

'I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and independence and they who, as a people, perished in the result...

Angula N and Bankie B F 2000:29 cited from Thabo Mbeki president of the Republic of South Africa

I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home in our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still part of me. In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a part of my essence... I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hitsa and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom. My mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert.

I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, who sees in the mind's eyes and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk: death in concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, and dreams in ruins. I am the grandchild of nongqause...

I come of those who were transported from India and China, who being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human exercise. Being part of all these people, and the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion I shall claim that I am an African.'

An African Dialogue Centre

Objective Statement

To bring together the different African embassies and different African people into one space using architecture. To try and find common ties and overcome the differences that divide.

The architecture must create a platform that allows for transformation and unity to happen among different African people, creating an opportunity for different African people to interact in one space without fear of being discriminated against. Through the African artifacts on display and the traditional performances that will take place the people will have exposure and be able to learn about each others cultures.

A further opportunity will be created where different African governments and the general public can engage one another to exchange views and ideas on developing Africa.

An opportunity is created for the African people to have direct access to intensively and intellectually researched information on current African development plans so as to aid them into making informed decisions. At the end a unified, prouder and more involved African society is arrived at.

Assumptions

By focusing mainly on the social order and interaction created by vernacular African architecture it is possible to create an architecture

that different African people can relate to and identify with. This assumption allows for the spatial conventions of the different African styles to be focused on and used.

Literature study/precedent study to be covered

The literature examined goes beyond African Architecture alone, but also looks at other architecture beyond the African continent and tries to find a relation between the two. The theories of the architect Herman Hertzberger which talk about creating an architecture of interaction and creating a community are an example of such theories which are looked at in relation to the theories of African architecture.

The theories of an African architect Hassan Fathy which talk of respecting culture and community when creating architecture also forms a good basis from which to relate architecture to the international architecture outside the African continent.

In helping with the understanding of the African social order which informs African architecture some theories will be looked at. Theories by Msimang C.T a South African author who analyses and explains Zulu architecture from both his experiences and through research will be among the theories studied. Fanuel Mutsepe's theories will also be looked at since he also analyses African architecture from social structure and personal experience. There is also other literature by people such as Guidoni Enrico which takes its readers on a journey through the West African countries but are based purely on research rather than experience.

Research by people like Guidoni Enrico, Garlake Peter and others on African art and it meaning will be useful in the study.

Research Drivers

- How can architecture assist in creating a sense of community?
- How does indigenous African Architecture create a sense of community while reflect the culture of the community it is rooted in?
- How does art, architecture and culture relate in the African society?
- How can contemporary architecture learn from vernacular architecture while remaining contemporary in its creation?
- Does architecture alone create a sense of identity or is there more that is involved in creating an identity.

Problem statement

“Common ground is greater and more enduring than the difference that divides”
 Nelson Mandela. “Many rills make a big river” Nelson Mandela.

The spirit of community as well as that of unity is the one spirit which has been and is being highly upheld in the different African societies, cultures and countries. The word ‘ubuntu’ has been a major tool which has been used from ancient times till the present to perpetuate and keep the spirit of unity alive. Fanuel Motsepe’s research for his thesis document discovered that the word ‘ubuntu’ is used even beyond the borders of South Africa, mentioning some of the countries like: Zambia, Tanzania and Nigeria. ‘Ubuntu’ has other words linking to it and used by different cultural groups as a source of guidance for self conduct. ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ meaning, ‘you are who you are because of others’. One of the other famous sayings states: a child is raised by a village.

We are currently living in a world where technology and commerce play a major role in shifting peoples’ lifestyles and behaviours. Despite such shifts, Africa has realised that it needs to work as one in order to manage and withstand the difficulties that come across its way. We have seen this through the introduction of various different organisations and disciplines to safeguard and promote Africa’s economic and social welfare. Through these processes we experienced the birth of the African Union which became the main body that manages the progress of both the economic and social welfare of Africa. For example we had the 1st all Africa Congress on Biotechnology 2008 taking place in September 2008 and this was an initiative by the African Union. Through the formation of the African

Union, other supporting development structures have been established. One of those structures is the African Institute, a division entrusted with the powers for economic development and planning research in Africa.

