
Sudanese style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire (Côte d'Ivoire) No 1648

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Sudanese style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire

Location

Bagoué Region

Tengréla and Kouto Departments;

Gontougo Region:

Sorobango Sub-Prefecture;

Kabadougou Region:

Samatiguila Department;

Poro Region:

M'Bengué Department;

Tchologo Region:

Kong Department

Kaouara Sub-Prefecture

Côte d'Ivoire

Brief description

Eight small mosques, at Tengréla, Kouto, Sorobango, Samatiguila, M'Bengué, Kong and Kaouara, characterised by earthen construction, protruding timbers, vertical buttresses crowned by pottery or ostrich eggs, and tapering minarets, reflect a Sudanese architectural style specific to the Sudan or savannah region of West Africa.

The style is considered to have originated around the 14th century in the town of Djenné, then part of the Empire of Mali, whose prosperity came from the trade in gold and salt across the Sahara to North Africa. Particularly from the 16th century onwards, the style spread south from the desert regions into the Sudanese savannah, becoming lower and developing stouter buttresses in response to the wetter climate.

The nominated mosques are the best conserved of twenty that survive in Côte d'Ivoire out of several hundred that were extant in the early 20th century.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of eight *group of buildings*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

The property was included on the Tentative List in 2006. At that time, only six mosques were proposed. Since then, with the Mosques of Sorobango and Samatiguila have been added.

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 18th August to 5th September 2020.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 24 September 2020 requesting further information on the comparative analysis, the links between the component sites of the serial nomination, and the choice of the component sites.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 17 December 2020 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the Interim Report including about the potential Outstanding Universal Value, documentation, conservation, boundaries, protection and management.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 23rd February 2021, and has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

18 March 2021

2 Description of the property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The ancient mosque at Djenné is considered to be the inspiration for Sudanese style mosques that were subsequently built across central West Africa. This savannah area between the Sahara desert and the forest has been called the Sudan region since the 12th century CE.

The Djenné mosque was constructed between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 14th centuries when, according to oral history, Sultan Kunburu of the Empire of Mali was converted to Islam. Its style is quite different from

the earlier mosques of Timbuktu (Mali), that are linked to the emperor Mansa Musa and an Andalusian architect.

By the end of the 19th century, the Djenné mosque had become ruinous and in 1907 a new one was reconstructed by the French on the same site, its design being said to reflect a few surviving vertical buttresses on the old mosque.

From as early as the 14th and 15th centuries, as a result of infighting in the Mali Empire, it appears that merchants, often accompanied by Islamic scholars, migrated southwards and south-eastwards into the Sudan region and what is now Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, as well as further east into Niger, developing new trading centres along routes to the forest areas further south, introducing Islam, and creating new Sudanese style mosques. In the north of Côte d'Ivoire, Bondoukou, Bouna, Kong, and Odienné became key centres of this largely peaceful trading and religious process with the Muslim Mandé/Malinke peoples from the North integrating with local populations, particularly the Senoufo, who over time, were converted to Islam but did not totally forsake their own beliefs.

By the late 16th century the Empire of Songhai, which succeeded the Empire of Mali, had become fractured from within and in the early 17th century was destroyed by an invasion from Morocco, with the result that the southward migrations expanded.

The 18th century brought turmoil as a result of the political hegemonies established by the Malinke at Odienné and Kong, which led to Senoufo migrations, as did the creation of the Senoufo's own chiefdoms. It was only at the end of the 18th century that the Senoufo became settled in the areas they now inhabit. And from the 1870s, Senoufo country was caught up in the turmoil of the Samorian wars.

The nominated serial property consists of eight mosques selected from a total of 20 that have survived in Côte d'Ivoire. These mosques are all built of spherical earth 'bricks', bound variously with shea butter, cow dung, straw, or fruit extracts, laid in courses and plastered. The facades are characterised by regular rows of buttresses, behind which are flat roof terraces in checkerboard/compartmentalized format with an interior staircase, and above are tapering minarets. Timber poles, projecting through the walls or between the buttresses act as support and scaffolding for maintenance.

The mosques are said in the nomination dossier to encompass two main types: low buildings with stout buttresses and high minarets in the form of a truncated pyramid; and taller buildings with more slender buttresses and less prominent minarets. Rather than these comparatively slight differences, what also needs to be highlighted are the more substantial differences between all of these mosques and Djenné architecture. The latter is characterised by straight narrow buttresses of rectangular form, supporting almost vertical walls,

while most mosques further south in the Sudan region, such as the ones nominated, tend to have stouter buttresses, many with pronounced tapering and curved forms, set against walls which also have a pronounced taper. These differences can be seen to reflect the wetter climate prevailing in the Sudan region, but also local building traditions. The stout almost conical buttresses, (which are also found on mosques in Ghana and Burkina Faso) are seen to have been inspired by local building traditions, particularly decorations on Senoufo shrines, while the smoother walls of the Samatiguila mosque and its thatched roof are more clearly associated with Senoufo domestic buildings.

