



Fig 1: House 1- Living room, Chagga/ Sukuma home, Dar-es-Salaam

Source: Author, 2014



Fig 2: House 2 – Interior view facing Entrance of a Chagga home in DSM. Note: Zanzibar door and archway.

Source: Author, 2014



Fig 3: House 2 - Living room

Source: Author, 2014

Statement of Problem

Majority of population in Tanzania reside in rural areas. However, a very large concentration of middle class is found in urban area. They build house by using industrial materials such as concrete, vibrated concrete blocks, glass, metal and wood. Most interiors of these houses seem to be inspired by the foreign cultures, most notable influence being the Greco-Roman styles (Western Culture) and the Islamic styles (Arabic Cultures). So far, there doesn't seem to be any evidence of interior design, or decorative inspirations, that are inspired by local traditional indigenous cultures. One wonders whether this is a cultural stigma of "The past best left forgotten" or simply a commercial propaganda to suppress and undermine ethnic cultures in order for mass population to buy into the foreign materials and culture.

Most Tanzanian living in urban areas live in modern buildings but harbor traditional and ethnic beliefs therefore there is always something missing from their physical environment. This missing link could be their cultural heritage within the design of their residential Interiors. One of the key concerns therefore is "How can we design functional and meaningful spaces that we identify with

socially and culturally?" The creation of interior spaces using foreign ideals and through foreign building materials has produced artificial interior spaces, lacking local social-cultural interior identity.



Fig 4: Living room of a New York townhouse with interior detailing such as Classical moldings and columns. Finishing, including color scheme, furnishings and accessories create informality with a formal setting.

Source: (Pile, Interior Design, 4th Edition, 2007: 17)

“Interior styles should be a direct reflection of who we are. ... We also want our homes to be sanctuaries where we can escape the overload of contemporary societies. At the same time, globalization has also delivered a certain type of homogeneity, and people are struggling to preserve their individuality. ...”

(Vranckx, Bridget, 2007, 11)

The purpose of this research is to bring out knowledge and understanding about the Interior compositions of traditional vernacular architecture, a subject that has not yet been sufficiently studied in the context of Tanzania. The study will bring forth knowledge, which can then serve to influence design of the local building interiors, providing Tanzanians living both in rural and in urban areas, the melting pots of societies, with a Cultural Identity.

Objectives

Main Objective

The research objective is to explore and understand Interior compositions of the Indigenous buildings (dwellings) in Tanzania.

Specific Objectives

- To document typology of interior spaces of indigenous traditional homesteads in Tanzania
- To analyze interior concepts and patterns of the traditional homesteads (convergence and divergences)
- To explore, if any, the influence of traditional interior compositions in contemporary interior design of rural dwellings in Tanzania

Methodology – Case Study Methods

This research is done mostly by a qualitative research approach where the units of analysis is a traditional vernacular dwelling of one specific ethnic group in Tanzania. However, there will also be a few elements of quantitative research approach.

The main objective, to explore and understand interior composition of the traditional vernacular homesteads, will be accomplished through employing a Case Study research strategy. Data has been collected through literature review, interviews, and going on field to acquire and to document the information through observation, photographing and sketching.

It's very important to find out not only the building materials and techniques, but also the spatial layouts and their meaning to the original intended user, layering and hierarchy of spaces, furnishings and interior accessories, in any way used. It was therefore of utmost importance to interview key informants, the entrusted keepers of the traditions.

One of the specific objectives is to find out if there is any influence of the traditional interior compositions in the contemporary residential interiors in study area, therefore, while documenting the traditional interiors, data will also be examined in contemporary vernacular dwellings. The remaining two specific objectives will be met during the pilot study, to document typology of interior spaces of traditional vernacular homesteads in Tanzania, and to analyze the interior compositions and patterns of the traditional homesteads.

Whilst vernacular architecture is a context specific phenomenon, there is a lot to be learnt and appreciated if one gets an opportunity to examine and compare notes from other social-cultural and geographical locality. For this reason, during the stay at the Polytechnic of Namibia, I will also spare some time to visit and explore the local traditional vernacular architecture. This will enable me to enrich my understanding of the interior compositions of vernacular architecture and offer an opportunity for comparative reflection. The program in Namibia will also facilitate interactions with peers.