The world as a whole fought very hard against racial discrimination with some people even putting their own lives on the line and losing them in some instances.

After the 1994 elections the Republic of South Africa entered into a new era where the constitution gave every man and woman equal rights regardless of their colour, ethnic group or culture. Besides all these struggles and achievements it is reported that as early as the 1990’s, South Africa has and is experiencing xenophobia. This has been focused mainly on African Foreigners. This situation became so bad that the South African President Thabo Mbeki delivered a speech in May 2001 condemning this behaviour.

Embassies are regarded as being countries in their own right and Pretoria is fortunate enough to have a large number of them both in the Hatfield as well as the Brooklyn area. The number of these embassies in Pretoria is estimated to be 112.

There are a lot of different cultures, resources and skills which are found in Africa but compared to the developed countries we still have many more to acquire. We even have some African citizens training in continents abroad with intentions of bringing back to Africa their acquired skills. On Wednesday 19 March 2008 an article on the South African Minister of Science and Technology was reported by Pretoria News as saying that there is a shortage of skills in Africa.

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The minister even suggested that development of education is not the only answer but there also need to be dialogues aimed at empowering Africa.

To try and assist Africa in its work towards a unified and dignified Africa, I saw a need for a publicly accessible, neutral meeting place for the collective African Embassies. Here, they will get to discuss common issues which are relevant in developing the African continent and linking it to the wider world.

Different African states can present cultural, social, economic and skills programs which can be of benefit to the other African states. Presentations and discussions from countries outside the African Continent will also become part of a knowledge base to better develop Africa. Due to the fact that the discussions which will be taking place will be done with an intention of assisting in developing the citizens of Africa, it is important that the outcomes are made easily accessible to all. A public information storage area is regarded as being one of the major benefits in this facility. 'Half education is more dangerous than no education'.

Exposing people to the richness of other cultures could be a useful mechanism in creating mutual respect. "Atannayita: y' atenda n nyina obufumbi" Ganda saying, which when translated means "The person who has not travelled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best cook)". 'Thairu (1975:168-169) argues for a future of greater regional integration through educational and cultural exchanges between African nations. This, he says, 'will bring into the open pan-African cultural similarities, promote more widespread understanding and tolerance on the continent, and contribute to greater overall African unity.' <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v3/v3i2a1.htm>

Seeing that Africa is known for its expression through its tangible and intangible artifacts (performance, craft and painting), having an art exhibition space show casing the art works from different African states and explaining their symbolic expression could go a long way in educating and creating respect among different people about each others cultures.

These exhibitions will be displayed on a rotation system with different countries showcasing their different assets each time. Cultural dance forms a major part of life within the different cultures when asking or thanking the Gods/ancestors for something or when purely celebrating. Having different African nations in one space, makes it necessary to have a performance space where cross cultural learning is facilitated amongst different people from various backgrounds and cultures.

Through this initiative, the public get to be informed directly by their collective government about developments and projects happening in their continent. Different nationalities get to learn and become more informed about each others countries and cultures, as a result develop respect for each other.

In an attempt to further assist with the development of Africa in both its social and economic affairs a platform for debate, sharing of information and delivery of such results to the public will be created. Seeing that there is an established institution like the African Institute which undertakes intensive research with regards to the development of Africa, it is therefore a wise decision for the African Dialogue Centre to create a link with them, possibly house them and help deliver their information to the public. The library and the electronic information facility in the African Dialogue Centre will become a good platform for

the African Institute to pass well researched information onto the public. Even education institutions like the University Of Pretoria stand to gain from the publicly accessible information in the library and the electronic facility. With the introduction of the African Dialogue Centre, an identity of a unified and progressive African culture will be strengthened. It was through the 1996 Rugby World cup held in South Africa that true transformation was experienced and felt in the air. In meeting for a common goal, people got to learn about each other, as a result celebrated as one and overlooked their differences. This experience served as a revelation of the importance of gathering spaces where an inclusive activity takes place.



