4.696 A Global History of Architecture Writing Seminar
Spring 2008

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“Before the Scramble for Africa: Tracing African Architecture through Trade, c. 1200 CE”

Required Reading:


List of Sites (in order of presentation) and Key Terms:

1. Casbah Aït-Ben Haddou, Morocco (founded c. 12th century)

   - **casbah**: Arabic word for “fortress”

   - **Maghrib**: Arabic word for “west”; used to denoted the region of North Africa (present-day Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco) of the western-most spread of Islam

   - **Imazighen** (instead of “Berber”): peoples from present-day Morocco, Algeria, parts of Mauritania, and Mali who preceded Muslim conquest; they speak the Imazigh language, which is in the Afro-Asiatic linguistic family; “Berber” is derogatory with its etymology linked to Greek “babaros” or barbarian

   - **crenellation**: an opening in the top of a castle wall or parapet, used for shooting arrows or other weapons
2. Great Mosque of Djenné, Djenné, Mali (original structure founded c. 13th century by Djenné chief, Konboro; French colonial reconstruction 1907; Aga Khan Award for Architecture—conservation 2001)

- **qibla**: wall facing Mecca
- **mihrah**: niche within the qibla wall
- **ferey**: Bambara word for mud brick

3. Dogon Communities, Bandiagara escarpment, Mopti region, Mali (founded c. 12th century)

- **“world egg”**: house plans based on cosmological philosophy that world is a germinating seed

4. St. George’s Church, Lalibela, Zagwe Dynasty, Ethiopia (founded c. 1200 by King Lalibela)

- **cruciform**: in the shape of a cross
- **artesian well**: a pit or hole sunk into the earth to reach a supply of water, generally of a cylindrical form, and often walled with stone or bricks to prevent the earth from caving in
- Complex hydro-engineering system designed by Abba Libanos

5. Husuni Kubwa Palace, Tanzania (constructed c. 1320 Sultan Hassan Ibn Suleiman)

- **Husuni Kubwa**: Swahili term for “large fort”
- **diwan**: word of Iranian origin used to describe a reception hall, usually either in a house or a palace; later used to describe courtiers or governmental ministry
- Coral building material

6. Great Zimbabwe, Monomapata Empire (c. 1200-1450)

- **mazimbabwe**: “stone wall enclosure”
- Cattle herding and gold mining
- Composed of the Hill Complex, Valley Complex, and the Great Enclosure