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World Heritage Convention

45COM

AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

Agenda Item	8B. Nomination to the World Heritage List
Draft Decision	45 COM 8B.7 _____
Submitted by the Delegation of....	MALI
Co-author(s) (if any)	<u>NIGERIA, EGYPT</u>
Date of submission	09/07/2023

TEXT

The World Heritage Committee,

- ~~1.~~ ~~4.~~ Having examined Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8B and WHC/23/45.COM/INF.8B1,
- ~~2.~~ ~~2.~~ Thanks the State Party for the additional information provided, which sufficiently documents the traditional management of the nominated property;
- ~~3.~~ Welcomes the State Party for having diligently produced the additional maps necessary to understand the nature of the land use, the terraced hills, the network of water retention walls, the location of the groves and other sacred places;
- ~~4.~~ Takes note with satisfaction that measures have already been taken to exploit the results of the HCT-ATACORA research project, in the management of the Koutammakou landscape;
- ~~5.~~ Also welcomes the continued commitment of the State Party through ongoing conservation actions on the ground and the programming of other measures in the strategic action documents of the country's institutions involved;
- ~~6.~~ Rightly appreciates the regular meeting of the Koutammakou Management Council as well as the mechanism for daily monitoring of the state of the property;
- ~~7.~~ Welcomes the involvement of communities in all decision-making and management bodies of the property, and encourages the State Party to continue in this direction with a view to continued consideration of traditional management practices;
- ~~8.~~ Further welcomes that the Cultural Heritage Directorates of Benin and Togo are working tirelessly to set up a transnational body for the management of the property, which makes it possible to organize the first working session of this body in the first half of the year 2024;
- ~~9.~~ ~~Approves~~ ~~Refers~~ the significant boundary modification of Koutammakou, Land of the Batammariba, Togo to include Koutammakou, Land of the Batammariba, Benin, ~~back to the State Party in order to allow it to:~~
- ~~10.~~ Adopts the following statement of outstanding universal value:

To be submitted to the Rapporteur at: wh-rapporteur@unesco.org

Brief summary

Koutammakou is a vast living cultural territory, dominated largely by the Atakora range. It is located in the northwest of Benin, in the department of Atacora and extends over the northeast of Togo. In Benin, it straddles three communes, namely Boukombé, Natitingou and Toucountouna. Country of the Batammariba, the Koutammakou still has its characteristics in terms of spatial planning, illustrated by scattered concessions, agricultural areas (subsistence and cash crops, livestock) that surround them, terraced hills, groves and other sacred places, ritual and funerary spaces, virgin areas and spaces for clan ritual routes. The Batammariba have developed a culture that judiciously combines fusion with nature, technical knowledge, social peace and religious practices. Their territory is in this image, a witness to the fabulous knowledge of this people and its constant search for harmony between the inhabitants, but also harmony with other elements of nature. The site is distinguished from other Sahelian landscapes by the Takienta, this family unit of unique and exceptional habitat by the technical prowess of its construction, the ingenuity of the spaces it offers and the richness of the symbolism it radiates.

The property proposed by Benin corresponds to the extension of property No. 1140 located in Togo and inscribed in 2004. The Beninese part is located between 10°00' and 10°31' north latitude and between 0°59' and 1°35' east longitude and covers an area of 240,658 hectares in Benin and 31,168 hectares in Togo. It forms a coherent continuum with that of Togo. The Beninese part, however, has the exceptional advantage of being home to the historic cradle of the Batammariba and major religious sites, possessing the five major types of Takienta known to date and extending over an area seven times larger than that of Togo. Despite these peculiarities, both sides are endowed with the same cultural, anthropological and historical characteristics. The project for the inscription of the Beninese side is proposed to be recorded according to the same criteria as that of Togo, namely that the Koutammakou is, on the one hand, an exceptional example of a traditional system of occupation of the territory and, on the other hand, an eloquent testimony of the strength of the spiritual association between peoples and the environment. If the site encounters difficulties such as urbanization in places, the exodus of young people, climatic threats, there are fortunately many guardians of the tradition who perpetuate the habits and customs in Tammari country. Better still, the vision of the Beninese State is already bearing fruit through the launch of the Route des tatas to promote the destination of Koutammakou. At the same time, a management plan for the period 2021-2025, an interministerial order for the protection of the boundaries of the site, a management body, tata restoration activities and economic support to some custodians of the tradition, to name just a few of the ongoing actions, are being put in place.

Criterion V: to be an outstanding example of traditional human settlement, traditional use of land or sea, representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment, especially when the environment has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

The Koutammakou is an outstanding example of a traditional system of land occupancy. Always alive and dynamic, it is subject to traditional and sustainable systems and techniques, and reflects the singular culture of the Batammariba, including the remarkable turreted houses called "Sikien" (Takienta in the singular).

Criterion VI: be directly or materially associated with living events or traditions, ideas, beliefs or artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

The Koutammakou is an eloquent testimony to the strength of the spiritual association between peoples and the environment. Technical know-how, endogenous knowledge, social practices and religious beliefs maintain a permanent dialogue with the surrounding natural resources, thus creating homogeneity and fusional harmony with and between the Batammariba.

