

**BOGOLAN: A traditional dyed fabric full of symbols.** (By Zakaria Ouedraogo, Burkina)

The Bogolan is a word in Bambara (language from Mali, West Africa) composed by a common name “**bogo**” meaning clay, mud and a suffix “**lan**” indicating the instrument or what achieves a result. Therefore, Bogolan means literally “the result that gives the clay” (on the fabric). It is a technique that consists of applying clay on a dyed fabric.

### WHO DOES IT?

Unlike indigo dyeing that is largely widespread throughout West Africa, bogolan is an ancestral technique of the people of the group Mandé (Bambara, Malinké, Senufo and Dogon ethnic groups). Originally, women made bogolan clothing, including wedding trousseau and loincloths, to be marketed. Hunters and shepherds also dyed, for their personal use, hunting and parrying outfits.

### HOW IS BOGOLAN MADE?

Even though this technique is traditional and concerns a few ethnicities, dyes of mineral origin (clay) and plants (biomass) are easily available wherever you are in Africa. It is enough to search in the bush for your preparation material.

To make a bogolan, 2 steps are essential:

1. **Dyeing the fabric**

The fabric is dyed in a color dependent on the plant that you will use. You can get yellow, blue, green, red, etc.

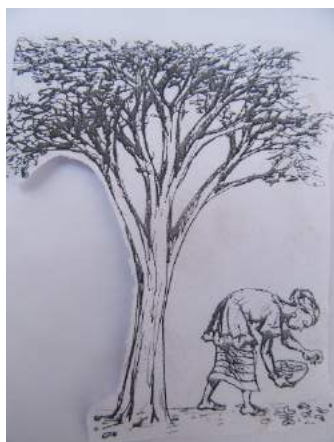
2. **The marking of the fabric**

On the dyed fabric, you draw with soft clay according to the forms you desire. A chemical reaction takes place between the iron contained in clay and tannin of the plant. This reaction gives a black color that holds on the fabric.

Unlike classic dyeing, you do not need to buy dyes. The only thing you need is the fabric. This technique is therefore inexpensive. Bogolan is a product that sells well locally as well as export.



## STARTING MATERIALS



### Plants

They will dye the whole fabric. Following are some examples, but you surely have some others in your region.

Plants	Type	Used parts	Color obtained
Acacia nilotica	Tree	Fruit	Green khaki
Anogeissus leiocarpus	Tree	Leaves	Yellow
Ficus gnaphalocarpa	Tree	Bark	Greenkhaki
Lannea microcarpa	Tree	Bark	Red bordeaux
Lawsonia inermis	Shrub	Leaves	Yellow, red or black

1. Add potash after filtration for getting the color
2. Different colors according to the length of the grind (mixture plant and water).

### Clay

It must be rich in iron to create black stains on the fabric. You can find it at marshlands that never dry out. In the natural state, this type of clay is of grey color.

Latin language (Universal)	Bambara (Mali)	Hausa (Niger)	Mooré (Burkina Faso)	Wolof (Senegal)
Acacia nilotica	Bagana	Bagaruwa	Pègnèga	Nebneb
Anogeissus leiocarpus	Ngalama	Mareke	Silga	Ngegan
Ficus gnaphalocarpa	Sutoro	Bawri	Kakanga	Gang
Lannea microcarpa	Npekuba	Malga	Sangba	-
Lawsonia inermis	Dabé	Lallé	Lalè	Fuden



**NB:** The choice of languages was made on the basis of information available.

### Gather

#### 1. Raw material

- Cotton

Traditionally, we use cotton loincloths woven by hand. You can also buy directly fabric that must have a proportion of cotton superior or equal to 50%.

#### 2. Local equipment

- A jar
- A pestle
- A bowl
- A fine sieve (that we use for flour for example)
- Plastic sheets thick enough that you can cut with a razor blade.



## BOGOLAN TECHNIQUE OF DYEING



### Ferment the clay

Put in a terracotta jar the clay that you have collected. Put water (preferably that from the marshland) and take care that it never dries up! Let the fermentation take place for 15 days at least. It is quite normal that smell of rotten gets off the jar. On the contrary, it's a good sign! To obtain a correct fermentation, you have to stir the contents of the jar with a stick at least once a day.