Ref: Graeme H, Hlahla P 2008:1. Figure 1: (Pretoria News, foreigners murdered)



Ref: Graeme H, Hlahla P 2008:5. Figure 2 (Pretoria News, Brain drain)

Community as a Concept for Architecture

The spirit of community and working as one in achieving a goal is highly emphasised and valued within the different African cultures. At the same time the different African cultures highly respect nature as it is one of the main references in guiding their conduct from day to day. Sayings and idioms have also been created within the African cultures to further emphasise the importance of this collective over the individual. "Ngone eka genda yonke yababa", is a Swahili saying when translated to means; When Ngoro (stream from the river Nile) travels alone it goes astray. "Sisimizi wawili lawashindwi kavulu panzi mmojd", is a Swahili saying when translated means; two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper.

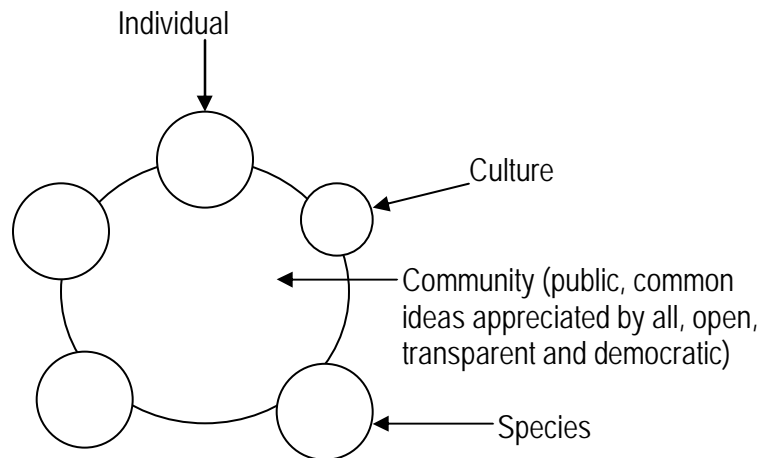
This is not to say that individual activities are not allowed, but it is merely to remind people that they belong to a whole. It is only these sources that allow one to confidently say 'therefore I am'. Even social scientists who do intensive studies focused on the different African social structures also agree that most African social structures are based around the importance of community. "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man" (1969:109). '<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asg/v3/v3i2a1.htm>' cited from (Professor John S. Mbiti (1969 and 1992))

Being involved in the field of architecture and looking at the importance of community, makes it critical for me to investigate how architecture is affected or influenced by this sense of community.

Before we look at the effects and influences that exist between architecture and community, Let us look at what constitute a community. 'Community, a population aggregate inhabiting a contiguous territory, integrated through common experience, possessing a number of common institutions, conscious of its unity, and able to act effectively in a crisis. In this sense, a community is a complex of activities which tie the inhabitants of an area into an interacting social group that works out its common life tasks in association. The population aggregate may range from a small tribal group to a modern metropolitan centre. Physically, the centre of a community is the place where lines of transportation and communication converge; usually such a centre is the business district of a town or city. The community is related to other places by physical and social ties, as well as by cultural, political and economic relationships that are organized in an orderly manner. The people living within the communal area feel they belong there: it is their home. A community is thus integrated psychologically and socially through the common experiences that are expressed in myth, legend, tradition, and folk tales.' (Halsey W. D 1972; 101)

Community is an identity, for example, the South African community at large is identified with democracy. Communities can be formed by different individuals, different cultures, different social groups

(communist, capitalist and many more) as well as different species. It is also possible to find a community within a community. For example, in Johannesburg you may find individuals being affiliated members of cultural groups, religious groups and many more. When you step back you will realise that these groups are interconnected to each other by the mere fact that together they come to form a South African community.



Due to common ideas and beliefs shared by different individuals, communities are formed and are made stronger by the frequent interaction of those individuals. This therefore requires that these different individuals find a common neutral place where they can meet. It is in these meetings that they, as a collective, get involved in activities, sharing of strengths, knowledge and even capital. 'Communities are structurally and functionally oriented around the social institutions which characterise human society: family, health centre, church, school, economic activities, recreation, government,

and welfare.' Halsey W. D 1972; 101. In answering the question of why people form communities and the cultural imperatives that drive individuals to come together in the collective, Aristotle says 'communities are formed not simply to oversee the practical details of justice, peace, defence, traffic, but rather for the sake of good life. Good life must satisfy four basic social desires: religiosity, intellectual growth, politics and conviviality' (V. Popovic 2005: 23).

