THE GREAT MOSQUE OF DJENNE

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INTRODUCTION

• The great mosque of Djenne is a large mud brick or adobe building that is considered by many architects one of the largest achievements of the Sudano Sahelian architectural style. The mosque is located in the city of Djenne, Mali on the flood plain of the Bani river.
The actual date of construction of the first mosque in Djenne is unknown. The earliest document mentioning the mosque is al-Sadis Tarikh al-sudan which gives the early history. The tariikh states that a sultan Kumburu became a Muslim and his palace pulled down and the site turned into a mosque. His immediate successor built the towers of the mosque.
SEKU AMADUS MOSQUE

• Ten years before Rene Caillies visit, The Fulani leader Seku Amadu had launched his jihad and conquered the town. Seku Amadu appears to have disapproved of the mosque and allowed it to fall into disrepair. Seku Amadu had closed all the small neighborhood mosques and. Between 1834 and 1836, Seku Amadu built a new mosque to the east of the exciting mosque on the site of the former palace.
In 1906, the French administration in the town arranged for the original mosque to be rebuilt at the same time for a school to be constructed on the site of Seku Amadus mosque. The rebuilding was completed in 1907 using forced labor under the direction of Ismaila Traore, head of djennes guild of masons. From the photographs taken at the time it appears the position of at least some of the outer walls follows those of the original mosque but its under as to whether the columns supporting the roof kept to the previous arrangement.
DESIGN

- The walls of the great mosque are made of sun-baked mud bricks, a mud based mortar and are coated with mud plaster which gives the building its smooth, sculpted look. The walls of the building are decorated with bundles of rodier palm sticks called toron. The mosque is built on a platform measuring 75m by 75m that is raised by 3m above the level of the market place. Its accessed by 6 sets of stairs each decorated with pinnacles. The prayer hall of the is dominated by 3 large, box like towers jutting out from main wall. In the prayer hall each of the 3 towers in the qibla wall has niche or mihrab
DESIGN

Bundles of the rodier palm sticks embedded in the walls of the Great mosque are used for decoration and serve as scaffolding for annual repairs.
CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- The entire community of djenne takes an active role in the mosques maintenance via a unique annual festival. This includes music and food, but has the primary objective of repairing the damage inflicted on the mosque in the past years. In the days leading up to the festival, the plaster is prepared in pits; it requires several days to cure but needs to be periodically stirred, a task usually falling to young boys who play in the mixture, thus stirring up the content. Another group of men carries the plaster from the pits to the workmen on the mosque.
REFERENCES

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