The building of some of the mosques is said to be associated with the first Imam, but it was usually a wealthy family that endowed the mosques, such as the Diaby in Samatiguila, the Fofana in Kouto, and the Cissé in Tengréla who still maintain their mosques on a regular basis.

What is known of the history of individual mosques varies from site to site and is based on valuable oral history archives, archaeological investigation of artefacts and radiocarbon dating. These combine to illuminate both the foundation of mosques and their later re-building, although for both there are often more than one version of events.

In the supplementary information submitted, further details have been provided on the Islamisation of the localities where the mosques are sited. This, combined with political history, leads to a better understanding of the building of the mosques, sometimes several centuries after the founding of the settlements, and of the various phases of their re-building.

Radio-carbon evidence shows that both Sorobango and the small mosque of Kong date back to the 17th-18th centuries, while oral tradition records that the latter was built in 1729 by Imam Barro who brought the plans directly from Djenné. According to oral tradition, three other mosques were also founded in the 17th century: Kouto mosque, Kaouara mosque, perhaps built by the son of the first Imam who made four visits to Mecca, and the Tengréla mosque, whose construction is attributed by some to a master mason who built other mosques in what is now Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, and by others to the Cissé family. Radiocarbon dating indicates that all these three mosques were later rebuilt in the 18th to 19th centuries. And such dating also shows that Samatiguila was constructed in the 18th century, perhaps by the wife of Karamogoba Diaby, and Nambira in the 18th to 19th centuries by Imam Traoré Sékou. Although the Grand Mosque of Kong was originally constructed in the mid-18th century, it was rebuilt in the early years of the 20th century.

The ensemble of mosques has thus evolved, being built in different stages, and having undergone many small modifications over time as well as damage from internal wars, such as those waged by Samory Touré in resisting

colonial rule, during which the Grand Mosque of Kong was destroyed.

Boundaries

As per the nomination dossier, the area of the eight components totals 0.12977 ha, with the buffer zones as originally nominated totaling 2.32934 ha.

The boundaries of each component site have been tightly drawn to encompass only the main buildings and original courtyards. The buffer zones are slightly wider rectangular areas, but their boundaries do not necessarily relate to any features on the ground.

Given the urban pressures that are already impacting on the mosques, and are likely to increase in the near future (five out of the eight are in urban areas), including pressure to accommodate new mosques and facilities for them, the current boundaries cannot be said to be sufficient to protect the ability of the mosques to dominate their surroundings, either now or in the future. In addition, the surroundings of the mosques are places where activities related to the cultural significance of the mosques were and still are practiced today. It would be important to protect these spaces as being part of the living heritage of these mosques.

In the Interim Report, the State Party was requested to give consideration to enlarging both the boundaries of the component sites and of the buffer zones, so that the mosques are embedded in their urban and rural landscapes, and to put in place protection to control the height and design of neighbouring buildings as well as the development or improvement of road networks.

In the supplementary information provided, small changes have been proposed for boundaries of two component sites and for two buffer zones. The nominated area has been enlarged for the small Kong mosque and now coincides with its buffer zone while for the large Kong mosque the nominated area has been enlarged to cover about three quarters of the buffer zone. For Sorobango, the buffer zone appears to have been slightly reduced. Samatiguila is the only site for which the buffer zone has been considerably enlarged. No changes have been proposed at the remaining four component sites of the serial property.

While ICOMOS welcomes the State Party efforts, these boundary adjustments only relate to the small areas surrounding two mosques and have not satisfactorily addressed the concerns. The new boundaries of the buffer zones have not been adjusted to encompass any of the neighbouring urban areas, such as the houses bordering the access roads. The component sites are thus still isolated from their urban context and the buffer zone do not offer protection from inappropriate development that could further enclose and overwhelm the dominance of these small mosques.

State of conservation

The form of construction of the mosques, with walls being built up of spherical round mud bricks laid in courses and plastered over with and without, requires regular maintenance. Every few years, the external earthen plaster needs renewing to maintain the structural stability of the walls. Traditionally, both maintenance and renewal were community activities that involved traditional masons, usually organised and paid for by the descendants of the family who had commissioned the mosque, or by local communities.

The conservation of the mosques is thus an on-going process that cannot be maintained unless traditional community structures are in place, unless traditional masons remain as part of the community, and unless traditional patronage prevails under which there is someone or some group who pays for maintenance and periodic re-plastering to be undertaken. Thus, even if a mosque is now in good condition, it could cease to be so in a few years' time if traditional practices are not sustained.

Information provided in the nomination dossier on the state of conservation is very slight: the mosques are listed as being in either good condition with regular maintenance by their communities (five mosques) or in average condition (three mosques, Sorobango, Kouto and Kaouara). For the latter group although communities still undertake regular maintenance, conservation measures are needed to address defects, such as water ingress and weakening of wooden structures, which presumably reflect the lack of regular conservation such as re-plastering.

