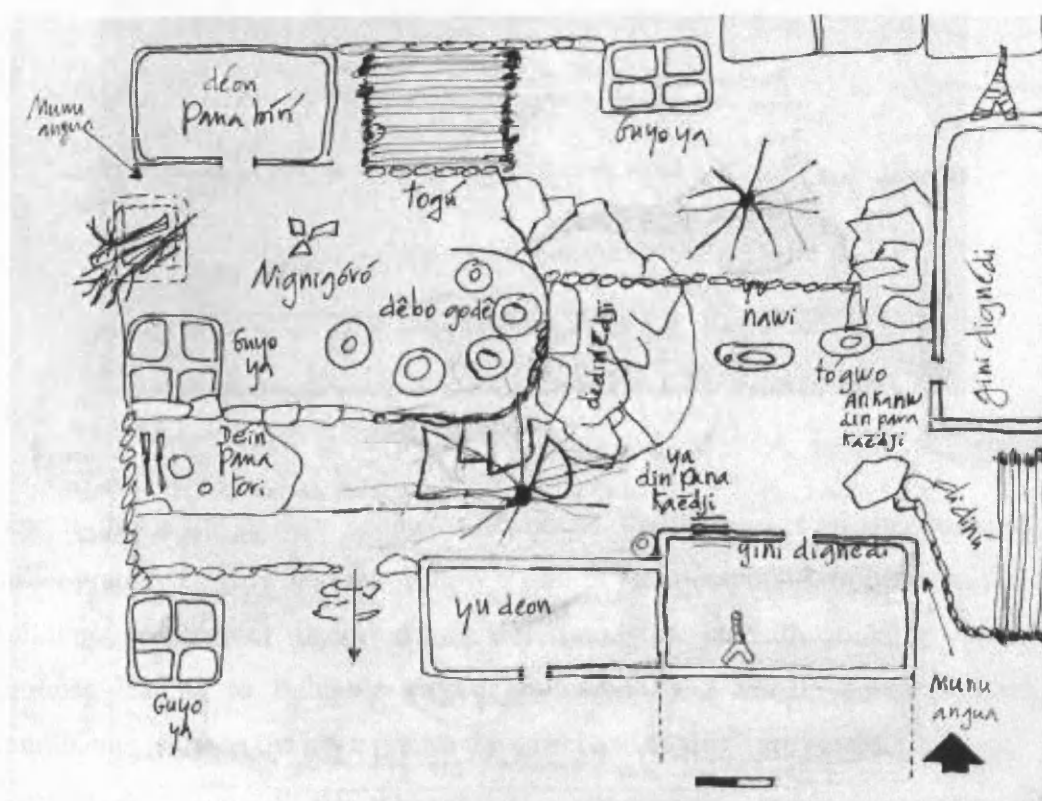


Fig. 6.1. Drawing of my host family's compound

The enclosure is interrupted on its North West and South East corners by two entrances formed by a simple wooden door. In some compounds the entrance is made up of a corridor called *dori*. I shall now introduce the various elements and places that constitute the compound by starting from this point. The large 'family' space is distributed on three levels. On the first one, as we turn to the left from the entrance called *munu angua*, is Bemu's quarter called *gini guinyedi*. It has a storage room, which is mainly for clothes and other belongings such as the plastic containers, jugs to fetch water, and piled up clay pots.

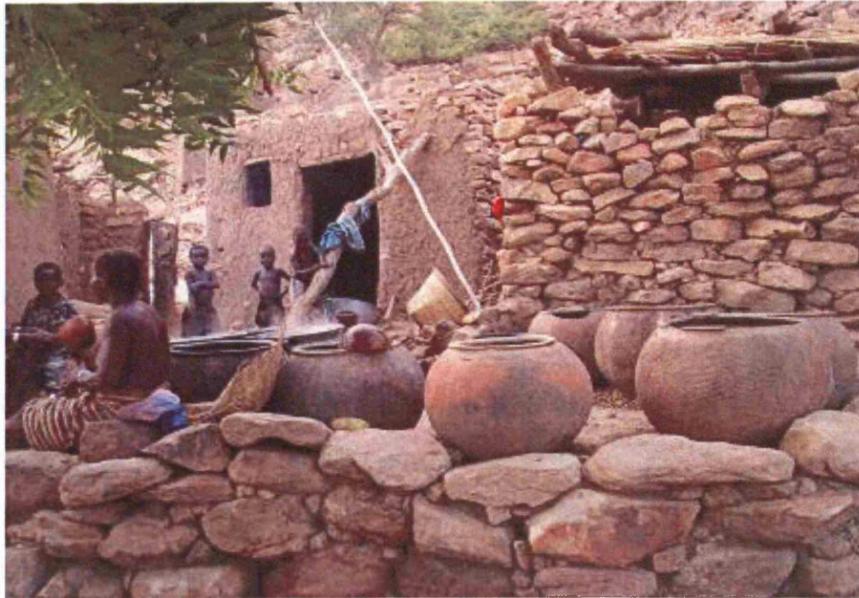


Fig.6.2. The cooking and brewing place

Next to this is the *yu deon* or the ‘millet house’ that is used as an alternative to the millet granary or *guyo ana* that is now a ruin in this compound. In between the two buildings, in a corner shadowed by a tree, stands the jar with drinking water. The entrance leading to Balugo’s *gujo* is followed by a female granary in which condiments (such as the *anyu* grains, the sorrel and fonio)⁸⁸ are stored.

On the first platform, at the corner of which a *nime* tree is planted, is the *pana tori* or pounding place. This is accessed by the large steps made of piled-up rocks. The *pana tori* is used for processing food resources with the mortars and pestles found here. Neighbouring women sometimes help each other by pounding together in a compound. This constitutes a daily helping-action that consolidates friendship networks. Similarly, the pounding or even cooking material can be loaned from one compound to another. The place that frames this activity has been chosen for its

⁸⁸ These are, respectively, *Hibiscus abelmoschus esculentus* and *Digitaria exilis*.

specific qualities which enable daily tasks to be performed successfully. The repetition of these tasks in the same place constitutes a sign of respect towards the millet that constitutes the staple resource of Dogon. Millet is respected because it is associated with the good luck received from god and which ensures the good-functioning of the daily tasks in a compound. It also symbolizes the prosperity and the stability of the family on a food level. The displacement of one of these cooking elements or the moving of the task to another place signifies either, the eviction of the woman or an act of disrespect towards millet and, generally speaking, food and would thus bring bad luck. As such, these place-bound activities are defined by their relationships with millet that produce the space and generate particular attitudes and beliefs. In fact, millet as constituting a vector in Dogon life, ensures the life sustenance as well as it brings health.

Below this work-place lies the women's eating place. The location of the eating place always remains the same. Once a spacious and shadowed place has been defined, it is used daily, only being replaced in its function by the bedroom or the *togu* when it rains. Maintaining the fixity of the place ensures good luck in relation to the food supply. It also constitutes a form of respect towards millet by ensuring its stability through fixed consumption. Men and women eat separately, on the the *ankanw din para kaeji* and *adin pana kaeji* respectively. This never changes for two reasons. On the one hand, the women say that there is a feeling of embarrassment when men and women eat in front of each other. Thus, eating separately constitutes a form of respect. On the other hand, the men say that the proximity of women reduces, or might completely damage, the power of the amulets and/or protections they wear on their body. The two groups do not necessarily eat at the same time, whether they do or not generally depends on what the men are doing. The women always share meals with the children. In the past, all members of one *ginu togu* would gather at the patriarch house to share the meal with the grandparents. It was a common rule, showing respect towards the elders who represent and constitute

family authority, and whose compound symbolizes its unity. Today, the patriarch's youngest sons and most of his grandsons prefer to eat individually in their own compound or in their *gujo* with other young people.

The large water jug used for cooking and washing stands in the corner of the second platform. It forms the *debo gode* place. Sometimes it is converted into a brewing place called *din gognoaraji* (Fig.6.2). Opposite it, there is another female granary or *guyo ya* in which Bemu stores the condiments, the dishes (*banya* bowls), soap, knives, and other small tools, along with the food and cloths. Then comes the small space between the granary and the kitchen house called *pana biri*. This space, previously occupied by a millet granary (*guyo ana*), is now used to store firewood. After this, comes the second entrance that leads to an empty place which used to be the grandparents compound. Today, half the ruins are used as a communal rubbish dump, while the other half serve as a sheepfold.

The wooden door stands near the two kitchens. The first, open-air one is called *ninyigoro*. It is made with three stones and is used the most. The second, which forms part of the compound enclosure is covered and is used mostly during the rainy season. In addition to these, the *debo gode* place (mentioned above) is sometimes converted into a kitchen when more space is required to brew millet beer. A *togu* or shelter with a thatched millet straw roof used as a resting place during the afternoon is also found here (Fig.6.3). Moving back to the first platform, the third *guyo ya* is situated near the back of Yaouro's (the neighbour) millet granaries. As we get down to the ground level, the second *gini dinyedi* occupied on market day by the *badie* or uncle lies next to another former kitchen (*togu*), which was recently converted into a combined rubbish dump, shower, and toilet place. The place located in front of these two buildings contains the *togwo*. This is the hollowed stone that is filled with water for the chicken and the *yu nawi* or the grinding stone (Fig.6.5).

Finally, chatting places, designated by the term *dedindineji* (where people sit), are numerous and generally located in shadowed places such as under the compound trees (where women eat) or at the *togu* where women do their hair, spin cotton or pot. Above the *togu* lies the place where food is processed called *dein pana tori* (Fig.6.4). Balugo's compound comprises two shower places called *didinu* that are located in the corner of the courtyard and in front of his flat. This is also used as a latrine. Two other latrines, one for men and one for women, known as *kerugue*, are located on the outside of the village. The sleeping areas are located on the *gini dinyedi* when the rain falls but are mostly on the rooftop (*dara*) the rest of the time because of the heat. While the women share one roof with the children and myself, the men, Balugo, cousin Brama, and his friends share the one at the back.

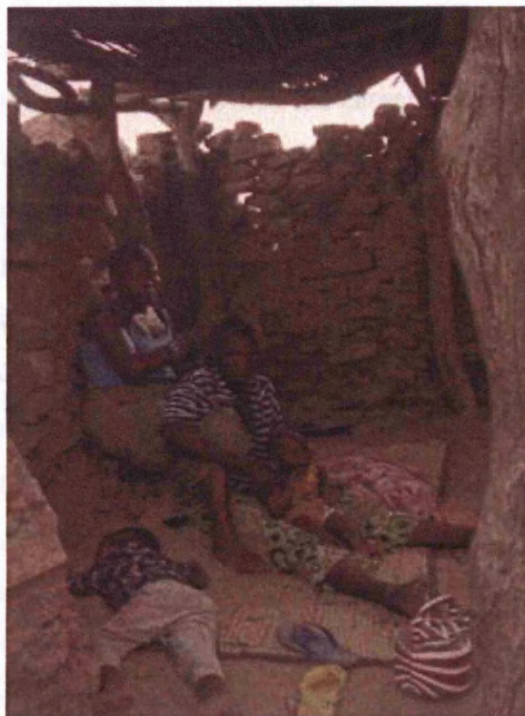


Fig. 6.3. The shelter or *togu*

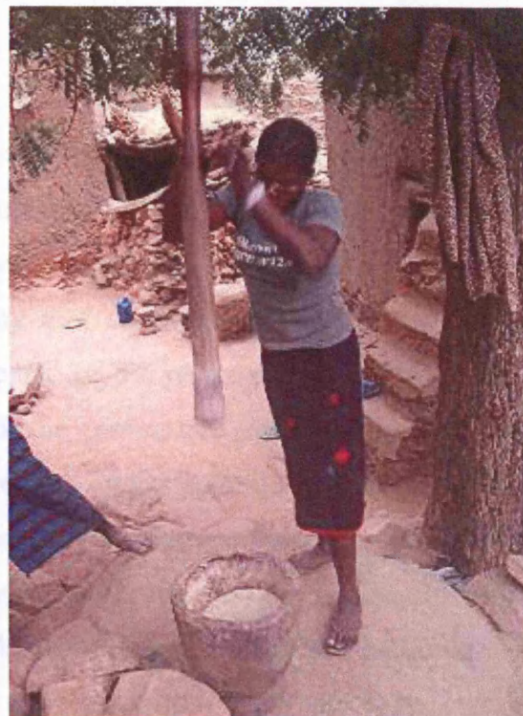


Fig. 6.4. The pounding place

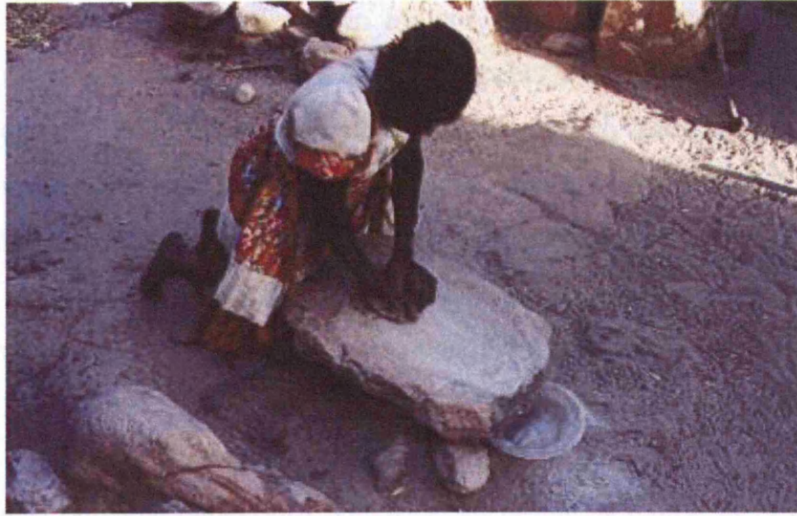


Fig. 6.5. The grinding place

As I have mentioned, my host family's compound contains three female granaries or *guyo ya* and the ruins of a millet granary *guyo ana* which has been replaced by a *togu* or room in which the cereal is stored. Though small than the granary, this room is large enough, as the harvests remain insufficient every year. The male granary or *guyo ana* generally symbolizes the economic activity and therefore the wealth of the family. As a male element representing man's responsibility towards food supplies, it materializes his work strength, capacity and contribution in ensuring the life continuity of his family. This is complemented by the women's tasks of processing, preparing, and feeding the family. Some of the compounds I worked in had a *guyo togu* or patriarch's granary, which contained the family's shrines and magic. This is generally located in a corner of a compound. It possesses precious ritual and sacred objects. The patriarch often rests in his *guyo togu* keeping an eye on the objects for which he is responsible. The *guyo togu* also symbolizes his age and authority. The three granaries constitute, through their attachment to people and their location within the compound, a material symbol that objectifies the presence and the roles of men and women.

The other main built feature found in the compound is the room or *gujo*. I will examine this now by looking at the general aspects of this built container as it is used by my host family. In particular, I will focus on both the modernization of the *gujo* and on the making process of that space by young men who possess the means to 'make themselves at home'. In this section I intend to show how the Dogon youth of Tireli, in particular the young men, break out of the traditional family and housing boundaries, gaining more independence and self fulfilment. I propose that the *gujo* of young men shows a particular form of containment that relates to the acquisition – in some cases astonishing accumulation – of things and therefore the constitution of personal collections which I shall define as a process of extraversion (Bayart 2005).

2.2. The *gujo*: storing and nesting

The Dogon 'room' generally consists of a shelter for the whole family. It is sometimes referred as *deu* and more often as *gujo*. As I have previously mentioned, the *gujo* is defined by its being the smallest part of the habitat from which a compound constitutes and expands. In some compounds, the husband might construct his own house, in which he will sleep, as he grows older. Alternatively, he can build his own granary (*guyo togu*) for the same purpose. In the case of a polygamous family, the co-wives as well as their husband possess their own house. As I have mentioned, my host family's compound possesses three *gujo*. Two of them form the courtyard enclosure. Their uncle Andra, who comes to visit the family on market days, on which he also sells his wares, uses one. Only the uncle has access to this room. Therefore, I do not possess any data about its content. As the uncle is dealing with sacrificing practices for the family as well as for the village such as the *lebe*, it is likely that the room contains various objects related to these practices. The second building is dedicated to my host mother, two of her daughters,

and two of her grandchildren. The third stands at the back of the compound and belongs to my host brother. I will examine this particular space in the next section.

My host mother's room constitutes a place where she, her daughters and grandchildren sleep at night during the cold dry season and rainy season. This place, though relatively small, also serves as a storage facility in which all store their clothes, large sized objects such as jars to cool down millet beer or to store fresh water, cooking utensils, and some of their agricultural tools. The room used to have a kitchen in which, a long time ago, Bemu used to cook when it was raining. A separate room is now dedicated to this activity. In fact, the smoke and therefore the smell was making the place uncomfortable as well as damaging its content, especially the clothes. The only piece of furniture found in the house is the bed, made of stones and covered with wet mud. As I shall show later in this chapter, the bed is installed when the construction of the compound is finalized and it is attached to the walls nearby the main entrance. Most of the time, this place serves as a storage space. In fact, the rooftop is used as a place where they sleep. As it accumulates the heat, the room remains very hot at night. Therefore, the rooftop is more practical because it is more spacious and does not accumulate heat in the same way. It is also used as a place to dry spices, baobab leaves, millet and, fonio. Hence, the rooftop acts as a container to store things temporarily.

As the room is dark people tend to add windows to it as well as to increase the size of the door frame which is normally quite small. I will examine this further down. In one of my first visits to the room, I bumped my forehead into the top of the frame. My host mother panicked because I was bleeding and in pain but also because she did not understand why I would rush into the room as they never do; I was told that "those who rush into the room are generally thieves or witches". Hence, the door frame in a similar way as the *togu na* shelter or even, as we shall see in chapter eight, the granary door, are made in such a way as to canalize body movements.

That is, to force people to enter ‘calmly’ into the building as the Dogon would put it. According to the uncle, the room stands as a place of harmony. Entering the house slowly constitutes a form of respect towards the people who live there. As he put it: “those who built a big room with a big entrance get it all wrong. People can enter directly and even see what’s inside of the room. (...) Also, by bending, you leave the bad things out and you bring the good things in with you⁸⁹”. The ‘bad things’ are the aggressiveness, bad feelings, bad moods, or worries that make people angry and unhappy with each other, while the good things are described as a positive attitude of fullness and happiness.

Harmony in the compound is also signified by the four walls of the house. Indeed, when the foundations of the house are designed, the head of the *ginna*, who allocates the plot of the land on which the house is to be built, makes the benedictions to the direction of the four cardinal points. He takes a handful of earth, sand, or four little stones that he throws towards the four points. By doing so, he invites all the good things from nature that surrounds the new building place in the North, South, East, and West to come into the room. In some places this is done with water that is sprinkled to the four cardinal points with a cow tail. In this way, God and the ancestors will favour the place and the people who live there. This is to make the good things come to the family. As stated by a young informant from Dama who built his house in 2003, the gesture implies: “to give ‘*tonus*’ to the soil and the nature, and to pray to God to give us good things. By praying to the North, South, East, and West we invite the good things to come to our place and so we build in a

⁸⁹ Said in French: ‘*Ceux qui construisent une chambre avec de grandes portes n’ont rien compris. C’est-à-dire que les gens peuvent rentrer directement et même voir à l’intérieure [...]. Aussi, en t’abaissant, tu laisses les mauvaises choses à l’extérieure et tu amènes les bonnes choses l’intérieure*’.

peaceful place⁹⁰”. Today, the new *gujo* as well as the modernization of the existing compounds shows different signs of well-being that do not necessarily concern the symbolism of the compound but rather the expansion, the embellishment, and the modernity of the habitat. This is what I examine in the next section.

2.3. The modernization of the *gujo*: social distinction and prestige

In Teri-ku Dama, as in many places in the Dogon land, new buildings (*gujo*), not built in the traditional wet-mud style, are springing up especially at the bottom of the scree. A *gujo* often belongs to one young man who hosts his friends until he decides to find a family. Or, the *gujo* can be built by a group of young men who will live there when they get engaged. Although this latter form was more common in the past, today young men stay with their brother and family and share a same room or they opt for the first type of *gujo* described. The rooves of these *gujo* are sometimes crested by an aerial and a solar panel that glitter in the sun light. These modern dwellings are built and occupied by the youth of Tireli who earn cash in town with seasonal jobs, through the trade of goods that they sell in shops or markets, as tourist guides, or simply by getting money from Western friends who help them to build their home. The size and overall style of these new *gujo* demonstrate a break compared with the ‘traditional’ way of building and therefore conception of the compound.

As one of my informants from Dama who finished building his *gujo* in 2004, puts it: “Young people today want to copy the town life-style. People travel in different places and they bring this back to the village. This gives value to you and to your

⁹⁰ Said in French: ‘*C’est pour donner du tonus à la terre, à la nature et prier Dieu qu’il nous donne de bonnes choses. Quand on prie au Nord, au Sud, à l’Est et à l’Ouest, on invite les bonnes choses à venir chez nous et on construit dans un endroit paisible*’.

family⁹¹”. As explained by Amakana, the modernization of the house indicates the head of the family’s capacity to make money, to travel, and to bring ideas, style, and new building materials, such as cement, to the village. Cement, is frequently imported to the village, and constitutes an important building element that is highly valued because of its resistance as well as its connotation of being ‘modern’. Hence, a ten kilo bag costing about 7.000 CFA, constitutes a prestige item, often substituted by ‘Dogon cement’ or *bosegue*, a form of red gravel for those who cannot afford Chinese cement. In some cases, people mix the little cement that they can afford with the *bosegue* in order to increase the resistance of the matter and to make it more prestigious. As mentioned previously, the stones used for construction are extracted on the building site itself, thus avoiding long and arduous trips. The bags of cement are brought from the town to the village by cars. Transporting things from the outside by a modern means of transport also constitutes a sign of prestige.

The door and windows of these modern homes are often made of tin (Fig.6.6) and painted to embellish the habitat (Fig.6.7). The *gujo* is either left unenclosed or is surrounded by a wall made of stones and covered with cement or the mixture described above. When enclosed, the space of the compound is much larger especially for those who have built at the bottom of the scree (Fig.6.8). Furthermore, the *gujo* of today also possess a veranda, like those of the town (Fig.6.9), where the family can rest in the afternoon, drink tea and chat. The signature of the owner of the building, made with the metallic tops of soft drink bottles (Fig.6.10), is frequently put on the façade or on the doorstep.

According to my informants, a ‘modern’ *gujo* shows that “you are successful in your life”. Hence, it constitutes a form of social distinction that also testifies to the

⁹¹ Said in French: ‘*Les jeunes d’aujourd’hui veulent copier le style de la ville. Les gens voyagent de côté en côté et ils ramènent ça dans le village. Ça ça te donne de la valeur à toi et à ta famille*’.

improvement of the occupier' quality of life and therefore of their well-being. The efforts and money invested into the habitat constitutes a great satisfaction that make young men feel good about themselves, as a form of prestige of the self. Making something new and being creative also translates their concerns about the the view that visitors such as tourists have of Dogon people, and their concern, in general, to make their habitat more welcoming.



Fig. 6.6. *Gujo* with tin door and large windows



Fig.6.7. *Gujo* with painted doors



Fig.6.8. The increased the compound courtyard

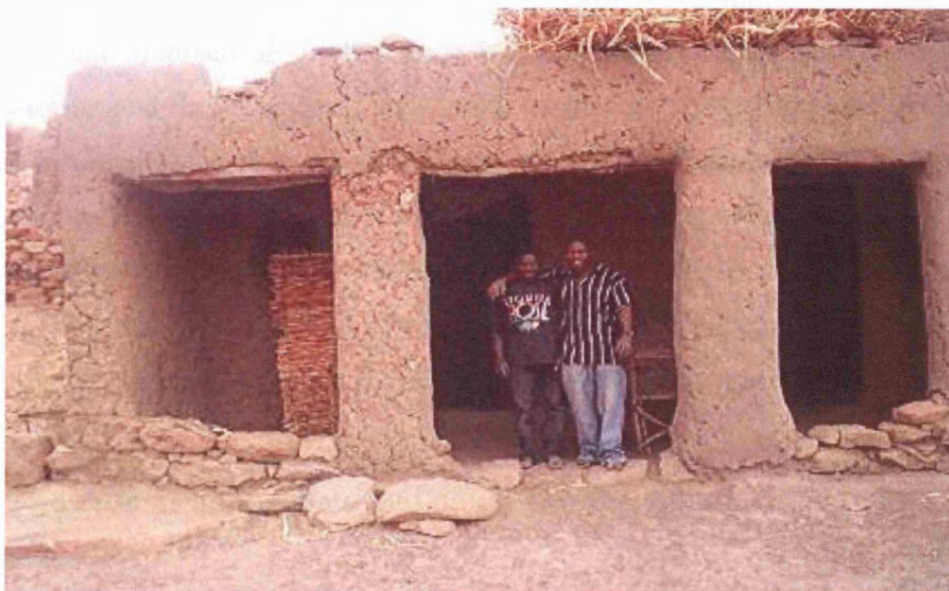


Fig.6.9. *Gujo* with veranda

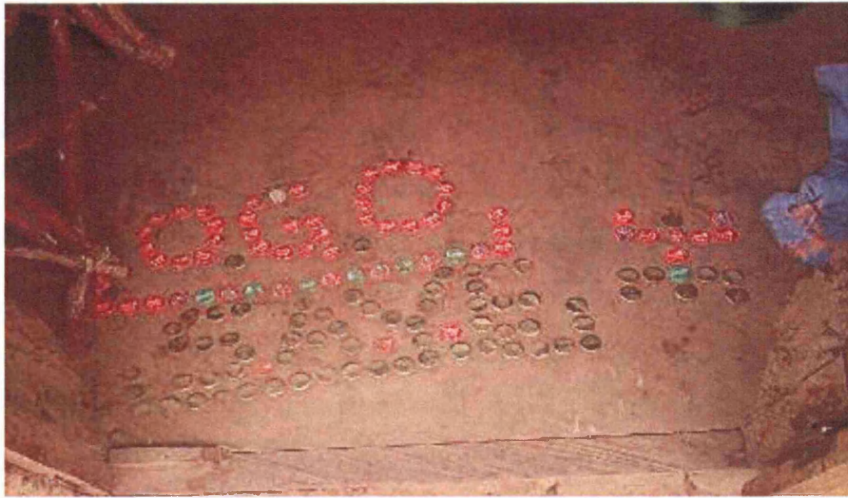


Fig.6.10. Name of the owner inlaid in the floor on the inside of the door

However, the tourist's view of this modern habitat is often very different from local expectations. Indeed, this modernization is often criticized and denounced by the tourists as a distortion of the 'traditional' architectural style and therefore of the aesthetic of the place. The solar panels and aerials are also not safe from the tourist comments. The *gujo* testifies to its occupants' desires to separate from the traditional architecture of their parent's compound, which they often described as 'archaic' and unpractical. In the same way, as young people convert to Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, they tend to detach from their family's annual ceremonies and ritual practice. Old people always complain that their children do not come to visit anymore even if they live in the same quarter, or, in some cases, they complain that the daughters-in-law do not cook anymore in her husband's family. The *gujo* objectifies a new lifestyle, values, and beliefs that break with traditional boundaries, allowing more personal development and individualism.

2.4. The *gujo* as an intimate and day dreaming space

I would like now to examine the inside contents of the young men's *gujo*. To do this, I think it worth making some comments on my exploration of the young

women's room. When I first started to work with young women, I realized that most of them were uncomfortable and did not fully understand why I was interested in the inside content of their room. Young girls live with their mother or their grandmother who does not always agree to give a foreigner access to their room. In the rooms I gained access to, the young women showed me their few clothes such as indigo wraps, t-shirts, and waxed cloth, jewellery⁹² contained in plastic containers, some pots of Chinese body-cream, pins and a comb to do their hair, and pair of platform shoes 'Bamako style' as they put it, as well as the clothes of their children if they were mothers. The material culture and room of young men are quite divergent from this. I propose to look at the *gujo* of my host brother, which I will complement with observations made in other *gujo* of Dama.

My host family's compound is extended at the back by Balugo's *gujo* (Fig.6.11). The room is normally built outside of the patriarch's household as a sign of independence as well as the starting point for the young man's family. However, for practical reasons Balugo decided to live in his father's house because he is the head of the family now given that his father had died a few years previously. As we walk down the stony steps, the 'house of the millet' is found on the left. This used to be occupied by the tourists that Balugo's father would host. Beyond the cement staircase stands the entrance to the *gujo*. This is located under the terrace called *dara*, upon a part of which is the storage room I used. The building is composed of one veranda from which we access an empty storage room on the left and Balugo's room on the right. As we leave the building, another empty storage room, used in the past by tourists, is found at the back. It is annexed to a shower or *didinu*, partly covered with a millet-straw roof. Finally, a *guyo togu* that contains the family's shrines, access to which is strictly forbidden by women, can be found in an extension to this section.

⁹² I do not have any pictures due to technical problems.