In his research on 'Ubuntu' Fanuel Motsepe, realised that South African township society appreciates the outside space orientated towards the street more while relaxing in their yards. This he says is because members can enjoy the shade in their yards while getting to interact with the passers by on the street. This interaction process forms a major part in the concept of 'ubuntu'. It is through the interrelationship of functions and status that persons become identified with a community.' (W. D Halsey 1972; 101).

As a community, decisions have to be made collectively and as a result structures to aid in good functioning of the community are set in place. In the rural communities Inkosi (king) has his Induna Yenkosi (chief) overseeing the well being of his people and reporting back to him where needed. Induna Yenkosi (chief) becomes a link between the Inkosi (king) and his people. In the suburban areas, some sort of community representative group is created, to pass and handle community issues. Even in schools/ tertiary institutions a representative for the student community is formed so that they can link and represent the students to other bodies and sources. Such a student body is usually known as the S.R.C. (Student Representative Council).

When designs are approached with an open mind and a will to learn from their end users, the concept of community as a catalyst or driving force for design has a lot to offer in the creation of architecture. Herman Hertzberger is one of the few architects who have an understanding and respect for community (its function, space and need); this he shows through his designs and theories. 'Herman comments, that a revolution in Society facilitated a revolution in Architecture' (Brian O'Hanlon 2007- 01). Hertzberger believes that a building should not only be seen as a beautiful sculpture but rather a place where a sense of community is upheld and encouraged. "This is not a building, it is a settlement" (Brian O'Hanlon 2007- 01). Occupants give life to a building and not the other way around. As mentioned by Hertzberger; building transformation should not only be driven by the latest technology but should mainly be driven by the changes that happen with its occupants. It is therefore important that architects design buildings to accommodate people and not have people try and accommodate architecture.

Herman Hertzberger emphasises that when he designs he looks for the meaning first and when that is rooted down then form will follow. He also mentions that once he has realised the meaning in the design, functioning spaces within objects become more important than the objects themselves. 'Architecture is about people – not making architecture easier for people – it is about, what they are. "Everywhere you make steps", that is, if you wish a building to become a city in microcosm. Space becomes about connection of people, without any separation. Changing the use of the ground, whether it became steps for socialisation, or an outside roof that took the form of a hillock for crowds to sit on, coated in Astro-Turf.' (Brian O'Hanlon 2007- 01).

'Spaces at low road buildings are changed at will by their occupants, therefore the spaces become personalised'. (S. Brand 1992: 4).

Some of the other greatest designers who learnt and continue learning from and respect community as a concept for design are the self taught designers in the rural areas working within the boundaries of vernacular architecture. 'Vernacular buildings evolve. As generations of new buildings imitate the best of mature buildings, they increase in sophistication while retaining simplicity. They become finely attuned to the local weather and local society'. (S. Brand 1992: 4). This is the type of architecture which understands that a family is a type of community within a community. This is evident in the vernacular architecture that is found through out Africa and this we will be investigating later on in the document.

In a biography written by James Steele on Hassan Fathy's work, he mentions that community architecture is a tradition. The biography traces and reveals the origins of community architecture and locates its existence. 'The community builders have always dealt with man, synthesising his existence and taking account not only of his comfort but also of his history, his myth, his 'being – here on the earth, in other words, the whole purpose of his existence'. (J. Steele 1988: 8). In the biography James Steele mentions Hassan Fathy's theories on communal architecture becoming the community's language. Fathy says that communal architecture develops its own favourite forms and details with which that particular community can identify with.

Having gone through the study and the understanding of what constitutes a community and some of the elements which can be applied into the built environment in creating or enhancing the sense of community, it has been made clear that designers can use community as a concept when executing their designs.

It is therefore the designers' responsibility to look closely into the community and take valuable lessons when approaching designs. Hassan Fathy says, 'The community builders teach us also some additional and important lessons that studies in architectural schools alone cannot accomplish: they demonstrate to us that architecture is a collective and not an individual art, and that this collective architecture has its own vocabulary.

Furthermore, they warn us that architecture is not just the product of theorising and sociological or psychological analysis as is so often the case in present – day schools, but involves a knowledge of techniques as well'.(J. Steele 1988: 8). Hassan Fathy warns designers that they must not separate tradition and identity when designing for a community.