This information was significantly augmented by the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, which reported that in some mosques there was evidence of inappropriate interventions and the use of inappropriate materials, such as cement and corrugated iron sheets, not only as coverings but also as structural support. Beneath these interventions, it appears that sufficient traditional materials remain and thus inappropriate work could and should be reversed.

But, as observed by the mission, undertaking such work means re-learning traditional practices. For the mosque of Kaouara, a project is underway to reverse the cement coating donated by a local resident to consolidate the earthen walls. However, funds had to be found by the *Office ivoirien du patrimoine culturel* (OIPC) to bring in masons from Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) to advise on how to deal with parts of the building that collapsed when the cement render was removed.

The lack of availability of some of the traditional materials does present some difficulties as shea butter, the main binding material for bricks and mortar has now become very expensive and alternatives such as oil have to be used. And techniques are changing with the traditional spherical bricks formed by hand being superseded by rectangular bricks dried in formers.

While for a few mosques uninterrupted regular maintenance programmes supported by local families are still in place, for other mosques, and particularly those where recent restoration projects have removed cement render and re-instated traditional plaster, there is a need to re-instate traditional those community practices.

How such traditional practices can be re-invigorated and sustained, is one of the key challenges facing the nominated property. The involvement of local communities in the process is essential, but so is the involvement of specialist masons to guide the processes, and the continued patronage of local families or communities. Although some masons specializing in earth construction do exist, it appears that overall the numbers are few and the traditional knowledge structures are very fragile. Similarly, the traditional system under which the descendants of founding families, or local communities, supported the regular conservation programmes, and other repair work that might be needed, remains only partly in place. And, as it has been seen in other inscribed properties such as Djenné, traditional masons may still survive, but cannot work on mosques unless sponsored and supported by local communities.

The supplementary information provided by the State Party acknowledges these challenges, as well as changing social structures and the lack of transmission of local knowledge. Crucially it accepts that traditional practices cannot be self-supporting and will need to be framed by supportive systems, both technical and financial. Clear aims are defined but how these will be achieved is not set out in detail.

In ICOMOS' opinion, the designation of an authority who will be responsible for ensuring that regular maintenance is undertaken and to appropriate standards is essential, as is the provision of adequate financial support, and measures to sustain and actively encourage traditional masons. While a management system that integrates different levels of authority has been defined, this is still not fully functional.

Factors affecting the property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the property are as follows.

Urban Development

Until recently, the immediate setting of the Great Mosque of Kong included only the Islamic University, the Great Wall (*dā-ba*) whose ruins still remain, and the marketplace. Today, this setting has been considerably modified by new constructions unrelated to the mosque, as well as by a concrete fence surrounding the mosque and new buildings for ablutions. There have been similar recent urban encroachments near other mosques, such as the large metal shed near the mosque of Samatiguila.

Currently given the very small areas covered by the proposed boundaries and buffer zones, and with no protection proposed for the urban areas that surround, in place quite tightly, all but two of the mosques on all sides, it would appear that there is nothing to stop the replacement of existing single storey buildings with taller structures, that could overwhelm the way these small mosques should be approached and perceived. As the nomination dossier states, these buildings were intended to dominate the surrounding village houses.

Indeed, the nomination dossier suggests that development and town plans in place are seen as threats. These will remain as threats unless they can accommodate adequately the need to protect the settings of the mosques.

Roads

All of the mosques are inherently vulnerable structures. The potential negative impacts of vibrations from traffic are acknowledged in the nomination dossier, particularly for the mosques of Tengréla, Kong, and Kouto which are close to roads. It is suggested that tremors associated with heavy vehicular traffic could create structural disturbance such as cracks and subsidence.

As the strengthening of the mosques is virtually impossible, it will be crucial for road use, the improvement of roads and the construction of new roads to be regulated to minimise disturbance, and, in certain cases, roads may need to be diverted away from the mosques.

New mosques

An increasing number of new mosques and buildings for their facilities are being built near the nominated mosques and some are encroaching on their settings. Most are Salafi mosques while a few are related to the Maliki school. It will be essential for new mosques to be planned and accommodated in Local Plans to ensure they do not compete for space with the existing mosques.

Scarcity of traditional materials and impact of new materials

The rising price of shea butter is mentioned above. The scarcity of appropriate timber is also acknowledged in the nomination dossier. More research is needed on both these issues to identify appropriate alternative sources of fats/oils and to manage timber supplies, perhaps through small plantations.

As well as the inappropriate use of cement and corrugated iron that have already been mentioned, plastic waterspouts are replacing the traditional wood or pottery pipes, while ostrich eggs on finials are being supplanted by pottery spheres.

Changing social structures

The nomination dossier acknowledges changing social structures that are weakening the authority of the elders over the young and leading to a rural exodus, which means that transmission of traditional knowledge and know-how between generations is disappearing. All of this

makes the conservation processes highly vulnerable, and these changes are likely to intensify over time.