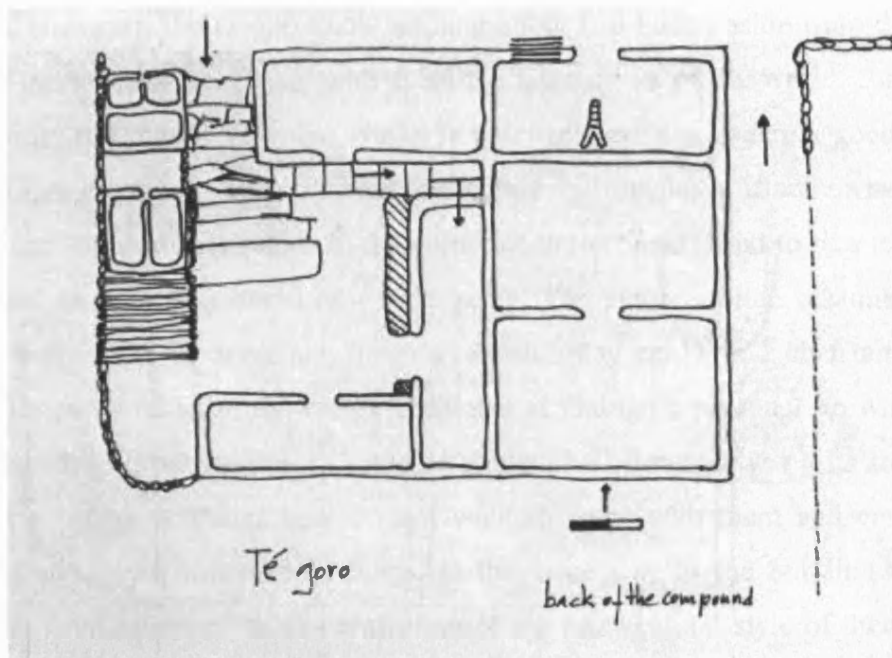


Fig. 6.11 Back of the compound: Balugo's flat

The space of the *gujo* is relatively spacious and colourful. The walls are covered with a thin layer of sand that makes the inside brighter and some posters of kung fu stars that Balugo bought at the market. These images of power depict kung fu movements being demonstrated by a Nigerian kung fu master whose persona is also emphasized by depictions of fierce animals such as a leopard (Fig. 6.12). Some other parts of the walls are covered with old glossy pages of Western magazines that he collected from the tourists and a calendar from Sotelma (Malian telecommunications company). The air of the room often filled with the smoke of cigarettes and Indian incense given to him by the tourists. The place contains a bed and some tables on which a collection of objects given to him by tourists is displayed. It ranges from plastic bottles, balloons, bottles of honey or alcohol to clothes and backpacks. Some of the clothes that hang on the string are those given to him by me. The batteries, cotton buds, body cream, tea, and spaghetti are things that he buys regularly in the market or the local shop. The Bin Laden wallet bought in

Sangha market is very popular among the Dogon and always horrifies the American tourists. However, the Dogon know nothing about Bin Laden aside from the stories told by the tourists who bring with them the latest news of the world. But as they say, it does not matter since the wallet is practical and Bin Laden is good looking (Fig.6.13 & Fig.6.14). An old broken radio that still manages, if somewhat poorly, to produce some sounds stands in the corner of the veranda. Next to it, a tea set lies unwashed as well as a brand new card game. The place is often occupied by his friends who come to drink tea, listen to music, play cards, and chat until late at night. The accumulation of wealth translates as Balugo's personal growth. As he takes the visiting tourists throughout the village, he often receives gifts from them such as a t-shirt or things they do not want to carry with them and earns some money that allows him to buy things. In the same way as the building materials imported from town or the modernization of the architectural style of their houses, the material culture of young men that accumulates in the *gujo* constitutes what Bayart calls a process of extraversion that he defines as: '(...) espousing foreign cultural elements and putting them in the service of autochthonous objectives' (Bayart 2005:71). Through the accumulation of this wealth, the young man displays his capacity to access and constitute a town-like lifestyle, which were he to leave the village he could have in the town, but which, because his responsibility as the head of the family requires that he stay, he has to create in the village.

Balugo's room constitutes a space to day dream, where he sits for long hours with his friends talking about the 'outside world', i.e. Bandiagara, Mopti, and Bamako, the lifestyle of which he tries to reproduce in his *gujo*. These ideal places where everything is possible and accessible are, in his view, like the West, the taste for which the tourists bring with them and leave in the young Dogon's head through their 'cultural exchange', stories, and gifts.



Fig.6.12. Kung fu poster



Fig.6.13. Collected objects given by the tourists



Fig. 6.14. Gifts from the tourists and goods bought on the market

In the 'wealthier' *gujo* of the village, a television, DVD player and stereo are found. These often constitute the main attraction of the village around which the youth of Teri-Ku Dama gather at night (Fig.6.15). The equipment is often paid for by the tourists and the DVDs sent from Europe or bought in town. In contrast, in the *gujo* of the majority of the young men, who do not have or have very little money, the room remains quite minimalist. The walls are often covered with a thin layer of sand or ochre mud on which masks figurines and multiple symbols of Dogon culture are drawn with a piece of charcoal. The sort of objects that are often found are some note pads and blank sheets of paper left by the tourists, flash-lights and batteries, clothes bought at a local market and carefully kept for special events, and cigarettes.



Fig. 6.15. Radio, DVD players, and tapes

In this section, I have shown the way in which young men make their own space, through the depiction of the material culture found in the *gujo* of young men. The inside content of the room as well as the building itself shows a particular mode of

dwelling or making oneself at home that is traced upon a modern town-like lifestyle that is brought into the village. The young people modernize their home by copying and collecting things, because they are expected by their family to stay in the village to cultivate and sustain their family. These spaces enable them to fulfil themselves but, overall, they constitute a space of dreaming (Bachelard 1994, 1971) within the habitat in which young people cross the boundaries of the village by imagining and talking about the outside world which they might access one day.

As described by the young men of the village, the *gujo* constitutes a space of freedom in which they chat. Thus the *gujo* constitutes a form of detachment from the family and traditional values, obligations, and responsibility towards their family. Through these multiple collections of objects, they display the outside world in their home. When sitting with them and chatting about life, they ask me what is Europe like? What is Bamako like? They say that they are stuck in the village because they have to cultivate the fields that are the main resource. However, as the crops fail almost every year, they do not see anymore why they should carry on with it. As they say: “It is worthless⁹³”. They say that they see their future as being outside of the village, but if they do not carry on with the cultivation of the fields, the family will die. Most of them do not have the means to explore the outside world because of their ties with the village. Thus, the boundaries of Tireli are crossed only through their imagination, fed by the stories told by the tourists, those of the village who have made the trip to Bamako, West Africa, or to the West, and their collections of objects that reinforce the idea of an outside world of cash, abundance and leisure. Young Dogon gain prestige and respect amongst their peers for possessing knowledge about the outside of boundaries. For the young girls I met, their life is different. They do not have the luxury of dreaming as they have to serve the family. They have their obligations, that consist not only, as they do for men, of

⁹³ Expressed in French as: ‘*Ca ne sert à rien*’.

bringing millet and food or cash but also of ensuring the well-functioning of the compound. From an early age they assist their mother or grandmother in daily life activities such as collecting daily resources, cultivating, taking care of the children, processing foodstuff, cooking, cleaning and washing.

Moving on from this account of the *gujo* – which I have defined as a social but also an intimate, day dreaming space, in which young men gather and display the outside world around themselves – I examine now the fixing aspect of the home. In other words an established compound as occupied by a young couple. I propose here that the complementary roles of men and women are objectified in specific elements of the home. These are appropriated and fixed by men and women as a sign of prosperity, cohesion, fertility, and, therefore, of continuity of family life. This is what I reveal in the following lines.

3. Fixing elements into place as a marker of stability and family prosperity

Initially, a compound is symbolically fixed by a series of elements when newly occupied by a young couple. As recounted by Calame-Griaule (1968: 101-102), the first of these is a bulb of *nonyo*⁹⁴ that is placed as a symbol of ‘perpetual life’ in the kitchen walls, next to the fire place. The bulb is always humid and is considered to ensure the continuity of the family life. Although this practice was common in the past, I was told that today it is practised less and less. In fact, I was told by a couple of Christians that they blessed their house and affixed a wooden Christ on top of their door frame. However, other elements such as the water jug, and the fire place still symbolically ‘fix’ gendered roles and ensure the continuity of the life of the

⁹⁴ Calame-Griaule has identified it as the *Urginea altissima Baker*.

compound. The bed and the *baga tanyu* fork, are two male elements that also represent the fixity of the home.

The first two elements are, according to the rules, fixed once and for always by the woman. They signify the attachment of the women to the place, and to her work. The fixing of the anvil in the village smithy, signifying the attachment and the activity of the blacksmith, express a similar idea. The fixing of such elements, which play a central role in the daily life of a family, materializes the stability and cohesion of the family. Through the act of fixing, a woman commits herself engendering and maintaining life in the family (Lane 1987: 60). She is the only person who can move the fireplace or the water jug around in order, for instance, to re-configure her working site in a more practical way. However, if someone else, such as her mother-in-law or the co-wife breaks it, or turns it on its side, this indicates the eviction of the wife for good. Expressed as such, this would constitute a sign of complete rejection from the family. In other words, if the elements that fix her presence and objectify her contribution to the family's life are displaced, then she is as well. As far as the fireplace and the water jugs are concerned, the act of fixing these elements is followed by a symbolic use of them. This is materialized through the first water poured into jug or the first fire made with the wood of the *ponu* tree⁹⁵ when the couple is newly wed. Its particularly scented wood is also burned while a woman is giving birth. The wood is also used in the construction of doors; its bark (*sumo*) is used to flavour water; its fruits are a sweet for children; its leaves are used in the cooking of fritters; and the gum is used to repair broken or breached domestic objects. Finally, in relation to the fixing of the fireplace, the water jug symbolizes the acceptance of the woman in the family as well as the 'starting' of life in a compound.

⁹⁵ This is the tamkuba or *Detarium senegalensis* (*cesalpiniacee*).

It is worth examining the fireplace in more detail, as it is a particularly significant element. The first significant element found in the *ginu* concerns this feature. As a symbol of fixity, it also constitutes an element through which a wife symbolically affirms her entry into the 'family' as a full member. By setting up the three stones that constitute the material support for the cooking pot, and by making a first fire, the newly wed spouse engages herself in metaphorically ensuring the continuity of that fire that is, assuming her role as wife. The fireplace is never moved by anyone other than the wife unless the couple get divorced. If this occurs, she leaves to fix a fireplace somewhere else. Hence, the fireplace signifies the role of women in the compound and therefore the co-operation between men and women (Lane 1987: 59).

The fire flame specifically materializes the principles of family life. For instance, the kitchen walls which are covered with thick layers of smoke are never renewed as this constitutes a positive sign of life – an active occupation of the place. It means that the cooking pots are on the fire everyday and the activity of cooking signifies that there is a whole family to feed. Therefore, the smoke symbolizes the output of the family. Similarly, it is said that the fire symbolizes the woman as the vitality of the compound as she feeds the family. Furthermore, the fire and its index, smoke, connote the passing of time as well as the stability of daily life as composed by repeated and successive gestures that maintain life. If faced with extreme food scarcity, which constitutes a disruptive and therefore a negative form of disorder, the cooking pot is still placed on the fire but is filled with water in place of food. This act reflects a common practice which symbolically and psychologically helps to keep the cooking activity going as part of the routine tasks. As food scarcity strikes the families unequally, leaving some with something to eat and others with nothing at all, I was told that a situation of complete cereal shortage is akin to living in humiliation. Therefore, the absence of food is hidden by a smoking fire. Thus, fire and flame act as two symbols of continuity of life.

After use, the fire is generally covered with ashes. This keeps its embers going within the ashes until next use. Under no circumstance is it put out with a large quantity of water. Rather, it is delicately stifled. This is also a matter of security. Spreading water over the fire can be dangerous. In fact, putting out the fire brutally brings bad luck on the family because the fire materializes the continuity of life and food preparation that lies at the centre of all life concerns. If by the end of the day, the ongoing embers are completely out, a new fire is 'restarted' over it. This means that the ashes are never cleaned off. Most of the time, the fire is passed from one compound to another. Bemu often goes to the neighbour compound to collect a piece of charcoal placed on a fragment of clay pot which contains some *enyeguerse*. These are small sticks of millet ears that result from the processing of millet straw and which reanimate the fire. This also constitutes a symbolic act of maintaining good social relationship and solidarity with neighbours.

While the elements listed are fixed by the woman, the bed and the *baga tagnu* are by the husband. Although, as I have mentioned, this occurred more in the past, this fixing is still practised. If a family includes a co-wife, the same ritual is carried out for her. In fact, although they share the same domestic space, each wife possesses their own house and utensils. The bed is made of wet mud and placed right at entrance of the bedroom on the right side. It is affixed against the wall and therefore cannot be moved. It symbolizes the fixity of the couple. The *baga tanyu* generally stands on the left side of the bedroom entrance. It consists of an upright wooden fork on which the eating bowl (*banya*) with the leftovers of the head of the family's meal. The stick holding the dish, symbolizing food gathering and safe keeping, recalls men's role of providing food resources. The practical aspect of the object is to keep food out of reach of the animals or the children who are always tempted to take some. In other words, this element symbolizes his role as food guarantor.

I have examined, in this section, the proposed elements of the compound that fix men's and women's roles. These symbolically ensure the continuity of the family, that is the biological reproduction but also the well-functioning of the family unit.

4. The compound as a container device for life resources: the case of domestic animals

I propose here to examine domestic animals as a dimension that constitutes another major resource of Dogon families and that play a significant role in Dogon daily life. Chickens, goats, and sheep possess their own place inside the courtyard. While chickens occupy a small house made of wet-mud that comprises little holes, goats and sheep are sheltered in a stone enclosure. In some places, they occupy a room that is annexed to the house or the ground floor of the house as in the plateau area. Goats, sheep, chickens and, in some places, horses that are destined for daily consumption are butchered outside the compound or at the market place. The residues such as feathers, horns, jaws, and hooves are left on the ground. Other types of domestic animal remains are re-used, for example, in the making of bags from goat or sheep skins. The bones or the flesh leftovers are given to the dogs. Domestic animals are also sacrificed for ceremonial purposes. These practices attempt notably to regulate the society by, for instance, resolving conflicts between people. Sacrificing is a principle of action upon the world, that entails requesting the benevolence of spiritual entities to whom the sacrificed objects are dedicated. Furthermore, this practice enables the acquisition of particular power and forces that allow the individual to act upon others as well as in his life. Sacrificing, as an act of disorder, reintroduces order in the world for the time disturbed. The blood of the dead animal reactivates the shrines and enables the communication with the invisible world of the spirits and ancestors. Thus, it regulates and reinitiates the ordinary state of things – or its interruption in the case of witchcraft and trials – as well as the continuity and prosperity of life for the practitioner. This secret practice,

is operated by mature men (assisted in some cases by their sons) who possess the knowledge and experience of a patriarch. It is sometimes enacted by a group of men, when a collective ceremony is required.

The animals dedicated to sacrifice are not bought at the market. Neither do they originate from an unknown family. Although extremely rare, a shortage may lead to a chicken being bought from a known and trusted source. However, this is perceived as shameful since it emphasizes the incapacity to sustain the practice. To be effective, the animal has to be raised and fed in the compound. Buying an animal on the market causes its intrinsic qualities to be lost, while an animal raised carefully within the home compound enables a successful ritual. The provenance and the manner of a sacrificial animal's raising must be known, as these determine the purity or impurity of the animal and thus the efficacy of the sacrifice to please the supernatural beings. For instance, it is said that if someone's chicken runs into the compound of a cast person⁹⁶, the animal becomes impure because the efficacy of the animal blood is affected. Because of this, chickens primarily constitute a resource dedicated to ritual practices required by a family. However, they also constitute a form of revenue since they can be sold at the market. These two reasons explain why individual consumption of poultry and meat remains relatively rare, as it is primarily used for celebrations. In the compounds where magico-religious practices are particularly adhered to, up to twenty chickens are sacrificed per year.

⁹⁶ Dyer, leatherworker or blacksmith

5. The abandonment and re-use of the compound ruins.

In the previous sections, I have explored the dimension of the compound that could be considered a living space that is defined and defines according to the people, things, activities, and the domestic animals that it contains – which symbolize personal wealth as well the particular uses to which they are put in sacrificial practices. I look now at two other dimensions of the life-cycle of the materiality of the compound: the ruins of abandoned compounds as well as their potential re-use.

When there are no descendants to occupy a place, the compound is left to collapse into ruins. In Tireli, the compound ruins located at the very top of the scree are completely abandoned due to the unevenness and impracticality of the topography. However, the compounds located in the middle of the scree are still reused either for dwelling or other uses. The ruins function as a playground for the children, as dump pits (Fig.6.16), or as a place to keep the pigs. Some people also use these ruins to keep other domestic animals when there is a lack of space inside the household.



Fig. 6.16. Ruins as a waste container

The ruins of a compound symbolize particular connotations of death and misfortune. In fact, when people talk about it, they often say that “those who used to occupy the place were unfortunate in their village life”. As it transpired, from my conversations with Dogon families on their perception of ruins, I came to realize that for them an abandoned compound is a place where life has stopped. My informants provided many explanations for why a compound may have been abandoned. Migration and a need for emancipation such as making cash to sustain the family were mentioned frequently. Fates such as epidemics and famine caused by recurring and interminable periods of drought or the devastation of harvests by locusts were also mentioned. In addition, the compound ruins as a patrilocal inheritance may cease to be transmitted for want of male descendents to take the compound over owing to, for instance, infertility. Finally, witchcraft is often cited as a life-long struggle that results in the dismantling of families by killing or expelling people from the village by “taking their souls away”.

Compounds can, however, be re-rehabilitated by other male members of the family or even someone external to the family as long as the closest owner of the abandoned compound or ruins agrees. Alternatively, the chief of the village might allocate the place to another family if none of the original family remain. Therefore, recovery can involve the abandoned built material or the whole structure. The recycling procedure involves particular logics of inheritance or transmission and appropriation. As a rule built materials cannot be taken away from a family to constitute someone else’s home, as they objectify the labour and the prosperity of a family. In other words, mud walls, stones, or wooden poles circulate within a same kinship group. If not recovered they are left to return to the soil. The compound site, even in ruins, is called *goju teru* or *ginoko*, a term which means the original place built on, and thus signifies that the place remains the property of the ancestors. Hence, while designating the physicality of the place, *goju teru* also entails a

principle of identity-making that concerns the legitimization of a family in the village through its ancestry affiliation. As I was told in the village of Nombori, some people take stones from the patriarch's compound, which they then include in their own household structure in order to maintain their affiliation with their ancestors. Through this, relatively uncommon, practice, the built element, objectifying the memory of the ancestors, is physically integrated into the new house. Similarly, the rock that stands in the courtyard of most compounds and on which the old men rest or under which domestic objects are stored is also subjected to the same inheritance and relatedness process. In fact, the rock is often blown up into pieces that are used to construct a new compound. There is always a continuity between one house and another. For instance, when some men build a house, they place a stone in its foundation that belongs to the house of their ancestors, in order to ensure the continuity between the two houses and to maintain the ancestor affiliation.

As with the transmission of built material, the re-occupation of an abandoned domestic site is, in theory, always carried out by the inheritee, usually the son or the brother of the deceased. However, some families might lease the site to people they know and trust. The first step of a re-recovery procedure consists of identifying the causes of the place's desertion. This can be linked to a curse, epidemics, absence of heir, or migration. In other words, the abandonment of a household constitutes a sign of pauperization. In the second phase, a series of protection and purification rituals are undertaken before beginning to repair the compound. This act is generally carried out by someone who possesses the relevant magic knowledge and shrines to secure the place. The purification generally involves a series of incantations and a fumigation that undertaken in order to expel bad spirits or a curse. Third, the owner entrusts the place to a (male) friend or a relative who will use it for about a year or two. His presence is thought to counter the ill-fated effects of the compound over time. The temporary occupier is chosen for his mind's capacity to capture and neutralize the ill-fated effects. He is often someone successful and with great self-

confidence. Fourthly, elements of the compound are generally changed such as the location and orientation of the bed located inside the house and the position of water jars in the courtyard. Making these changes to the site prevents the new family from undergoing the same fate as the previous owners. In short, although it is abandoned, the ruins of the compound can always be recovered through a particular process of appropriation and dwelling that operates through rites of 'decontamination', which objectify the ethos of the former owner's life trajectory. Hence, through its abandonment and re-use the compound inscribes itself into a life-cycle that defines and is defined through its materiality.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the Dogon compound and dwelling process by focusing on its daily uses and 'making' especially through the fixing of a series of gender elements that objectify men and women's roles in the compound. I have proposed that this site of action defines a particular form of containment and ontological security through gathering and boundary making processes. This transpires through symbolic practices of fixing people and tasks into places through domestic elements or by containing people's behaviour, through, for instance, architectural elements such as small doorways, and finally by reinforcing a compound's boundaries with magic. I have demonstrated that the continuity, stability, and prosperity of life is maintained pragmatically through repeated and shared, embodied tasks that are allocated to fixed places in the compound as well as through the gathering of resources.

I have examined domestic animals as a dimension which constitutes both a form wealth and also an essential part of sacrificial practices. From a slightly different perspective, I have shown that the young men of the village tend to break away from the traditional ways of dwellings by making their home in a different, generally

more modernized, way. And that they do so through their choice of build material, their use of space and their way of relating to their family. Their room, the *gujo*, functions as an intimate space of dreaming that is constituted by the young men through various elements that represent the outside world, thus extending it beyond the village boundaries. Lastly, I have looked at the ruins and their re-appropriation as a means to show how the life-cycle of the compound can, potentially, be revived through specific symbolic procedures.

7.

Dogon domestic waste and the *re-cycling* of a daily cosmology.

The scenic qualities of the Dogon landscape are betrayed in many places by the presence of rubbish such as plastic bags. Flying around in the wind, these coloured and volatile elements often hang in the trees or lie stagnant in the ponds during the rainy seasons. While local people do not pay much attention to these and other forms of rubbish, the Western visitors who stride through Dogon villages often choke with shock and disgust when they encounter these jumbles of straw, rags, tin cans, animal bones, tree leaves, dung, and torn plastic bottles to name but a few of the things they come across. The rubbish accumulates over time, becoming plastered into the furrows of the paths that weave around the Dogon compounds. This garbage is also mixed up with the tourists' refuse, hygienic napkins, tissues, toilet paper, and condom packages. Most is thrown straight on the ground, or transported there later by the wind or by the children as they rummage in the hostel bins. Because of the airy openness of the space and the rubbish's exposure to heat, this rubbish becomes mostly odourless in the long-term. In contrast, the average state of Dogon compounds provides a far more olfactory and hectic experience. The compounds host predominantly rotten organic elements, unwashed cooking pots and utensils, used water and some tin or solid plastic pieces which are brought in by the children for playing. Consequently, the Dogon landscape is often largely discredited as its colonization by garbage makes the environment appear chaotic. In fact, this eclectic landscape of waste does often detract from the visual and pictorial qualities of the

place and of the culture. This is seen and explained within Western discourse(s) as the result of neglect and poverty. Multiple governmental and international NGO's programmes are dealing with the issue. They see waste as a threat to local well-being as well as to the tourism industry that constitutes one of the mainstays of the national economy of Mali.

1. Daily experience of domestic waste as a 'culture on the ground'

The approach I propose in this brief account on Dogon domestic waste differs from those I found in the recent literature on domestic waste in the Dogon land due to it being grounded in a day-to-day shared experience of the matter. The surveys of French anthropologist Jacky Bouju and his team (Bouju, Tinta, Poudiougou 2004) investigating local notions of cleanliness in the towns of Bandiagara, Koro, and Mopti are just one example of the sort of studies that represent a contrasting approach to mine. Their survey is framed within in a context of water management and supply that raise issues about, notably, health, and local and traditional politics about water. Other approaches include the short descriptive accounts of waste in the Bandiagara escarpment proposed by Denise Paulme in her 'Dogon Social organization' (Paulme 1988), and the ethno-archaeological method used by the archaeologists Paul Lane and Rogier Bedaux (2003) to investigate local attitudes towards waste through an examination of practices surrounding the re-use and the discarding of domestic objects. Lane and Bedaux's study relied on a statistical approach made possible by a through a systematic itemization of the detritus found in 29 compounds and which led them to investigate the degradation phases of waste. I do not propose to follow a static approach such as this here, nor is what I propose based on a large sample of compounds. My account on Dogon domestic waste emerges from participation in and observation of the daily tasks and activities out of which the Dogon produce their rubbish well as through my everyday interactions with the villagers. Therefore, the worldviews that I recount here are framed within a

practical and dialogic approach. That is through participant observation. I should mention that I am performing another form of conversion through my act of observing waste conversions in an African context and then writing about it once back within my Western academic and everyday life. This distance, this disjuncture between the two acts of observing and writing emphasized for me the presence and effect of my own worldview on the matter. For, although I introduce the Dogon conception of waste as temporal – the way I learned to see it when I was living in the village – now that I am back in the West, I tend to see waste as spatial once again. Thus, I am still in a process of discovery, one made possible by my travels to and fro between the Western and the Dogon conceptions of waste.

As a resident in the Dogon village of Tireli, I was constantly stepping in the rubbish. It stuck to the soles of my sandals or got caught between my toes. I regularly entered into interminable discussions with the villagers about the collection and destruction of garbage. Consequently, inevitably, I came across the issue of rubbish through my daily stepping in the matter. It is in terms of this experience of waste as a ‘culture on the ground’ (Ingold 2004) that I became interested and fascinated by this abject matter, since I was literally living in garbage. Like my coexistence with the Dogon’s domestic animals – the goats, sheep, and chickens that would spontaneously defecate in the compound, or constantly attempt to get at everyone’s plate of food, and would, finally, end up squatting on my sleeping bag – its presence was indeed beyond my understanding. Although, in the beginning, I could hardly get used to it, as I progressed into Dogon daily life, I started to gain an interesting insight into the local conceptions of domestic waste. I suggest, that contrary to the general Western view of the rubbish as evidence that the Dogon are a filthy people, that the non disposing of waste can be understood as the locals’ desire to retain things that are usable and meaningful to them. It also seems to me that the questions of health and hygiene that go hand in hand with Western conceptions of rubbish do not apply in this particular hot and dry environment, even though the waste is scattered all over

the place. Beyond this messy aspect, waste is transformed, re-cycled, or reused in a local way. This is done according to the degree of utility that is found in the rubbish's materiality (Miller 1997, 2005; Attfield 2000; Dant 2005).

In this chapter, I propose to examine some of the multiple forms of rubbish that are found in and around the Dogon compound, which I conceive of as a container device for domestic matters. My overall objective is to show the implicit meaning objectified in both the materiality and daily praxis of the residue that people select and allocate to particular places and uses or simply expel or retain on their own body. While the first aspect examined in this chapter concerns the identification of emic categories of garbage, the second implies an investigation into the daily dynamics of 'doing' and 'un-doing' the household and by extension the body. I shall conceptualize this in terms of a *re-cycled* cosmology. I propose to define it as a complex of changeable worldviews that encompass the lifecycles of people and the environment through systematic conversions of domestic residue to which people attribute a new life. I suggest that the Dogon compound acts as an epistemological enclosure that contains life through the validation of certain formless and creative elements (Douglas 1966). The discarded residue that stands outside of the compound is regarded as nothingness. However, this potential nothingness can always be retrieved inside as long as a utility is found in or for the matter. In addition, the temporary 'inside waste' always terminates in the outside soil. Thus, the compound enclosure remains permeable. In short, I attempt to explore the Dogon cosmology or more precisely their *re-cycled* cosmology as objectified through their domestic waste and by focusing on the temporality and efficacy of its materiality as it is gathered or dumped outside the compound. In this view, rubbish becomes more complex than 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966).

2. Tidying up the conceptual ground.

Domestic waste is messy by nature and culture. As products of daily routines, these jumbles of disparate residue stand as cultural constructs (Douglas 1966). They endow particular meanings that are changeable according to the context in which they are handled. Although, this versatile domestic matter constitutes a form of disorder, processing it induces ontological order. In other words, as Douglas suggests, dirt corrupts order as well as it continually re-creates it (Douglas 1966). There are at least three distinctive processes with which the Dogon treat their domestic residue. I shall translate these with the Western terms recycling, reuse and composting. I define recycling as the reprocessing of plastic and metal waste that is turned into a new commodity. When I talk about composting it will be with reference to the transformation of organic matter. Composting, in particularly arid environments, involves a process of decomposition. It is accelerated by addition of liquids such as used water or hot urine that act as a tonic. Finally, the concept of reuse refers to waste that is used more than once without being transformed or broken down to reform a new object.

In the West, rubbish is defined as useless and unwanted matter (Rathje and Murphy 1992; Strasser 1999; Lucas 2002; Amato 2000; Edensor 2005 (a & b); Cohen and Johnson 2005). For the Dogon, this conception seems only to apply to elements that exist outside of domestic life. Nevertheless, outside residues always contain the potential to constitute a life resource. In order to cope with the ambiguity of the term, the notion of Dogon waste is used here as the part of a whole, or as a whole element that does not have any use as such. However, it can, potentially, be re-created by being physically, or simply functionally, turned into something else. Following one aspect of Thompson's argument (1979), Dogon waste operates within an ongoing process of the creation of value from things within a particular

context of poverty in which nothing is really thrown away. Thus, Dogon rubbish, and consequently the notion of dirt, remains relative and ambivalent.

