Historic Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa

From Timbuktu to Zanzibar

By

Stéphane Pradines
Contents

Preface: On Vocabulary and Dates  XI
List of Figures  XII

Introduction: A Survey of Islamic Architecture in Sub-Saharan Africa  1

1  The Mosques of the Niger Valleys  7
  1.1  Introduction: The So-Called “Sudanese” Mosques  7
  1.2  Historiography of Research on the Mosques of the Niger Valleys  9
  1.3  The History of the Great West African Kingdoms  11
    1.3.1  The Kingdoms of Tekrur and Ghana, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries  11
    1.3.2  The Empire of Mali, Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries  13
    1.3.3  The Songhay Empire, Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries  15
    1.3.4  The Hausa City States, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries  16
    1.3.5  The Age of the Fulbe Jihads, Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries  17
      1.3.5.1  The Caliphate of Sokoto  17
      1.3.5.2  The Fulbe Empire of Massina  18
      1.3.5.3  The Fulani Theocracies of Futa Jalon and Futa Toro  19
  1.4  Commerce and Islam in West Africa  20
    1.4.1  The Forms of Islamisation in West Africa  20
    1.4.2  Trans-Saharan Trade and Islam  22
  1.5  Technology and Construction  25
    1.5.1  Masons and Builders  25
    1.5.2  The Building Materials  27
    1.5.3  The Foundations  31
    1.5.4  The Walls, the Pillars and the Coatings  31
    1.5.5  The Openings, Doors and Stairways  34
    1.5.6  The Ceilings and Roofing: Terraces and Cupolas  35
  1.6  Architectural Characteristics of the Mosques of the Niger Valleys  43
    1.6.1  General Description of the Mosque of the Niger Valleys  43
    1.6.2  The Mihrab  46
    1.6.3  The Minbar and the Maqṣura  48
    1.6.4  The Annexes: Madrasa and Ablution Areas  48
    1.6.5  The Minarets  48
  1.7  Regional Groups of Mosques in the Niger Valleys  50
    1.7.1  The Group of the Desert Mosques  50
      1.7.1.1  The Stone Mosques of Mauritania  50
      1.7.1.2  The Mosque of Kumbi Saleh  51
      1.7.1.3  The Mosques of Chinguetti, Wadan and Kidal  53
      1.7.1.4  The Mosques of Walata and Tichitt  55
    1.7.2  The Group of the Pre-Saharan Steppe  55
      1.7.2.1  The Mosques of the Niger Bend  55
      1.7.2.2  The Mosques of Gao  57
CONTENTS

1.7.2.3 The Mosques of Timbuktu 58
1.7.2.4 The Mosques of Agadez and Assode 66
1.7.2.5 The Sub-group of Air 66
1.7.3 The Group of the Middle Niger 68
1.7.3.1 The Mosques of the Middle Niger 68
1.7.3.2 The Sub-group of the Inner Niger Delta 68
1.7.3.3 The Sub-group of Lake Debo 79
1.7.3.4 The Sub-group of Segou 82
1.7.4 The Pular Mosques of Futa Toro 83
1.7.4.1 The Mosques of Northern Senegal 83
1.7.4.2 The Mosques of Bode, Doumga Ouro Thierno and Halwar 83
1.7.5 The Group of Hausa Mosques 84
1.7.5.1 Hausa Mosques of the Caliphate of Sokoto 84
1.7.5.2 The Mosque of Zaria 84
1.7.5.3 The Mosques of Niger and Nigeria 87
1.7.6 The Group of Dyula Mosques 88
1.7.6.1 The Mosques of the Volta-Niger Valleys 88
1.7.6.2 The Bougamena Sub-group 95
1.7.6.3 The Sub-group of Dougouba-Kawara 95
1.7.7 The Group of Fulbe Mosques of Futa Jalon 96
1.8 History and Chronology of the Mosques of the Niger Valleys 99
1.8.1 Architectural Styles, Environmental and Human Constraints 99
1.8.2 Vernacular and Traditional Architecture of West Africa 101
1.8.3 How to Establish a Chronology? 104
1.8.4 Diffusion of the Style of the Niger Valleys 107
1.8.5 Al-Sahili and the Myth of Egyptian Influences 110
1.8.6 The M’Zab and the Role of the Ibadis 111
1.8.7 The Mosques of the Niger Valleys from the Colonial Period to the Present Day 113