To address these challenges, ICOMOS considers that traditional management will need to be supported by some sort of co-management structure between local communities and authorities. In the supplementary information provided, clear aims are set out towards this end, but details are needed on how a system can be made operational, and what capacity building is necessary to make it effective in addressing conservation needs.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The series of eight Sudanese-style mosques are considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- They represent a distinct architectural style that was introduced into the Empire of Mali in the 14th century and developed in regions to the south with the fall of the Songhai Empire in the late 16th century;
- They are material witnesses to the introduction of Islam in the area that is now Côte d'Ivoire from the 14th century;
- They became religious centres around which developed commercial and cultural exchanges, particularly between the cities of the Niger inland delta and the forest areas to the south;
- They reflect a heritage that has survived through continuation of its original functionality and rigorous maintenance by local communities.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is presented in three parts: the comparison with sites within the country, in the immediate region and internationally. The information in the nomination dossier was considerably augmented by the supplementary information provided in November 2020 and in February 2021 at the request of ICOMOS.

The national comparisons are set out to demonstrate that the eight nominated mosques were selected from 20 surviving Sudanese styled mosques for the way they have maintained their 'original' form and are regularly maintained.

At a regional level, it is suggested that the Sudanese style of mosques can be divided into four groups from north to south: those around Timbuktu, around Djenné, in southern Mali, parts of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, and lastly the Kong area in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Around Timbuktu, the mosques are low, large and with tall truncated pyramidal minarets, while around Djenné the mosques are very tall with a slender silhouette. The third group, which includes part of those nominated, have low stout buttresses, sometimes shell-shaped, as well as minarets and lower cone-shaped *qibla* towers. The fourth

group have a compact structure with no courtyard, regular hard-edged pilasters and mihrab towers almost as high as the minaret.

Although the nomination dossier suggested that the characteristics of the nominated mosques are differentiated from others by their lower profile, by decorated merlons, by the fact that some minarets are conical rather than pyramidal and some have transverse scaffolding, the more detailed analysis provided in the supplementary information suggests a more complex picture. This differentiates between the Kong style, which has regular façades of straight sided buttresses, two towers and no courtyards, and the lower squatter mosques with buttresses that taper both top and bottom, giving them a curved profile, one tower and small courtyards. But in applying this to the eight selected mosques, the differences become less clear. Although the small mosque of Kong has two towers and no courtyard, its buttresses are quite squat. And the mosque of Samatiguila fits into neither category.

The international comparisons offered relate to Djouma d'Iltchankala Mosque in the Khârezm in Uzbekistan and the historic mosque city of Bagerhat in Bangladesh, neither of which have any relation to the geo-cultural area to which the nominated mosques belong, and thus are not appropriate comparators. It is unfortunate that a relevant geo-cultural area for comparisons was not defined. This should have encompassed the Sahel and Savannah regions of West Africa within which earthen mosques were constructed from the 12th century onwards.

In the absence of such a geo-cultural framework, no detailed analysis has been provided with mosques in West Africa that are inscribed or on Tentative lists, and no documentation offered to show what mosques survive in the neighbouring countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Niger, or how the Djenné style was adapted as it travelled south and adopted by different groups of people. Had such an analysis been undertaken, it would have become clear that the Sudanese style of mosques in Côte d'Ivoire cannot be clearly differentiated from those immediately across the borders in neighbouring countries.

In the supplementary information provided, the State Party has offered a brief summary of what distinguishes the Sudanese mosques of Côte d'Ivoire from others in West Africa in terms of how they are seen to fuse the verticality of Islam with the circularity of local Sudanese architecture. But it also acknowledges that the eight nominated mosques, together with the twelve others remaining in Côte d'Ivoire, and a few in Ghana and Burkina Faso, do form a coherent group.

The justification for the current series of eight mosques is thus based on their being the best preserved in Côte d'Ivoire and the fact that no interest was expressed by neighbouring States Parties in extending the series to encompass examples in Ghana and Burkina Faso, in spite of overtures from Côte d'Ivoire.

In ICOMOS's view, a stronger case could have been provided to support the idea that Sudanese mosques in Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries reflect a particular fusion of Islamic and local building forms that responds to local climatic conditions, and major periods of migrations along trade routes between the Sahara and the forest areas to the south, and, thus, these mosques as a group can be seen to be distinguished from others elsewhere.

These mosques are also extraordinary survivals of a building tradition that need regular and on-going community support and maintenance.

A difficult question is how many of these mosques are necessary to define this Sudanese style. The nominated eight are put forward as the best preserved in Côte d'Ivoire, while those beyond the boundaries of Côte d'Ivoire were not available for inclusion. On balance, ICOMOS considers that the nominated eight are sufficient, but every encouragement should be given to exploring how examples in neighbouring countries might be considered as extensions.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis currently provided does allow consideration of this serial property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iv) and (v).

Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Sudanese-style mosques bear witness to an exchange of influences between the indigenous animists and the predominantly Muslim caravanners, in particular the Arab-Berbers and the Mandé who came from the Niger delta in the period between 14th and 18th centuries and set up trading settlements linked into trans-Saharan trade. The structure of these mosques is clearly the result of an exchange of architectural ideas and local earth building forms and techniques.

ICOMOS considers that the mosques clearly reflect an important fusion of ideas, influences and techniques adapted to particular climatic conditions, which resulted in a highly distinctive, Sudanese architectural style that has persisted over time.

Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the architecture of the Sudanese-style mosques, while demonstrating the mastery of techniques of earthen construction, reveals a subtle mix between the cultures of

Arab construction and African. The hybrid style combines two beliefs, that of a single transcendental god of Muslims and that of several gods in sub-Saharan African and fuses Arab verticality with Sudanese circularity.

ICOMOS considers that the series of mosques can be seen as outstanding examples of a type of architecture that very specifically reflects a major period of migration, south from the Islamic Saharan states to the forest areas that started in the 14th century and accelerated after the collapse of the Songhai Empire at the end of the 16th century, which that led to the development of new centres of trade, the introduction of Islam and the building of mosques. The style of the mosques reflects a fusion of Islamic and local architectural styles adapted to climatic conditions, and the mosques themselves can be seen as documents for an important period of history.

Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the mosques are among the last witnesses of Sudanese-style earthen architecture in sub-Saharan Africa. They have influenced the spatial organization of their localities and constitute a central element around which the city or village unfolds.

ICOMOS considers that although the mosques are positioned in a central place in the settlements, what has been nominated are only the mosques, which on their own cannot reflect the way the surrounding settlements may reflect a specific interaction with their environment.

And although examples of this particular Sudanese-style of earthen architecture are diminishing, these mosques cannot be said to be the last witnesses to the style.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property has the potential to meet criteria (ii) and (iv), although the Sudanese style mosques and the trading centres that developed around them after the end of the 17th century are not confined to what is now the Côte d'Ivoire. Criterion (v) has not been demonstrated as, in ICOMOS's view, it is not appropriate for the single buildings that have been nominated to be interpreted as settlements.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the series relates to its ability to display all the attributes that convey potential Outstanding Universal Value. In this regard, the eight component sites can be seen as sufficient.

In terms of the integrity of the individual component sites, the current boundaries exclude the assembly areas essential for the use of the mosque, and thus not all the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value have been included in the boundaries.

Furthermore, the component sites are all highly vulnerable to further diminution of traditional maintenance and conservation practices, and to urban encroachment.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the component sites in terms for their form appears to be good, although the level of documentation provided does not allow for a full understanding of how details might have been eroded over time.

In terms of their construction and materials, although there have been interventions using modern materials, these it appears can be reversed as sufficient local materials remain and some masons skilled in local techniques are still to be found. However, there are significant challenges to be met in terms of re-learning some techniques, adapting others in the light of scarcity of some local materials, in dealing with the adverse impacts of modern materials, and in ensuring the traditional involvement of local communities and patrons.

Thus, the authenticity of materials and construction techniques remains highly vulnerable as it relies on the continuation of community maintenance, the availability of skilled masons and the continued patronage of local families, and how this will be achieved has not been sufficiently clarified.

In terms of how the symbolism of the buildings is understood, then the boundaries of the component sites and their buffer zones are inadequate, as they do not encompass sufficient space around the mosques to allow them to be perceived as intended. In some component sites, new buildings have been erected recently in the vicinity of the mosque, including particularly large and prominent ones next to the Great Mosque of Kong.

ICOMOS considers that authenticity is highly vulnerable in terms of material and techniques, and in terms of how well they are able to display their value.

ICOMOS considers that the requirements of integrity and authenticity have not yet been fully met.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

The eight mosques that have been nominated are clearly important survivals of a style of mosque that developed in the Sudanese region mainly after the fall of the Songhai Empire, and which reflects the way the Djenné style was fused with local traditions and adapted to local climatic conditions. The eight nominated sites have the potential to justify criteria (ii) and (iv) but conditions of integrity and authenticity have not yet been fully met, as the boundaries

of the nominated component sites do not encompass all the attributes of proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Moreover, the sites are vulnerable to urban encroachment.

ICOMOS considers that further work is needed on how boundaries and buffer zones are defined in order to allow the nominated areas to include assembly spaces associated with the mosques, and for the buffer zones to encompass their immediate urban and rural settings in order to ensure that what remains of the mosques' dominance can be protected. To address the urgent conservation needs, the management system needs to be operationalised and augmented to allow it to strengthen the traditional processes. This will take time and a road map is needed that sets out actions necessary to achieve a stable situation.

Attributes / Features

The key features of the mosques are their form including layout, their architectural features such as buttresses, merlons, minarets and towers, their traditional materials and construction techniques, their use and continuing use, and their association with traditional systems of patronage that allow regular maintenance and the involvement of skilled masons. The features also relate to the spatial plans of the mosques, the construction system of the roof terraces, and the assembly spaces that surround the mosques structures.