Statement of Integrity

With several thousand Sikien inventoried including 1400 still inhabited, the Beninese part of Koutammakou includes all the elements to express its outstanding universal value, both material (exceptional architecture) and intangible (practices and beliefs related to the Sikien).). The entire territory proposed for extension has the landscape features presented in the description that make it surprising, namely a scattered fortified habitat surrounded

by cultivated areas and sacred groves hosting ritual practices. This living and dynamic occupation of the territory, a real lesson of sustainable development for humanity, is present throughout Koutammakou. Beyond these maintained physical characteristics of the landscape, this extension reinforces the historical integrity of Koutammakou. Indeed, it is in present-day Benin that the first Batammariba settled in the 6th century and that the cradle of this people is located. These pilgrimage sites are recognized by all Batammariba and are extremely well protected. The part inscribed in 2004 in Togo (Bien N ° 1140) corresponds to secondary migrations several centuries later. The proposed extension therefore restores the historical integrity of this territory.

Regarding the geographical limits of the area proposed for extension, they correspond to the cultural territory defended by the Batammariba on the Benin side. The same spiritual and cultural practices are shared by the inhabitants of this area. In addition, they meet every year for a major festival (FESTAM), organized alternately in Benin and Togo. By joining this extension zone to the Togolese territory inscribed in 2004, it is the entirety of Koutammakou as recognized by the Batammariba that is delimited and protected. Proposing a smaller area would have created tensions and undermined the integrity of this cultural area, by excluding groups that recognize themselves as part of Koutammakou.

Declaration of authenticity

The landscape of Koutammakou reflects a way of life that has persisted for centuries. None of the landscape is very old. The traditional habitat consists of a few models reproduced until today. Throughout the region, we see that the life cycle of buildings continues: construction, abandonment, destruction and reconstruction on ruins. If a close observation shows that there are changes concerning the materials used, the sizing of the living space and the constructive forms, the traditional model persists. Indeed, the house is much more than a habitat. It is a temple dedicated to worship. In fact, even if a modern house is built, only a traditional habitat can integrate this symbolic and religious dimension. Traditional housing is essential for funeral rites for example and every Otammari citizen attaches great value to the respect of this tradition around his Takienta. Similarly, the ground floor reserved for animals and the presence of attics remain essential elements. Better still each court must have its Têcheinkotè which is the "ancient", "mother" or "reliquary" Takienta of the family. Thus, many "modern" houses are complemented by a traditional habitat, which, if it is sometimes of reduced dimensions, nevertheless retains all the traditional characteristics and its spiritual dimensions. Even if it is noted today that in peri-urban hamlets, some young people refuse their constructive labor force for the Sikien, preferring to exile themselves in the city for economic reasons, the guardians of the tradition remain and continue to preserve the integrity of this architectural know-how.

Tammari society evolves over time. This evolution takes place within the community itself and thanks to external contributions. If the repeated aggressions of ethnic wars, slavery and colonization have led to the refinement of this defensive habitat, it should also be noted that colonization, independence and all their avatars have influenced the Tammari people and caused mutations. This evolution continues under the influence of schools, the centralization of administrative power, religions, tourism, monetarization, and the emergence of new needs. Despite these aggressions that tend to shake Tammari society, there are in all the villages very strong and very hard nuclei that constitute this melting pot where essential elements of Tammari culture move and perpetuate themselves through time and space. Despite the threat of globalization, cultural expressions and identities are resisting. The rites of age passage of men (Difoni) and women (Dikuntri) are perpetuated with as much interest for the local populations as for the diaspora. Thus, and despite the development of small urban centers (as in Natta or in the center of Natitingou and Boukombé), it is still the same landscape that can be observed today, with villages with houses located in the middle of their cultivable space, spaced and independent. The natural space also remains very present, although it is certainly desirable that some of its components can be regenerated. However, all sacred natural places remain preserved.

11. However, invites the State Party to take into account, in a planned program, the following recommendations immediately after approval of the extension of the inscription, and to keep the Committee informed of the efforts carried out:

- a) Draw up in the short term a map indicating the location of the sikien in their territory, and providing details of the nature of land use, the terraced slopes, the network of water retaining walls, and the location of groves and other sacred places. This geo-referenced database will ensure regular updating and appropriate document

management, which are essential for effective management and protection of the proposed extension and its attributes;

- ~~b) Incorporate in the short term the results of the “HTC-ATACORA” research project in the management of the cultural landscape of Koutammakou. These results will be useful in identifying more precisely areas of high concentrations of cultural and natural attributes;~~
- ~~c) Ensure in the short term greater involvement of local communities in the management and conservation plan of the proposed extension, and take into account traditional practices for the management and conservation of Koutammakou;~~
- ~~d)a) Elaborate in the short and medium terms the municipal development master plans of Boukombé, Toucountouna and Natitingou, and the urban planning regulations for the urban centre of Boukombé;~~
- ~~b) Diligently implement/Incorporate in the current management plan and evaluate it as soon as it expires; in the short and medium terms a conservation plan, a maintenance work plan, and strengthened monitoring mechanisms in order to take these factors into account;~~
- ~~e)c) Submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1st December 2024, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and on the implementation of the recommendations mentioned above for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session.~~
- ~~f) Define in the short and medium terms clear protection and conservation priorities for areas with high concentrations of attributes;~~
- ~~g) Implement this road map in accordance with the established order of priority, and subject to obtaining adequate financial resources, including from external sources;~~
- ~~3. Recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:~~
- ~~a) Setting up the transnational property management body, under the supervision of the two cultural heritage Directorates of Togo and Benin, and defining its operating procedures and missions;~~
- ~~b) Preparing a risk management plan to take into account the impact of climate change and bad weather on the proposed extension, Nominations to the World Heritage List WHC/23/45.COM/8B, p.20~~
- ~~c) Considering the possibility of establishing an integrated management structure, covering both the cultural and natural values of the proposed extension, and guaranteeing the integration of duly qualified personnel, dedicated to the conservation of natural values.~~