Dogon people employ a series of generic terms that enfold the various waste materials within a term and/or definition that classify them according to their intrinsic properties or materiality. I came across native classifications of waste, through my awkward repeated participations in the cleaning of my host family's compound, as well as through the management of my own waste. This activity constituted an interesting interactive and reflexive ground that enabled me to locate myself within the native daily *re-cycled* cosmology. Dogon people categorize waste through a conceptual ordering of daily life that allow them to set up and to maintain their socio-cultural and symbolic boundaries. It appears that through the naming of rubbish, Dogon take control over the fuzzy reality of the matter. The local classification of refuse is as versatile as the daily practice that constantly redefines and generates new categories of waste with which new forms of worldviews are associated. In other words, rubbish categories even though solid endow certain fluidity. This flow of waste, both conceptual and physical, is made manifest through particular transformation processes. In one way or another, domestic waste is always in a state of becoming because of its fundamentally temporal and mutable status. Consequently, waste can easily move from one category to another.

Domestic waste was defined to me by the Dogon as *neme*, which means 'dirt'. This refers to the substance and matter that endows either a positive or negative connotation depending on the uses and meanings that are attributed to it. On the one hand, the term encompasses the repellent elements or awkward things that are in the way and are therefore rejected. On the other hand, the term *neme* also refers to useful residue that is recycled, reused or composted as this constitutes a bi-product of activity and, therefore, signifies life. Finally, the term *neme*, applies bodily as well as household waste(s).

3. Retaining waste and dirt in the home and on the body

I shall now look at some of the waste enfolded by this term by starting with its 'positive' connotation. In the Dogon, it is often said that the messier a household is, the better! In fact, the sayings '*Ama ginu nemegere*' meaning '*May (God) Ama make your house dirty*' (Calame-Griaule 1968: 199), and '*Ama gonte woun logudjio*' meaning '*May god make your courtyard very dirty*' expresses the Dogon's wish that their house will become increasingly 'dirty' over the years. Such idioms, which are pronounced at the foundation of the house, wish a long life to the inhabitants and the multiplication of the family. Dirt therefore communicates the capacity to feed people as well as to fulfil their needs.



Fig. 7.1. The living compound

I shall begin with what is, perhaps, the most aesthetic form of waste, fire's index, smoke. This form of waste, the smoke that fills the air of the compound daily when women are cooking or brewing, connotes the stability of life as time passes, is

(Fig.7.1). That it is considered a sign of normality and stability can be found in the expression '*Ama sebu geoun nogno*' meaning 'May god blacken the roof of your kitchen'. As it is repeated daily, even in the context of famine, setting up a fire to pretend that the cooking pot is full constitutes a form of psychological resistance against the dismay of paucity. It is indicative of the desire for prosperity. Similarly, the bodily traces (residues) left on the entrance wall to the compound are not so much waste as a sign of life. The sign of these many hand imprints is made by the darkening over time of the residues left by its inhabitant's repeated grasping of the entrance walls – said to be never rough-cast – before entering the compound. Thus these residues (in Western conceptions a form of waste or dirt) are bodily traces that are seen as a sign of life because they are created by the passage of people, and especially importantly by children, as they pass daily in and out of the compound. Hence, touching and impregnating the home with body dirt expresses life as opposed to death, which a clean place would signify. In fact, a compound empty of dirt indicates the precariousness of the lives of the people who occupy the place. In other words, spotlessness becomes lifelessness.



Fig.7.2. Smoke on the walls as a sign of life

Similarly, the dried smelly food residue, stuck to the cooking pots and walls indicates the dynamism of the place, as does the accumulation of smoke that gives an impression of thickening the surfaces (Fig.7.2). It is the same worldview that causes cooking utensils left unwashed until next required (Fig.7.3) to be seen consist as a positive sign of domestic (dis)order. The women say that cleaning them straight after eating brings scarcity.

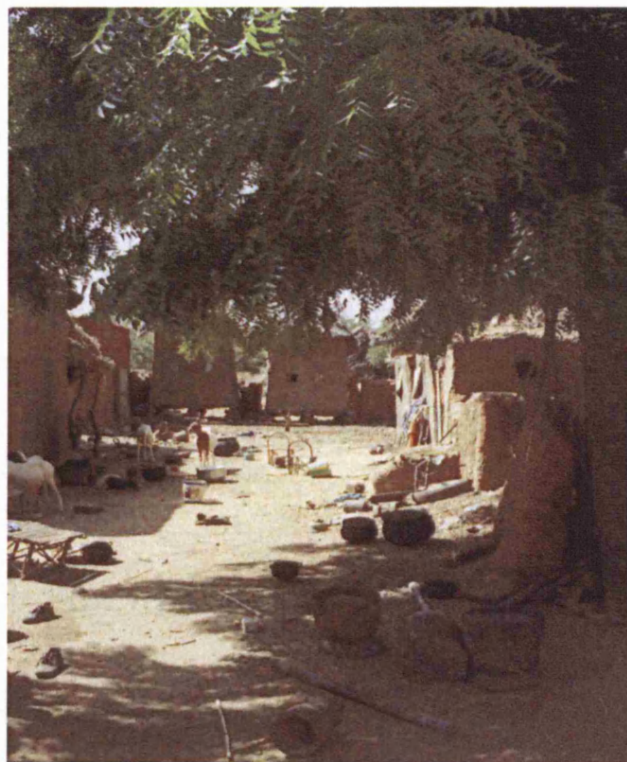


Fig. 7.3. Cooking utensils left unwashed in the compound

Indeed, my host mother pointed out to me that this action will cause the food that was eaten to leave the body. In other words, it brings hunger upon them. When the cooking pots are about to be used, the dry matter is scrubbed and watered for a while in a separate pot to be given as a drink to the sheep. In addition, the layers of dirt retained on people's skin and clothes possess a positive connotation, as this residue is associated with labour or the intense and energetic physical work

necessitated by the Dogon's daily routine called *wanaguet*. This term refers to the capacity of a person to live by the sweat of one's brow.

Furthermore, this accumulation of sweat impregnated and accumulated on daily clothes is perceived as a form of comfort as well as the revitalization of the person. It creates a sense of reinforcement of the self. It is said that someone always clean is someone lazy. This also applies to people with long nails who are considered to be lazy. Finally, the layers of mud mixed with animal dung used to rough cast the house each year, act as a second skin for the house, thus waste (dung) is reused. Consequently, by covering and crystallizing on surfaces or filling the compound air with its scent, all these residues convey a sense of activity and of everydayness. They create an ontological security that makes people feel ('be') 'at home'.

In the next section I shall begin by exploring two categories of organic matter found in most Dogon compounds. The first is the *binugu* or manure derived from millet straws as well as from the processing of the millet fingers. The second is the animal body parts that remain after a sacrifice.

3.1. The multiple life-cycles of millet straw

Millet straw constitutes an important practical, economic as well as symbolic element that serves multiple purposes and which requires a complex recycling process. Once millet fingers are harvested, the cattle are left in the fields where they eat the remaining leaves of the straws as well as trampling the straw as it mixes with their dung. This turns after a while into manure. The good straw is collected and recycled in multiple ways. First, it serves as reserve fodder for the cattle during the hot dry season. This straw is generally stored upon large wooden frames that stand in the proximate fields. Millet straw is also used in the making of the base of granaries bottom compartments as we shall see in chapter seven. It is also used in

the same way in the making of the foundations of the roof of the houses, the men's house called *togu na*, and in the making of the house doors. It can be mentioned that another use for good millet straw is in the making of a local condiment. In fact, once the millet straw has been burnt off outside of the compound, it is turned into a liquid potash called *e*. The ashes are filtered with cold water using a pierced clay pot called *e teguru*. Then, the collected bitter yellowish substance called *e di* is used in the preparation of a millet dish called *edja* (Dieterlen & Calame-Griaule 1968: 73)⁹⁷.

According to Paulme (1988: 335), and to my surprize as I regularly consumed this dish, the straw used in the preparation of *edja* which constitutes a salt substitute, is that which is tainted by animal's faeces. To go back to the *e*, this substance, which can be bought at local markets in the form of a greyish paste, can be mixed with chewing tobacco. It is also used to heal wounds or to neutralize evil spells and poisoned food. Indeed, it is said that the victims witchcraft, if fatally afflicted, can be brought back to life by the *e*, which as a dead substance counteracts death. Finally, the burnt-off straws are used in the making of gun powder called *bugu*. It is humidified and mixed with pounded charcoal then it is dried out.

Multiple layers of litter are an almost defining characteristic of most of the compounds surfaces (with the exception of water jars, cooking, and eating places) (Fig.7.4.). These layers are predominantly composed of organic matter that includes animal dung and the remains of millet such as the straw, bran, and ashes that accumulate in the home in the period between the end of the harvest and the beginning of the agrarian cycle. Amongst the multiple scents of smoke and rotten condiments drying out on the rooftop or boiling in the cooking pot, there is a redolent scent of sewage with a hint of ammonia that evaporates from the scattered manure and intensifies while the heat increases. This organic matter, called *binugu*, consists of a mixture of animal excrement, dirty liquids, and chopped millet straw.

⁹⁷ The solid form of *e di*, called *e manyu*, is sold at the market.

Although it is mostly found in the place where the domesticated animals are kept, it sometimes extends to all the surfaces of the courtyard as well as being found in the latrines. At harvest time, this mature compost is brought back to the fields to fertilize the soil and thus to feed the crops. The spontaneous crushing action of human feet on the humid straw compresses it and activates the process of fermentation. Additionally, the manure is constantly re-imbued with animal dung and urine thus enriching the matter. In fact, the addition of urine during the composting of millet residue, is a fertilizer that aids, considerably, the productivity of crops (Sangaré et al. 2002).



Fig. 7.4. Millet straw scattered in the compound

In many places, the *binugu* is mostly found in the patriarch's compound and fields. The thick blend of compost that regenerates the fields also materializes the temporality of millet cereal and by extension the environment that hosts it. In fact, the incorporation into the soil of this organic residue, collected originally from the

fields and constantly dampened, revives the life cycle of the cereal. It helps develop the seed and transmits vital substances to the young, growing millet plants that will, one day, return to the compound once the harvests terminate. People often refer to the fields becoming 'clean', when there is a lack of vital substance in the soil that will cause the plants to weaken. This means that the *binugu* needs to be spread over the fields. Cleanness is associated with the sterility of things while dirt signifies productivity.

The second dominant type of organic element that is encountered in most Dogon compounds and, more specifically, in the latrines is the *yugodie*. In some places, it is also combined with the manure made from millet straw. Although the Dogon spread this matter on their fields, they use it mostly on their gardens where they cultivate onions. It constitutes a precious fertilizer alongside the use of ashes and dried leaves. The *yugodie* is the core of the millet ear that appears in the form of small sticks during the processing of the millet harvest. Another substance that results from the processing is the *se*, which consists of the millet sheath that is a by-product of the sifting of the grain. It is kept inside the compound. Both the *yugodie* and the *se* are also preserved in the latrines. However, for some families, it is stored outside the compound in rock cavities and is dedicated to use in the onion fields (Fig.7.5)



Fig.7.5. Manure taken to the onion fields

For the households in which this manure is kept humid by daily additions of domestic liquids, the fermentation process of the *binegu* represents both a practical and symbolic principle of fecundity. Indeed, I was told in many villages that a small clay pot called *me kunu toroy* containing the umbilical cord and the placenta of a new born, is buried where the manure will be stored. According to Calame-Griaule (1968: 185), the place is called *me* and it means 'the came out placenta'. By permanently retaining humidity, the *binegu* maintains the principle of fertility of both the woman and the cereal. Once the birth-matter has been enshrined, the young mother has to wash in the morning and in the evening in the latrines during the thirty-five days of the menstruating women. Then, the young mother has to disinter the pot. As described by Paulme, the contents are into thrown into a hole dedicated to this purpose that is watched over by the *Lebe* priest who protects the new born child and the mother against evil spells (Paulme 1988:436). The pot is then thrown into the latrines of the menstruating women, which is where calabashes and pots which can no longer be used are discarded. According to Calame-Griaule (1968:185-6), this particular rite is carried out in order to keep the placenta 'alive'.

Hence, the fertility of women is ensured symbolically through the connection made between the residue of the womb and of the cereal. This connection is further emphasized by the use of the same metaphor to refer to sterile women (*gunu*) and fields, both are said, metaphorically, to be 'dry'. The notion of 'dry' (*ma*) also refers to the harsh conditions of life in the Dogon, such as poverty. Various linguistic expressions found in daily language make reference to this, such as when the Dogon refer to someone as living in a 'dry' place. This refers to the harsh, sterile, and scarce conditions of the place. By extension, someone who is miserly has 'dry hands', someone who is rude and/or who always makes problems has 'dry eyes', someone with a 'dry mouth' *anga ma* is associated with those who never admit to being in the wrong. As reported by Calame-Griaule (1968: 185), *kine ma gabay* (dry

heart) means careless and *ku ma* (dry head) means whimsical. Unsurprisingly, given these associations, someone with humid hands refers to someone who owns lots of material means.

Finally, ashes called *uno*⁹⁸, which result from the firewood used in cooking and brewing activities, often complement millet residue in the same fertilization process. As underlined by one of my informants, the Dogon conception of ashes follows the same particular pattern of birth, death, and rebirth as the millet straw. In fact, after being revitalized by the flame of the fire, the dry dead wood dies again as it is entirely consumed by the flames and thus reduced to ashes. This dead matter is then spread out onto the fields to fortify them. The conception of the action of fire in its production of ashes does not involve the destruction of the matter, but its transformation.

Consequently, organic waste is defined in this instance as a tonic⁹⁹. It does not create life but it constitutes a substance that regenerates the life of earth. Added to the ashes, the manure tones up the seed, in the same way as water or urine activates the transformation of waste. That compost matter and substances play as significant a role in securing the prosperity of Dogon families as the other fundamental economic (and for some of them ritual) preoccupations the Dogon have in relation to sustaining the stability, harmony and continuity of life in their scarce environment. Hence, the practices and rituals surrounding compost and its related substances provide considerable insight into the formation of local worldviews that bring together environmental and human life-cycles. In other words, compost

⁹⁸ In some compounds, the ashes are thrown away. This depends of the occupier's need and uses.

⁹⁹ Murray Last pers.com.

materializes, through refilling and transformation processes, temporalities re-generated through everyday practices and which are revived seasonally.

3. 2. Powerful waste: the case of animal remains

Another dominant living resource that exists alongside the multiple residues that I have just described and which produces a reusable residue, are the Dogon people's domesticated animals¹⁰⁰. These provide flesh and blood, skin, bones, and excrement that intervene in both quotidian and ritual life. Gathering domesticated animals constitutes a form of ontological security since life and resources remain particularly precarious. Domestic animals dedicated for daily consumption are generally butchered and sold in the market every five days on the *dombai* (the last day of the week). They also constitute gifts, for instance, at the time of a marriage, as an exchange, or to repair the breaking of a prohibition. The remains of domestic animals whether it was used for a sacrifice or for domestic consumption are therefore reused. However, as I will show, sacrificed remains must be kept inside the compound because of their intrinsic power, which affects people dramatically.

Animal remains derived from sacrifices constitute an ambiguous category since skins, feathers, bones or horns are left to putrefy on the site of the sacrifice where the meat is also consumed by the men involved in the practice. Hence, when this ritual practice occurs in the compound, the remains are retained in one of its corners where they are piled up or, sometimes, buried over time. The place where remains are left is generally enclosed by a fence of walls. The remains are dealt with in this way because the entire body contains the words that spoken into the animal and

¹⁰⁰ There is no generic term that refers to this type of residue. Each element is designed by its name, for instance, the skin of the goat, the feathers of the chicken, etc.

communicated to the supernatural entities through its blood. The incantatory words are either loaded with offences, problems to be resolved, or requests for prosperity and luck. They stay in the remaining body parts after sacrifice. Thus burdened, these elements can never leave the compound for fear of spreading and consequently affecting someone or for fear of losing the good things outside of the compound. By placing the remains in a place that is out of reach, a positive or negative contamination is avoided. In addition to the spoken words, some local medicines¹⁰¹ are ingested by the chicken, sheep, or goat in order to increase the power of the animal's blood. They convey particular strength to the blood and flesh, and to the rest of the sacrificed animal. Thus, as transformed, the body pieces empower the place and become either a threat or a potential source of success. Consequently, the animal body parts that belong to supernatural entities dealing with the request have epidemiologic consequences for the Dogon. Consumed ritual meat is always defecated within the compound's surrounds. Men do not travel immediately after a sacrifice in order to defecate in a place where the stool will not affect anybody. Generally, people never defecate in someone else's field as that would leave the residue of the positive substance and matter ingurgitated in the field. As it constitutes a threat, one of my informants told me that 'even the dogs do not touch it'. Another reason for keeping the residues inside the compound is to protect it against theft. Indeed, these powerful materials when freshly sacrificed are extremely valuable for witches and sorcerers, as is the case for dead human body parts. According to my informants, the dry horns, skins, feathers, and jaws may be re-used by the beholders of the sacrifice to make or contain magical substances. For instance, horns are affixed on the inside walls of the house or in the entrance to protect the habitat against malevolent beings. From a different perspective, in some compounds, horns and jaws are hung upon the granary façade as an account of the

¹⁰¹ Composition unknown

number of sacrifices that have occurred there over the years, thus signifying the extent of the people's animal contributions to the sacrifice. In addition, the remains act as signs that indicate the privacy and danger of the ritual places. Thereby, whether they are re-reused and turned into magic or simply left to rot in a corner of the compound, animal remains encapsulate the power of speech and medicines that become objectified in the materiality of some of the flesh, skin, and bones that remain. The reuse process of this matter depends on both the body elements and implicitly on the force their materiality intrinsically contains.

I have shown in this first section, the retained, collected, stored, and transformed domestic waste consists of a celebration of ordinary life. As a 'positive disorder', waste produced in the compound creates a domestic and symbolic order as well as a form of bodily comfort. Through an examination of the practices surrounding the reuse of animal remains, I have proposed that the matter that is left to dry out in a corner of the compound constitutes a powerful form of waste that is reused for magic purposes.

4. Expelling waste and polluting substances

I propose now to examine some elements, called *neme*, that are considered 'negative'. This term refers to repellent and useless domestic waste, such as the sweepings from the compound floor, decomposing food remains, plastics and other non local elements. These are all allocated to the outside of the compound. While most of them are either progressively integrated into the soil or swept away by the wind, the bodily solids and menstruated blood that represent a polluting and dangerous substance, are both expelled from the village. And, as I shall show, in some places, plastic and metallic pieces are reclaimed from the outside of the compound to make craft items for the tourists.

Human excrement and vomit are called *samu*. The term refers to 'bad smells that provoke disgust'. These bodily dejections are evacuated in remote areas of the village. In Tireli, these local toilets called *begouno* are located at the top of the scree. Although bodily solids are acknowledged as repulsive, they still symbolically bear life. In fact, although children's faeces found in the courtyard are seen with disgust, they are also seen as a sign of life made manifest by the having of children in the place. However, they are always removed. It is the same worldview, that leads to the practice, told to me by one of my informants, of not traveling for a few days after the consumption of sacrificial meat. Indeed, it is believed that defecating in someone's fields or village scatters the benefits of the prayers. In fact, the power of incantations that are contained in the digested meat, always partly remain in the faeces.

Menstruation, called *punu*, constitutes a rather complex polluting substance that, notably, detracts from the power of magic objects and taints water. It is therefore excluded from the compound and the village. The state of menstruating women makes them impure and is called *puru*. The term also refers to a particular state of dissemination of an individual's spiritual and vital forces called *nyama* (Calame-Griaule 1968:229). In theory, menstruating women are not allowed to leave their temporary house enclosure to approach places of water nor are they allowed to use the common public toilet. They must stay in the house dedicated to them called *ya punulu ginu*. There, they cook for themselves with specific utensils that are left on the site because they are polluted. Today, although, fewer and fewer women attend the house due to religious conversion, it is still widely believed that the presence of menstruating women inside the compound affects the power of magic and shrines which then need to be purified.

As I was informed by a potter, once a woman's period terminates, they have to cover their body with the oil that is extracted from the pit of the wild raisin called *sa*

which stands as a symbol of fecundity. They use it as a means to purify their body and therefore to recover their reproductive forces. The wild raisin oil that is considered a male substance enables the women to regain their sexual power (Bedaux & Lane 2003: 86). As observed by Paul Lane in the escarpment village of Banani in the 1980s, if the village gets polluted because a woman has left her house while menstruating, the purification of the village is operated through the removal of all of the women's culinary materials. These are thrown into a place called *punulu didiu*, where the utensils are left amongst the rocks on which the clay pots are shattered into pieces. As part of the same cleansing, in each compound, the water jars are emptied and left to dry in the sun in order to cope with the soiling. Lane suggests that emptying the water jars, which are called *loy*, a term that also refers to the foetal envelope, could symbolically be associated with a form of purifying a woman's womb. By breaking the polluted containers and utensils that constitute the contamination of the food and drink, the pollution is stopped (Lane in Lane & Bedaux 2003: 87-88).

The Dogon call the useless residues that they expel from the compound *toro* and *logo* (Fig.7.6). Although first, *toro*, is sometimes integrated into the compost as it is mostly organic, the second, *logo*, is thrown away. However, my host family incorporated their *toro* within the category *logo* by mixing their organic and non organic matter together. *Toro* refers to inedible pieces of herbs and thorny branches that domestic animals leave behind. Incongruous things found in people's food such as little stones, sand or rotten cereals are also regarded as *toro*. The category *toro* also enfolds light sweepings such as dust or tree leaves brought by the wind or by people. As I discovered in my frequent participations in the cleaning of the compound – a task always done by women – sweepings are collected in a calabash with the aid of a small hand broom made of straw called *sana*. The compound is generally swept once eating, sitting, resting, and walking in the accumulated dirt

becomes inconvenient for the occupiers. Domestic animals also clean up the place naturally, as they eat food remains.

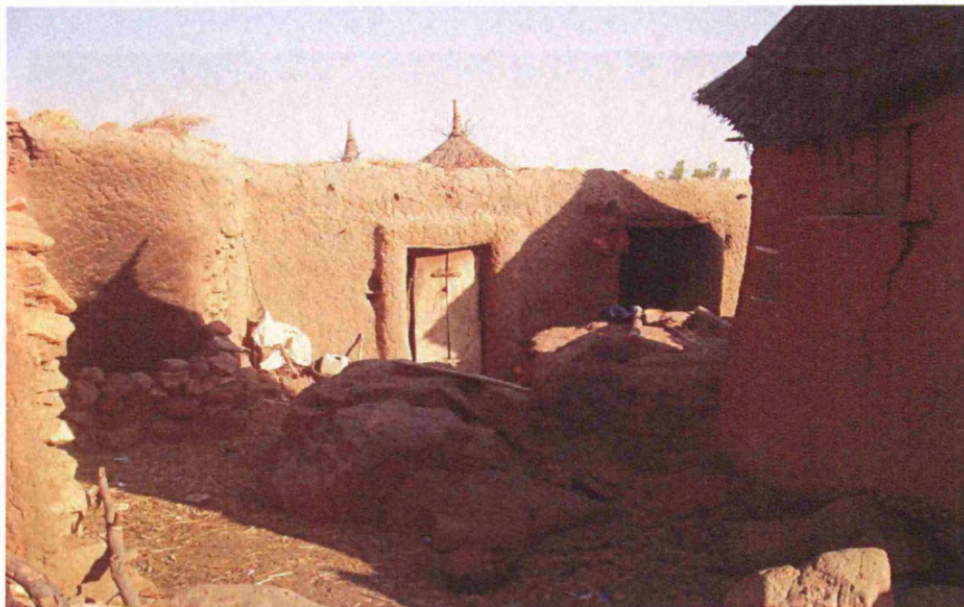


Fig. 7.6. Sweepings in the compound

The category *logo* comprises potentially useless and irrecoverable, disparate things such as pieces of pots, dust, pieces of cloth, torn up plastic bags, school books pages, pieces of shoe or of tin cans and other indiscernible metallic and plastic fragments. Belonging to this category of domestic waste, the weeds that grow and dry in the fissures of the walls or on the rooftop connote neglect and an absence of life. By extension, a field in which weeds largely colonize the ground and menace the growing of plants conveys the same idea of 'seediness'. However, as indicated by my host mother the sweepings that clutter in the public paths, make people aware that these residues did once serve a purpose. They are therefore a testimony to the dynamic of daily life, as they are produced by people or animals.

Discarded rags are found amongst the *logo* sweepings, (Fig.7.7). They constitute another form of waste that takes on a particular conception of the body and of life (Norris 2004). Ideas of longevity and prosperity of the body and of the individual

are conveyed throughout the life cycle of this matter. Clothes that are falling apart are commonly referred to in the local language as '*Ama semele daga*'.



Fig.7.7. Sweepings found outside of the compound

This means 'Make Ama leave this forceless rag out' that is outside of the compound. This device gives voice to the wish of the person wearing the rag, that he/she lives a long and prosperous life. Once it cannot be worn, it has to be thrown away. While the act of buying new clothes testifies to a financial investment through work, discarding rags translates as a capacity to reject these useless elements that become at some point unnecessary. The rag that has accompanied a living body for a stretch of time reflects the body's longevity and also a need for renewal. Thus, the regeneration of the individual is marked symbolically by the act of casting out the forceless matter.

New clothes are always kept for celebrations such as weddings and funerals during which people use them to manifest their personal improvement and ability to embellish. This is often described as '*parader*' or '*l'art de la parade*', which means

showing off with new gear. During the Dogon New Year's Eve (occurring after the harvest at the turn of the hot dry season between mid December and mid January), people sing that those who do not have cotton (indigo) can only blame the parents who were not able to offer cotton to their children who merited it. The practices associated with the renewal of the year represent a form of regeneration of the self that is made real through clothes and conceptual value. Wearing such clothes daily is usually perceived as a form of superiority and thus stirs up jealousy. Thus, after the event people slip back with their everyday outfit. However, due to a great availability and diversity of clothing products bought in local towns or, as is more frequently the case, purchased in the escarpment markets, young people revel in the art of displaying themselves in the latest fashion gear while they are working in the fields. Older people, however, wear the same clothes everyday. As was pointed out to me by one of my assistants, the older people's attitude emphasizes the daily accumulations of their labour. It expresses the passage of time as well as providing psychological comfort produced by the smell and the decay of the fabric. In short, the everyday rags that people wear objectify the efficient, daily performance of the body. The usury value of the faded and shredded textile covered with soil, perspiration, oil, or dust shows people's engagement in daily life and labour. Furthermore, it contrasts with the longevity of the healthy body that wears it.

Consequently, changing clothes enables people to distance themselves corporally from their daily routine as well as to show the renewal of the self in public. Similarly, it testifies to the ability to overcome the everyday and its harsh conditions by buying and wearing new clothes. Put in this way, rags can be seen as a form of biographical matter that can, in their wearing, define the body in contrasting ways as they constitute a form of matter that objectifies social dynamics and temporalities. Further, and perhaps, counter intuitively (to Western conceptions of the world), if thrown away, the rag reinforces the longevity of the body. Within this continuity, the excessive use of fragranced soap and body lotions veils the everyday in the same

way that clothes excessive washing of clothes can be seen to mask that they have been used. The value which the younger Dogon place on breaking out of the everyday can be seen in how they often spend the little money they have on bars of soap or, more stylishly and expensively, they choose bags of washing powder.

Wearing clothes redolent with the (bought) smell of freshness is associated locally with the ethos of modern town-life, which is thought to appeal to 'clean' and 'attractive' people. The qualities of these imported 'modern' products generate new perceptions of the self and of society in the young people's minds. Dogon peasants are often perceived by other ethnic communities as filthy, especially by Muslims, who are particularly obsessed with cleanliness, as they wash several times per day and the Dogon do not. As said by my twenty five-years-old host brother: 'Poverty makes Dogon people unclean. When I cultivate crops in the Plain, I don't have any means. So, I become dirty again'. By this, Balugo means that he does not have the money to buy soap and proper cloth. The daily hard and intensive cultivation work affects his physical condition and appearance. In contrast, when he stays in the village, he can find small jobs, wash as often as he can and be presentable. This constitutes one of his main concerns.

Finally, the *logo* (Fig.7.8) litter that is expelled from the compound encompasses multiple forms of medicine packets, batteries, envelopes, flip flops, and elements that cannot be repaired, lids, bottle tops, and broken plastic containers of imported products that can no longer contain. These are produced locally but are mainly brought into the village by Westerners such as tourists and myself. This waste generates new forms of worldviews as the potential seen in the matter's is creatively re-used and recycled, i.e. turned into new commodities. These can be used for domestic purposes such as to scour the cooking pots or even to carve clay pots or decorate the mask with, for instance, pill-packs. In many places of the Dogon land,

this 'modern' rubbish tends to be retrieved to manufacture small masquerade figurines and vehicle miniatures to sell to tourists (Fig. 7.9).



