



Examining the aspirations of Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence, 1950-1975

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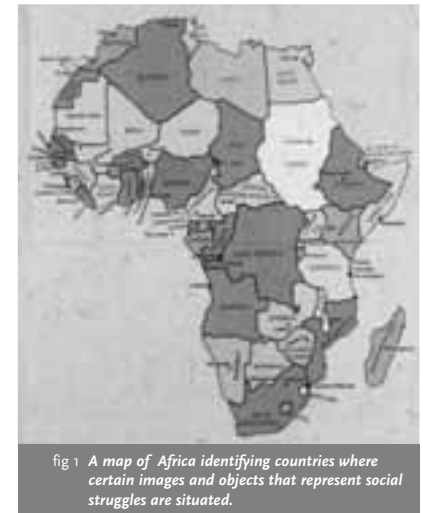
Your Excellency, Ambassador Benard Berendsen, Royal Netherlands Embassy to Tanzania; architect Anthony Almeida, Mrs. Subira Mchumo, President of Architectural Association of Tanzania; our distinguished Tanzanian hosts; our colleagues from ArchiAfrika: Antoni Folkers, Joep Mol, Berend van der Lans, and Stephanie Geertman; my distinguished colleagues from the great universities of Eindhoven, Leuven and Delft: Thank you for the invitation to join your most distinguished audience to explore and reflect on the concept of *Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence*, especially, the years between 1950-1975.

With your permission, my objective in this short paper is to raise certain questions that can help us flesh out the complex meanings that are implicated when we talk about 'modern' Architecture in East Africa around the independence eras. The questions are:

- 1 When did modern architecture begin in East Africa and other parts of the continent?
- 2 What were its principal aims and objectives?
- 3 Why is the period 1950-1975 important for our exploration and discussions?
- 4 Why was modern architecture exploited as a giver of hope and instrument of national and individual development?

I would like to draw a few examples of modernist projects from Northwest, East, and West Africa in order to expand on the above questions. It is hoped that the examples would implicate social, stylistic, technical, and preservation issues confronting the Modern Movement in East Africa and the continent as a whole.

The importance of deploying modern architecture for the purpose of creating national identity and unity in multi-ethnic societies in different countries of Africa cannot be over-emphasized. However, I would like to argue in this paper that it is more likely that between 1950 and 1975, modern architecture was a means for resolving a particular struggle that has been unfolding from the very moment that many African nations were formed following the European scramble in the latter part of the 19th century up to the present time.



The available literature has done very well in explaining how during the colonial times and after the colonial times, architectural practices in different parts of Africa reflected certain struggles for economic, cultural, political, ethnic, racial, and individual identity and dominance within the countries of Africa. Such struggles were visible in the urban policies that overtly perpetuated segregation practices based on race, class, religion, and ethnicity and they were/are implemented through the distribution of urban amenities and in the colonial and the postcolonial cities of Africa [fig 1]. Here, one cannot ignore the fiery work of Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1963 and 1967); Udo Kultermann's, *New Architecture in Africa, New Directions in African Architecture, Contemporary Architecture in the Arab States: Renaissance of a Region*, (1963, 1967, 1999); Hassan Fathy's *Architecture for the Poor: an Experiment in Rural Egypt* (1973); Janet Abu-Lughod's, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid In Morocco* (1980); Paul Robinow's 'Techno-Cosmopolitanism', in *French Modern*, (1989); Zeynep Celik's *Colonial Urban Confrontations in Algiers* (1998); Gwendolyn Wright's *French Colonial Urban Policy* (1990); and

Jean-Louis Cohen's *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (2000). Challenged by the need to rapidly consolidate their modernization agendas after independence, African nations such as Nigeria adopted European-inspired ideologies of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), as tools for solving problems of national unity, erasing a supposedly British colonial identity, and formulating national development policies. My book, *Abuja: The Single Most Ambitious Urban Design Project of the 20th Century* (2001), illustrates how CIAM's ideas were implanted in Nigeria in my study of Abuja's master plan. Also, when confronted with the end of the Cold-War and the rise of religious fundamentalism, certain African leaders took advantages of architecture as the means for resolving and entrenching political powers. The religious solutions adopted by the Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco stand out as demonstrated in my book *Architecture and Power in Africa* (2002). Recently, we have new literature trickling out of post-apartheid South Africa such as: *Architecture, Apartheid and After*, edited by Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavić (1998), and Annie Coombes's *Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (2003). In philosophy and the visual arts, there are essays that elucidate how social struggles in African societies directly and indirectly implicate architecture. Such texts include: Kwame Anthony Appiah's, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, (1992); V.Y. Mudimbe's, *The Invention of Africa* (1988) and the *Idea of Africa* (1994). Also, Annie E. Coombe's *Reinventing Africa* (1994) and *Reading Contemporary African Art from Theory to the Market Place*, ed. Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe, explore various visions of Africa - some of which directly point to the roles played by architecture in the practices of consolidating social hierarchies. The latest of these texts, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements, 1945-1994*, (Munich: Prestel, 2001), seems to be the most ambitious since it touches several realms of social practice, including performance and visual arts, music, architecture, literature, politics, and liberation movements.