ICOMOS considers that the identification of features, as potential attributes, is comprehensive, but that the current boundaries do not fully encompass them all at this stage.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Conservation measures

Very few details were provided in the nomination dossier on conservation measures. It was stated that five mosques are in a good state of conservation and three average, Kouto, Kaouara, and Sorobango, and that for these, conservation will be undertaken by local communities with the advice of skilled masons.

The technical evaluation mission expressed concern at recent 'messy' interventions at several mosques and identified the need for urgent measures to be undertaken to reverse work at Kouto, Kaouara, Sorobango as well as at Samatiguila.

It appears that traditional construction techniques are being changed due to the use of imported materials such as cement and lime, although apparently there is a desire in certain localities to return to traditional practices, including the use of earth from termite mounds. While specialist masons do exist in some settlements, particularly where routine maintenance is still entrusted to a lineage family, or several families (as is the case for the Samatiguila mosque), they are not available for all component sites.

These changes have clearly contributed to the recent unsatisfactory interventions being undertaken, without, it appears, any advice or interventions from the responsible Ministry. And the shortage of skilled masons is exemplified in the re-plastering the Kaouara mosque where, after cement render was removed, advice had to be obtained from Burkina Faso masons on a suitable recipe for earthen plaster using boiled oil rather than shea butter, all of which came at a high cost to the local community.

In the supplementary information provided, these weaknesses are acknowledged. Furthermore, details have also been provided on proposed new initiatives to support capacity building for masons, on plans to form them into a professional association and on collaboration with institutions in Morocco in connection with training in earthen architectural techniques. Consideration is also being given to how local maintenance committees might be formalized and integrated into regional and national networks so that they can be supported both professionally and financially. How these initiatives will be developed and implemented has not been set out, nor any suggested timeframe for how long it will take before new structures allied to capacity building will become effective in reversing the current decline in traditional practices.

The supplementary information includes in an Annex a costed conservation plan for six of the mosques. It is unclear, however, quite what status this Plan has or whether it will be extended to cover the remaining two mosques.

There is mention in the nomination dossier that the Ivorian Office of Cultural Heritage has signed an agreement with the Islamic Development Fund to provide resources for the restoration of Sudanese-style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire. The scope of such an initiative is not set out nor how it might sit alongside the idea of supported traditional local conservation and management.

Monitoring

In the nomination dossier monitoring arrangements have been set out for the Actions associated with the Management system. These are set out in tabular form with headings for the action, indicator, periodicity and responsibilities. These will be helpful to track progress in delivering activities.

Over and above these, there is also need for a monitoring system to be developed to monitor on a regular basis the identified features of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. This should include regular monitoring of the mosques, perhaps through photographic records, with the results being used as an early warning of any adverse changes. Such a monitoring system should also encompass the setting of the mosques, and their uses.

ICOMOS considers that while current conservation of most of the nominated mosques might be considered just about satisfactory, it is fragile due to a decline in local masons, and changes in social structures. ICOMOS

considers also that complete reliance on local communities to continue to maintain and repair these mosques over time is not a robust enough approach, given the weaknesses of traditional practices. Systems need to be put in place that offer support for local communities, can strengthen the skills of local masons, and integrate both into national support networks. While such a structure is set out as an aspirational, details are needed on how it might be developed and operationalised, and a road map set out to show when it might become effective in reversing the current downward trends. A monitoring system also needs to be developed to monitor the features of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

5 Protection and management

Documentation

The information originally provided in the nomination dossier on the mosques in terms of documentation was not sufficiently detailed and lacked a deep presentation of their history. For all mosques, photographs were provided including aerial views and for some sketches of the layout were also given. No measured drawings were included.

In response to a request to strengthen this documentation, the State Party, in its supplementary information, provided detailed drawings of the eight mosques, and expanded details of their history and historical context.

What still remains to be better understood is quite how the structures of the mosques have evolved over time and, it would be helpful if further sources could be explored, such as archive photographs and mosque records to complete the documentation, and frame conservation approaches.

Legal protection

Although the eight mosques were included on the inventory of national cultural heritage in October 2012 and January 2016, the State Party acknowledges that the protection of Sudanese-style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire remains a major concern.

From the supplementary information provided, it is clear that the protection offered is limited to within the areas of national protection, which coincides with the areas nominated. There is no direct protection offered to the buffer zones. It is clearly stated that the spaces surrounding the mosques that are arranged for prayers do not have a ban on new construction.

The mosques are privately owned, five by one family, one by six families, and two by individuals, while the land on which they are built belongs either to families or to the Muslim community. Titles to the land – which extends to the spaces around each mosque beyond the legally protected areas – have not been formally recognised and remain to be ratified by the State. Assigning such titles to owners, or registering them on behalf of the management

committee, could greatly strengthen local management and help to prevent illegal occupations and constructions.