Fig. 7.8. Pieces of flip flop and medicine packets

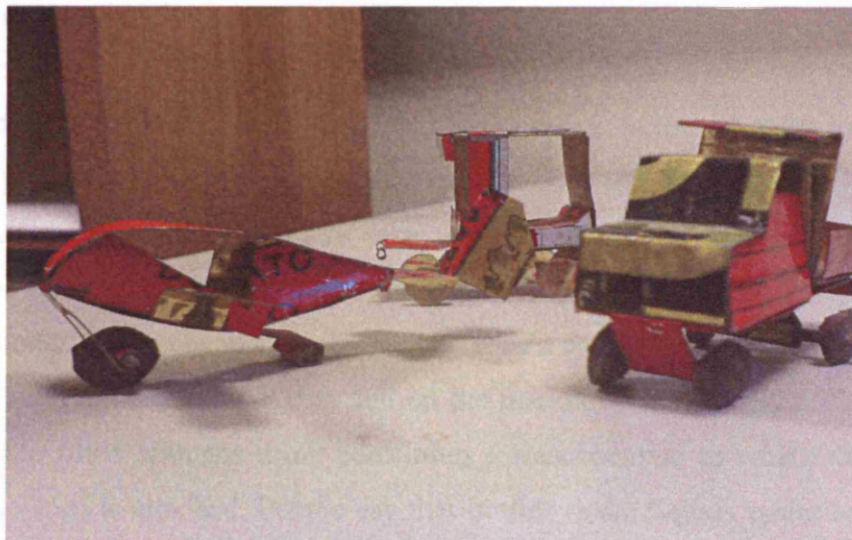


Fig.7.9. Miniatures sold to the tourists

5. The reuse of Western waste as a mode of interaction

When kept in the granaries or in the house, the shiny tin cans of milk powder, coffee, sardines or tomatoes are kept preciously to store money, spices and other things. They belong to a separate category of *neme*, seen as neither positive nor negative. This broad category includes items such as plastic mineral water and shampoo bottles, body cream pots, and film boxes. It seems that the Dogon consider the container that remains after the consumption of the product to be an object in its own right. Indeed, the locals' constant and persistent pestering of any visitor for these can border on harassment. As they put it in French '*Toubab donne-moi un bidon*', that is, '*White give me your bottle*'. Small plastic bottles are given to the children to use as toys, which when the youngest ones cry, they nibble at or use to scrape at the soil. In a similar vein, children often hang small bottles of medicated syrup (often a sour mixture of water and baobab powder) around their neck that act as pendants. The Dogon say that the plastic bottle represents the best 'white people' because they permanently carry around their bottle of water, and whom the Dogon children enjoy mimicking.

Cultivators and shepherds carry water and millet cream in these bottles for practical reasons. In their view, this considerably reduces both the weight of the jar and the space that a pot would normally take, thus reducing the pain and exhaustion associated with carrying things and endowing a greater mobility. They carry the bottle around their necks or laterally as they would carry a bag. Sometimes, women fill them with millet beer that they sell on the market or send to the compounds. A water bottle filled with the drink constitutes a measurement to which the price of 350 CFA (35p) is attached. People say that bottles make liquids easier to transport since the small opening is hermetically sealed. However, the plastic-bottle container does not protect the contents from heat and the plastic from which it is made changes the taste of the contents unpleasantly. Similarly, adults also collect empty

film rolls left by the tourists, which they use to carry their tobacco. They also recover shampoo bottles to store salt, sugar, stock, and spices. Refillable containers such as glass bottles are also sold on the market. These are, notably, used to store petrol or motor oil. Once broken or leaking or in pieces, plastic bottles and pots are thrown outside the compound where they accumulate over time. However, they can always be reclaimed to manufacture objects as well to serve for domestic purposes.

As far as I was concerned, while living in the Dogon compound I rapidly found out that my own waste constituted an interesting, interactive research tool. In fact, it enabled me to examine the local uses and perceptions of the 'Western waste' that Dogon people tend to partially include in their daily life. Additionally, it allowed me to locate myself within the Dogon cosmology, mostly through interactions with my host family. Hence, within a reflexive approach, I shall briefly expose the confrontation of local (Dogon) and Western perceptions of 'modern' waste by looking how my waste was dealt with by myself and my host family.

In contrast to the Dogon habit of scattering and therefore displaying rubbish, I always contained my waste in a bin, which I made from a re-cycled wooden wine rack that I found in a local hostel. I hid it in the corner of the house roof since I did not want the locals to see my rubbish. However, the contents of my bin were constantly a target of great interest to the children. I caught them several times re-chewing my gum, licking the envelopes of desiccated soup and toothpaste tubes as well as bringing my shampoo and other plastic containers to their mother. As the accumulated waste attracted bugs, mice and flies, my host brother suggested that I empty my bin outside the compound in a pit. I was not surprised to notice that the same children soon gathered around the waste pit. Uncomfortable about the idea of damaging the local environment with my own waste and embarrassed about these unusual local attitudes towards my rubbish that constituted an abject/object of curiosity, I felt the need to find a compromise. It was not without difficulty that I

managed to convince my host family to burn what I claimed to be useless and dirty. Upset by my attitude, they finally decided that I would keep the matter – containers for the most part – that they saw as reusable. I would destroy the rest. There was, therefore, some kind of tussle over authority going on in relation to how I disposed of my waste. Through my rubbish, I progressively approached but never fully integrated into my host family's cosmology. In other words, in this respect, I always stood on its periphery. By asking to burn my detritus, I assume that I was refusing to show what I was consuming. In other words, I did not allow them to scrutinize my privacy.

As far as my waste water was concerned, I was told to tip it in the rill on the terrace. The rill ran alongside our compound to where the waste water, imbued with soap and toothpaste would pour out. Soap (and toothpaste) matter constitutes for most Dogon people (especially the old ones) a polluting element and is, thus, never mixed with the compost since 'millet does not like that'. This is why bathing or washing clothes in the river near the gardens or in the place where the *Nommo* (water spirit) is, is strictly forbidden. It was the logic of this world-view that caused me to be told off by the old Baïre in one of the neighbouring compounds for putting my waste water in the rill because, when my waste water poured out of the rill and some of it sprayed onto the neighbour's compound, it contaminated the places he uses for rituals and sacrifices. Each time it happened, the place had to be re-purified. As I observed in many other compounds, the Dogon never use soap in the shower place that contains manure. They always remove any soapy liquids to outside the compound where these can collect in the public paths and dry out. In this sense, the compound enclosure, which supposedly retains waste, is, in this instance, leaking since the waste water always flows out of it. This and the way in which the Dogon expel residual waste in general begins to give an idea about local conceptions of private and public space.

My daily observations of my host family's treatment and recycling of waste provided me with some examples that indicated that there is a substantial contrast between the way my host mother and uncles talk about waste and what the family, especially the young people, actually do. My host family did not seem to share completely the local conceptions of waste, notably those about manure or *Binugu*. In fact, being currently half Muslim, half Catholic my host family has adopted different views on waste than those traditionally followed by the majority of people. However, my host mother and uncle's conceptions of waste and domestic residue do coincide with the practice and discourse collected in many other compounds of the escarpment and the plateau. Hence, it seems that the core cosmology, that concerning symbolic embedded worldviews about the life cycles of people and the environment, is changing fundamentally. Indeed, the younger generations – those of which have converted to Islam and Catholicism and have, in general, attempted to adopt 'modern' or town-like ways of living – possess a different conception of domestic waste or dirt than their parents. The modernization of the habitat, sanitary campaigns and politics of domestic and bodily hygiene, as well as access to a wider range of fragranced products, has all shaped people's conceptions of clean and dirty. My host sister Domu, who worked for years as a maid in the town of Mopti for a doctor's family, has clearly introduced new ways of cooking, cleaning, and washing to the compound. As mentioned previously, I too, as a 'white' person in the compound also influenced their daily 'cleaning habits'.

6. Synthesis on Dogon domestic waste

As I have suggested, the Dogon keep useful and meaningful body dirt, compost and smoke on the body or in the household temporarily. In contrast to this, bodily dejections, decomposing matter, fragments of modern/Western rubbish, as well as sweepings, rags, soapy liquids and, finally, menstrual blood are all kept or removed to the outside of the compound. These are summarized in the following diagram that

attempts to show how Dogon waste is dealt with through particular contextualized practices. I have demonstrated that certain outside matter, such as modern/Western, plastic and/or metallic elements, can always be retrieved to be turned into something else as long a particular use and meaning is attributed to it.

Dogon conceptions of domestic waste enfold fluid categories that reveal complex modes of relating (Hawkins 2001:7; Hawkins and Muecke 2003). In other words, the inside/outside conceptual ordering of the domestic framework materializes local worldviews that are variable and changeable as the domestic matter takes on different meanings according to different individuals (Drackner 2005). The place to which, on the body or the inside/outside of the household, domestic waste is allocated that is based upon the materiality of that piece of waste. This place defines, as tangible, the qualities of the rubbish that determine its new potential/use. However, as I have shown, this dichotomist vision possesses a more complex dynamic. In fact, metallic and plastic things can always be reclaimed. Consequently, I propose that the porous-ity of the epistemic boundaries of domestic waste indicates that ‘Dogon dirt is a matter all over the place’, that is always ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the household.

Through the multiple examples summarized in this ‘open’ diagram (Fig.7.10), I propose that Dogon garbage materializes particular temporalities. In fact, it appears under the category of that which is temporarily retained or temporarily refused. Hence, Dogon rubbish always remains in a temporary state of ‘becoming’ (Hawkins 2001). It is fundamentally generative and regenerative. This manifests through the re-use, re-cycling, and composting of domestic matter. Any kind of rubbish that can potentially contribute to the renewal of people and places is seen as positive, i.e. as a source of life.

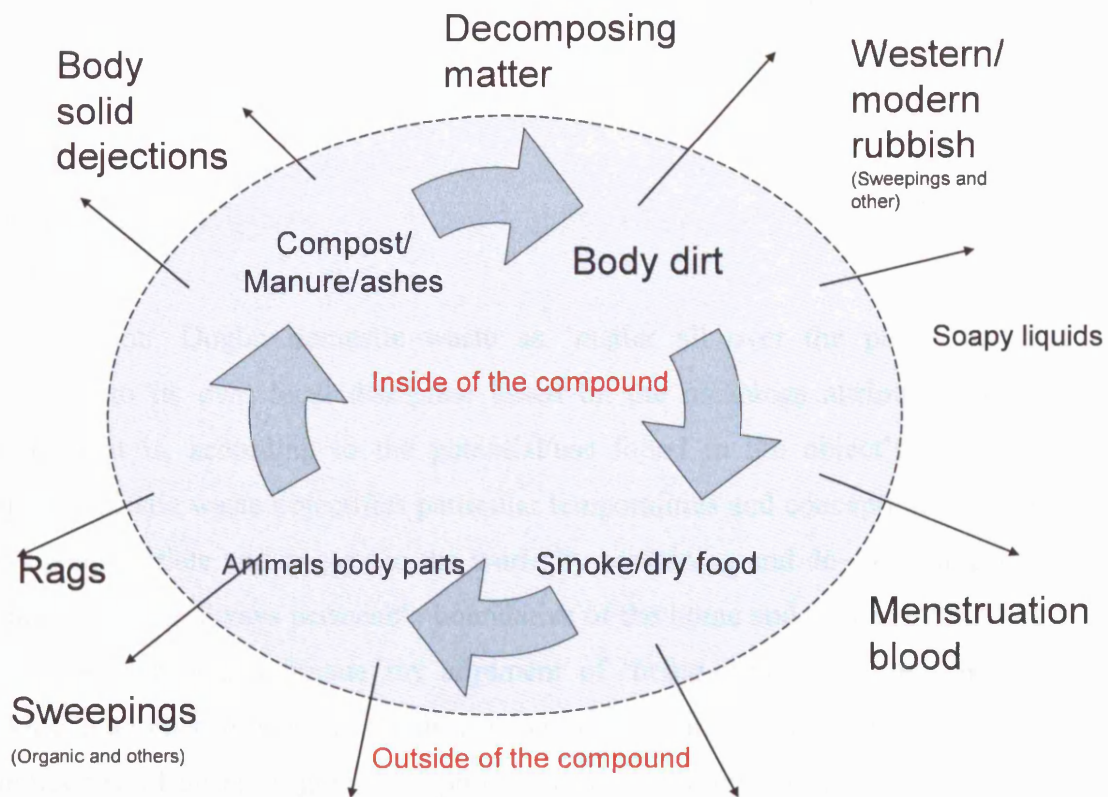


Fig. 7.10. Dogon categories of waste

Although rubbish and residues are considered as disorder, for the Dogon each residual mark, smell, or piece of rubbish possesses a capacity, which, when realized, through action, as an object of use, becomes part of an order of things with which the Dogon cope with scarcity either by containing that which is scarce, or symbolizing the continuity of life, or by sustaining that life through the generation of new economic means, i.e. objects they can trade. In fact, the detritus that remains after the consumption or use of imported or local products constitutes a form of wealth and thus a sign of prosperity. Through the multiple daily *cyclia* and *recyclia* of waste that operates according to the materiality of each piece or residue, Dogon domestic waste takes part in what I call a *re-cycled* cosmology. Always in the

making (Barth 1987), this cosmology of return embraces the life cycles of people and of the environment.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Dogon domestic waste as ‘matter all over the place’ operates according to its own local discipline based on the meanings attributed to it by people, that is, according to the potential/use found in the object’s materiality. Dogon domestic waste objectifies particular temporalities and conceptions about the ways people relate and engage in the world by containing and de-containing waste in and out of the always permeable boundaries of the home and of the ‘living’ body. In the next chapter, I pursue my argument of ‘being-at-home in the world’ by looking at another dimension, the dimension of the making of the home through the manufacture of an earth granary. I propose to examine this dominant architectural container as an embedded technology in which daily worldviews are objectified.

8.

Dogon female granaries as embedded technologies and embodied cosmologies.

The earth granaries of the Dogon from Mali form a prominent characteristic of their domestic landscape. These warm-beige coloured containers, square in plan and crested with a conical thatch roof-hat compose part of the compound enclosure or stand independently within it. They are built on a set of stone pillars, which adapt remarkably well to the uneven and steep topography of the Bandiagara escarpment scree. There are four types of Dogon granary, all of which belong to the men but two are gendered female. Earth granaries distinguish themselves as domestic and social technologies through the shape of their roof, the way they are compartmentalized and finally by what they contain. The male granary called *guyo ana* possesses a flat roof and a single compartment. It serves to store the millet harvests. The two female granaries (*guyo ya*), characterized by a round top, are either allocated to men or women. In the first case, the building generally possesses four compartments (two at the top and two at the bottom), which contain millet seeds, millet fingers, the owner's belongings and his ritual objects. The female granaries, dedicated to women, generally comprises a minimum of six compartments (four at the bottom and two at the top) and holds their condiments, cooking utensils, and their personal effects. There are two other forms of granary. The first is the *guyo togu* that belongs to the old men. It is made of two compartments, one of which contains the family shrines and ritual objects, the other a resting space for the old man. It possesses a square base and top. The second type

of granary, called *totori*, is small and round, with a conical top. It contains hibiscus harvest. Dogon granaries are mostly built and rough cast by men during the hot dry season immediately before the start of the agrarian cycle. Generally, a man builds his own granary. However, family members are allowed to assist him with the transport of materials to the construction site. He may also receive some advice from other men as they pass by. Today, wealthy people, such as merchants or anybody working in the town who do not have the time to build, generally pay a builder to do the work. In some cases, a woman living on her own, for instance a widow with no children who has neither the relations nor the money to pay someone to build her a granary, has to make her own granary. It will generally be of a round structure and relatively small. As I observed with Yaouro, a neighbour who is a widow, such women repair the bottom of their granaries themselves. Yaouro makes her own material with which she repairs her granary. She digs-up soil from her own compound, mixes this up with some water and, since she is a potter, some clay she has stored in jar.

When the fonio harvest approaches (fonio is harvested before millet), granaries are constructed if it looks like there will be a lack of storage space in the compound. People tend now to delay this task, since the harvests are completely unpredictable from one year to another, especially if it is for the millet harvest because it is particularly likely to fail. The storage space remains often half or completely empty. Hence, the abandonment of granaries, the small number of buildings found in the compounds, as well as a renewed outbreak of building, in short, all such activity partly constitutes an indicator of scarcity. The opposite can be observed in the plain area where a row of up to twelve, over-sized millet granaries is still more likely to be found than on the escarpment. This abundance symbolizes the prosperity of a family that has many people to feed due to successful harvests and thus the good quality of the owner's land. However, over exploitation of the soil as well as the drastic climate conditions mean that this signifier of abundance is becoming less

common. To summarize, the granary is intricately related to people, the crops and, by extension, the environment, that is to the raw material (wood, earth and stones) that are extracted from it to build shelter and to grow crops.

Through a detailed examination of the manufacturing process of a Dogon female granary, I look, in this chapter, at implicit forms of embodied daily worldviews that are objectified in the materiality of this domestic container (the granary) and which are made manifest through praxis. Made of earth, the granary objectifies the embedded life cycles of people and the natural environment as well as it symbolically acts as a vector of life's continuity. I show that these cyclic temporalities transpire through the mutual shaping of the body and the material form generated through its seasonal making. I suggest that the container as an embedded social technology is defined through systematic interplays that occur between the body of the builder and the earth matter that is being transformed and shaped. In other words, as entirely hand made, I propose that the granary objectifies particular bodily dynamics that are conveyed to and through its materiality. These dynamics concern the kinaesthetic and sensory experience of earth matter. The body as a tool or 'living' technology conveys rhythm and forces to the edifice, traces of which can be observed on its surface and in its geometry. Moreover, through its manufacturing process, the granary frames and defines particular bodily gestures, practices, and metamorphoses. As a semi-shared, participatory and socially embedded performance, it connects the multiple body dynamics of builders and apprentices. The transmission of this technological knowledge is achieved through participant observation and mimesis, that is through the emulation actions performed on the earth matter (Marchand 2003). Finally, I propose that the repeated body movements, reproduced systematically from one construction to another, gather into routine-ized tasks through which cyclic temporalities are generated.

1. The making of the granary: embodied practice and embedded temporalities

As detailed in chapter two, I employ a praxeological approach (Warnier 1999, 2001), which in this particular chapter concerns the making of things. I have previously defined this method as a way of dealing with the idea that material culture constitutes the mediation of all of the body senses and motricity that are grounded in the subject and that result from a daily process of skills learned through practise (Warnier 2001). Thus, this method asserts a constant mutual shaping between people and artefacts, through a process, which I shall emphasize in the following observation, of objectification of the body's dynamic and likewise of the material embodiment. In other words, praxeology, in the context of the manufacturing process of an earth granary, constitutes a compelling way to highlight technical knowledge, *savoir-faire* and the temporality of its material form.

Praxeology in tandem with phenomenology, which postulates the knowing of the world through body senses, frames my analysis of bodily interactions with earth as 'matter'. I shall focus on the one hand on the body kinetic and, on the other on the sensory experience of the making of a female granary. I will do so through a retelling of my systematic observation and experience of this seasonal praxis that is operated on a daily basis. The impact that the materiality of earth produces on the body of the builder and more specifically the skin is of critical importance to my explication. By following this dynamic scheme, I propose that the relationships between the body and granary being made is, primarily, beaten into shape through the haptic experience of matter in which the rhythmic movements of the bodies making the granary are objectified. In other words, I suggest that the Dogon sense of materiality is fundamentally generated and constituted by the rhythms of the bodies'

movements, which attribute particular configuration to container while the matter is processed and transformed.

In this study, I consider praxis as a sequence of embedded tasks that I frame within a *chaîne opératoire* (Leroi-Gourhan 1943; 1945, Lemonnier 1993, Gosselain 1992, 2000). I use it here as an in-the-field method to collect, organize, and verify my data, as well as as a conceptual framework and an analytical tool with which to interpret these (Audouze 2002: 287, Dobres 1999: 124). I employ the operational sequence I have schematized as unified chunks of analysis in order to examine the manufacturing process, the repairing, and the re-cycling of a Dogon female granary. The proposed sequence constitutes a visual narrative that supports and complements my phenomenologically and ethnographically thick descriptions (Geertz 1973). Indeed, my use of this method is intended to provide a detailed ethnographic and descriptive overview of the transformation of the matter and the array of body movements undertaken throughout the building process. Moreover, it enables me to emphasize the particular process of transmission of the technical and practical knowledge that is involved in the reproduction of this domestic task, a transmission process embedded in the fabric of the Dogon social world.

Finally, because the sequential process of manufacturing a female granary represents a series of choices and constraints (Lemonier 2002) that deny temporal linearity, I will examine the operational sequence as a gathering idiom. That is to say, I will examine it as a gathering of raw material, bodily dynamics and tasks into an object that is, therefore, 'in the making' and which is intended for subsequent use. Using a visual narrative re-construction of the entire operation, I will explore time as a dimension materialized in domestic form and corporeal expression. Time is articulated by multiple temporalities that imply segmented daily human tasks of a relative *durée*. These tasks are synchronized and repeated day after day with the same constancy and therefore they aggregate into cycles, which are, in turn,

determined by the seasons and, most specifically, by the life cycle of the un-built-on environment such as the fields. In short, Time symbolically encompasses human life cycles.

2. Thinking through sequences: the manufacturing process of the '*guyo ya*'

This section examines the making of a female granary in detail. The sequence of tasks I observed was spread over twelve days, and required action to be taken three times per day. Generally, the building of a granary takes about seven days. The extension to the observed sequence was the result of a miscalculation. The length for each stage was relatively random. I observed from a standing position near the construction site. Due to my status and gender, I did not take part in the building activity. The building requires delicate work especially from the second line of the wall on. I helped only with mixing the mud. The building was undertaken by Amatiguemu a thirty-five-year-old man from Teri Ku Dama who lives at the top of the scree with his family (Fig.8.1). The sequence I detail below shows the learning process involved, with brief participations of few neighbours, one of his brothers, and the children for the mixing of the mud and the setting of the first row. Therefore, this semi-shared activity highlights how this form of technical and practical knowledge is transmitted, i.e. mostly through emulation and experiencing the tactile characteristics of the wet mud.

2.1. Wet mud preparation¹⁰²

2.1.1. Wet mud mixing and kneading with the feet

As can be often observed, the mud material (*lodo* or *logo loro*) is obtained from the breaking-up of re-cycled granary walls (Fig.8.2) through the operation of a hoe called *jewiri*. The pieces are then reduced with a pestel called *tamudo*. The matter thus obtained, is generally dampened with a large quantity of water that the children have brought to the site. They also help to knead the frothy *logo mang* mud (Fig.8.3), which is re-worked initially with the feet before being re-structured by hand with the addition of some fonio stalks. All the dismantled components of the former, broken granary that stood once next to where the new one is being constructed are re-utilized. These include the pillar stones and all the wooden elements: the door and its frame, and the sticks that formed both the foundation grid and the supporting pillars of the upper compartment. The only new additions are water, millet and fonio stalks, pot shards and gravel, which are incorporated as a means of regenerating and consolidating the wet-mud substance and structure. I observed that the matter, such as the clay pottery, is generally prepared long in advance and re-moistened immediately before use. It is prepared and left covered on the construction site with the surplus fonio and some rags. In total it remains on the site for about four days and is dampened three times a day. The longer it matures the better. Fonio straw is vital to the construction of the walls. It is needed to maintain the cohesion of the mud matter during construction and finally to increase the wall's resistance to the rain, as the fibres retain the mud.

¹⁰² This step sometimes occurred after the making of the foundation depending on the availability of mud, its maturity and time.



Fig.8.1. Building site



Fig.8.2. Re-cycled walls



Fig.8.3. Mixing mud and fonio straw

This is beneficial because when it rains, the inside of the building remains warm while its content is preserved from humidity and thus from rotting. The wet-mud mix is, thus, the material they use because it serves the purpose required of it. Other material can be added to the mix, such as dung, wild raisin pulp and more rarely sea shells, to improve its waterproofing quality. A well constructed granary with material made from a mix of a consistent texture can last for seven years. The tactile character of the mud mix, which smells heavily of silt, permits the evaluation and

adjusting of its softness, before it is shaped into large dark balls of a sticky, plastic texture.

2.2. Granary building

2.2.1. Foundation making

The building site is cleared of dirt, before the granary foundation (*guyo ti*) is set. Using millet straw, Amatiguemu, the mason, indicates the dimensions of the building by transferring the measures of an existing granary base¹⁰³ to the new construction site. He then devises and evaluates the foundation by placing an initial series of stones in a square. According Calame-Griaule, a measurement known as *numo tanu* (the length of the forearm up to the finger tips) is used to measure granaries (Calame-Griaule 1955: 485).

2.2.1.1. Setting up the pillars

Nine pillars of piled up stones called *tibu tene* distributed in a square are then formed. The first stone of each pile is buried in the ground, as a means of fixing the piles in an upright position. On top of this, two small stones are placed in order to stack the next one and therefore to stabilize the pillar. The base stands here at about 43 centimetres from the ground. The principle at work in the construction of the foundation consists of assembling the stone and wood materials according their shape but with no adherent component between them. This is followed by the re-aggregation of these re-cycled elements through their re-adaptation to the

¹⁰³ All granaries of Teri-Ku Dama I examined possess more or less the same proportions.

topography of the new site, for instance, here, the left side of the granary leans directly against clusters of rock

2.2.1.2. Setting up the wooden materials

The making of the granary base that supports the wet mud construction begins with the positioning of the wooden materials. The pillars are used to prevent rain from entering the building and damaging the granary content or imperilling its structure. The wooden base is constructed using a technique that is similar to that used to construct the roof of the house. This consists of superimposing three layers of wooden sticks of differing lengths and widths, which are distributed vertically and horizontally on the stony pillars. The spatial layout of these materials depends on their size and length. Its action of making it starts with the depositing of two large sticks called *baga ti*. These are placed horizontally on the first and third row of pillars (Fig.8.4). When I observed, Amatiguemu adjusted and stabilized these with little stones that he wedged underneath. Then, he placed a millet straw crosswise on the two sticks and successively on their beginning, middle and, finally, at their end in order to evaluate the stability of the setting. When the straw touched the two sticks simultaneously, at the three locations, with no space between, he carried on with the adding of a third stick placed on the third series of stone piles. This series was then checked in the same way. At this point, two neighbours who were busy rough-casting their houses came, in turn, onto the building site. They advised and helped Amatiguemu with the arrangement of the foundation. Three long sticks thinner than the three first and called *baga sey* were placed crosswise and vertically on the three series of pillars (Fig.8.5). Finally, the thin *ye/semenu* branches, of a more or less equal length and width, were placed crosswise horizontally (Fig.8.6). *Ye* and *semenu* are the two words used to describe the wood. While the first refers to the making of a mat with packed straw, the second means 'thin'. The thin bits fill in the gaps and constitute a compact ground for the wet mud mix.



Fig.8.4 *Baga ti*

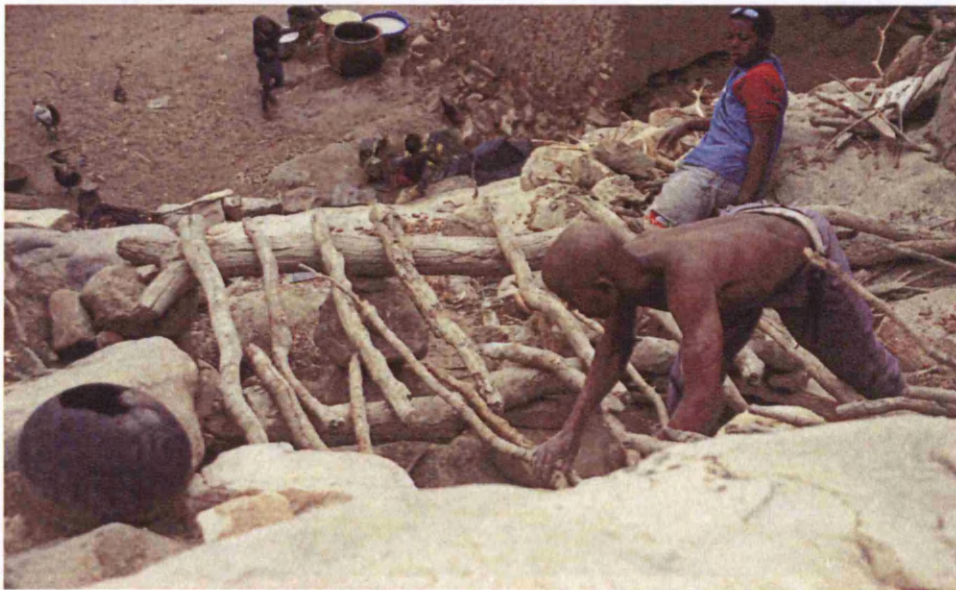


Fig.8.5 *Baga sey*



Fig.8.6 *Ye/semenu*



Fig. 8.7 Overview of the grid

Lastly, six small wooden sticks were placed vertically on both sides of the grid as a means of indicating the emplacement of the granary walls (Fig.8.7). Once the granary base (Fig.8.8) is made, by the superimposition of materials, the walls can be built.



Fig. 8.8. Foundation cross-section

2.3. The building of the granary walls

Before starting the upward construction of the walls¹⁰⁴ called *guyo botoro*, Amatigemu ensured the stability of the *semenu* branches by placing some stones provisionally on the structure. Then, he tested the texture of the mud by dropping and rolling it on a rock. Finally, he adjusted the matter by adding some water and fonio. When the matter was of the correct consistency, he placed the first wet mud ball on one corner, extending the matter with the flat of his hands towards the

¹⁰⁴ These are of approximately 1,64L and 1,48 W.

opposite corner and pressing it onto the wooden support (Fig.8.9). The wall's foundation was set up by moving round the outside of the structure and attaching a ball of mud to the previous one (Fig.8.11). This step was carried out with the help of Amatiguemu's children (Fig.8.10).



Fig. 8.9. Starting to build the wall

Each course, which included the divider for the internal compartments, called *karu* (Fig.8.12), was added in an anti-clockwise fashion, terminating with the placement of the *ama* mud cones (Fig.8.13), which have the same shape as the altar used in the magico-religious practice of the same name. These are made of small balls of wet mud that are slightly curved on the outside by being pressed in the palms of both hands and laterally folded in on themselves with the fingers.

