

Third Edition RISK MANAGEMENT

Knowledge, Forecasting, Prevention, Protection, Planning, Preparedness 20 - 27 July 2025



TITLE: CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MALI

HAMET ALPHA DIOP ARCHITECTE

MALA



email: hamdiop2003@yahoo.fr

MALI 21 July 2025

Mali is a West African country with a surface area of 1,241,238 km². It is a vast country whose subsoil is renowned for its wealth of precious stones and various fossils (gold, oil, gas, lithium, etc.).

A land rich in cultural diversity (numerous distinctions and UNESCO classification), the territory has been home to several powerful West African empires, including the Ghana Empire, the Mali Empire, and the Songhai Empire, which dominated trans-Saharan trade at the time.

An ancient land of history, civilization, knowledge, and know-how, it harbors remarkable tangible and intangible heritage (the manuscripts of Timbuktu, the Tomb of Askia, the Cliffs of Bandiagara (Dogon Country), the ancient cities of Djenné, etc.).

Mali's cultural heritage is a treasure whose sustainability is important to all humanity. This rich heritage is our common good and must be passed on to future generations because it embodies the identity and values of an entire people. Populations and institutions strive to preserve it even in times of crisis. Awareness of the plight of the population and its assets after these unfortunate events (various crises) has led to reflections on the restoration, conservation, enhancement, and development of sites.

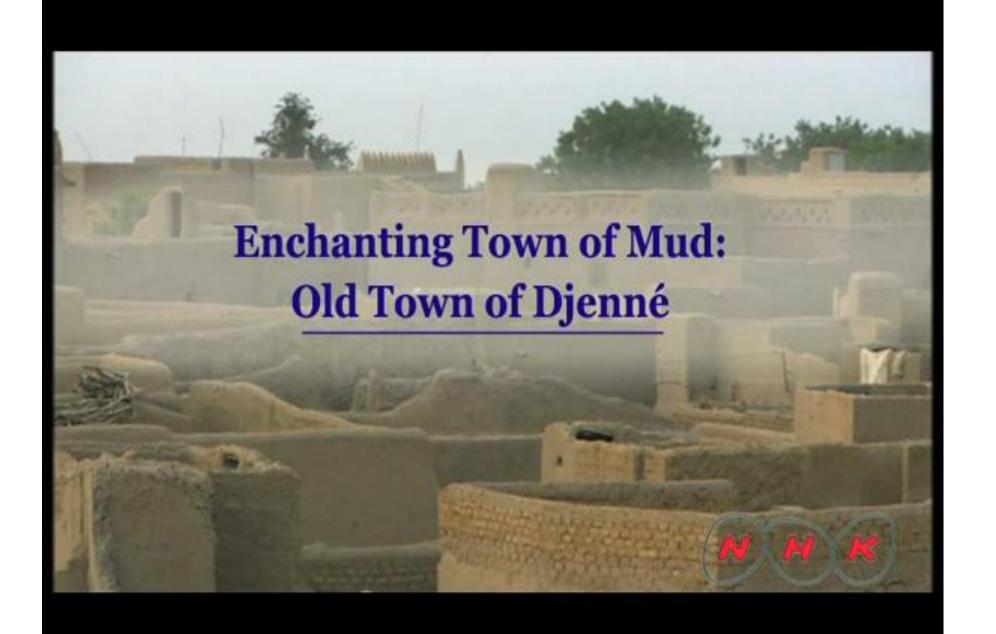
Post-crisis management has sometimes made the task very difficult, but the authorities have made it a permanent challenge, and thus the Head of State has declared 2025 the Year of Culture (a return to the roots for a new beginning). Awareness-raising efforts and funding from the government and international organizations such as UNESCO have been put in place to achieve the set objectives, even if the task proves difficult.

We will focus on the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage in Mali.















- What policy is in place to manage Malian heritage?

Mali's cultural heritage management policy is based on a comprehensive approach that involves the identification, preservation, promotion, and transmission of cultural heritage. This policy is implemented by the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage (DNPC) in collaboration with various national and international partners, including UNESCO. The primary objective is to preserve Mali's tangible and intangible heritage, while promoting its role in socioeconomic development and peacebuilding.

The following are the key aspects of this policy:

1. Identification and Documentation:

- The DNPC is responsible for inventorying and documenting cultural heritage, including archaeological sites, historical monuments, ancient manuscripts, and cultural practices.
- Efforts are made to document heritage before, during, and after conflicts in order to analyze situations and guide restoration and reconstruction efforts. UNESCO has developed a map and a "Passport" to protect Mali's cultural heritage, and sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List are particularly closely monitored.

2. Safeguarding and Conservation:

- The safeguarding policy aims to protect cultural heritage from threats such as armed conflict, looting, natural disasters, and degradation due to human activity.
- Management and conservation plans are in place for heritage sites, particularly those inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, such as Timbuktu, the Tomb of Askia, and the ancient cities of Djenné.
- The restoration and reconstruction of damaged sites, such as the mausoleums of Timbuktu, are priority actions.
- The conservation of ancient manuscripts, many of which have been hidden and transferred to Bamako, is also an essential component of the safeguarding policy.

