
One of the most pressing problems of African countries in the second half of this century is the provision of shelter for the rapidly growing urban and rural populations. This problem has been compounded in the urban areas by the imposition in most of these countries of official housing standards usually of colonial origin and often not wholly appropriate in the particular circumstances, by the adoption of foreign housing designs, and by the dependence on imported construction technologies that place the costs of house building well beyond the means of a vast majority of the population of the country. In the rural areas, the growing crisis in agricultural productivity with its resultant poverty and mass immigration of youths is also giving rise to the gradual degradation of rural housing and settlement.

It is, thus, clear that if African countries are ever to seriously tackle the problem of decently housing their population and improving general living conditions, there is need for some innovative and determined program of action in architectural design and construction. A fundamental element for such an innovative approach is an inventory of existing practices in shelter provision, both traditional and modern. In this book, *African Traditional Architecture*, Anderson has made a valuable contribution to this vital task of inventorying. The objective of the study, as identified in the preface by Miles Danby, is “not to promote a sentimental backward-looking and inevitably artificial imitation of preindustrial times but to preserve the existing skills and knowledge of local materials so that the future built forms may be suitably adjusted to the changes in life-style and agricultural practice and the ecological integration be maintained, avoiding wasteful and inappropriate use of modern industrially produced materials.”

The book is about different, rural, traditional building styles and settlement patterns among various ethnic groups in Kenya. Thirteen groups were studied, most of them in southern Kenya. For each group the relation of the architectural forms to prevailing ecological conditions of climate, soil, and vegetation are considered. The task of building is described, particularly in terms of the part played by men and women. The tools used are listed and the major built internal forms are identified. The study, however, goes beyond architecture to give details of how the house is used, its internal divisions, various important household utensils, such as the peculiar drinking cup of the Galla or the variety of pots of the Luo. The descriptions of wide-ranging ethnographic details relating built forms to aspects of social or cultural life of the people give credibility and realism to the study, for example, the relation between the *manyatta* settlement of the Masai and the ceremony of graduation from warriorhood to elderhood, which Anderson observed in the Loita hills between July 1972 and April 1974.

One misses in this study some evaluation of the environmental efficiency of the various built forms. Such an assessment would have given some possibility of the various architectural forms and materials to provide the basis for suitably adjusted forms in the future. It would also have provided a basis for comparing these forms with the nontraditional forms that have become fashionable in government schemes of resettlement in rural or semiurban areas.

This criticism should not, however, detract from the high quality of this study. The very generous and skillful use of photographs and stereographic images of settlements helps to heighten the overall visual effect of design and pattern. This book should prove of immense value to architects, town and country planners, geographers, anthropologists, and environmental scientists as well as to those interested in providing imaginative solutions to the almost intractable problems of providing housing for the rural masses in developing African countries. More than this, it offers a valuable format for future studies of traditional architectural designs in other African countries.

**Akin L. Mabogunje**

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Northwestern University

---

**THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES**


This Harvard thesis of 1970, with an “Introduction and Overview, 1976,” fully deserves to be proclaimed an outstanding study. Its youthful freshness may be exemplified by one quotation: “Around 1820 the kaleidoscope replaced the eternally amber ‘Claude glass’ as the popular way of seeing” (p. 69). This is most characteristic thinking for an architectural historian who is able and ready to link the history of inventions with the history of painting and architecture or to reveal the tides in neoclassical taste by quoting descriptions of Egyptian landscapes from Jean-Nicolas Huyot’s unpublished travel diary of 1817–1821.

Chapter 1 deals with the reconstructions of ancient Greek architectural polychromy by Quatremère de Quincy, Hittorff, and Semper, and chapter 2 with the application of painted external polychromy to modern architecture by Hittorff, Duban, Labrouste, Semper, Klenze, and Bindesboll. Van Zanten also offers a glimpse of the Pompeian and Etruscan revivals.

Chapter 3 is devoted to Owen Jones’s “luminism,” with inviting subtitles, such as “Jones’s *Alhambra*: Rationalizing the Fantastic,” “Positivism, New Materials, and a New Style,” and with three sections on the Crystal Palace and a fourth on the Department of Practical Art. With Owen Jones we enter the High Victorian scene, and it comes as no surprise that Van Zanten develops in the final chapter the problem of the relationship between color and material. As for the Greek as well, he begins with the archaeological studies, in this case with the writings on Islamic and Italian medieval structural polychromy. He goes on with Schinkel, Zanth, and Wild, omitting, as most historians