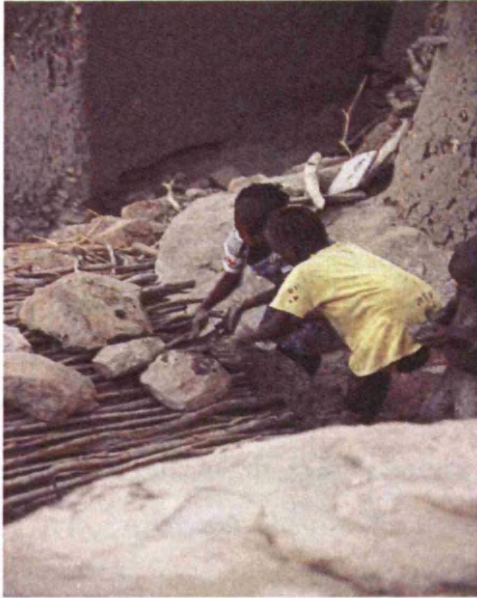


Fig.8.10. Children practising



Fig.8.11. Attaching the mud

The *ama* cones ensure the consistency of the construction and design of the four corners (Fig.8.14). These technico-symbolic elements facilitate the repetition of the construction as the mud balls constituting the new wall section are attached directly to them. Hence, the *ama* determine the straightness of the granary walls. They also consolidate the building by forming its edge and structure. Moreover, they serve to account for the number of lines that were done in a day in order to evaluate the height of the granary. Two *ama* are generally used per stage of construction. This enables the wall to dry out easily between each. Finally, they indicate the width of the walls required. Symbolically, the cones act as signs of continuity, on a practice-based level, each time the construction process is recommenced. As reference points they mark the evolution of the edifice. They also act as an expression of the wish to complete the building work on time, that is, before the first rains and thus the beginning of cultivation. Finally, the *ama* reinforce the idea of ensuring the longevity of the building, of the abundance and permanence of its content and, generally, of the continuity of life.

As a form of performance for the locals as well as for the tourists, the making of granaries also constitutes a practical learning process that often turns into a game for the children (Fig.8.11), who help by bringing the water and mud to the site as well as by kneading and mixing. The transmission of knowledge is handed traditionally from the father or grandfather to his sons and/or grandsons. This operates fundamentally through systematic exposure, observations, and through the reproduction of gestures, although the people passing by are always welcome to give advice and suggestions about the construction. However, as I was told by one of my informants, these days children go to school and thus miss out on the building activity. Although, they might have some construction knowledge, they no longer possess the knowledge of the practice. In the past, everybody was able to make their own granary. Now, it tends to become a matter for experts. People were more self fulfilled and autonomous in the past. These days, if a man has the money he is more likely to pay a builder to construct his granaries and/or his house.

The walls were constructed, one row at a time, three times a day. This occurred at around 06.30 in the morning, before lunch (at 12.00) and finally late in the afternoon (at 16.45). However, this schedule remains flexible since basically, it is designed around the builder's free time. The gaps in the schedule allow the walls to dry out before a new set of two to three courses is begun. Each course is approximately ten to thirteen centimetres thick. Each portion of wall requires between four-and-a-half to five-and-a-half balls of wet mud. According to my informant, it is important to keep to the same direction, clockwise or anti-clockwise, for each section of the walls built as a row. In his view, it gives more strength to the construction, ensuring a better continuity and co-ordination on a practical level. The walls are wetted-down repeatedly in order to rectify the wall surface by filling in its irregularities.

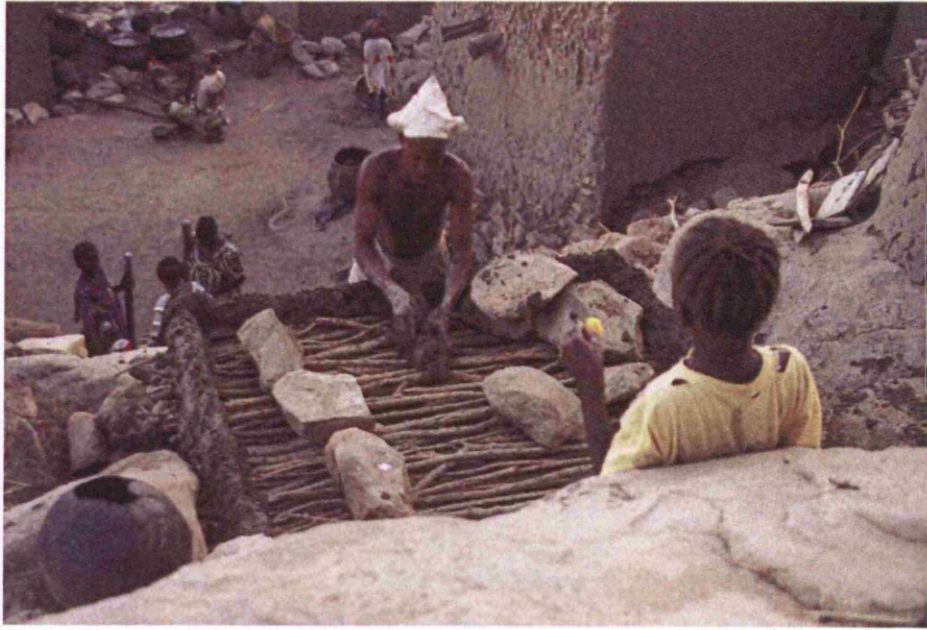


Fig.8.12 Setting up the compartments.



Fig.8.13 Fixing the *ama* corner



Fig.8.14 Overview of the construction site with four *ama* corners



Fig. 8.15. Fixing the mud on the cone



Fig.8.16. Pulling the matter

The same gestures are observed from one course to another as well as from one builder to another. The ball of mud is attached to the *ama* corner with two hands. The builder pinches this with his finger tips to facilitate the fixing of the next line. He stretches the mud towards him with both hands by applying some pressure down on it in order to fix it on the existing portion of wall (Fig.8.15). With the palm of his hands, he presses down to attach it better on the wall and simultaneously he flattens the matter by increasing its height (Fig.8.16). This is known as *badiu*. Finally, he simultaneously flattens the inside and outside of the walls with a hand gesture called *jadiu*. In this way, he increases the height of the walls, proportions the matter and ensures that it adheres properly to the existing wall structure by smoothing the mud of the wall with his hand (Fig.8.17). In fact, the matter has to be distributed equally in order to make the edifice stable. Finally, the builder (in this case it was Amatiguemu) evaluates the width of the walls with his hands by palpating the matter. The divider walls, which are about 12 centimetres wide, are made with similar gestures except that the top of the wall is flattened each time with the thumb.

Three forces are applied to the matter: horizontally to stretch it along, vertically down to attach it and vertically up to raise the wall height. The portion of the wall thus extended is about two-and-a-half to three centimetres tall. A circular, centrifugal dynamic is also applied to the building as the builder operates from the inside, as is the case for most daily activities like potting or pounding. However, when he is helped by his brother the sense/direction of this becomes completely random. Although, it is commonly advised to keep the same sense/direction in order to frame the building within a continuous logic, variations occur from one builder to another, depending on the builder's view on such matters. This is often determined by a personal economy of gesture, comfort, and ease of movement, since the building work occurs under particular climatic and time constraints.

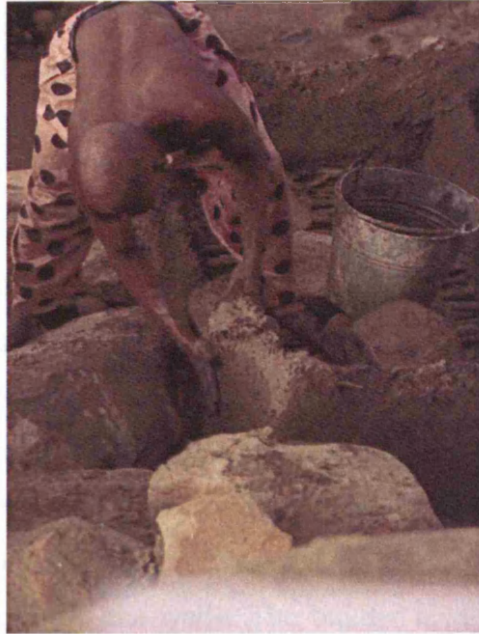


Fig.8.17. Smoothing the wall

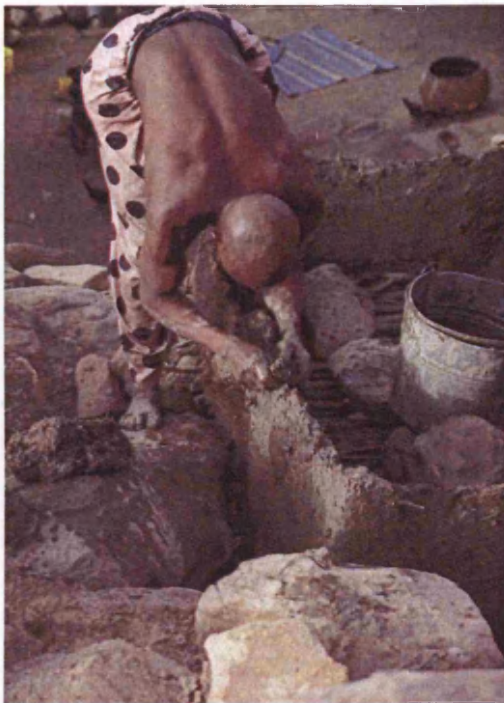


Fig.8.18 Pinching and attaching the matter

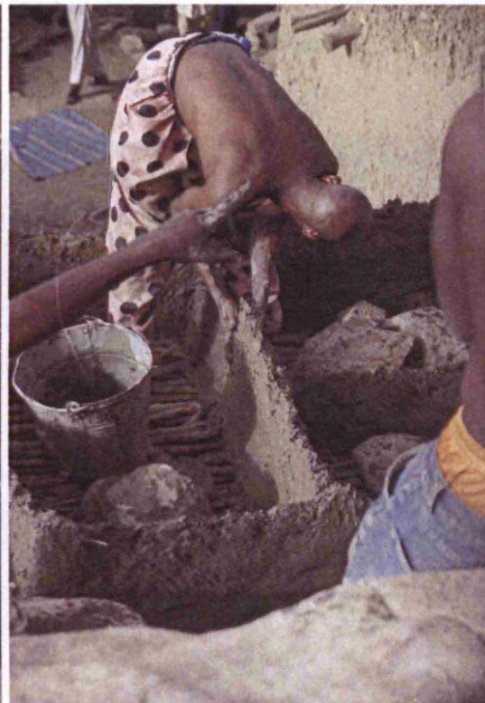


Fig.8.19 The making of the compartment wall

Each builder replicates the tasks from one side of the granary to the other by pinching and attaching the matter on the existing wall (Fig.8.18), creating the compartments inside as he goes (Fig.8.19). Each layer of the compartment requires two-and-a-half balls of mud. While the first forty centimetres of the walls are made from the outside, the rest of the construction (for greater ease) is undertaken from the inside with the same motion (Figs.8.20, 8.21, 8.22, 8.23). The slightly curved walls are sprinkled regularly with water. It is believed that a perfectly straight and rigid construction would make the building collapse quickly. The wider compartment walls are always made after finishing the wall course. When the construction has reached about ninety centimetres tall, the top of compartment walls are flattened. This flattened surface, serves as a support on which the builder stands in order to continue to make the walls. The builder always works barefoot when standing inside the granary as a sign of respect to the soil used, the construction, and its future content such as foodstuffs. At the compartment level, a space is left to insert the door. Two-and-a-half balls of wet mud are used for each wall section of approximately 35 centimetres.

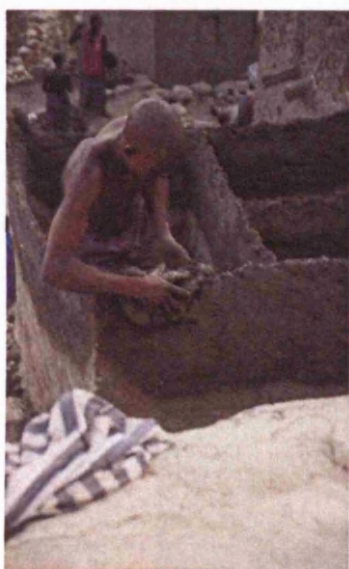


Fig.8.20 Fixing the matter

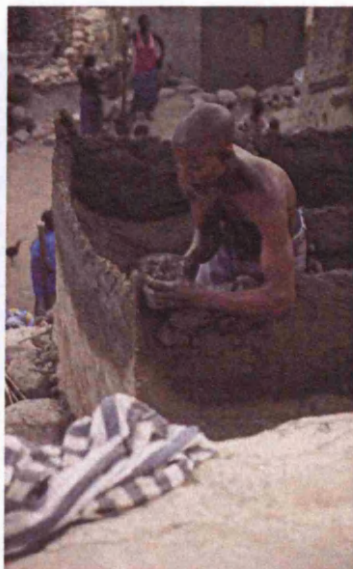


Fig.8.21 Pulling on the cone

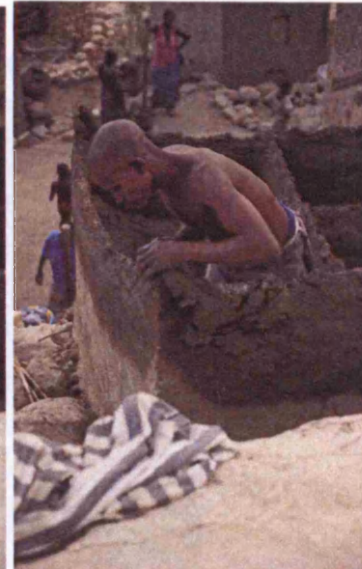


Fig.8.22 Pressing on the cone

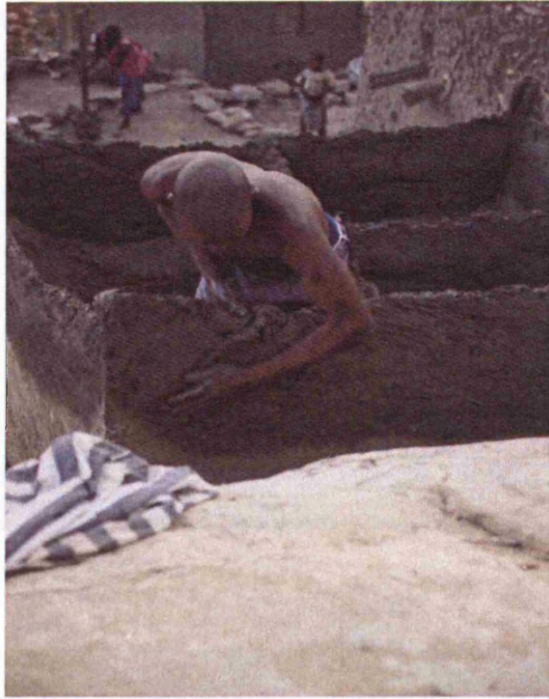


Fig.8.23 Flattening the wall

As shown in the sequence below, and as observed with Enam, the repertoire of gestures employed in the construction of the granary is common to all builders (Figs.8.24, 8.25, 8.26).



Fig.8.24 Stabilizing the walls



Fig.8.25. Lifting the matter



Fig.8.26 Flattening the walls

Furthermore, the same centrifugal forces are applied to the construction. When I observed Amatiguemu, he watered the walls again and added pieces of mud to equalize the walls as well as to smooth them over with the flat of his hands. The layers of mud can be observed on the surface of the finished walls (Fig.8.27), which sometimes show the traces of the builder's fingertips, which are thus bodily indentations, objectified in the matter (Figs.8.28 & 8.29).



Fig. 8.27 Layers of walls



Fig. 8.28 Finger prints



Fig. 8.29 Layers and finger prints

2.4. The making of the inside bottom

As a means of filling in the holes of the wooden bottom¹⁰⁵ called *ie*, Amatiguemu deposited some stones and clay-pot fragments (Figs.8.30&8.31). These are relatively large, flat and collected in the scree between the compounds. On top of this, he layered some thick and humid red clay (Fig.8.32). Amatiguemu then used the same matter to rough-cast the house walls, consolidating them. The matter, which contains some little stones called *bosegue*, hardens like cement. Before it does, he flattens it with his feet, then his hands, in order to make the matter penetrate between the pieces of branch that form the bottom. This needs to be perfectly cemented to prevent mice, ants, and termites from entering the granary. The bottom is left to dry for a day-and-a-half.

¹⁰⁵ No name was given to me for this stage



Fig. 8.30 Bottom aspect



Fig.8.31 Stones & shards



Fig.8.32 Red clay layer

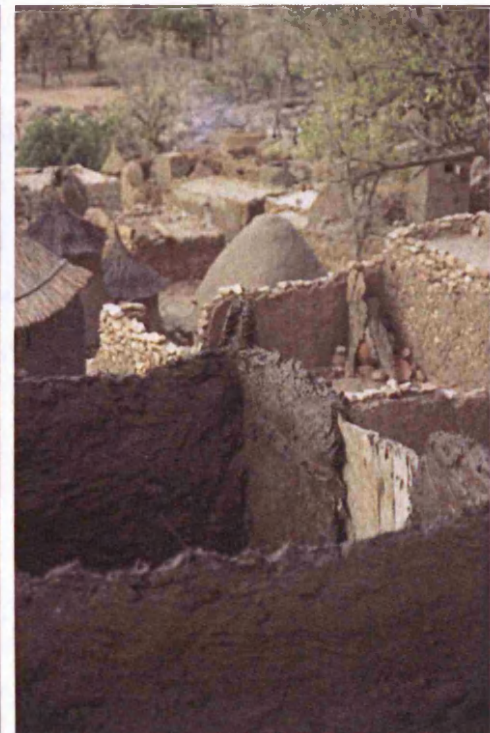


Fig.8.33 Fixing the door

2.5. The fixing of the door

The square wooden door (*guyo munu hanga*), a re-cycled part of the former granary, is protected from the rain by being placed on the West side (Fig.8.33). The Dogon granaries are also well known for their highly decorated wooden doors which are valued by antiquarians and tourists. The doors are generally made by the blacksmith. The wood that is used is called *kuguon*. Its step is called *tanhkunu*. It is simply made of two flat pieces of wood. When I observed Amatiguemu, he cut-off about one centimetre of wall surplus with a knife in order to set up the two flat pieces of wood that constitute the door frame. The frame is located at the same level as the compartments at a height of one meter from the foundation grid. No scaffold is used, only the existing bottom compartment is used to support the builder's body. A builder needs to be quite supple and flexible to build a granary. While I watched, Amatiguemu carried on with few lines before setting up the foundation of the upper compartments. He used the same grid scheme made of layers of wood to do this. Their array and organization was similar to that of the foundation. Right after the fixing of the door, he positioned two wooden sticks which were used as internal hangers. Amatiguemu carved two notches on the wall where the door stands as well as in the opposite one (Fig.8.34). He then dampened the four holes and added some wet mud in order to fix and stabilize the two wooden sticks called *baga* or *baga ana*. The action is named *baga pin*. Then, he carried on with two lines of wet mud walls.

2.6. The making of the upper walls and compartments

In the middle of the two other walls, Amtiguemu placed a third *baga ana* or *baga yiere*¹⁰⁶ across the two other walls (Fig.8.35). Then, he laid out a series of *baga sa*¹⁰⁷ or thinner wooden sticks that get fixed in the granary wall and placed these horizontally on the first main cross beam. He set the *ye* or *semi* branches which count a large quantity of millet straws and are about 28 centimetres long, called *yu keru*, down on top of the wood (Fig.8.37). After which, he increased the length of the walls (Fig.8.36). Then Amtiguemu designed and built the four upper compartments with two courses of wet-mud. Lastly, he added a thick layer of wet mud on top of the straw at a height of about 1.74 metres from the base. The part of the process for making of the bottom is called *ie*. The operation undertaken by pressing the mud on to the straw with a light repeated action with the flat of the hand is called *guyo kin nenyu*. The mud is made very wet for this process in order to adhere and to penetrate the millet straw.

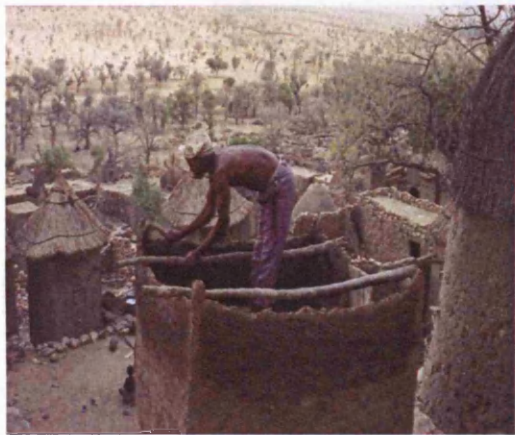


Fig.8.34 Fixing the hanger



Fig.8.35 Base of the upper compartments

¹⁰⁶ The wood supports the compartments.

¹⁰⁷ The wood that is used is called *sa* that is the *Lannea Acida*.



Fig.8.36 Laying out millet straws



Fig.8.37 Increasing the walls



Fig.8.38 Inside compartments

After this, Amatiguemu carried on with making the four compartments by adding a divider wall (Fig.8.38) as well as with the building of the surrounding walls. Their height is, essentially, up to the builder. However, in the case of Amatiguemu's granary, it is slightly out of proportion compared to other female granaries.

2.7. The making of the granary shell

The granary is then folded progressively inwards from approximately forty centimetres from the door level. The builder confers the shell shape on it by tilting

the *ama* cones standing at each corner (Fig.8.39). This step, called *guyo ku yone*, literally means 'to fold the head'. It requires a great deal of precision to prevent the dried mud from collapsing under the pressure of the rain in the years to come. Thus, here again the *ama* constitute the structure of the granary top (Fig.8.40&8.41). The top is often compared to a pot due to its round shape and the technique of extending the wall to form a small opening.



Fig.8.39 Overview of the *ama* cones



Fig.8.40 Shaping of the shell

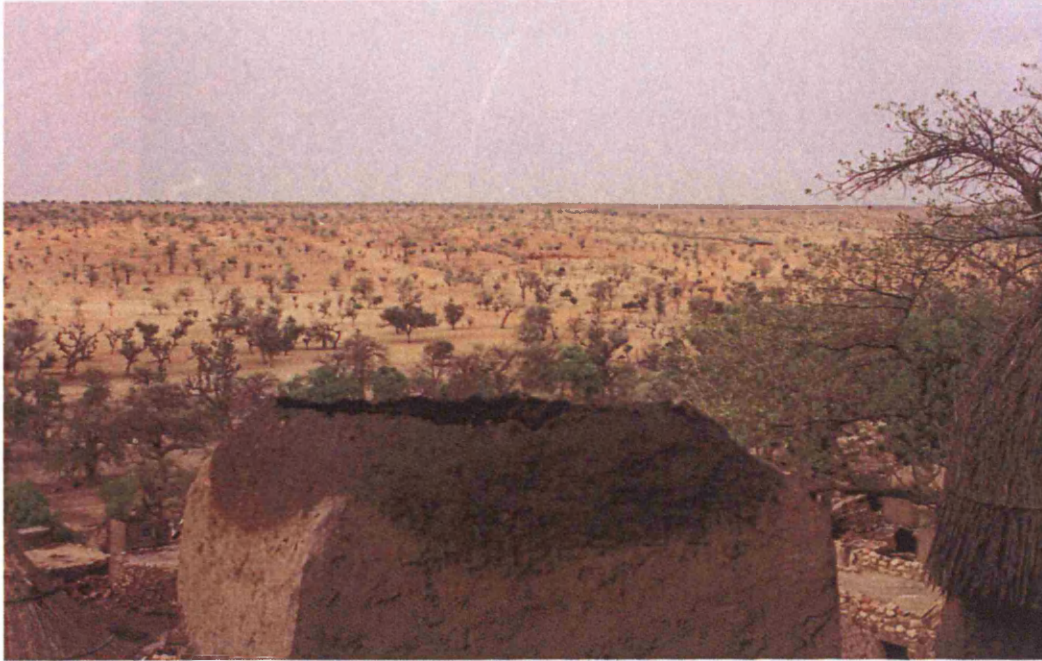


Fig.8.41 Folding of the shell

As the shell takes shape, no more *ama* cones are added, and the wall ‘gathers’ to form a small opening in which the builder stands. As I observed, Amatigemu increased these by applying a ball of wet mud to the existing surface and by extending it with the flattened palms of his hands, which were placed inside and outside of the wall (Fig.8.42). Finally, as he leap over over the construction, Amatigemu smoothed the surface with his right hand, keeping his left on the underside in order to maintain the wall (Fig.8.43&8.44). As a builder brings the wet mud towards himself as a means to extend the walls, he became progressively self enclosed inside the construction (Fig.8.45), as is more clearly shown here with Enam during the construction of another female granary.

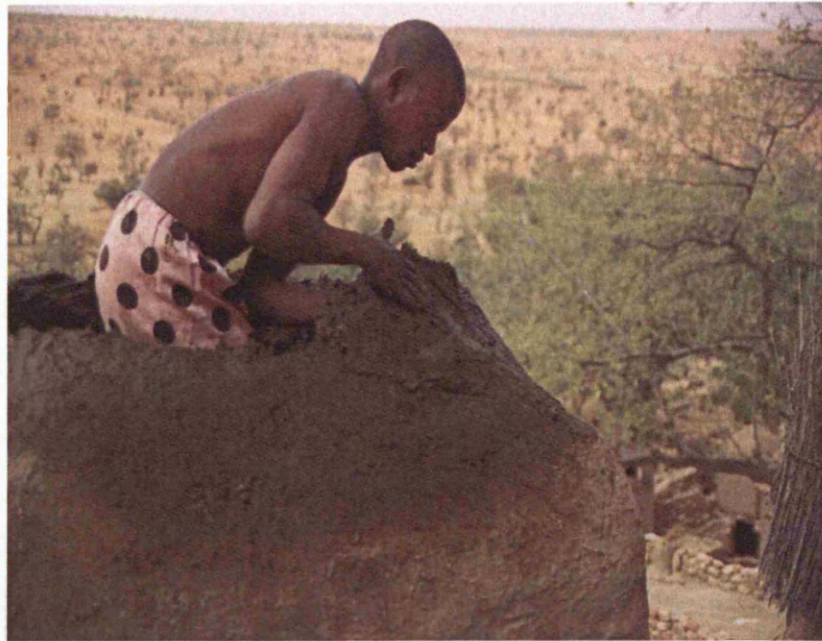


Fig.8.42 Sticking clay on the structure

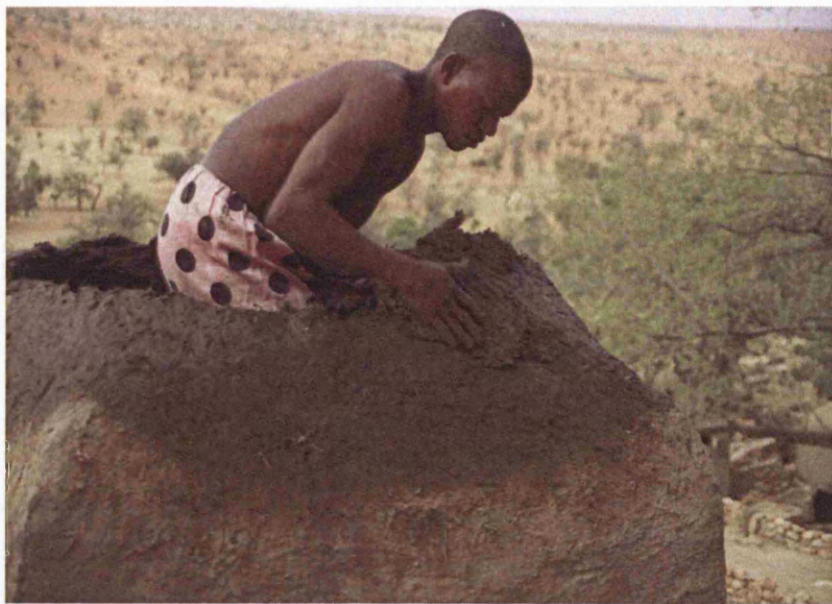


Fig.8.43 Pulling the matter

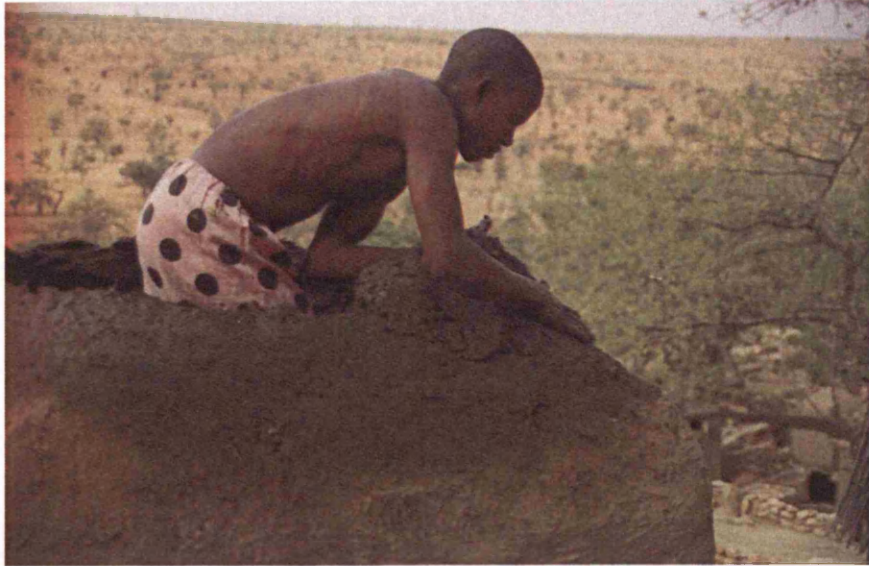


Fig.8.44 Flattening the surface

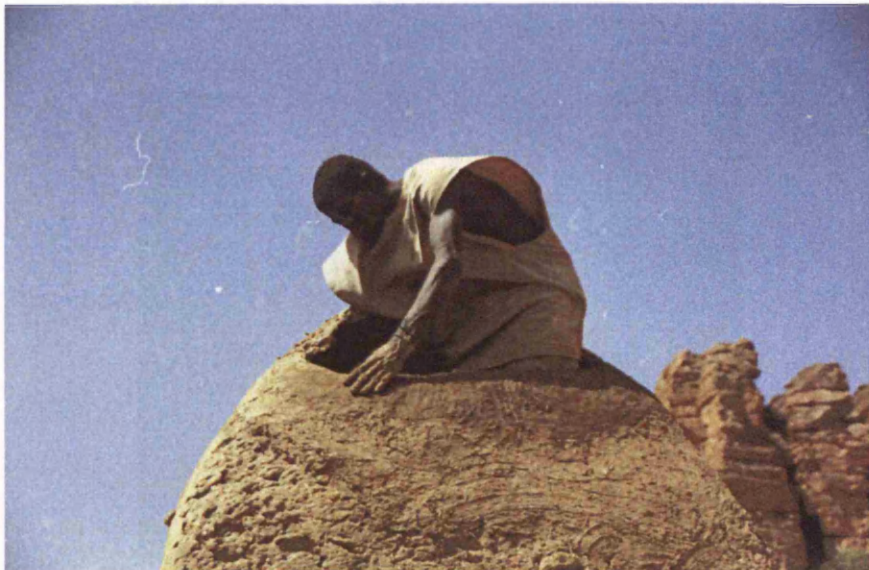


Fig.8.45 The builder trapped

As the opening called *guyo hanga* gets very small (Figs. 8.46&8.47), the builder gets down into the construction and carries on with the building from the inside in order to make the opening as small as possible.