Town Plans do exist, but few details have been provided and the nomination dossier refers to these as a threat in terms of promoting development. Although the supplementary information states that regulations exist to control development on open spaces, these regulations appear difficult to operate, and to permit a particularly large number of exceptions, including for buildings with a social purpose.

What remains essential is the need for the mosques to be integrated with their urban and rural contexts and for their immediate settings to be properly defined and protected to ensure there is no inappropriate encroachment from new buildings or from the re-development of existing buildings – as has occurred at the Grand Mosque of Kong, even though for this mosque the entire area around it was protected, including the ancient square, the ancient market, the *dâ-ba* and the Binger case. Such protection of the immediate settings needs to be achieved, not just through national laws, but also through a participatory process with local communities, as well as through the drafting of sympathetic town Plans.

Management system

Traditional management has been practiced over the centuries by families under customary law and this is the basis for the current management system. Each mosque has a Local Management Committee, set up by local communities, and involving some elected officials and these meet four times a year.

A 'Management system of the eight Sudanese-style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire, for the period 2020-2025, was submitted within the nomination dossier. Under this system, the local Committees will be integrated into an overall system for the nominated series with links to regional and national structures. For the future, all restoration work will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the existing normative instruments. Annual action plans will be adopted by the Ivorian Office of Cultural Heritage Management Board and implemented by the Local Basic Management Committees. The Regional Directorates of Culture and of Francophony will also be involved through coordinating conservation and management activities in relation to local management committees. Currently it appears that not all these structures are yet operational. Although there is mention of an annual budget for the Cultural Heritage Board, no details are provided on how this will support Local Committee and local work. It is also unclear how any large-scale projects funded by the Islamic Development Fund, which are apparently being planned, will be integrated into the proposed system.

The Management System also includes an Action Plan that sets out outcome to be achieved by 2025. As well as strengthening legislation and protection, these include creating a Foundation for the protection of mosques, developing and implementing a plan for the maintenance,

rehabilitation and restoration of Sudanese-style mosques, and ensuring financial autonomy for the management of mosques. It remains unclear who will be responsible for their development.

The Management System, once fully implemented, can be said to fulfil the basic requirements of a management plan. But while it sets out general and specific objectives as well as activities to be carried out during the five-year term, it does not show how the systems and methods of centuries-old conservation, held and practiced by local communities who have ensured the conservation of mosques from generation to generation, will be sustained. Although more on this aspect was submitted in the February 2021 supplementary information, it remains aspirational without clear details on how and when a robust system of support for traditional management would be put in place. What is needed is information on when the management system will be operationalised, and how the longer term issues such as capacity building and training for masons will be undertaken, in order to reach a stage where the decline in conservation practices has been reversed. To this end, a road map is needed that defines actions and timeframes to reach that point.

A further weakness of the Management System is the lack of specificities on how it will relate to the setting of the mosques and to Town Plans – or whether the latter will be re-drafted given the concerns that have been expressed. Risk management is also not addressed.

A further aspect that remains unclear and that is how any large-scale projects, such as the project funded by the Islamic Development Fund, which is apparently being planned, will be integrated into the proposed management system.

Visitor management

The proposed Actions in the nomination dossier include Developing tourist exploitation of Sudanese-style mosques and these include organising pilgrimages and the sale of souvenirs.

Whereas there appears to be a desire to attract visitors to the mosques, there is currently no visitor management plan. Given the real constraints that exist in accommodating visitors in these very small structures, and the needs that visitors bring in terms of facilities, both of which could conflict with the requirements of worshipers, it will be essential to develop such a plan and integrate it with local plans.

Community involvement

Local communities are at the heart of this nomination and the on-going maintenance of the mosques is mainly their responsibility.

Clearly there have been consultations with the local communities as the nomination has evolved. Concerns do remain though on precisely how their contribution will be organised and supported and formally integrated into the management structures.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of nominated property

Managing a series of eight highly fragile earthen mosques which are still in regular use, in settlements subject to growing development pressures and where there is a desire to attract tourists, presents considerable management challenges.

The management structures that have been set out focus on support for local committees and the need to formally integrate these into wider local, regional and national structures, and this is to be commended, but for the most part these systems are apparently not yet fully operational.

The actions envisaged in the management plan and in the supplementary information that has been provided, if they are carried out, will contribute to strengthening local mosque management practices and their sustainable conservation. But they cannot yet be said to adequately address how traditional management will be sustained, or how the immediate settings of the mosques will be protected from inappropriate development and from excessive traffic that could cause damaging vibrations. A detailed road map needs to be produced to show how these challenges will be addressed over the next three years.

ICOMOS considers that the current management arrangements need to be operationalised and significantly strengthened to deal with the very specific challenges that this serial property presents, particularly in relation to the weakened traditional practices, and the pressures of urban development, and that a detailed road map is needed setting out how these will be addressed.

6 Conclusion

The eight mosques, at Tengréla, Kouto, Sorobango, Samatiguila, Nambira, Kong and Kaouara clearly reflect a distinctive Sudanese architectural style, specific to the savannah region of West Africa, which was developed between the 17th and 19th centuries as traders and Islamic scholars spread south from the Empire of Mali, extending the trans-Saharan trade routes into the forest area.