Tradition and identity mean more to the community than the architect's personal opinion. But this does not mean that designers must copy and paste the existing.

Working with the existing, designers are suppose to be able to analyze, extract and create meaningful as well as appropriate architecture that responds positively to its community and makes it easy for them to identify with. 'Authentic traditional design is a complex process of careful adaptation and assimilation in an act of gestation. This ritual revitalises the spiritual identity of the community through the proper act of building, and the master piece is created by the faith of the artist in his tradition more so than in the arrogance of his revolt.' (J, Steele 1988: 8 cited from Hassan Fathy (Architecture for the poor)).

African Social Structure and Typologies

Xenophobia is among some of the greatest challenges that are facing South Africa and other parts of Africa. For us as Africans to be able to confidently challenge and learn from other continents while developing ourselves as an African continent, we have to first learn how to live with each other. Once we understand each others differences and have respect for each other, it then becomes easier to take on other tasks. Due to different cultural groups having little knowledge and understanding about each others cultures, a sense of negative pride is created and perpetuated. In supporting the fact that there needs to be an intercultural relation developed in Africa, Professor Wolf suggests that we should look at the positive side of cross cultures and similarities that exist within. This he says will contribute in uniting us African People. He refers to this idea of cross culture as global cultural landscape.

<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v3/v3i2a1.htm>

“Ukulehla kwenqama akusho ukuthi iyabaleka kodwa ilanda amandla”, a Zulu saying which when translated means, when a ram reverses it does not mean that it is running away but it is merely gathering strength. Sometimes to have a better understanding of things or to be able to make a couple of steps forward, you have to take one or two steps back. Most of the African vernacular architecture was and is designed around accommodating and capturing both the culture and social structure of the people using it. It is therefore important that we go back and look at some of the African architecture and see if we can extract informative lessons from it.

When one is familiar with a certain group’s architectural layout and the treatment there of, it becomes easy for that person to tell some things

about that group. For example one can tell where the highest order of a tribe is, that is if hierarchy is practiced in that tribe. The architecture can even inform one about the accepted way of circulating around a certain space.

Extracting some of the important elements which capture the cultural elements in the vernacular architecture and applying them in the design while still keeping the architecture in touch with current trends of the times in which we are living in, we stand to get an appropriate and responsive architecture. “World culture” will only come into being through a cross – fertilization between rooted cultures on the one hand and universal civilization on the other.’ (Frampton K 1983: 148). In an attempt to try and achieve this goal we will take journey through Africa and look at its architecture. We will start the journey from the Southern parts of Africa and make our way up the continent.

Most of the different tribal groups in Africa were either nomads or permanent settlers and this had a profound influence in their architecture. Locally available materials also played their own part in influencing the types of structures that were possible to achieve at the time. In most of the cases the village layout was determined by certain natural elements. This was because certain natural elements had different symbolic importance for different cultural groups. Orientation was than found to be more symbolic than a means of trying to bring light and warmth into the built structure.

South African Koi/ San

The different Koi/San tribes residing in South Africa are amongst some of the tribes who have high respect for both nature and orientation. Both nature and orientation have a very strong underlying meaning for these tribes. The tree (natural) and fire (artificial), form the two main natural components that get considered and incorporated when both the **Kung** and the **Heikum** tribes (Koi/San tribes residing in the Republic Of South Africa) set up their architecture. These two natural components are of high importance because through them the highest order in the tribe can be demarcated. Even visitors and everyone in the tribe can orientate themselves using these elements.

The village is set up in a semi-circle formation while the structure and form of the huts is that of a half dome. Due to the belief that their God is orientated towards East, this has been celebrated as being the most sacred orientation for the **Kung**. To have a relationship or connection with God, the openings of the Kung's huts are oriented towards east.

The tree and fireplace are symbols of the highest order in the **Heikum** tribe. This is where important tribal or senior meetings are held. This spot is made more important by the fact that the chief resides there facing the rest of the village. In their semi-circle formation the villager's huts have their openings orientated towards the chief's hut. The chief lights the sacred fire next to the tree.