3. Promotion and Transmission:

- Mali's heritage management policy also aims to promote this heritage and make it known to the general public, both nationally and internationally.
- Awareness-raising and information campaigns are conducted among local communities and policymakers to raise awareness of the importance of heritage.
- Heritage promotion contributes to socioeconomic development, particularly through cultural tourism and job creation.
- Institutional and professional capacity building is an important aspect of this policy, with training for local staff in heritage preservation, conservation, and management.

4. Partnerships and Cooperation:

- Mali's heritage management policy is implemented in collaboration with national and international partners, including UNESCO, MINUSMA, the European Union, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), and others.
- Funds are mobilized to finance heritage restoration, conservation, and promotion projects. 5. Integration into development policies:
- Mali's heritage management policy is increasingly integrated into the country's development strategies, recognizing its role in peacebuilding, reconciliation, and socioeconomic development.
- The heritage designation of certain cultural events and rituals, such as transhumance, helps reconcile international standards for heritage promotion with local realities.

In summary, Mali's cultural heritage management policy is a set of actions aimed at preserving, promoting, and transmitting a rich and diverse cultural heritage, while contributing to socioeconomic development and peacebuilding.

- What is the current state of cultural heritage conservation and promotion in Mali?

Mali's rich and diverse cultural heritage has suffered significant damage, particularly during the crisis in the north of the country. However, considerable efforts are being made to conserve and promote it, with UNESCO and local communities playing a key role.

Conservation Status:

Damage: The conflict resulted in the destruction of numerous heritage sites, including mausoleums in Timbuktu and historic buildings in Gao and Douentza. Ancient manuscripts were burned or stolen, and their state of conservation is critical.

Restorations: UNESCO and its partners have undertaken the reconstruction of mausoleums, the rehabilitation of mosques and libraries, and manuscript conservation projects. These efforts involve training local staff to ensure sustainable preservation.

Safeguarding Manuscripts: Safeguarding ancient manuscripts is a priority, with local communities hiding more than 300,000 manuscripts in Bamako. Inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger:

Timbuktu and the Tomb of Askia have been inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, highlighting the need for enhanced protection.

Promotion:

National Heritage Days: Mali organizes national heritage days to inform, raise awareness, and advocate for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

Community Involvement: Local communities play a central role in heritage management and preservation, with days dedicated to their roles and responsibilities.

UNESCO and Socioeconomic Development: UNESCO works to rehabilitate cultural heritage to boost the local economy through job creation.

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Mali has inscribed eight elements on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In summary: Mali's cultural heritage faces challenges, but significant efforts are being made to conserve and enhance it, with active participation from local communities and international support, particularly from UNESCO.



Here are some ways to mobilize these resources:

1. Mobilizing Financial Resources:

Strengthening Internal Resources:

Increase the budget allocated to the heritage sector by the Malian government.

Implement innovative financing mechanisms, such as endowment funds, heritage foundations, or public-private partnerships.

Develop income-generating activities related to heritage, such as cultural tourism, craft fairs, and the sale of heritage-related products.

Mobilizing External Funds:

Strengthen cooperation with international organizations (UNESCO, European Union, etc.) to obtain funding and technical support.

Apply to bilateral and multilateral funds dedicated to heritage and development. Organize fundraising campaigns among the Malian diaspora and the international community.

Develop infrastructure:

Invest in the restoration and conservation of heritage sites, historic monuments, archives, and museums.

Build or renovate heritage interpretation centers to promote the sites to visitors.

Improve the storage and conservation conditions for heritage objects and documents.

Build skills:

Train qualified professionals in the fields of conservation, restoration, heritage site management, and cultural tourism.

Develop continuing education programs for sector stakeholders.

Encourage the transmission of traditional heritage-related skills.

Use technology:

Adopt digital tools for the documentation, digitization, and dissemination of heritage.

Develop applications and online platforms to make heritage accessible to as many people as possible.

Use social media to raise awareness and communicate the importance of heritage. 3. Coordination and Governance:

Strengthen cooperation between different stakeholders:

Involve government institutions, local authorities, civil society organizations, and local communities in heritage management.

Establish consultation and coordination mechanisms for integrated heritage management.

Adopt a participatory approach:

Involve local communities in defining conservation priorities and actions.

Ensure the participation of intangible heritage holders in preservation processes.

Implement a coherent heritage policy:

Develop a national heritage preservation plan.

Define tools for the legal and regulatory protection of heritage.

Integrate the heritage dimension into development policies.

In short, the sustainability of heritage conservation and promotion in Mali relies on the mobilization of diversified financial and material resources, participatory governance, and an integrated approach that takes into account development and sustainable development issues.