2 The Mosques from the Horn of Africa to the Valleys of the Nile 115
2.1 The Mosques of the Ethiopian High Plateau and the Somali Plains 115
2.1.1 The Neglected History of the Muslim Horn of Africa 115
2.1.2 The Sultanate of Ifat and the Mosques of Nora 116
2.1.3 The Mosques of the Plains of Bilad al-Barbar 125
2.2 The African Mosques of the Red Sea 129
2.3 The Mosques of the Nile Valleys, from Nubia to Darfur 133
2.3.1 The Church-Mosques of Nubia 133
2.3.2 The Mosques of the Valley of the Blue Nile 139
2.3.3 The Mosques of Darfur 142
2.3.4 The Mosques of Kanem, Borno and Wadai 143

3 The Mosques of the Indian Ocean Coast 146
3.1 The Swahilis, a Cultural Model of Multiple Origins 146
3.2 Historiography of Research on the Swahili Mosques 148
3.3 The History of the East Coast of Africa 151
   3.3.1 The Abbasid Explorers and the First Muslim Communities between the
         Seventh and the Ninth Century 151
   3.3.2 The Shiite Merchants in East Africa from the Tenth to the
         Twelfth Century 154
   3.3.3 The Apogee of the Swahili City States from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth
         Century 158
   3.3.4 The East African Coast under the Portuguese and the Omanis from the
         Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century 159
3.4 Trade and Islam in the Indian Ocean 162
   3.4.1 The Swahili City 162
   3.4.2 The Importation of Foreign Products: New Tastes 165
3.5 Technology and Construction of the Swahili Mosques 170
   3.5.1 Builders and Materials 170
   3.5.2 The Foundations and the Floors 172
   3.5.3 The Walls and Masonry 174
   3.5.4 The Openings: Doors and Windows 178
   3.5.5 The Supports: Columns, Pillars and Arches 180
   3.5.6 Roofing and Covering: from Palm Leaves to Cupolas 184
3.6 Morphology of the Swahili Mosques 192
   3.6.1 The Plan of the Swahili Mosques 192
   3.6.2 The Ablution Area 194
   3.6.3 The Minarets 197
   3.6.4 The Funerary Mosques 204
   3.6.5 Swahili Minbars and Mihrabs 207
3.7 The Decorative Programme of the Swahili Mosques 208
   3.7.1 The Inlay Ceramics 208
   3.7.2 The Bosses and Mouldings in Sea Coral 212
   3.7.3 The Stucco Decorations 215
   3.7.4 The Epigraphic Plaques and Inscriptions 217
3.8 Regional Groups and the Chronology of the Swahili Mosques 218
   3.8.1 The Swahili Mosques from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century 218
       3.8.1.1 The Mosque of Shanga 218
       3.8.1.2 Kizimkazi and the First Swahili Mihrabs 219
       3.8.1.3 The First Mosque of Kilwa in the Twelfth Century 222
       3.8.1.4 The Mosque of Sanje ya Kati in the Twelfth Century 223
       3.8.1.5 The Mosques of Comoros in the Twelfth Century 226
       3.8.1.6 The Mosques of Gedi of the Twelfth and
               Thirteenth Centuries 227
       3.8.1.7 Common Features of the First Swahili Mosques 227
   3.8.2 The Swahili Mosques of the Thirteenth Century 232
       3.8.2.1 The Mosque of Fakhr al-Din in Mogadishu 232
       3.8.2.2 The Mihrabs of the Tongoni Group 238
       3.8.2.3 The Somali-Style Mihrabs 238
3.10 The Swahili Mosques of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries 241
   3.10.1 Mnarani and the Swahili Mihrabs from the Fourteenth to the End of the
          Fifteenth Century 241
   3.10.2 Domoni, Tsingoni and the Comorian Mihrabs 244
   3.10.3 The Second Great Mosque of Kilwa and the Influence of the Deccan 249
   3.10.4 The District Mosques of Kilwa 255
   3.10.5 The First Great Mosque of Gedi 255
   3.10.6 The Mosques of Ungwana 258
   3.10.7 The Second Great Mosque of Gedi 260
   3.10.8 The District Mosques of Gedi 264
   3.10.9 The Mosques of Songo Mnara 268

3.11 Portuguese Domination and the Style of Lamu, Sixteenth to
    Seventeenth Centuries 271
   3.11.1 The Great Mosque of Kua, Mafia Archipelago 271
   3.11.2 The Mosques of Pate and the Lamu Archipelago 273

3.12 The Swahili Mosques of the Nineteenth Century 280
   3.12.1 The Mosques of the Sultanate of Zanzibar 280
   3.12.2 The Return of the Shi'ite and Ibadi Communities to East Africa 285

Epilogue: The Mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa in the History of Islamic
    Architecture 290

Annex 1: Historical Chart of the Main Dynasties and Kingdoms in Sub-Saharan
    Africa and Their Neighbours 295
Annex 2: Inventory of Historical Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa Listed by
    Contemporary States 296
Glossaries 311
List of Credits 317
Bibliography 321
Index 343