Closest family members, relatives and high members of society get to have a spot closest to the chief. The less important members of the tribe are placed far from the chief

Zulu architecture (South Africa)

The central kraal settlement pattern is one of the most commonly used architectural layouts in most African countries. Opportunity for social interaction and good surveillance over livestock makes this layout to be very favourable. (E. Guidoni 1975: 42) says that this type of settlement pattern is mostly found in particular tribes like the Tsonga of Mozambique, the Masai of Kenya and Tanzania as well as in the Zulu tribes from South Africa. He further mentions that the settlements in these different tribes only differed from each other through the materials which they use to construct the enclosing shelters.

Despite the shape of the central kraal settlement, hierarchy is still portrayed within the Zulu homesteads. After God (umvelinqanga) and ancestors (amadlozi), the king is the highest order in the Zulu tribe. The importance of the king as the highest order within the Zulu tribe is even emphasised through idioms. 'Izwe elenkosi nabantu abakhekulo abayo inkosi'. (C.T. Msimang 1975:1). When translated to English this means that all the land and the people that are on it belong to the King.

Kings home (South Africa)

Before we study the rest of the Zulu homesteads it is important that we first study the king's castle (Isigodlo). To show his wealth and power, the king usually built himself a number of homes throughout the province and would visit them at different times. One home would be as big as a town. The kraal, which his homestead was designed around, was not to house livestock but was a place for gatherings as well a place where ceremonial celebrations took place.

The layout of the central kraal settlement is planned according to the main Gate axis. The most important hut in the settlement is always placed directly opposite the main gate leading into the yard. Isigodlo is the main hut in the whole homestead. This is a very big hut which uses a minimum of four supporting pillars (izinsika) to keep it upright. It is in this hut where the king keeps his thrown, welcomes his visitors and holds meetings with his right hand men. On either sides of the main hut (isigodlo) the king has his various huts for different occupations. He could have different huts for eating, keeping his attire, sleeping, entertaining himself and some for his wives.

On either side making their way towards the gate, the rest of the huts are allocated according to their descending order of hierarchical importance. The king's right hand men are positioned to the right hand side from the king's main huts and on the left are the king's children. At the main gate into the Castle (Isigodlo) is where the castle gate keepers huts are placed.

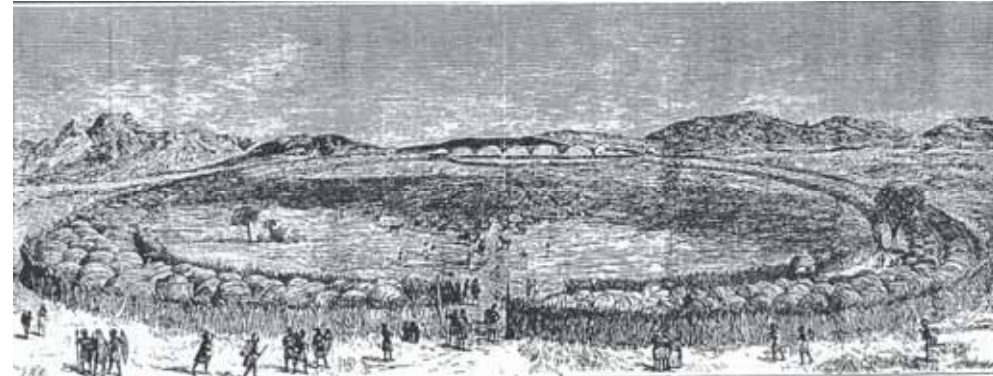


Figure 1: King Cetshwayo's Royal home Ondini cited from Baines, c

Zulu home (South Africa)

Whenever a Zulu man wanted to move out of home and start his own home, by order he had to take his mother along. He therefore had to build her a hut (ilawu) within the bigger homestead. This hut (ilawu) had to be built irregardless of whether the mother was still alive or had passed on to the next life. Since the mother was the most important figure in the homestead, her hut was also of high importance. This meant that her hut was built in line with the main gate access. The mother of the household head was regarded as a living ancestor. She had the authority to call her son into order if she felt that things were getting out of hand within the homestead.

The second most important figure in the homestead was the head of the family (usokhaya) together with his hut (indlunkulu). It was only

after the two most important huts had been built than the rest of the other huts followed. In descending order towards the main gate would be the first wife's hut followed by the second wife's (Iqadi) hut. The rest of the wives (Amabibi) would then be placed on the left hand side (ekhohlo) of the main hut facing the gate.

