



Bozo and Somono fishermen of Mali

by Elisabeth den Otter

The Bozo and Somono of Kirango (Mali)

Kirango is a village located on the bank of the Niger river, near the Markala dam, about 35 km north-east of the city of Ségou. The inhabitants are Bamanan (farmers) and Bozo/Somono (fishermen).

These photos show the daily life of the fishermen in the Jaka quarter, the circumcision ceremony of a group of boys and the accompanying masquerade, builders of traditional boats, and a migrant family.



MALI

Niger

● Kirango
● Segou

● Bamako

BURKINA FASO

IVORY COAST







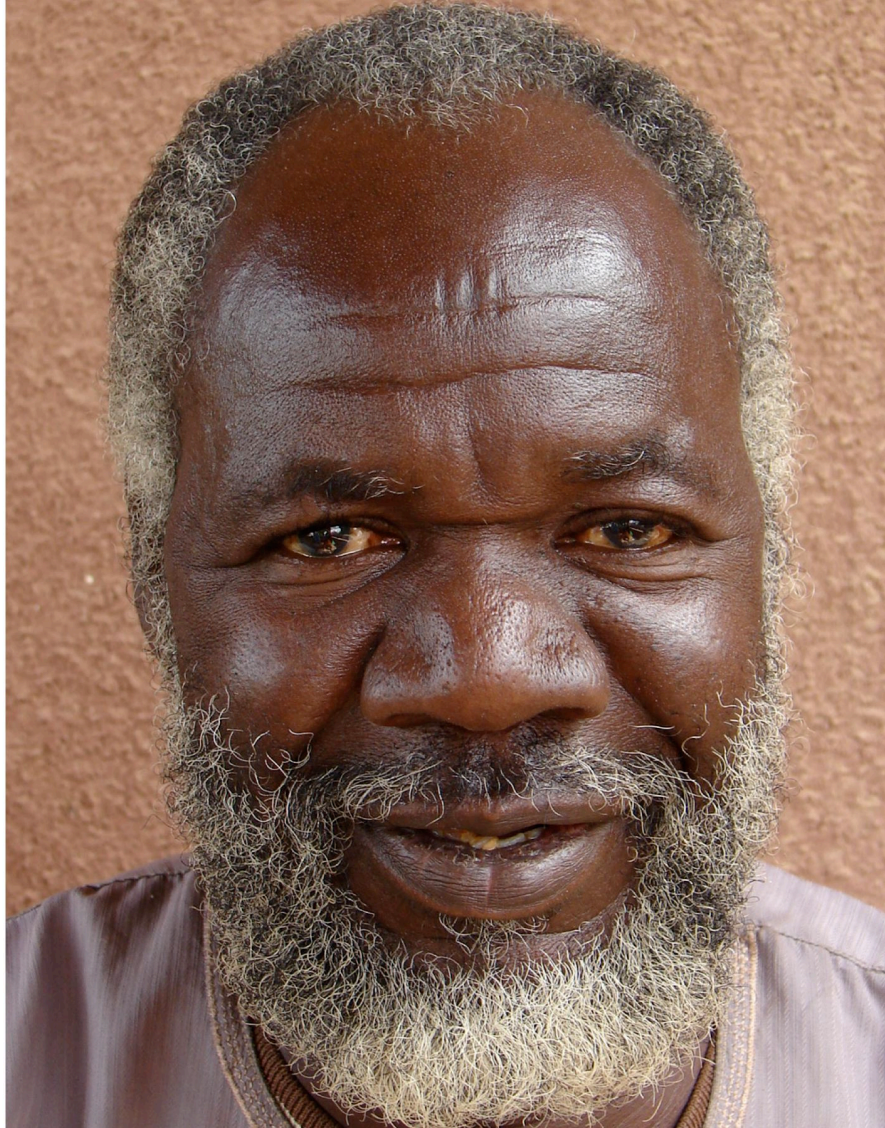


















Circumcision ceremony

For the Bozo/Somono circumcision is a very important ceremony, which takes place about every ten years. About 100 boys of the Jaka quarter were circumcised collectively in 2005. Afterwards, they went to the mosque for prayers, and to the Karabenta household where they stayed for ten days to recover. The men of the Karabenta family play an important role: Seydou Karabenta accompanied the procession and Gaoussou Karabenta attached good luck charms to the boys' tunics. The younger Karabenta men take care of the boys' everyday needs. A masquerade was held for the occasion: the Bird, Dog-Fish, and Antelope could be seen during daytime, and aquatic animals like the Nile Perch, Scorpions, Hippopotamus, Crocodile, Porcupine and Snake at night.











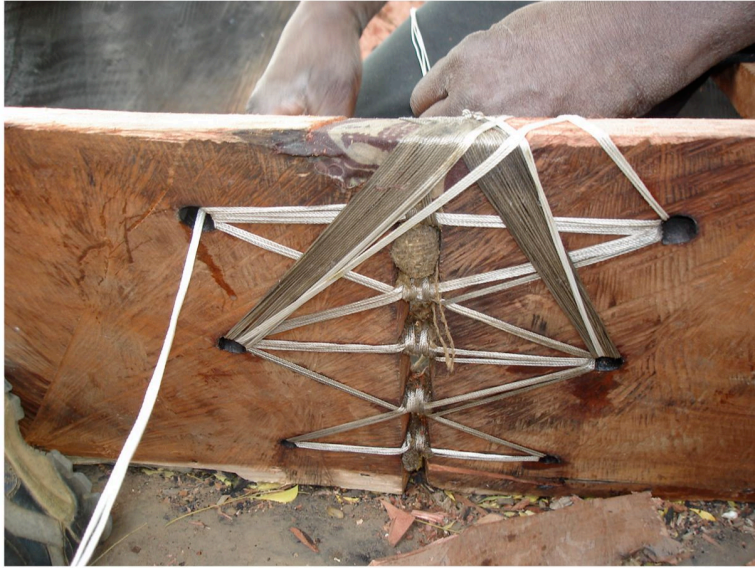
Kaka Karunta and his sons, boat builders

Kaka and his sons Aruna and Abba are builders of traditional boats (pirogues). They are of the type 'sewn boat' and measure from seven to twenty meters in length. The wood used is 'caïlcédrat' (acajou from Senegal) and the instruments used are various types of hoe, piercer, hammer, file, saw, pincers and hand drill. The planks are shaped by means of burning wood shavings on top or underneath them, as well as putting weights on top and supports underneath. The bottom is made from two big planks that are joined laterally by cutting overlapping profiles into the edges. Two rows of holes are drilled, after which nails are driven into them. The sides are built up by means of two planks which are sewn together with nylon cord. Wet jute is used to waterproof the gaps.















1000

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A Somono migrant family

Every year, from October till January, migrant Bozo/Somono camp on the shore of the Niger river. Their stay coincides with the arrival of large shoals of 'ntinenin', a type of sardine. The Kané family is an extended family consisting of the pater familias with his wife and a number of children, about 15 in all.

The men fish; the women sell the fish and take care of the household (cooking and the children). Their makeshift dwellings are made of straw mats and pieces of cloth.













Acknowledgements

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These photos were taken from 2004-2008.

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