### Produce your own dye

Making a bogolan is really using nature. It is often easy to buy dyes in commerce. But for this method, you will use plants. Dry the part of the plant that gives the color (fruits, leaves, barks, roots, etc.). Then stack it in a mortar.

Put the powder obtained in water. The quantity to be used depends on the color, the darkness: more or less dark, that you want to get. For example, with *Anogeissus leiocarpus*, you will get a darkened yellow by mixing a 15 liters bucket full of dried and crushed leaves in a basin of 40 liters of water. Then let the mixture sit between 12 to 24 hours. Then sift the mixture. You now have a solution that will dye your fabric.



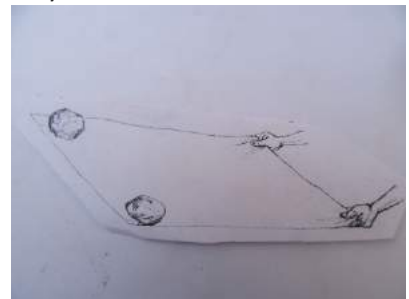
Do not hesitate to mix different plants, so you will have pretty nuanced colors.

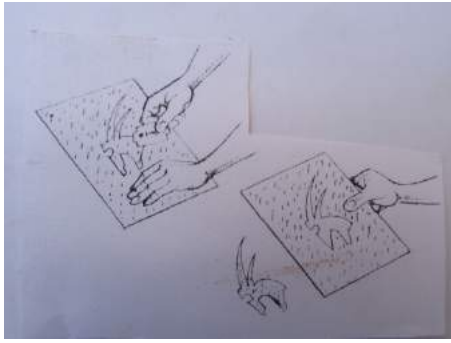


### Dyeing your fabric

In a basin that contains your coloring solution, soak your fabric for at least 30 minutes. Dry in the sun: fabrics are spread horizontally on the ground. Pebbles are placed on the edges to avoid the fabric folds or risks of displacement caused by the wind. Complete the series of dipping and drying three times. You can keep the same water along this process.

You should get at the end a uniform dyed fabric.



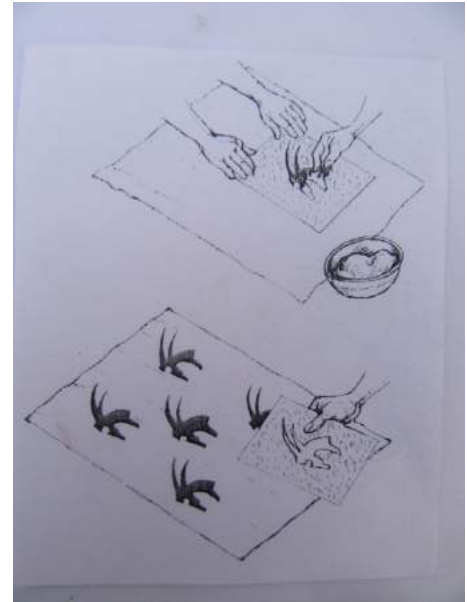


### Mark your fabric

Now, you are at an important stage because you are able to create an original fabric with the designs or symbol that you want!

- **First you have to do your stencil:** draw on the plastic sheet the marks/shapes/forms/drawings you want print on your dyed fabric. Cut out with a razor blade and set aside the part removed.

- **Place your dyed and dry fabric on a table.** Lay down your stencil and fill the "hole" with clay. If you want to make several designs on your fabric, you must then make several stencils. It's at the level of hole filled with clay that the black color will appear and show your marks/drawings.
- Allow the mud to dry well (20 to 30 minutes after application on the fabric). Then you should remove the mud and wash the fabric in a marshland or a river. The fabric should be washed directly into the water without rubbing it. You may also remove the mud and wash the fabric in a container filled with water. Do all these operations with precaution to preserve the colors.



Then you have your bogolan, which is your creation! A beautiful success that would make friends green with jealousy or envy as they will never be able to have the same. The bogolan can help you with building and strengthening good relationships and bring you money because it's a product highly requested locally, by tourists and export markets. Making bogolan can be a profitable full time job for youth in Africa or elsewhere.