Girls and young ladies shared their living space with their mothers. Girls would only get their own hut (ilawu) if there were too many of them in the family. After all these huts had been allocated, for the sake of security, the boys' huts were placed on either sides of the gate.

Even inside the huts there was demarcation of space usage, the women used the left hand side of the hut and the males used the other portion of the hut. Only members of the family were allowed to sit closer to the door. The closest members of the family reserved the privilege of sitting closest to the door. Visitors had to sit as deep as they possibly could towards the inside of the hut.

When entering the yard, visitors were at all times expected to use the main gate. There were two other small gates giving access in and out of the homestead. These were only used by family members. These were located next to the main hut as well as to the left hand side (ekhohlo) of the home stead. Unlike in the king's homestead, the kraal in a normal man's homestead is built to house livestock.

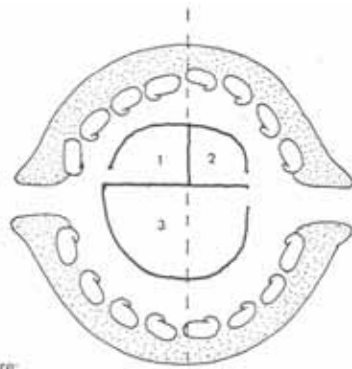


Figure 2: Amazulu homestead cited from Tyler, 1891

The Masai and Tsonga

The Masai and the Tsonga are amongst the African tribes that make their living off farming livestock. As mentioned before, these tribes also form part of the group who use the central kraal settlement pattern when building their homesteads. Like most African cultures, ritual sacrifices for the ancestors (chirilu) form an important part of Tsonga culture. This is why they designate a sacred spot for these sacred rituals to take place. Once again the importance of the tree is realised as it is also used within the Tsonga tribe to mark the sacred place. Through the axis which is used to set up the homesteads, they are able to set aside the chief's wives from the visitors and the rest of the family.

As much as the Masais homesteads are built on a similar layout, the men are usually housed outside the homestead.



Livestock enclosure:
1. sheep / 2. calves / 3. adult cattle
Figure 3: (Masai homestead plan)



Figure 4: Masai homestead Ref: Guidoni, E. 1975: 44, 46

Bamileke (Cameroon)

Axis is used to help set up the Bamileke village while also giving a distinct order of hierarchy. The king's residing point and also of those who are close to him is demarcated by the intersection point of the layout axis. This axis intersection point is also celebrated as a ceremonial plaza. The position at which the king's house is placed, has a clear and direct view/ access to the ceremonial court, main entrance, wives houses, guest houses and many other important features.



1. main access / 2. market / 3. skulls and statues of ancestors / 4. entrance gate / 5. guest house / 6. chief's house / 7. site of the puberty rites / 8. wives' huts.

Figure 5: Plan of the village
Ref: Guidoni, E. 1975: 124, 125, 127



Figure 6: Chief at his house

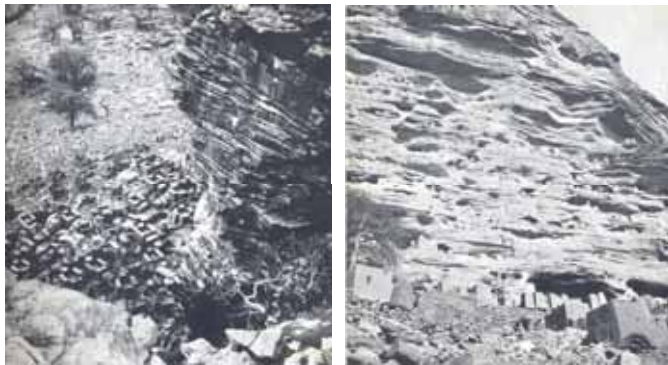


Figure 7: View from the chiefs house

The Dogon of the upper Niger

Due to the elders being regarded as walking encyclopaedias in the different African tribes, they get to be highly respected. Because of this reason the Dogons appoint the oldest person in the tribe as a chief (Hogan).