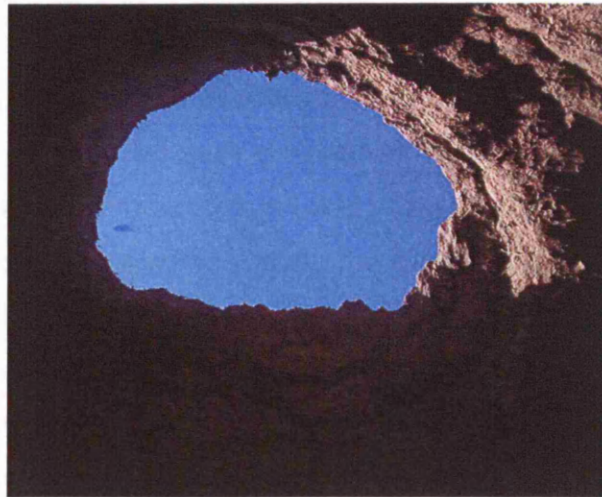


Fig.8.46 Granary opening

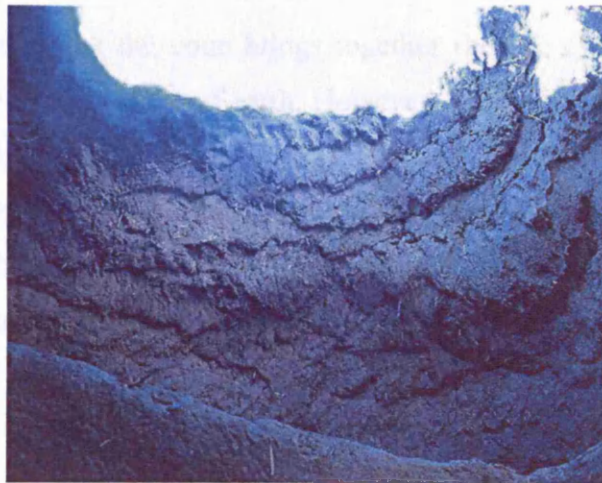


Fig.8.47 Details of the inside wall

2.8. The closing of the granary

When the final step called *guyo ku manu* is undertaken, the granary reaches a height of about 2.74 metres from its base to the top of its shell, which is not perfectly round. All of the granary's dimensions are calculated so as to contain the 'height of a person'. This is called *igru turu*. The final stage consists of closing the structure opening (Fig.8.48) by placing either a small clay pot or an *ama* cone (Fig.8.49) over it. To do this, the granary shell must be completely dry because the closing is done from the outside, i.e. by climbing on the side of the construction and lying upon it (Fig.8.50). The closing consists of placing the head of the *ama* into the granary's hole (Fig.8.51). The *ama*, is therefore inverted, if compared to the ritual altar of the same shape. According to an informant from the village of Nombori on the escarpment, the inverted *Ama* constitutes a highly symbolic device that is more than just a practical device to close the female granary top and protect it from the rain. In addition to this function, it acts as a phallic element that ensures the permanence of the granary cereals. It also represents the fertility of the field, and of the family. Thus process of inverting the cone brings together the life cycle of the fields, of humans and of the granary made of earth. However, I did not come across this view of the *ama* in Tireli nor in the plateau region.

When finished, the female granary I observed being made was not perfectly straight. Indeed, the top shell showed a curve that indicated a lack of dexterity. When I returned to the site a year later, the granary top that did not survive the rain was destroyed.

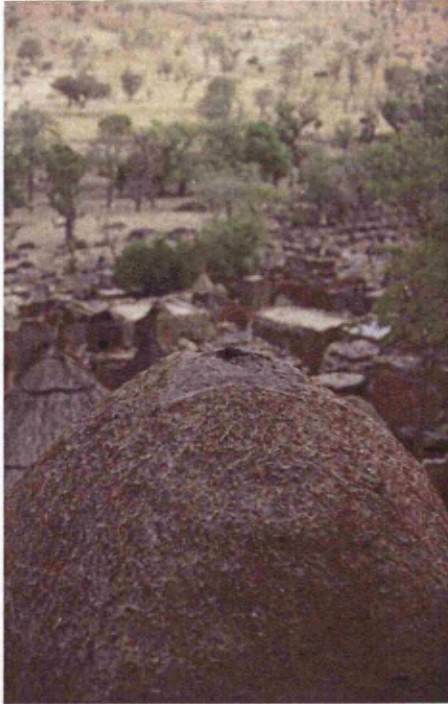


Fig.8.48 The granary shell opening

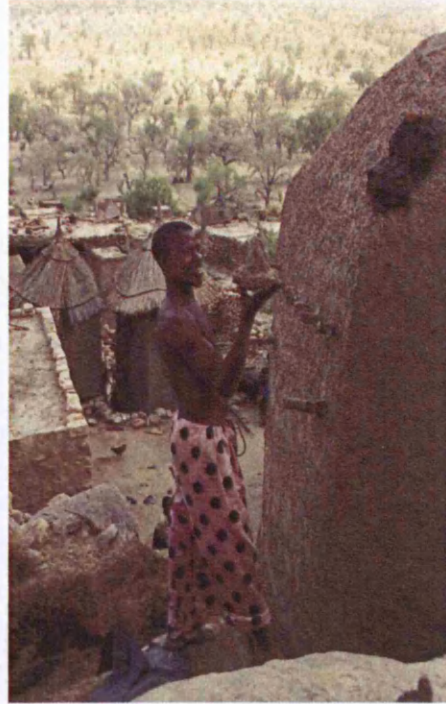


Fig.8.49 The *ama* cone

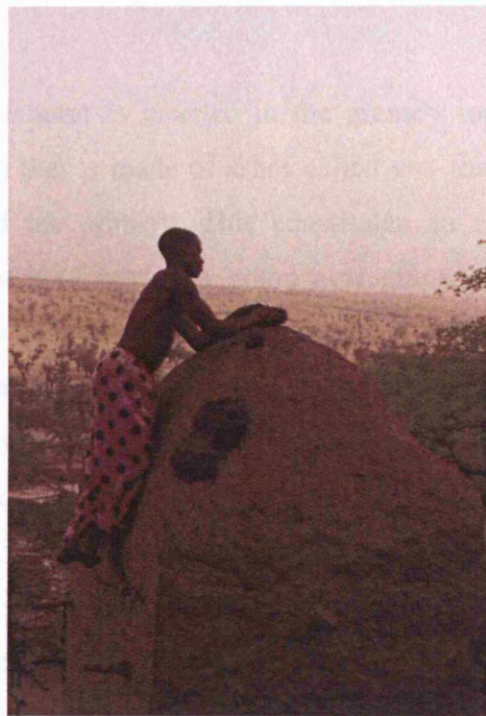


Fig.8.50 The closing of the shell



Fig.8.51 Overview of the top

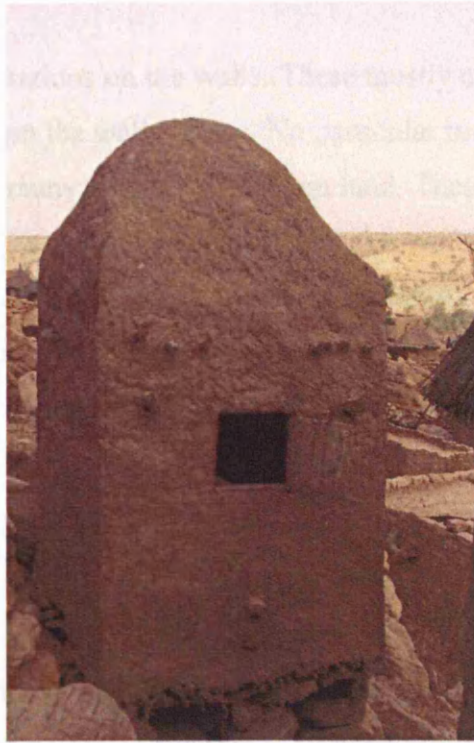


Fig.8.52 Overview of the asymmetrical granary

When the final *ama* element is inserted in the granary top, the builder normally spreads a cream (*puno*) that is made of ashes called *uno* that are diluted with some water, over the top of the granary. This constitutes an act of inauguration that indicates the contentment of having a brand new granary: '*guyo kana beremaje*' which means 'happy to have a new granary'. However, some people would smear a libation of millet cream on top of the granary as a means of wishing for a successful harvest so that the granary will always remain full. (Alternatively, the juice of the wild raisin can be used, mixed or not with ashes, to make a prayer.) This kind of libation with or without millet, is performed right after the millet harvest to thank God for what they have obtained as well as to ask for more the next year. The builder signals that the container is now ready to be used. This symbolic gesture constitutes a way of showing and of legitimizing the seriousness and the labour of the builder.

Some builders also add a series of decorations on the walls. These mostly consist of geometric patterns, which are plastered on the wall surface. No particular meaning is attached to the patterns which occur in many parts of the Dogon land. These simply are added for purely aesthetic reasons as well as to consolidate the walls and the door frame. In other words, it is done to testify to the act of building, of being successful in life and, of course, of being recognized by the villagers as such. Thus, it indicates the builder's capacity of acting in life, of gaining social status and repute.

2.9. Weaving the hat.

The granary hat is made at the very end of the hot dry season during a celebration called *buro*. It is the last element crafted before cultivation¹⁰⁸. It constitutes a means of protecting the granary and ensuring its durability. Although the task is individual, the owner of the granary always appeals to his friends to help him set up the hat on the granary top. This is often followed by the drinking of beer. Not all granaries have a hat. Whether they do or not mostly depends on whether the owner has the time to make it (approx. two hours). The operation strongly resembles the weaving of baskets which consists of gathering the same type of straw and binding it with a series of hoops.

First, three wooden sticks called *konugo бага* are gathered and attached as beams with a rope¹⁰⁹ on one end to form a cone.

¹⁰⁸ No ritual and no prayers, were observed after fixing it.

¹⁰⁹ Baobab bark plaited. This activity is done by the old men.

This first step produces what is called *konugo kubo* or the ‘feet’ of the granary hat. Second, the ‘beams’ are encircled and bound together by two flexible wooden hoops that are attached with rope. These are name *bil*. The third step called *keri sa uru* consists of covering the existing structure with straw¹¹⁰.

In the fourth step, this straw is bound together by two ropes made of flexible and plaited wood called *dogo bil*, which are sewn in the straw. For the fifth step, two wooden sticks are stuck in the top of the cone hat, approximately three quarters of the way up. Then, a long piece of rope is crossed from one portion of stick to the other, attaching the straw firmly together. This stage is called *baga som*. The sixth and last step consists of attaching the head of the hat with a rope. It is called *konugo ku pagu* and is carried out by rolling up the same rope all around the thatched straw point to its very top. From a technical point of view, it is necessary to attach the top of the straw together in order to orient the flow of rainwater to the outside of the hat and thus onto the ground. Some people fix a cross made of wood on the top of the hat that symbolizes the four cardinal points, as a sign of harmony in the compound. According my informants: ‘it attracts the positive ‘things’ coming from the North, East, South and West’. In doing so, they are attaching an other element that constitutes the act of wishing for a good harvest and, therefore, of keeping the granary full.

¹¹⁰ The *telú* or *Andropogon Gaynus* canes are found in the scree but also in the plain. It is also used in the basketry.

2.10. The rough-casting and the repairing phase.

The rough-casting constitutes a repeated stage of the operational sequence of granary building/re-building. As part of its material life cycle, the rough-casting consists of a process of renewing the edifice as well as, by extension, the built environment, such as in the case of the house. By being carried out right before the rainy season, it protects the habitat elements; as Amatiguemu states: ‘the *logo* is like an ointment that you apply to your body to protect it’. The repair work is of two kinds. First, it involves a partial re-construction of those elements damaged by the rain (granary walls or top). Second, in most cases, it implies the rough casting of its external wall surface (know as *guyo taru*). The wet mud used remains the same as the mud utilized for the rough casting of the outside walls of the house (known as *guindogo taru*), which is done in order to consolidate and protect them. However, the mud used for the construction of granaries differs from a material point of view, since fonio straw called *pon semi* is added. There are three types of mud from which to choose: the clay¹¹¹ found in the scree called *logo* or *nang* or the mud found in the pond *woina*, or at the foot of the scree called *wanyu logo*. The latter is very black and gives a cement aspect once it is covered and dried on the granary surface. Most of the time, cow or donkey dung or, alternatively, ground wild raisin pulp and skin are added to the wet mud on the day of the rough casting. The ground, dried wild-raisin pulp and skin comes from the squeezing of their juice to be served as a drink during the annual religious celebrations. The pulp and skin are dried out and pounded to be re-used in building work. The preferred type of wet mud for building use is that which has been fermented. As with the clay pots discussed earlier in this chapter, the wet mud is left in a jar and is dampened daily for a period of three weeks and sometimes up to a year. Once mixed by hand, a ball of gluey, smelly wet mud is thrown on the wall. Then, it is smoothed out with the flattened palm of a

¹¹¹ It must be pure clay. Otherwise the construction breaks.

hand. When the wall is covered, it is sprinkled with some water and smoothed again. The mix used is prepared in the compound and is generally brought by a child to the builder.

3. Earth granary '*chaîne opératoire*': temporality and gathering process

The *chaîne opératoire* summarized in the above chart (Fig.8.53), is proposed from a perspective that views the multiple tasks that occur in the making of a Dogon female granary as gathering process. This scheme attempts to cross-reference the manufacturing stages revealed to me in the local terminology with their Western transcription. Thus, the schema constitutes a self-reflexive way of showing how the indigenous technical knowledge, is usually conceptualized and understood by the researcher via a process of analysis and re-construction that tends, to borrow an everyday phrase, to 'go without saying'. Moreover, the schema presents a further challenge to this 'unspoken' way of working, by conceptualizing local temporalities in terms of a time of gathering that transcends daily shared or participatory agencies. Therefore, what I propose is a vertically oriented, syntagmatic sequence of actions that translates the synchronic series of steps in the making of the container. Each level of which is crossed by a horizontal, paradigmatic gathering-of-activities which happen within one and the same operation. While the first is an inventory of the succession of tasks as I have been able to observe them systematically, the second renders the Dogon ways of 'doing' and 'naming' the routine steps in terms of 'what has to be done'. Finally, this structure seeks to set up, metaphorically and spatially, the whole underlying notion of the containing and gathering process as being cyclical. In other words, by framing the multiple technical levels within a cyclical framework that encompasses both daily and seasonal temporalities (the building task

prior to the agrarian cycle), I present this epigenetic sequence as a gathering of tasks which are conceived as relative doxic modalities.

As mentioned, the method of presenting actions within a sequence tends to put across a much more routine-ized and therefore repetitive sense of duration. As such, it is locally denied while the task is being performed (Gell 1992). Hence, I have endeavoured to resolve the ambiguity of the linear or synchronic intervals of the recorded sequence by reflecting, in my writing, the time spent on each activity. In short, the sequence gathers interconnected socio-cultural and domestic durations that are brought into the temporality of a wider landscape and ritual life (Lansing 1991, Geertz 1966). Thus my aim is for this description to express the particular sense of continuity and life cycle that transpires through my analysis of the material I have collected in the field; and to do this by adding, to the making of the granary, the dimensions of its repairing, re-cycling and discarding. In that sense, the idea of *chaîne opératoire* as it is applied here constitutes a way of emphasizing the networks of implicit relationships that exist between the life cycles of people, of the environment, and through their material formations of the objects, as being part of one same cultural process. In this respect, making and repairing earth containers as a social construction of everyday life, operates as a participatory mode of performance. A similar continuity shows through the learning process at stake in the making and shaping of a granary due to the increasing frequency with which, now, only a partial transmission and exposure to the praxis is in danger of becoming the norm. In addition this rupture in the transmission of the techniques is exacerbated by both the tendency not to build granaries, due to a drastic reduction in crop-yields and their increasing replacement with modern concrete storage facilities, as well as the replacement of clay pots with metallic or plastic material substitutes. Thus changes in practice create changes in knowledge transmitted. Generally, practical knowledge starts to be passed to the children, almost as if they were apprentices, through their partaking in small operations such as working basic components or

collecting and bringing the material to site. On becoming an adult, the apprentices are invited to take part in the main activities. Thus, as part of a shared bodily dynamic of participatory and domestic activities, the knowledge is passed from an individual to another through the hands, that is, through the observation and emulation of material forms. Therefore, the transmission of knowledge is communicated through the act of making that occurs through a sensory and kinetic continuity operated on an age group and gendered basis, although young girls and boys take part in both activities until puberty as a form of game.

Hence, granaries act as a social gathering in which young apprentices, relatives, friends and neighbours take part in the process by advising and/or practising as well as by being entertained. Thus collective building tasks regenerate a family's networks. The participation in this, often followed by the cultivation of the family fields, consists of an act of identity that reunites and consolidates the relationships between people as well as it constitutes a form of heritage through the technical knowledge that is transmitted. From within the same transmission perspective, the re-cycled earth of the granaries is considered to be a form of heritage that is transmitted within a family. In fact, re-cycling raw material enables the symbolic 'building up of oneself and one's family', i.e. the increasing of one's compound in order to make it prosperous. It is undertaken, along with the matters that already objectify the labour of the builder who shaped the original container, with the components that are now being transferred to a new material form. As a result, the construction material of a granary is circulated within a single family nucleus, which can, under no circumstances, ever be passed to someone external, as this would transmit the prosperity to someone else. Hence, the container materials are retained within a family even if they stand as ruins, as they also symbolize the (extent of the) house. This is why Dogon people prefer to let this matter return to the ground rather than to sell or give it away.

In summary, the making of earth granaries, which act as a common property for the whole family and are owned by the ancestors, still reinforces the sense of community through a shared agency in a society that is however tending to become more and more individualistic.

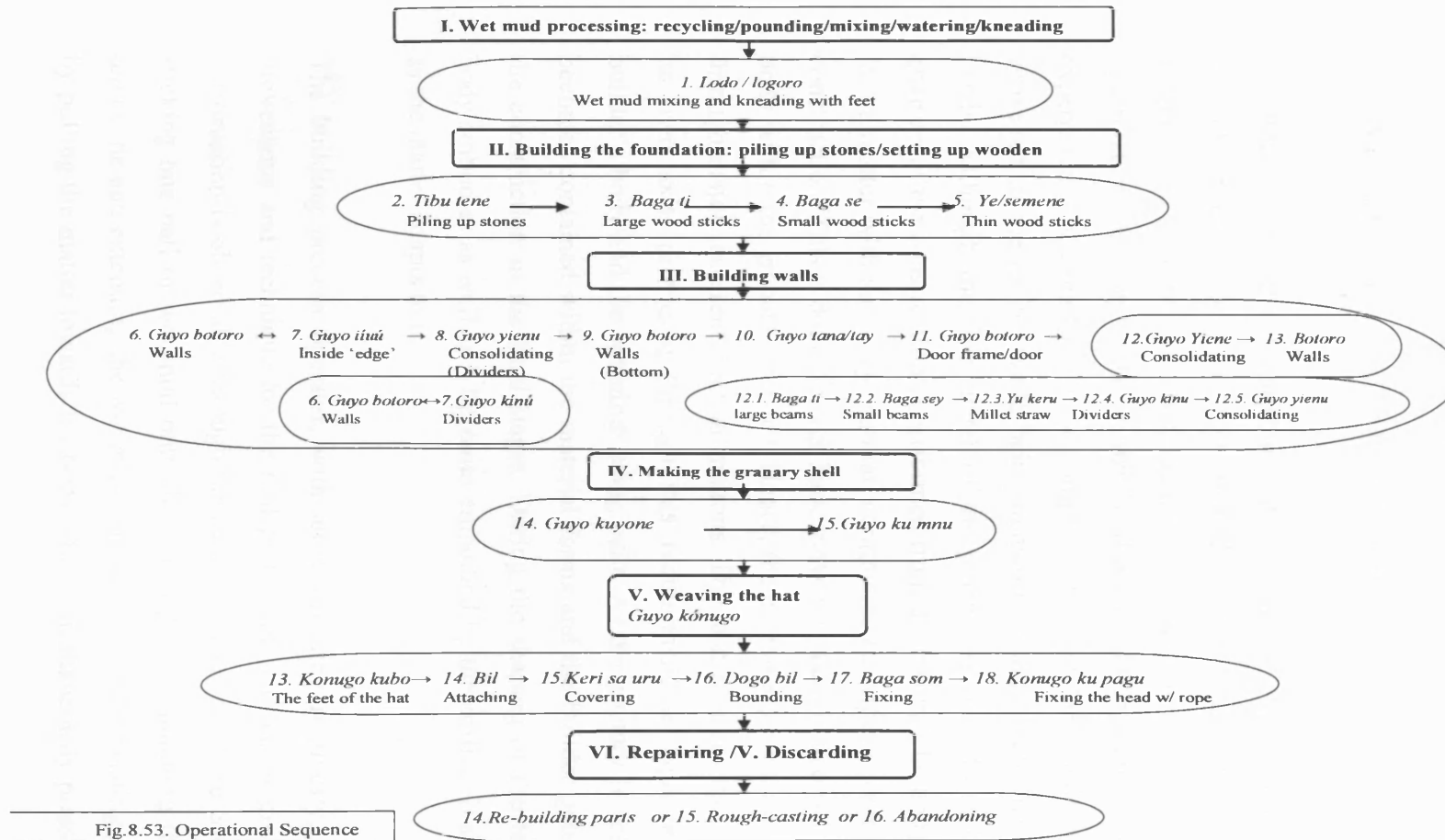


Fig.8.53. Operational Sequence

4. Body dynamic, senses of materiality and cyclic temporalities

4.1. Body dynamic and the transformation of earth matter

As shown above, the manufacture of the granary is performed with a particular intensity, body tension, and co-ordinated dynamic that is based upon a corporeal adaptation to the matter, i.e. because it is exclusively worked with the body as a tool. The relationship body/container stands within a triple dynamic that forms the haptic experience of the matter. This encompasses the body axis and tilt, the body rhythm conveyed to the matter while being transformed and finally the movement of the hands. Although the first meter of the granary is built from the outside, three-quarters of the construction is performed from the inside. The body kinetic is applied to the matter with an always similar, continuous centripetal force that maintains the construction. This is done through hand movements combined with the motion of the body within the granary structure. Hence, the container objectifies the body dynamic through major recurrent circular motions. The task requires the body to balance on its own axis, providing through this requirement an equilibrium between the builder's body and the container being built. As the granary is being built, the body becomes contained within the material forms and the builder gets nearly trapped in the construction in the final stages. During the shaping of the female granary, the body embodies as well as it becomes embodied by the edifice. It adapts to the matter as the matter adapts to it.

The building process operates, with an astonishing regularity, the replication of movements and technique for the first part of the edifice. A great homogeneity of construction is observable through the gestures. The repertoire consists here of first, sticking one ball of wet mud onto the existing wall, attaching the matter onto the *ama* cone and extending the wet mud ball back on to the existing portion of dry wall by pulling the matter towards the body while simultaneously pressing it down on the

structure. Second, it consists of pinching the matter up to extend it. Third, the matter is smoothed down as a means of fusing it completely into the wall and of creating a symbiosis between the existing and the new matter. Fourth, the matter is smoothed upward by watering it gently and adding, if necessary, new pieces of mud. The walls are built up until they form a shell which completely encloses the builder. Breath, heart beats, and exhaustion alleviated by songs convey, in the same way, a particular rhythm that enables the builder to shape the matter. However, as can be observed, the top of the granary remains asymmetrical. According to the builder himself, although his technical knowledge remains good, he miscalculated the proportions and the quantity of matter. Added to which, he was hurried by the premature start of the rainy season, Amatiguemu, tried to finish work in haste, perhaps causing his miscalculation.

The making process operates through a particular sensory and kinetic experience of earth matter or sensed observation of matter, which is required to effect its metamorphosis and resistance. In fact, it is predominantly the olfactory experience of earth, occurring in the mixing and kneading of fermented wet mud, and its tactile qualities that provide indications as to the adjusting required to be able to build with it. In addition, because wall portions are added at different times of the day, the manufacturing process can also be seen through a series of dry beige and progressively wetter, and thus darker, brown layers. Here, the coloured stripes indicate if the wall is dry enough to be continued. This is a process that Warnier (1999) calls 'thinking through one's fingers' and by extension 'one's body'. The hand movements animated by the builder's internal body rhythms that imply breaths, heart beats, songs, and whistling transpire through fingerprints that appear on the granary walls. This is also reflected in the overall geometry of the construction. In fact, the assembled mud balls that are pulled down, stretched along, pulled up and then smoothed with the fingers and the palm of the hands in the constitution of the walls are not apparent on the surface. As, turned into balls, the matter is gently

pressed to test the level of humidity and the consistency of the mud. Furthermore, it is conveyed onto the entire wall structure with actions that attempt to cause it to be straight for the first part of the building and curved at the top where it forms its roof shell. Here, the cylindrical and conical geometry of the granary results only from the pressure of the hands and fingers, and not with any pre-existing technical structure or particular tools that would mould the granary were they to exist.

Consequently, granary making requires an accute sense of detail, a great practical expertise, and a complete understanding of all the chemistry and mechanisms at stake in the transformation of the earth. Knowing thus becomes experiencing. Making granaries, as a gendered form of habitus, constitutes itself through repeated, shared daily praxis (Bourdieu 1990). It results from a long-term learning process rather than through an exclusive cognitive exposure. In other words, the activity remains a fully sensorial and kinetic operation in which the whole phenomenology of the container expressed in terms of colour, texture, smell and geometry, stand at the core of the shaping process. Hence, the sense of proportion and the replication of more or less the same measurements¹¹² is achieved through a tactile experience of the matter. This involves knowing exactly where and how the matter has to be balanced, knowing the weak points of the containers and finally the texture of the matter to be prepared. Mimesis and learning through the emulation of the matter constitute the two principles of the making of earth containers.

4.2. The materiality and symbolism of earth matter

As stated by Mauss (1974:166) and re-emphasized by Pecquet (2004: 152), the main component of granary making, earth, constitutes ‘a living principle’ and a ‘living

¹¹² Exceptions exist and were observed.

body'. In a manner similar that described in Pecquet's study of '*banco*', the earth material used in the Gurunsi's built environment (in Burkina Faso), the Dogon's conception of earth acts as a material of power. In fact, the earth matter or wet mud (*logo*) acts as an authoritative element to which many prohibitions and certain attitudes are applied. In fact, for the Dogon, earth matter 'becomes empowered' by being mixed or associated with certain organic components and substances. For instance, an earth granary receiving a libation of millet cream or alternatively of ashes at its inauguration constitutes a sign of renewal of the compound life and, by analogy, of the fields. Symbolic connections exist here between the earth matter of the granary and of the fields that host millet plants. Hence, as the main life asset and source of life, the intention behind the pouring of millet substances (as in the cream poured on top of the construction) is to ensure symbolically the longevity, prosperity, and fertility of the contents inside, as well as the fields and human life (Prussin 1999: 424-433).