The small and fragile mosques are now highly important testimonies to this trans-Saharan trade that facilitated the expansion of Islam and Islamic culture to the savannah region. Characterised by earthen construction, protruding timbers, vertical buttresses crowned by pottery or ostrich eggs, and tapering minarets, the mosques present an adaptation of a style developed in Djenné around the 14th century style. This adaptation reflects a fusion of Islamic and local architectural forms, particularly related to Senoufo shrines, and also responds to the wetter climate of the Sudan region.

This highly distinctive architectural style has persisted over time. But its characteristics are also found in other similar mosques in neighbouring countries, particularly the Great Mosque at Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, the Larabanga mosque, Ghana, and others in southern Mali.

Although it would have been desirable to include within this series some of the mosques beyond the borders of Côte d'Ivoire, ICOMOS nevertheless concludes that the nominated eight mosques have the potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value. At this stage, the mosques have the potential to justify criteria (ii) and (iv), but they do not yet fulfil the conditions of integrity and authenticity, or of management and protection.

The boundaries are too tightly drawn and there is inadequate protection in place to ensure their immediate urban settings are not further eroded. The boundaries of the mosques only encompass built structures, not the communal spaces to which they are related, and the buffer zones do not include neighbouring buildings which are a key part of the mosques' immediate settings. It is important to protect the mosques as monuments related to their urban and rural landscapes: one should support the other. To correct this, the boundaries of the nominated sites and their buffer zones need to be adjusted. In order to protect the immediate settings, the Local Plans should be re-framed to stop new development in the spaces surrounding the mosques and to constrain re-development of neighbouring buildings to allow the mosques to maintain what remains of their dominance in their urban contexts.

A real and immediate threat is the siting close to the traditional mosques of new mosques linked to different schools of Islam, such as Wahhabism and Salafism, as well as to the traditional Maliki school. Many of these new structures threaten the integrity and authenticity of the traditional mosques.

Conservation of these earthen mosques was traditionally based locally and often supported by local families. Maintaining this communal approach is a difficult challenge, given the nature of traditional conservation that involves regular maintenance and re-plastering, and the support of skilled masons as well the participation of members of the local communities. The fact that only a few of the mosques now have adequate conservation and that for four others recent work needs to be reversed as a result of the use of unsuitable materials, demonstrates that the current level of traditional conservation is not effective enough and has not been in the recent past.

While a commitment to try and reverse this decline is to be welcomed, ICOMOS considers that a co-management system that sustains local masons, and supervises work that is carried out is needed to ensure that communal involvement will persist in the long term. Although the basis structures of traditional building practices still exist, it is clear that changes are being made to both practices and the type of materials that are used. Evolving changes to social structures may impact on the ability of

communities to respond as they have done in the past. A formal system is thus needed that builds on traditional practices, but gives them support and encourages capacity building, and also addresses projects that go beyond traditional maintenance such as those needed to reverse inappropriate recent work. While the framework for such a system has been set out, this needs to be operationalised and appropriately resourced as a matter of urgency. But as it is appreciated that reviving and strengthening traditional practices will take time, it is suggested that a road map be developed to set out actions to address these challenges and a timeframe within which the traditional conservation practices will be robust enough to have reversed the current decline.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the series of nominated mosques has potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value but will only be able to do so once measures relating to boundaries and protection of urban landscapes have been put in place to monitor threats to integrity and authenticity, and once the management system has been operationalised and augmented and there is a clear timeframe for reaching stable conservation conditions.

ICOMOS considers that there is an urgency to achieve these measures in order that these mosques are sustained together with their associated traditional practices, as they are currently highly vulnerable as a result of a combination of factors that have been detailed in this evaluation.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the examination of the nomination of Sudanese style mosques in northern Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party, with the advice of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre, if requested, to:

- Enlarge the boundaries for each component site to encompass the full extent of communal and associated functional spaces around each mosque;
- Enlarge the buffer zones to encompass the immediate urban setting of the mosques to allow the mosques to be perceived as dominant structures;
- Strengthen the protection for buffer zones, through amending Local Plans and relevant local regulations, particularly in relation to development that is currently permitted;
- Operationalise the proposed management system and augment it to encompass capacity building for local masons;
- Develop a road map with actions and a timeframe within which traditional conservation practices will be robust enough to reverse the current decline;
- Complete conservation plans for each mosque setting out its current state of conservation and the interventions needed;
- Define an overall conservation approach for the whole series that includes proposals for major projects;
- Design as a matter of urgency projects to reverse recent inappropriate interventions at Kouto, Kaouara, Sorobango and Samatiguila mosques.

Any revised nomination should be visited by a mission to the site.

ICOMOS remains ready and willing to offer advice or co-operation on the development of these measures, if requested by the State Party.



Source : OIPC, 2019

Map showing the location of the nominated components