The Dogon village is marked and pulled together by four important spaces. The central space in the village claims its importance because of it being a sacrifice space. Due to the tribes respect for their ancestors, they allocate them a sacred space within the village and this is usually at the face of the cliff. Being the highest member of the Dogon society, the Hogan is given the most prominent spot in the village. Together in consultation with other elders the Hogan decide the way forward for the village. As a result this meeting place is a sacred space.



Ref: Guidoni , E. 1975: 142, 144

Figure 8: View of village of the hill face Figure 9: View of ancestors rest place from top of the hill face

Dogon of Mali

In this village orientation of both the house as well as that of the village layout are important. The door giving access to the house has to be orientated towards North. The Dogon of Mali also offer the position of chief to the oldest member of the tribe. Together the chief and the ancestors get the prominent space in the village. The ancestral resting places are sculptured on the façade of the Hogan’s house. Through these sculptured pocket spaces on the façade of the Hogan’s house one can trace back the generation of the tribe.

There are also symbolic reasons behind the way in which the houses and the granaries are structured or built. ‘The soil of the ground – floor..... is the symbol the earth and of Lēbē, restored to life in the earth. The flat roof, square like that of flying granary, represents heaven, and the ceiling which separates the upper storey from the ground – floor represents the lying between heaven and earth.’ (Guidoni E 1975:148).

Jennē and Timbuktu

‘Besides the residence of the king or chief and the principal religious edifice (mosques in the Islamized towns), the populous centers in the Sudanese area always have a market, the true driving force behind the urban activities, and it is this institution that, both symbolically, distinguishes a town from a mere seat of a chief.’(E.Guidoni 1975:165). A market can be seen as an important place in a town because that is where most people from different backgrounds get to meet and possibly network.

Creating an identity

In his theory on identity, Kevin Lynch makes us aware of the fact that identity is usually created by the things that people can relate too. Identity and meaning can be seen as being one with each other. In trying to portray a certain meaning through the way in which the structure is created, may lead into birth of a certain identity. Kevin Lynch also mentions that identity can go beyond the structure itself. It can also be created by the functions which take place within a particular place or structure. 'Alternatively an object seen for the first time may be identified and related not because it is individually familiar but because it conforms to a stereotype already constructed by the observer.' (Lynch, K: 1960: 6)

In a conference held at Windhoek in May 1999 to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the (OAU) Organisation of African Unity most delegates felt strongly about putting Africa's identity at the forefront of what we are doing as Africans. Hon. Geingob one of the delegates mentioned that Africa's culture today which leads to identity is more than an ethnic one. In backing up his statement he stated that Africans shared cultural values have become the main driving force in creating any African identity. In support of the above statement Hon. Makoba M W was quoted saying: 'The definition of who is African today is based on three elements: history, culture, and consciousness.'" Angula, N and Bankie, B F 2000: 28. In reflecting the importance of culture as an identity Hon. Makoba M W quoted the speech presented by Lee Ten hui the president of Republic of China : ' "It is my firm belief that our culture is the most important factor that has allowed the Republic of

China to achieve successful political reforms in the past five years." (Angula, N and Bankie, B F 2000: 33)

Regionalism

'Among other factors contributing to the emergence of a regionalism of this order is not only a certain prosperity but also some kind of anti – centrist census - an aspiration at least to some form of cultural, economical and political independence.' (Frampton. K. 1992:314)
We are currently living in a world that is changing very fast and globalisation has become a new language in everyone's' daily discussions. Architecture has also found itself being affected or influenced by globalisation and this is not an answer to architecture.

When one looks at traditional or vernacular architecture, it responds to climatic conditions, landscape and culture of the region in which it is rooted in. By this I am not saying that we must replicate vernacular, stay in the past and ignore the latest technology available at the present time. What I am saying is that there are elements to be learnt

and extracted from vernacular architecture while staying aware of the trends and technologies happening around the world. Architecture should be able to learn from other architecture across its own borders but still remain rooted in its context as it applies some of the lessons it has learnt.

Alvaro Siza is one of those architects who have been highly celebrated for creating architecture which is rooted in its context and responds well to the site in which it is embedded. It is said that while applying local materials in his designs he still use modern techniques and his architecture reflects the current time in which it is built. ' "world culture" will only come into being through a cross – fertilization between rooted culture on the one hand and universal civilization on the other.' (Frampton. K. 1983:148).