In a slightly different way, the substance spread over the top of the newly made building acts as a visible sign of accomplishment that testifies to the labour, technical skills and capacity of the builder to set up his own compound, thus engaging him in life. Finally, many Dogon families possess a series of totemic prohibitions regarding the composition of the wet mud that they use in building work. For instance, in certain families, the totem, which remains secret, bans the use of fonio straw in the wet-mud mix. This is due to the negative magical power of fonio that would affect the content of the granary. Finally, on a technical level, the *ama* corners reflect the society's fundamental preoccupation with the continuity of life. This preoccupation interweaves the principle of the environment as objectified in the earth container with that of people's life cycle.

4.3. Containment and gathering processes

The materiality of granaries objectifies a double gathering process that comprises on the one hand, the weaving of social networks through daily practical performances which constitute both a learning/teaching process, as well as a form of entertainment, while, on the other, it comprises the collection and retaining of natural resources in the home that create or re-create a containing environment. This appropriates and re-materializes the landscape from which the earth, the stone, and the wood are extracted. These two forms of gathering define a particular form of material containment that generates local conceptions of the body, of nature, and of society and which constitute a local cosmology.

First, making and repairing earth containers constitutes a social construction of everyday life. Manufactured within a participatory mode of performance, containers act as a social gathering principle, in which young apprentices, relatives, friends, or neighbours take part in the process, by advising and/or practising, as well as by being entertained. In the case of major building work, such as building granaries and repairing or rough-casting old *ginna* compounds, the collective task re-installs family networks. The participation in this building work, often followed by the cultivation of the family fields, consists of an act of identity that reunites and consolidates the relationships between people. In short, the making of these containers, which act as a common property for the whole family, and are owned by the ancestors, still reinforces the sense of community through a shared agency in a society that is becoming more and more individualistic.

Second, the collection of substances from the surrounding environment, such as clay, gravel, scree stones, pond mud, wood, straw, and tree fibres constitutes a process of gathering local resources that creates or re-creates a domestic environment that exists

inside the landscape from which the items are gathered. Here, gathering implies a dual process of de-containing and re-containing the landscape. That is, an emptying and subsequent re-materializing of it through making earth containers. In other words, the materiality of these containers, as well as other locally made forms, objectifies the whole landscape as they are made of earthly substances, which are reshaped 'from within'. Furthermore, digging up the ground, extracting or even blowing-up the rocks, and collecting the resultant stones constitutes an appropriation of the place that becomes complete through the making of containers. Their insertion within the landscape devises a series of domestic and social boundaries through which ordinary people relate to each other. Working with the environment's substances, and therefore experiencing its materiality, generates a particular sense of attachment to the place in keeping with a 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962). In this sense, knowing and embodying its intrinsic properties through repeated sensory and kinetic experience as well as through its exploitation characterizes the Dogon act of dwelling. Under this perspective, the retaining and circulation of container material strictly within one family constitutes another form of social and resource gathering that functions here as a form of heritage, prosperity, and continuity of life.

5. Conclusion

Through this examination of the building process of a Dogon female earth granary, I have shown that the container, as a socially embedded technology, objectifies particular embodied daily worldviews. These are made manifest on the level of technical, material, and bodily praxis. The making of this earth container objectifies, through its materiality, a form of body containment that highlights the local conceptions of both nature and the body as being constituted through movement inside and outside of the material form of the granary.

The *chaîne opératoire* proposed in this chapter, has revealed through visual narrative and thick ethnographic description (also framed within a chart), interwoven cyclic temporalities, which have been conceptualized in terms of a gathering process. This encompasses the life cycles of people and nature as being both materialized in a recycled earth container, the matter of which constitutes a highly symbolic element of the continuity of life and its renewal. Therefore, the granary, by materializing the temporality of the landscape through their substance, constitutes a form of ontological security that provides some reference points in space and time. These stand at the juncture of the environmental and the human life cycles. Therefore, the making of containers as well as the re-actualization of the village altars, both of which imply a relative participation and consist of two forms of material containment, constitutes a shifting moment through which Dogon villagers prepare themselves to re-enter a new agricultural cycle that will demand of them a considerable amount of strength and vigilance. This liminal period, characterized by a particular euphoria that is caused by the re-awakening that follows the dry season's long period of lethargy and the 'healing' of the split between those who cultivate onions and those who leave the village as a temporary exodus to work in the town. Their return (and therefore the social gathering of families before the first rain) enables the Tireli community to re-engage and maintain social networks before the laborious and intense rainy season. This temporal liminality of a few weeks also constitutes a moment of doubt. Indeed, being socially and domestically re-contained, people pass through this period with the hope that they will have a successful rain and harvest. The hope that they will be able to fill the containers they have made.

The manufacturing process of an earth granary defines a cosmology in the making (Barth 1987) that consists of a process of perpetual re-creating of the domestic environment that contains people and that conveys a sense of regeneration in tandem with the renewal of activity, environment, self, and society (Bloch & Parry 1982). In fact, it acts as a means of re-engaging oneself in another cycle, one marked by the

cultivation and thus the first rain. It is the making of them during the hot dry season that causes earth containers to objectify the temporality of the environment. Their manufacturing occurs before the regeneration of the land and the agricultural tasks. Thus, making containers at that particular moment of the year re-initiates a whole process of containment that, for the granaries, is completed during the harvest period when they are filled. Earth containers bring together human and environmental life cycles, along with their essential matter or substance, by objectifying them.

Material practices of concealment: Pandora's Granary as a
Cosmology of Hope.

The Dogon compound is inhabited by the material presence of a series of gendered earth granaries. These emblematic built elements constitute the dominant storage facility in the Dogon home, as they either form a part of the compound enclosure or stand within its inside space. In most of the villages that are located alongside the Bandiagara escarpment scree, Dogon granaries, with their back wall facing the Plain create a series of ramparts that functioned, in the past, as a fortification against invasions (Lauber 1998). With their lofty stature, these storage facilities constitute a thick fence that conveys a sense of impenetrability and intimacy.

In this chapter, I explore the form of containment that transpires from the material practice of storing in a particular domestic built element. I do this through an examination of one of the four Dogon granary types, the *guyo ya*, with a focus on men's and women's daily uses of this female granary. Although this examination exposes local conceptions of gender, I do not intend here to discuss the gender divisions and perceptions thereof in relation to the domestic sphere (Moore 1986, Prussin 1995, Schlyter 1996). My interest lies in the material practice of this particular gendered object, which reveal themselves to be a form of concealment, that, as I will show, acts as a mechanism with which to cope with the vicissitudes of daily life such as food shortages. Consequently, this material practice inscribes itself and its meanings within what I shall define as a cosmology of scarcity. I examine here the process of storing food and, more specifically, millet in granaries belonging

to my informants in Teri ku Dama and I will compare the data collected with those I gathered in the Plateau area. This study is framed within a praxeological approach which I have already employed in a similar way in the previous chapter on the making of an earth granary. Here, it deals with the sensory and kinetic or bodily experience of the materiality of the container object (Warnier 1999, 2001). My use of praxeology to describe the body movements required to access the granary, allows me to highlight a particular mode of concealment that is at stake, by focusing on the routine, seasonal 'filling' and 'emptying' of, primarily, food resource containers but also by taking into account ritual artefacts and personal belongings. I show that these actions are undertaken by men in order to conceal the content from the view of the women. This acts as a means for the owner of the granary to maintain the privacy of its powerful content. From within a broader perspective, I shall demonstrate that the material form itself acts as an interface between the individual, the society, and the drastic environmental conditions. This, I conceptualize in terms of a cosmology of scarcity, by referring to local worldviews, attitudes towards the vicissitudes of life and, in particular, to the precarious conditions of the crops. I argue that this bodily and material practice of storing in granaries and, therefore, of concealment embodies men's attitudes towards women in a particular context of necessity.

1. Concealment as a material practice

The Dogon people were facing a drought, at the time I was carrying out fieldwork in their land. The crops failed the September I arrived, as the rain was delayed across most of the region. Food was absent due to the insufficient harvests of the previous year. Containers were consequently reported and commonly assumed to be empty. This is a repeated situation that I witnessed and to some extent I experienced while I was carrying out most of my fieldwork. Food shortages strike families and villages unequally, as, on the one hand rain falls sparsely in the Dogon, and on the other, the quality and amount of the crop harvested depends upon the quality and quantity of

the seeds and compost owned by the families. Consequently, almost no families harvest the same as another. However, the Dogon people's practices assume that the harvest will be bad every year and for everyone. Scarcity is expressed as hunger, as the absence of a content that is assumed or pretended to be there. Hence, the act of concealing a foodstuff enfolds two dimensions. First, although the content of Dogon granaries is known to everyone, its quantity remains unknown except by its owner, that is the husband. Second, concealment, as both bodily expressed and encapsulated into the material form of the granary, casts doubts on the potentially existing content in order to prevent theft but also psychological breakdown. In other words, the sealed granary generates assumptions and questions about what it does or does not contain.

The everyday 'doing' and 'undoing' of containers or the use and non use of granaries translates into action(s) the scarcity of the two fundamental substances, millet and water, which disappear rapidly. Consequently, the desperate need for full containers reflects local conceptions of death and life. From within this perspective, I propose that these material forms stand as solid metaphors for the real live bodies whose stomachs also remain empty due to a constant shortage of food.

The Dogon idea of concealment is found in the local term *kine*. It is frequently used to signify 'something that is being hidden inside of something' while the verb *kinere* translates as to hide (Calame-Griaule 1968: 159). In the same way, the term *boduru* means to keep things for oneself. As a practice, concealment stands as a boundary marker that defines the gathering of hidden resources. Through an examination of the management of granaries, I shall look at concealment as a practice of setting things apart as well as of distancing people from each other. As I have previously suggested, concealment as an embodied practice of things and knowledge discloses social and gender relationships between the individual self and the society as well as between men and women. Concealment generates status and power, as it is an

authoritative process of ownership and of access that is enacted everyday. In other words, I argue that concealment contributes to the formation of domestic boundaries through a practice of retaining, maintaining, and hiding both things and knowledge in the granary.

As a mode of containment it takes its own form, which is objectified in the materiality of the female granary being full or empty. The process of storing in Dogon earth containers that embodies a form of concealment is developed here using the metaphor of Pandora's Box as a means to explore Dogon worldviews. In other words, I suggest that concealing foodstuffs within this particular context of scarcity, prescribes a cosmology of hope. I propose that the ambivalent Dogon *guyo ya* that symbolizes life when full and death when empty, constitutes a threat for women if ever opened by them. Hence, the mechanism and philosophy behind Pandora's Box allow me to think about the object-container within a context of absence because the building objectifies the fears and hopes of Dogon men and women. The granary is banned for women, as it retains powerful objects or conceals an absence of life resource. Its opening constitutes a considerable threat to them. While the ritual objects can cause death, the absence of foodstuffs can lead to psychological breakdown at the thought of their being nothing left to eat. Consequently, Dogon granaries as Pandora's boxes tell us much about gender relationships and worldviews. For although its opening by women would reveal its extant, absent, or missing inside, thus releasing fear and despair into the world from this 'Pandora's granary', when the physical content is actually absent or has been emptied, hopes for a better future always remain at the bottom.

2. Men's and women's uses of the female granary

The *guyo ya* granary is square in plan. It possesses a round top and one single opening. It constitutes a domestic technology that is divided in such a way as to meet

the storage requirements of men and women. Although the number of compartments of the *guyo ya* (Fig.9.1) for a woman is based upon her own decision, most of these edifices comprise an average of four divisions in the bottom and two at the top. The more a granary is compartmentalized, the more difficult it becomes to store things unless the plan is for the granary to hold various and relatively small secondary harvests such as hibiscus, groundnuts, and beans. The compartments generally indicate what they are meant to contain. A cross-compound study of granaries would therefore be interesting in order to examine, diachronically, Dogon food habits and consumption patterns as well as to evaluate the availability or disappearance of certain plant and cereal species. In the same way, granary ruins can tell us something about periods of drought.

A compound that includes a large number of granaries tells us things about the size of the family, which, for instance, is likely to be a polygamous unit with many mouths to feed. In this case, the granary symbolizes wealth and success in life, while an absence of a granary or granaries indicates the opposite. My host family's neglect of their granaries reveals a lack of foodstuffs, which are stored instead in hermetically sealed raffia matting bags in the house. Only the female granaries used by the women of the family remain intact and get repaired seasonally. However, the female granary containing the deceased father's objects collapsed and was never rebuilt. Balugo, the head of the family, said he had no interest in putting effort into the reconstruction of something that does not concern him anymore. In fact, Balugo, who could be said to be accumulating his religious conversions, keeps these objects he inherited – the meaning(s) and practices of which he does not know – in his *gudjo* simply because of the memory of his father and not because they are active objects with which he could act upon life.

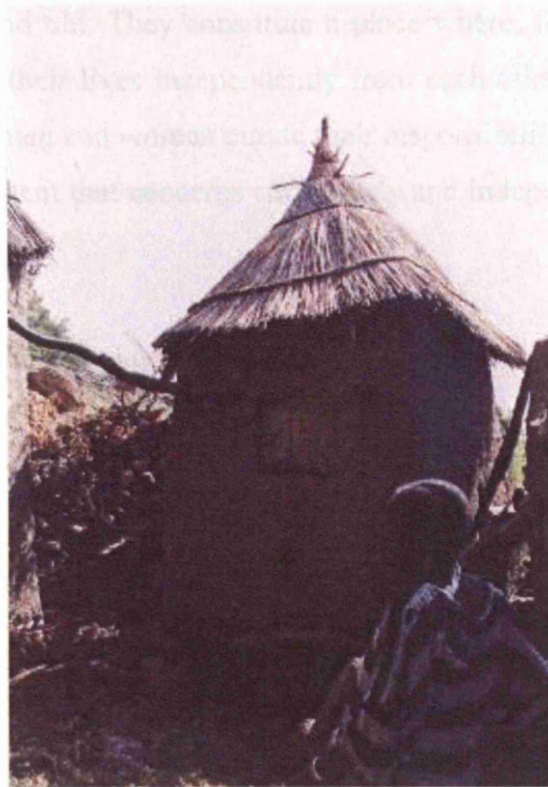


Fig.9.1. The *guyo ya* or female granary

The *guyo ya*, used by a man to store millet and his personal objects, generally comprises a minimum of two compartments at the bottom and two at the top. The location of the edifice in the compound usually says something about its ownership. Those that stand in a corner of a compound, or relatively far away from the main areas occupied by women and children, are generally those of men. The granaries located near the kitchen belong to women. However, men's and women's granaries can be distributed randomly, this usually occurs if the size of the compound does not allow the distribution described above.

As mentioned, the *guyo ya* granary is female but can be used by both men and women. However, the granary remains exclusive property of the men because they built it and the women are strictly forbidden to access the men's granary. These intimate storage spaces accompany people during their life, as they are used by men

and women, young and old. They constitute a place where, for the most part, men and women organize their lives independently from each other. The granary stands as a space where the men and women curate their responsibilities towards the family through a specific content that concerns exclusively and independently either men or women.

I propose now to define the *guyo ya* according to its contents and as how it is used, first by the women and then by the men. Particular focus is placed upon millet which constitutes the main Dogon daily concern. Then, through an examination of the storing process of the cereal in the granary, I expose the particular body-technique at stake that reveals the practice of concealment.

2.1. *Guyo ya* for women: personal and domestic objects

Getting access to a women's granary to throw a look and itemize its content was not without difficulty. In fact, the reactions were multiple. While several were relatively annoyed and said they did not have the time to show me, others completely ignored my presence in their compound by carrying on with their daily task. I was also sometimes told in a joking and genteel manner that I was being too curious. I realized that opening a granary to check its contents constituted a form of intrusion and indiscretion, in the same way in the West if someone were to open someone else's fridge or kitchen cupboard an act which is seen as impolite in most places. Some women thought that I was coming to spy and to reveal the content of their granaries to other women we knew in common. Therefore, in their view, the pictures I was planning to take would act as evidence in and of what they believed to be my dishonesty. Consequently, upset by these reactions, I decided to focus on my host mother's granaries to which I had free access and could document as I was living in the compound. She fully agreed to let me examine the storage element.

As I would occasionally cook (spaghetti!) for the family, Bemu my host mother gave me a granary. In this I could store my spices, my few cooking materials and, if I were willing to organize things inside the granary, my clothes and property. My family confirmed to me that the storage was perfectly safe. Amused by the idea of having my own granary, place, and role in the family, I started to empty my tupperware boxes and my Ziploc bags. After a couple of days of trying to get the things I wanted to use out, I gave up contorting my body to get in and out of the small opening and thus access the deep cavity within. I replaced my things back into my storage room and tried to recover my Ziplocs that had been taken by the children. I did this despite the fact that the contents of my storage room were, in the manner of an exhibition, constantly scrutinized by multiple curious eyes, making me uncomfortable, as the granary I was offered became increasingly inconvenient as I would constantly knock my head on its door frame.

My host mother's granary, which she gave me permission to open, did not contain much (Fig.9.2 & Fig.9.3). As mentioned above, man may access a woman's granary but the opposite is strictly forbidden. Hence, theoretically men always have control over women things even if the granary contains the women's own 'business'. It is totally up to a husband to respect or not the privacy of his wife or wives containers. As was often claimed by men, the *guyo ya* of women contained far less than theirs: women do not own anything! In fact, my host mother mostly used her room as a storage space in which various metal trunks, plastic boxes and buckets have replaced her granary. Inside, her things are mixed up with her daughter's possessions. However, the granary remains a place where cooking utensils and pulses are kept. Once opened, the granary liberates a mixture of dry smells of pulses, desiccated food remains from unwashed containers, spices, dust and sand; the slightest movement causes the desiccated remains and dust to rise from the floor and fill the air inside the granary. It is particularly stuffy and the warmth and stickiness of the building creates an atmosphere of inactivity and desolation.



Fig.9.2 & Fig.9.3. Contents of the inside of a female granary

By way of contrast, the neighbour's *guyo ya* (with whom I worked regularly) hosts numerous things (Fig.9.4 & Fig.9.5), such as cotton cloths or indigo dyed cloth – the chemical dye of which has a particular smell reminiscent of gasoline –, cotton batting packed into a basket to be spun, a smelly, goat-leather belt, the rest of the

food and, finally, a bouquet of spices, herbs and onions blended with Chinese camphor body cream. These scented elements are hung on wooden bars and accumulate in the bottom of the compartments.



Fig.9.4. Cloths and cotton to be spun



Fig.9.5. Clay pots, sand, onions and a raffia bag



Fig.9.6. Hibiscus and baobab leaves

In the bottom compartment, women often store their harvest that mostly consists of groundnuts, hibiscus, baobab leaves (Fig. 9.6), and beans, all of which can be sold in the markets. For instance, grilled peanuts are sold in small plastic bags as a delicacy while they can also be ground to make oil. The dried flowers of the red hibiscus are filtered and turned into a juice called *dableni*. Cotton is spun and then sold to be woven by men. All of these constitute women's business the money of which is spent on spices, cooking utensils, cloth and jewellery, body cream and soap. Finally, the space located under the granary between the pillars called *guyo bolo* meaning the 'behind' of the granary, is also used as a storage space. Technically speaking, it exists to minimize the heat inside of the granary since the bottom of the container remains relatively cool and airy. This is notably where the chickens shelter during hot afternoons. Large pieces of broken containers, broken knives, and metal tools such as an axe are kept under the granary where they are out of reach of the children.

2.2. *Guyo ya* for men: storing magic and ritual objects.

The men's *guyo ya* is generally used to store the millet, which is also contained in the *guyo ana*, their ritual and magic objects (called *geru* and *geru dogu*) that are stuffed between the millet fingers. In some compounds, however, these are contained in the *guyo togu* which I have described in chapter 8. The aim of these objects is to protect the owner and his families or to kill enemies. As told to me by my informants, the earth structure of the container acts like a shell that encapsulates and retains the aggression and powerful effect of its content. As a woman, I was not able to examine these objects. The information I collected and which I use here is based on my informants' explanations. These data constitute a common knowledge that is also shared by Dogon women. The functioning and materiality of these artefacts is kept secret. I am mostly concerned here with how these objects relate to the granary container.

To my understanding, amulets, medicines, shrines, altars, and sorcery materials are intimately attached to the person as they constitute a heritage since they are prepared, curated, and managed by the individual in order to serve his own needs, such as to fight against malevolent entities and his own fears. These artefacts are generally adapted to suit the person who owns them. As voiced by an elderly informant, these objects act as a bridge between the 'visible' world of humans and the 'invisible' world of the dead and the spirits and, therefore, enable access to particular forces and knowledge that empowers the individual. Although the objects function as powerful entities, their effect only takes place from the moment the object becomes activated through sacrificial practice during which words in the form of incantations or prayers are pronounced.

Preserving the secret mechanism(s) of these objects is of vital importance to its owner. Thus, it is the management of these multiple amulets, altars, and shrines – i.e. the knowledge and practices required to use them – that must be kept secret. In other

words, because the practice of maintaining, activating, or using the artefacts involves particular knowledge, language, and gestures, the nature of the secrecy concerns the 'way things are done'. This comprises particular substances, recipes and procedures that are retained by the owner. My informant indicated that if someone seizes somebody else's objects, the thief can identify what the owner protects himself from. The role the earth granary as an architectural container can be seen in the management of the inside content. It consists of a way to contain and keep things secret, that is to keep control of the objects. Similarly, on a collective level, the *omolo* protections of the village are buried in the ground while the mud cone that stands at the surface simply indicates the presence of the object underground. Burying these artefacts in soil constitutes another means of concealing knowledge about them.

The *guyo ya* granary can be seen to 'outline' its own physical boundaries of concealment. In fact, as can be observed in some compounds, the edifice is surrounded by a series of stones that prevent women, children, and visitors from approaching. The same enclosure sort of enclosing mechanism is found around sacred sites such as around specific trees. As proposed by Nooter (1993: 141), secrecy boundaries can be of three kinds: 'those that spatially separate people; those that socially delineate gender, age and class; and those that spiritually divide and bridge the living and the dead. These are porous, shifting and complex (...)'. While the Dogon female granary distances men and women by creating an individual space for privacy, the male granary allows the men to constitute or empower their self through objects; these they manage as their personal belongings that they accumulate in the granary. As an envelope the granary reinforces the secrecy of the content through containment and concealment. In other words, by sequestering the objects, these become more powerful since they remain un-revealed and unreachable. The container discourages people to approach them. The *guyo ya* used by men also

contains millet that remains the exclusive property of men. I shall now examine this precious content as well as the way it is managed.

2.3. The *guyo ya* as a container for millet

Millet grain, or *Pennisetum Glaucum* called *yu* by the Dogon, constitutes a staple crop that is widely cultivated throughout West Africa as soon as the rain falls. It is known for its good nutritional properties. In fact, this cereal that looks somewhat like a finger is high in protein and energy. Moreover, it possesses a remarkable adaptability to adverse soils and, when the crops do not fail due to a shortage of rain, it constitutes a form of food security. Many alternatives to millet exist such as sorghum, beans or *fonio* but these resources are secondary and less widely cultivated. Particular value is attached to millet. In fact, the cereal constitutes the dominant field crop and is used primarily for home consumption although individual stocks are sold in the market before the start of the agrarian cycle. As told by my informants, millet cultures are the product of the ancestors who own the land and harvests result from intensive hard labour. Hence, all concentration and effort is put into the cultivation of millet. Rice constitutes another alternative but remains expensive and is generally consumed during the main celebrations. Thus millet remains one of the main concerns of Dogon people, as it rules many aspects of their ritual, social life or daily life in the compound. It is therefore resistant to change or substitution. Furthermore, I was told that the cereal is even more important than onions, is seen as a symbol of the culture and identity of the Dogon; as they say 'Millet is the food of the Dogon. It makes us strong. Without it we cannot work well'. In the same vein, the grain is seen as a product of hard and intensive work that is grown on the ancestors' land, and results from centuries of cultivation. It has therefore become a form of heritage. Shared as a meal and always drunk collectively, millet constitutes an element of social cohesion (Jolly 2004).

As proposed by Bouju (1984), millet is present in all socio-economic, cultural, and symbolic aspects of Dogon daily life. For instance, when sacrificed under the form of libations to their God *Ama* or to the ancestors, the cereal functions as a meat offering would, by acting as a bridge between the supernatural world and the world of humans. Due to its life force, the cereal endows a particular power that with its own ritual consequences. I was told by one of my informants in Bandiagara, the cereal is considered as gendered. According to him, while millet ear as a phallic element is collected and preserved by men, the grain stands as a female element since it is sown by woman, thus it carries fertility principles. However, millet seed is the property of men and is safely conserved in a leather bag in the female *guyo ya* owned by men.

2.3.1. Some aspects of the symbolism of the millet granary

As proposed by Prussin, the granary: ‘as a storage container [...] is not only a metaphor for physical well-being but a receptacle for the spiritual source of life, a symbol for the continuity of life and the future, receptacle for the grain that will guarantee life’s sustenance from [one] harvest to another.’(1999:426) New or renewed granaries as well as their number testify to success in life. They express the family composition and therefore the number of people to feed. They also reflect hard work, technical knowledge and skills in building and crucially the management of food resources. To borrow again from Prussin: ‘granaries stand as a metaphor for prosperity and fertility; the form of these extended dome-shaped mounds evokes a gender association...’ (Prussin 1999: 427). Through a detailed examination of West African architecture, following Lebeuf (1961), Prussin reports analogies between the roundness of the material form, its content and pregnant women: ‘A full granary is a pregnant granary. And to be sure, [a] clay pot containing the seeds for the next year’s planting is often sealed and buried deep within its womb-like interior (Lebeuf). The

granary's form, its taut, close-to-bursting walls recalling the tight skin of pregnant woman close to term, is only one of its feminine attributes' (Prussin: 1999:427).

Thus, the symbolic explanation tells us that the top of the granary as being round refers to a woman's womb when pregnant, as was also suggested by some of my informants. Hence, by applying the shape to the building, the power and efficacy of the inside content is ensured since the womb symbolizes fertility and therefore life. Indeed, I was told by men that containers, such as clay pots or in this case the top of the granary, 'look a bit like a woman'. They always say so with an expression of amusement upon their face, but would never tell me why the container resembles a woman or a woman a container. This might suggest the roundness of women as underlined by Calame-Griaule (1968: 168). For Griaule while the 'genderedness' of the object could be explained by its respective male or female uses, it was the storing practices in their relations to the geometry of the building, along with the analogous comparing of the edifice to the shape of a woman's body's that caused him to view Dogon granaries as anthropomorphized (Griaule 1966: 29 in French version). According to Griaule, the granary (generally) appears in the Dogon cosmology as a civilizing element that came down to Earth as an ark in immemorial times. In this claim, which has never been confirmed to me by the villagers, Griaule specifies that the granary is also symbolically located in men's collarbones where, according to his informant Ogotemeli, all spiritual principles reside. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I was told that the granary is built so as to fit a whole human body. This conveys an idea of body scale rather than straight anthropomorphism as proposed by Griaule.

On a practical level, my informants told me that the round top enables an individual to stand up in a granary and therefore to better manage his belongings. The *guyo ana* which is also used as a container for millet possesses a flat roof that facilitates the storing of millet fingers. As we shall see the fingers are laid out in a particular way in

order to preserve them and to its extraction later in such a way not to break the millet-fingers. Therefore, the container frames and stabilizes its content. Originally, the two types of granary shape and name served simply to distinguish which gender used which container. However, the female granary is also used by men to store their belongings as well as to conserve millet ears in the bottom compartments. According to my informants, this is a strategy to confuse potential thieves or witches.



Fig. 9.7. Libation on a *guyo ana*

Although the architecture of the granary has been planned so as to prevent the damage of its content, the inside is sometimes symbolically protected. In fact, at the approach of the rainy season, some people offer a libation of millet (Fig.9.7) to the granaries as a means to ensure future abundant millet harvests. The same process is carried out for the *daba* hoe that is used to break open the earth during the sowing process. The libation is undertaken as a means to foster good work. Such libations also serve more purely technical ends, cold ashes can be spread at the bottom of the

edifice in order to preserve millet against parasites. It also protects sorghum and sesame. Millet also possesses its own protective envelope. Each millet grain is contained in a sheath that protects it against insects such as ants and termites. Other pests such as mice are eradicated by smoking out the granary with chillies that are burnt off in a small clay pot that rests on three stones (to avoid burning down the edifice) and that is placed at the bottom of the granary. Then, if necessary the step is repeated by fumigating with the pulp of the calabash fruit. The two fumigations are particularly efficient and were used in the past to kill people. Both, and in particular the calabash pulp causes the lungs to burst.

2.3.2. Harvesting and filling up the body of the container

According to my observations, storing millet when the harvest is abundant is a collective endeavour. After regular and accurate evaluations of the state of the crops, the head of the family starts cutting the fingers and packing them on carts (Fig.9.8). I was told that the task is generally carried out by men, although I saw women helping. As the harvest failed for certain families, notably mine, the ears were pounded in the fields (instead of the compound) and brought back in large plastic bags to be stored, this time in the house. As mentioned above, the state of the harvest can vary significantly from one family's fields to another and from one village to another. In fact, when the rains fall in Ireli, a village about 4 km from Tireli, it does not necessarily rain in Tireli. Consequently, some areas have more favourable harvests than others. Similarly, the quality of the soil varies from one place to another. I was also told that today in some places, as harvests tend to be bad, everybody is taking great care with their crops. Generally speaking about, collecting, transporting, and filling a granary are tasks that are always done by close family members who trust each other. Under no circumstances can a stranger come and help. According to my informant, people always hide what they have obtained to avoid jealousy and to prevent people from stealing. Hence, each family has a

different schedule to collect crops in their fields. For much the same reasons they avoid providing details about their harvests. Once the cereal has been brought back to the compound, it is normally left to dry on top of the *gudjo* roof.



Fig.9.8. Millet harvest packed on a cart

After a couple of days, once the fingers are dry enough, they are stored in the granary. The *guyo ya* of one of my informants that I examined, is composed of two compartments in the bottom and one large one at the top. As my informants were annoyed to see me systematically taking pictures of everything, they asked me not to photograph while they were storing. While some people were amused by what I was doing, others just found it annoying as they cared about their image on the picture as they were sweating and badly dressed.

As far as the storing process is concerned, the millet fingers are first packed against the far back wall of the granary. Then, the front space becomes filled up successively in a similar way. The granary contains up to four columns of millet fingers in the two

bottom compartments. The person standing outside the granary passes the fingers to the second person who stands inside and stacks the matter. Millet fingers are placed in layers (Fig. 9.9) and in staggered rows as a means to stabilize the packed content. This tight and compact disposition also serves to prevent rodents getting inside the rows where they would damage, and thus waste, the foodstuff. If the millet ears are well stacked in the granary, the cereal can last for up to seven years. Once filled to a certain point, the person standing inside gets out of the edifice and the two people carry on the filling of the construction from the outside. They stop once they reach the level of the door. Each compartment is filled up one after the other.

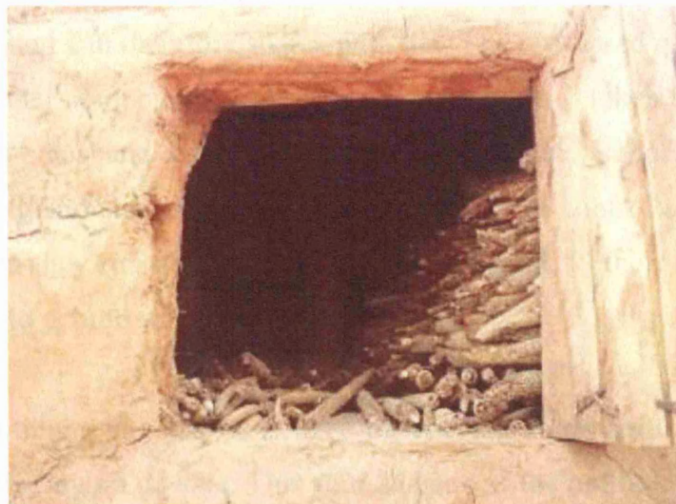


Fig. 9.9. Layout of millet fingers in the granary

Millet is never thrown into the granary but is delicately organized in order to favour its conservation; it is said that the millet would run away if it is not handled with care. While one person stands outside and passes the ears in, a second stands inside and stacks them in the first compartment of the granary. The cereal must be treated with respect. Similar attitudes can be observed when pounding or sowing millet with bare feet.

2.3.3. Emptying the granary as an embodied practice of concealment

Every week, depending on the consumption of the family, the husband opens the granary where millet is stacked, to extract the fingers that are then processed into food by his wife. The quantity of grain obtained is then put in a basket or in one of the thick raffia bags back in another *guyo ya* owned by the husband. Everyday, the wife receives a quantity of cereal that is calculated by her husband in order to cook. As observed in the compound of my host family as well as in that of the neighbour, which is occupied by a widow, a large quantity of fingers are taken out of the granary to be pounded. In the neighbours, the grains are then stored in the *guyo ya* of her deceased husband that belongs to her elder son who stores his harvest in his mother's compound and therefore shares with her. The processed quantity is used for a few days. In other compounds, I observed that the grain is taken out of the granary twice a day by the husband and is given to his wife to cook. Hence, women have the task of processing and cooking the cereal but do not have control over the quantities they cook. When they run out of millet, they have to ask to their husband to climb into the granary to get the cereal out.

One of the first things that can be noticed on opening a granary is the sound of the wooden door grinding on its axis. This sound is one of the multiple daily sounds that characterizes Dogon domestic life that in tandem with the rhythm of the pestles knocking at the bottom of the wooden mortar testifies to the activity in the compound. The second noticeable thing is the warm, soft, and dusty smell that the edifice releases once open. Every week, depending on the consumption of the family, the husband opens the granary where the ears are stocked, to extract some of them and give them to his wife to be processed. This generally large quantity of grain is then put back in another *guyo ya*. This is separate to the quantity that he gives to her daily to prepare the meals. However, nowadays the grain is more frequently stored in a large plastic bag that is placed into the house. It is difficult to generalize about the

storing process since variations can be observed clearly from a compound to another. In fact, I have, but rarely observed that the fingers were pounded daily. It requires a lot of work indeed and therefore lots of time. I have observed that in some of the families who migrate to the plain to cultivate, the remainder of the harvest still left in May is pounded before the start of temporary exodus. This is due to the intensive cultivation work as well as the problem of transporting the ears to the plain.

The movements and the positioning of the body in order to empty the granary remain the same as for filling it. As the fingers are taken out, a cavity in the packed rows of millet is created. From there, the body can be positioned in order to gain access to the rest of the interior of the container. The extraction of millet from the granary is a relatively acrobatic procedure. In fact, as shown by one of my informants, he stands on a wooden stick that helps him to reach the opening (Fig. 9.10 & Fig. 9.11). Then, he grasps the tiny door frame by the hands, lifting his body up all at once. Relying on the strength in his arms alone, his head is brought in first, then when his torso is completely inside the building, his legs stick horizontally out of it (Fig. 9.12). They then tip up slightly to give him balance before he folds them placing his knees on the door frame. Finally, he stands up inside on the dividers of the granary and jumps down into the upper compartment (Fig. 9.13 & Fig. 9.14). The container is built to fit the body of a person in order for its owner to better reach its content. The cereal is gathered all around the body in order to facilitate its collection whilst remaining unseen from the outside. There is indeed no chance to glimpse anything through the opening since the body blocks this. Consequently, the very structure or design of the granary requires a technique of the body, particularly the opening, which the body must squirm through.

The small openings of the granary structure discourage entry to it. As described, access to the building remains difficult, as it requires considerable effort, suppleness, and time. This dissuades people from stealing since thieves will not have the time to

take things without being caught. It is impossible to hide oneself in the granary for a long time without becoming dehydrated, as the square and restricted dark space remains narrow and hot. Hence, its particular configuration enables the owner to keep the inside private, to maintain it as well as to reinforce the concealment of its content. It also defines gender distinctions through the management of hidden properties. By canalizing the path of movement and the limiting of body access, the *guyo ya* granary as a closed structure, controls the expression of both the authority of the content as well as of its owner.

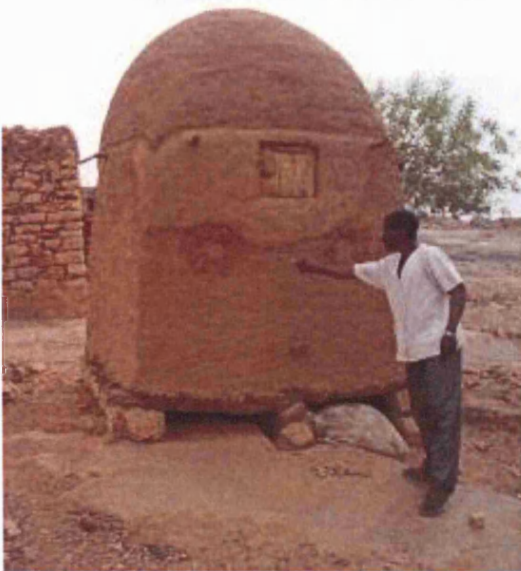


Fig. 9.10. Overview of the *guyo ya*

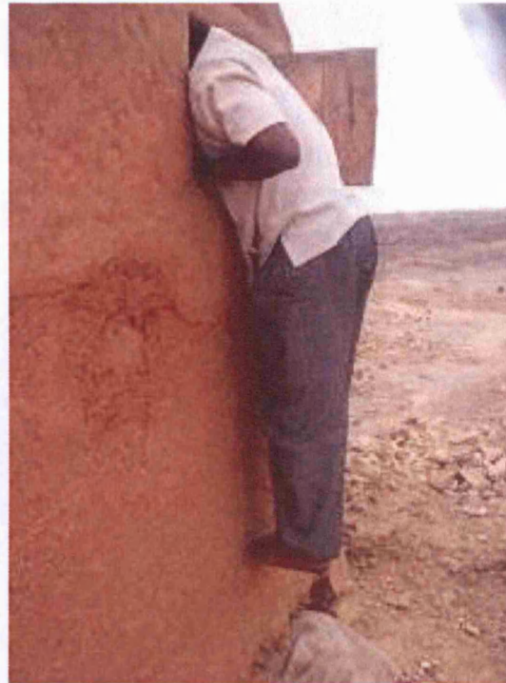


Fig. 9.11. Entering the granary



Fig. 9.12. Getting half of the body into the container



Fig. 9.13. Jumping into the upper compartment

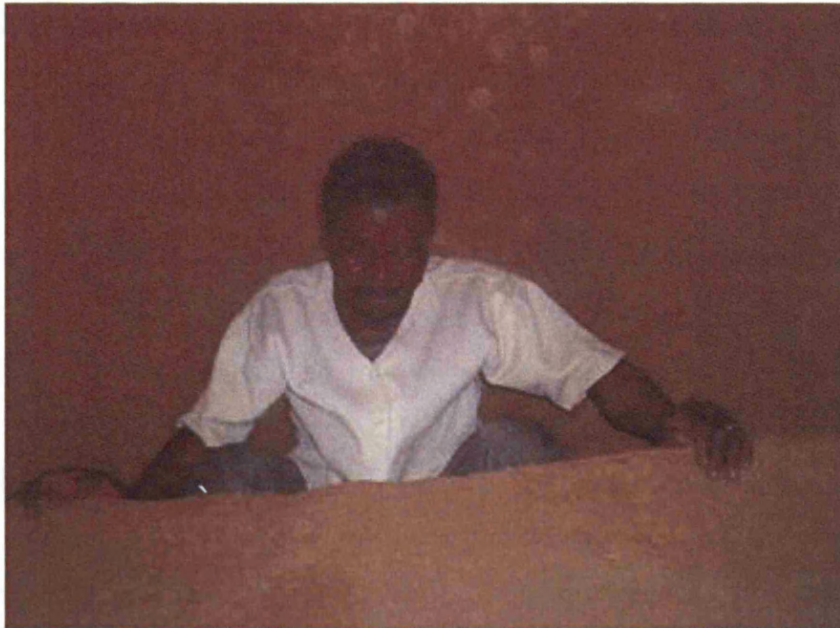


Fig.9.14. Accomplishment of the movement

Consequently, this body technique that is framed and conducted by the structure of the granary is performed as a means of using the body to hide the content. Hence, concealment is, basically, ensured by the small opening. As specified by one of my informants, the movements required to get in and out as well as to grab the ears are operated slowly and with care. These too are dictated by the granary design and define attitudes of respect towards the precious content as well as towards the harmony of the compound's life. The same design and control behaviour can be observed in the architecture of the house as I have shown in chapter five. In fact, the small size of the door was meant to keep the inside private as well as to frame behaviour, i.e. to ensure that people enter the house with a calm attitude or, in my informant's words, to 'bring the good feelings in and to leave the bad ones out'. I have also shown (in chapter 5) that this system of a small opening also applies to the *Togu na* or men's house in order to maintain, notably, the privacy of the inside as well as to exert control over excessive behaviour when conflicts are debated. Unlike the compound's round open space or its entrance vestibule that engages social interactions and creates semi-public places, the narrow granary entrance, its dark,

packed and stuffy inside space and atmosphere enables the space to be kept private, and thus to maintain and, potentially, to reinforce concealment.

2.3.4. Concealing the hunger

In context of food shortage, devising strategies to find millet remains the task of men. While most families have to rely upon their cereal banks, others stave off hunger by selling their meagre harvests. In fact, reserves of millet – which for most people is all they have – are sold at high prices as the price of millet shoots up during periods of hunger. As observed in my host family, in which millet reserves were already completely depleted by early April, the grain was regularly bought from another compound. Hence, those who can manage to reach the villages of the plain such as Koporo where millet is sold in the market at an average of 12,000¹¹³ CFA before the rainy season, buy 100 kilo bags before starting cultivation. As millet stocks decrease, the price increases to 17,500 and in some places can reach up to 21,000 CFA. Hence, there are always shortages, since millet stocks are sold to make cash that is then spent upon rice, which still remains cheaper than millet. Shortages constitute particular forms of economy. For those who do not have the money to buy millet, every grain is saved.

When food is scarce, the quantity of food served per meal is reduced to the minimum and many subterfuges are applied by the cook to hide scarcity and to maintain one's dignity. For instance, the millet cake that is presented as a round loaf in a wooden bowl is hollowed in the middle to the maximum to contain a maximum of sauce made out of baobab leaves. The lack of food can be felt as the hand dips a portion of cake into the large hole containing sauce. The meal is always shaped and presented

¹¹³ 1,000 CFA = 1 Sterling pound.

in the container in such a way as to not show the lack of food. In this respect, the container acts as a camouflage. When food is scarce, most people rely on tree leaves while the children hunt for reptiles. Finally, millet cream is made out of double the usual quantity of water and with very little millet powder. Here again, the taste and texture of the liquid signify the lack of resources. Although fruits and vegetables such as guava, papaya, salads, tomatoes, green beans, peppers, and aubergines are cultivated in the gardens straight after the millet harvest, these are still considered as 'useless'. In fact, the millet-sauce-based-diet is never changing. In the Dogon view, fruits and vegetables constitute a western idea of diet that is neither valuable nor nourishing for a Dogon whose energy for daily hard work needs to be found in the hard millet paste that fills up and hardens the stomach. Although they are consumed, tomatoes and salad are still called the food of the tourists, and do not constitute part of a meal. An extreme shortage occurs when the granaries are completely empty and the husband is unable to sustain his family. Such a situation is, however, kept hidden from others. Women pretend to have something to cook by setting up a fire. The smoke that pours out the household manifests as a sign of 'normality', showing the neighbours that there is something to eat. Although most villagers are in the same situation, scarcity is hidden within the compound enclosure and it is not talked about for reasons of dignity. In the same way, by keeping the fire going, woman attempt to cope psychologically with the drastic situation.

2.3.5. Thievery, witchcraft, and dilapidation

Men maintain their control over the family unit by managing scarcity and the anxiety associated with perceptions of an empty granary. Concealing also prevents undue waste of scarce resources and impedes witchcraft and stealing. As told to me by the uncle: 'If my neighbour sees that I've got food and he hasn't any left, he is going to have to resort to witchcraft by jealousy'. According to him, witches act out of jealousy and kill 'successful' people in order to split families up. A wealthy man

who possesses many resources and is known for being a good entrepreneur stands a good chance of becoming a victim of rivalries. For similar reasons, theft occurs in periods of extreme scarcity.

Women's access to the granary is forbidden by men. They are said by men to be particularly prone to waste food. The men of the village would openly tell me that: 'If women were to access a granary, the building is certain to be emptied quickly. They would take all millet to sell on the market. Also, they often prepare too much food and waste it'. The wasteful character of a woman can be read by men according to the way she walks. In fact, as reported by an elder: 'If you see a woman walking with the tip of her feet opened, she is a wastrel. But, a woman walking with the feet towards the inside, she is surely a saver'. Similarly, a woman wearing a wrapper that is folded on the left side is considered as an 'easy', unstable, and unreliable woman. A woman's character is thus embodied. Women are generally described as irresponsible, lazy, disorganized, and as bad managers. Consequently, women are never allowed to know about the bottom of the granary.

Men and women work on two different temporalities and economies. In fact, men define themselves as saving for the long-term while women are seen as spending on a daily basis or as saving a very minimum that will be squandered anyway in the market. Women's cash is also spent on large amounts of millet destined to be brewed and rapidly distributed in return for cash in the market. According to the men, most women do not do the mathematics. Consequently, they end up wasting their time and energy in brewing without making any profit. Nevertheless, as countered by the women, brewing as a female task is necessary so as to maintain social networks. Selling and sharing beer constitutes a leisure time activity for them that is, one of those rare moments when they can enjoy themselves instead of struggling through their routine. In other words, women need to brew in order to make themselves socially active and generally visible in the village. Another attitude that is commonly

picked up on by the men, concerns the spendthrift character of young women. They say that women spend all the money upon unimportant items such as cloth, jewellery, soap, and body cream for themselves and for their children that they often spoil. As explained by a group of women, friends of mine, it is crucial for them to stay dignified by wearing decent clothes and taking care of their skin even in when food is scarce. Hence, they put on their jewellery and do their hair no matter if they are rich or poor. While talking about men's and women's respective roles in finding food, my elder host sister would categorically tell me that it is the responsibility of her husband to find millet. Hence, what she earns is spent on spices, cooking utensils, and things that are strictly for herself. If a husband is not fulfilling his task, shame falls on him. As she said: 'People don't like being looked at as poor. If a man mismanages his family, the wife leaves. Then, he is on his own, unhappy, his reputation will be ruined with others, because you know people talk about it'. It should be emphasized that the management of food resources and, therefore, of millet is in some compounds also carried out by women. In fact, women are increasingly taking the initiative when it comes to finding food. They create associations in which they discuss financial matters and try to develop strategies to cope with food shortages. Similarly, multiple NGOs and organizations have set up some programmes to support Dogon women or '*plans d'appui aux femmes Dogon*' that provide micro credits to Dogon women to start their own business as well as to manage the production and the selling of craft such as indigo cloth, pottery, or jewellery. Therefore, these women 'entrepreneurs' make money for their own expenses as well as to sustain the family since they cannot rely on their husband. They carry on with their domestic tasks and they also contribute food while as they say in a joking tone, men are wandering around in the village, chatting and drinking tea.

Consequently, the potential existence and level of cereal in the granary is concealed by men. In their discourse and practice, concealment impedes witchcraft and stealing

as well as it prevents gambling, wastage, and averts psychological breakdown among women. On that particular point, concealment remains relative because as it is they who process and prepare food, women can always guess the state of food resources. Thus whether or not a shortage is perceived by the women depends on the men's entrepreneurial strategies working before shortage is discovered by the women through the act of cooking. It is up to the men to develop strategies to find millet as it remains his responsibility. According to the men, the extent of the granary's content is kept 'silent', in order to avoid a general state of panic in the women that can lead to a psychological breakdown on the women's side of the compound, and a refusal by them to keep up with the daily tasks such as supplying the compound with water. Issues about food stocks and their dearth are never inquired in to nor discussed by men and women. In fact, men and women tend to carry out their own tasks on their sides of the compound, without taking over each other 'business'. Help occurs through the complementarity of their roles as individuals, not in terms of sharing each other duties or taking on what another could not do. However, as we have seen, some Dogon women are taking personal initiatives in order to cope with food shortages. Hence, it seems that concealment consists of a means for men to maintain their control over the family unit, that is to maintain their authority, role, and power which, increasingly, could easily be taken over by the women through their own initiatives and strategies.

3. Conclusion

I have shown that the structure of the female *guyo ya* regulates behaviour and restricts access to foodstuffs as well as it defines gender relationships and their boundaries in the compound. In the same way as the symbolism attached to it converges towards principles of the fertility of the cereal and, by analogy, of the women. The prosperity of the families' manifests itself through the round structure of the building that also references a woman's womb. The Dogon granary, as a

structure for containing food and property, controls and frames bodily movement and behaviour as a means to conceal, and thus manage, its content. The daily practices of the gendered container reveals particular ways of concealing men's property from women as well as from the other people. While my examination has focused on these practices with the particular context of a food shortage, the level of cereal stored in the granary is, necessarily, hidden from women. This is done as a means to prevent them being wasteful if the granary is full or from them suffering fear, anxiety, and breakdown if the container is empty. In the same way, its design prevents thievery from outside the compound or by women, as, according to the men, they could easily spend the content or, even gossip about it to a neighbour. This would then attract thieves. However, as I have also shown, this material practice of concealing constitutes a means by which the men can maintain their control over the women as well as their power within the compound.

Consequently, as an emblematic domestic feature, the female granary represents men's and women's roles, status and, metaphorically, their own bodies. I have proposed that this built element objectifies, in its own materiality, cosmological principles that relate to society, and to relationships between men and women and the environment. The material practice of concealment reveals a particular form of containment that is about gathering, protecting, and bounding life inside the earth container. In a same way, when empty the granary limits and conceals fears about scarcity and therefore death. The female earth granary is a Pandora's Box that enacts as a control device designed by men and objectifies a cosmology of scarcity that encompasses men's and women's perceptions about food as well as about each other. When open, the full container expresses life. However, while empty it expresses poverty, fear, and death, while the smells released by the bottom of the container maintain hopes for a better harvest in the future.

10.

Conclusion.

Towards a philosophy of containment.

In this thesis, I have explored one aspect of Dogon material culture that I have defined in terms of containers. By focusing on the daily embodied practice of material forms, that is, of the landscape and the built environment, I have looked at implicit forms of worldviews that gather into a generative cosmology or cosmology in the 'making' (Barth 1987). This refers to the production of embedded and embodied knowledge (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Jackson 1983, Bourdieu 1990) about the world that is revealed in the course of everyday life, through an ongoing pragmatic and symbolic material practice of containers. I have proposed that containers constitute an active and reflexive ground for shared agencies, a template with which to think about the world as well as to make oneself in the world.

I have suggested that Dogon containers enfold particular processes of building and dwelling (Heidegger 1962), which I have defined in terms of a philosophy of containment. This refers to the act of containing oneself in the world through the making of boundaries, the dimension of which I have explored through an examination of the diachronic constitution of the territory of Tireli as well as of the daily 'making' of the Dogon compound. Boundaries generate particular senses of attachment to the world and create an ontological security (Giddens 1984) in a scarce environment. The ontology of the milieu essentially brings into perspective a recurrent fundamental instability generated by food shortages, precarious health, long periods of drought and an on-going process of desertification. I have exposed

the protection system that surrounds the territory with which calamities are kept symbolically at bay. We can thus view a philosophy of containment as a centripetal gathering process (Heidegger 1962). This generates a sense of collectedness or togetherness that is achieved through ritual reactivation(s) of the territory's altars and during the *Bulu* celebration that manifests the renewal of the land and of the social network (as was revealed in chapter 2). Both principles are found in the materiality (Miller 2005) of the landscape and of the compound as containing devices but also in the substances, matter, and elements that they gather inside of them. In fact, the material practice of concealment in a female granary was revealed (in chapter 9) as a particular form of containment that is about gathering, protecting, and bounding the life inside the earth container. The same principle was shown to be at work through my examination of the collection and curation of rubbish inside of the compound (in chapter 7).

I proposed that Dogon containers as unified objectify a philosophy of containment that reveals local ways of 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962) and, in particular, ways of 'being-at-home in a world container' as inspired by Jackson (1995). Containers create particular locales in which people inhabit the world and via this process define their world through an inside/outside dialectic (Warnier 2006), a process through which the Dogon world is constituted. This operates through people's kinetic and sensory experience of the landscape and of the home. This I have envisaged within a praxeological (Warnier 1999, 2001) and a phenomenological approach (Heidegger 1962, Merleau-Ponty 1962, Schutz 1967), which I have framed in an anthropology of techniques (Leroi-Gourhan 1965, Haudricourt 1968, Lemonnier 1976, 1992, 1993), realized here through an examination of bodily movements in the 'making' and 'doing' of containers as a means to explore implicit forms of worldviews that are expressed through bodies' relationships to containers and the matter that constitutes them. This was shown

notably in chapter 8 by my employing of the methodological tool of operational sequences.

I have envisaged Dogon containers as a self contained model that is locally defined through a centripetal, anthropocentric, and an inside/outside spatial logic. Indeed, I have proposed that Tireli's territory is composed of the village or 'inside' that is held by the bush that surrounds it as an 'outside'. Both areas of the inside and outside surface are protected by a series of altars, which at the same time define the boundaries of the territory. These are spatial divisions of the landscape, as well as temporal ones as they separate the cultural world of the living from nature as well as from the supernatural world. I have also conceptualized the landscape container as a cosmoscape that enfolds both the earth and the air that contains the village and the compounds that contain the granaries. From this perspective, the Dogon world is metaphorically similar to a system of calabashes, in which the largest one contains a series of smaller ones. Thus, the Dogon world can also be defined as a metonym, being holistic rather than individual. The idea of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts constitutes and frames this particular Dogon sense of containment.

I have shown that the Dogon landscape and compound constitute folded surfaces of permanent or temporary inscription and interaction between the individual and the world through an inside/outside dialectics in a way that is similar to a skin envelope (Anzieu 1989, Benthien 2002). The landscape as the skin of the earth contains and retains the substance of the world. I have proposed that the outside of the village or domesticated bush constitutes a 'life-giving' reservoir (Van Beek & Banga 1992) from which people extract their daily means of subsistence. The domesticated bush constitutes a surface of inscription that gets written on by, among other things, people's footprints (Ingold 2004) through people's daily crossing and seasonal taskscapes (Ingold 2000). The texture of the landscape (Tilley 1994, Ingold 2000) is therefore constantly marked and shaped by movement of people and of things. The

dynamics of movement manifests themselves through the motion of the body, that is through daily activities such as collecting foodstuff in the bush, cultivating, walking, planning the land, or, on a domestic level, building a compound, gathering and dissociating domestic waste, making or storing in a granary. I have shown that the act of daily walking through the land and the village constitutes an act of appropriating the place, as well as it attributes new configurations to the place such as, for instance, to canalize the tourism that constitutes an increasingly important economy to the Dogon. In short, I have proposed here a thesis on movement that primarily concerns body movement in relation to the material forms of containers as well as their content.

In addition, the shaping of the landscape also occurs through modernization, seasonal migrations, and religious conversion, all of which constitute other forms of movement that are transforming Dogon society and worldviews. The dynamics at work here are characterized by a process of extraversion that defines the adoption of external cultural elements to achieve local goals (Bayart 2005). Notably, this was shown through the planning of the built environment of the village of Tireli and the modernization of the compounds that now extend at the foot of the scree and indicate a progressive expansion of the material boundaries of the village. I have shown that the dwelling and building process of the village of Tireli occurs through a dialectic between movement and fixity that concerns the foundation of the village, and the bounding of the landscape as well as of the compound. I have demonstrated that the act of fixing is both symbolic, such as in the case of the magical protection of the compound and pragmatic, that is, for instance, through the repeated and shared embodied tasks that are allocated to fixed places in the compound, which create continuity, stability and prosperity in life. The acts of building on the scree, fixing the built elements and the land through altars constitute another form of inscriptions that define and map out the land. I have suggested that the altars materialize Dogon cultural identities, that is the history of Dogon migration, settlement of the

escarpment, and the bounding and protection of space. Finally, the weather as constitutive of the atmosphere attributes particular configurations to the landscape and the built environment, while, the air, being contiguous with the landscape, impacts on it. The weather such as the wind and the rain give substance to the land. By blowing or pouring down they inscribe things on the surface or make things disappear. In summary, the weather leaves impressions on the landscape and therefore on the built environment that are either permanent or ephemeral. I have shown that the compound constitutes another surface of inscription, on which the traces of human life accumulate such as on the ground of the compound as domestic waste or on the walls as hand prints and smoke.

I have examined Dogon containers by looking at the dynamic of movement that is applied to these material forms and which defines them. Movement, generated from the inside and the outside of the container, constitutes a dialectic through which the Dogon material world and therefore worldviews are formed. I have shown that Dogon containers remain permeable and reversible, through my explication of the multiple forms of movements involved in their making and doing. I have shown the porosity of Dogon boundaries through an examination of how domestic waste exists inside and outside of the compound and constantly flows between the two spaces, causing the inside of the container to become its outside and vice versa. For instance, the detritus collected in the home is brought (and in some instances returned) to the field to fertilize the soil. Thus, through the flow of waste, the life cycle of people and of the environment becomes intertwined in one same *re-cosmology*. Within this same view, the earth granary through its manufacturing process and daily uses materializes the temporality of the landscape. I have proposed that the domestic container functions as a conjuncture of environmental and human life cycles. The manufacturing process of an earth granary defines a cosmology in the making (Barth 1987) that consists of a process of perpetual re-creating of the domestic environment that contains people and, in doing so, conveys a sense of

regeneration in tandem with the renewal of activity, environment, self, and society (Bloch & Parry 1982).

Consequently, by looking at the daily making and doing of Dogon containers, that is of the landscape on the one hand and of the compound on the other, I have examined implicit forms of worldviews that are expressed by Dogon people through their embodied practice of material forms. Therefore, I have proposed a cosmology that brings together people and the environment into one same container. This Dogon cosmology as an agency that is as fundamentally relational and changeable defines here through processes of shaping that define through modernization, the movements of things and of people. This creates a fluidity between the inside and the outside of things. From within this perspective, new boundaries are generated or expand, keeping the Dogon village and its reality at the centre. Thus, I have proposed a Dogon cosmology through boundary making and gathering processes that creates a particular form of containment, i.e. that creates an ontological security in a particularly harsh environment in which scarcity of the means of subsistence is the norm. Hence, through an account of the forms of Dogon containers, I have proposed the development of a philosophy of containment that concerns ways of 'being-in-the-world' or 'being-at-home in a world container' through the embodied experience of the materiality of the world as a container.

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