While the texts mentioned here present abundant evidence on different modes of the struggles, I would like to suggest that they may be characterized as revolving around the formation of social hierarchies comprising various competing segments of the emergent postcolonial African elite. During the struggles, the emergent postcolonial elite exploited different political and economic ideologies from around the world in order to advance their causes. Before the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, factions on different sides of the struggles were caught in the illusive dilemma of capitalist versus socialist models for the economic liberation of the African peoples, and radical imageries were deployed to underscore and disseminate



fig 2 A polemic emblem of the struggles in Mozambique; it is also symbolic of the tensions of the Cold War within the international community from the end of World War II until the early 1990's.

the ideological and emotional contents of the confrontations [fig 2]. The competitors within the struggles included: politicians, bureaucrats, traditional rulers, military officers, professionals, as well as the masses one of which eventually emerged to inherit political power from the colonial authorities when African countries became independent during the 1960's and the latter parts of the twentieth century when the Republic of South Africa abandoned the practices of apartheid. On the other hand the Republic of Ghana led the path towards independence in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1957 [fig 3].

Looking at President Kwame Nkrumah's Independence Arch, one would discover from the onset that most of the independence and liberation monuments often announced conflated messages to the citizens of the respective countries in which the objects were created. Nkrumah's Arch could be standing in Brussels, Berlin, London and Paris. It would fit in perfectly as part of the Western cultural landscape. Why would Nkrumah choose the style of arch from the cultures of the former colonizers to celebrate his country's freedom from British colonialism? Was it a deliberate act of subversion of European culture? Or, was it an oversight that failed



fig 3 President Kwame Nkrumah's Independent Arch, also known as Black Star Arch.

to take into consideration the fact that Africans do have the styles and means for representing monumental portals, and arches?

Let us also keep in mind that during the independence struggles and immediately after the victories were won, the first official policies that were implemented on modern architecture had little to do with newly designed projects. Instead the first policies had to do with the sharing of the spoils of war among the emergent postcolonial elite. We recall that there were barracks, cantonments, and quarters that were specifically reserved for the colonizing European authorities [fig 4].



fig 4 A Colonial Bungalow, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1930's.

Well, guess what? As soon as independence was won, the most powerful elite in the respective African countries moved into the quarters that the Europeans were leaving behind. The experiences of the Algerians against the fleeing French population from the Marine Quarters of Algiers and different cities in the country demonstrate the most violent examples of how the spoils of war were distributed among the native elite. Unfortunately, there were not enough European-aban-

doned quarters to go around among the contending emergent postcolonial elite in Algeria or in any African country where independence had been obtained. The visions of how to deploy modern architecture for the development of different African countries came after the spoils of war, especially the housing stock, had been shared among the emergent ruling elite.

Let me also take advantage of this moment to indicate that while the European Quarters symbolized certain aspects of colonial social injustices among the masses whom they ruled, there were certain things that the builders of the colonial structures did very well. The architects of such structures, usually recruited from the members of the Public Works Department (PWD), were sensitive to the environmental problems relating to heat, humidity, moisture, energy saving mechanisms, and maximizing the opportunity to exploit daylight. As a result, long sloping eaves, plain but shaded surfaces, darkened and screened openings, and cross-ventilations were applied for the benefit of utilizing the gifts of nature to moderate the interiors of such buildings. Even as the colonial era drew to an end, E. Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew's buildings at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, continued to exhibit such climatic considerations and sensibilities.

In contemporary architectural practices across Africa I have seen few designers who are conscious of the climatic needs of buildings in the tropics as was the case prior to the era of independence. I do not intend to sound nostalgic for colonial structures. That is far from the case. I only wish to put on the table that we should not overlook the problems of sustainable design as we examine the gains and losses of the modern movement in architecture in East Africa.

If there is anything that can speak of modern architecture in East Africa as a symbol of hope, nationalism, individual development, and as a contested public sphere for the consolidation of social hierarchies, Nyerere's visions and master plans for Dodoma would be on top of the list. The master plan incorporates the ideals of the *Arusha* Declaration which is an 'Economic Manifesto and a blue print for Tanzania's socialist construction'.¹ The *Ujamaa* principles which aspired to appropriate traditional lifestyles into Tanzania's version of modernism are also a major part of the *Arusha* declaration and the master plan. Nyerere states that:

The city must be neither an ivory tower nor a new version of our existing towns. It must draw upon

¹ See Meta Townsend, *Political Economy Issues In Tanzania, Lampster, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998, p. 55.*



fig 5 An axonometric perspective of the modest plan of Dodoma looking North. James Rossant Architect, 1970-73.

the lessons of other specially built cities throughout the world, but it must not be a copy of any of them. Dodoma must be a town which is built in simple style but with buildings which reflect the light, air, and space of Africa. ²

Based on the above observations, one can suggest that certain issues regarding sustainability were in Nyerere's mind when Dodoma was founded. As a result, the master plan was modest and people-oriented [fig 5]. However a huge gap exists between the rhetoric of the plan and the will to fulfill the dreams that the Modern Movement afforded the Tanzanian people when Dodoma was founded. Granted, financial considerations are the major reason for the inability of the authorities to fulfill the ideals of the Dodoma plan. However, we cannot ignore the extent to which the ideological confrontations among the competing interest groups within the ruling elite and how the powers which enforce international commerce contributed in sabotaging the big urban experiments that were attempted at Dodoma. During the twentieth century, architects, engineers, and urban designers were the vehicles through which the ideological confrontations were disseminated around the world. African countries and cities were not exempt from such ideologically driven agendas.

Another example where such ideological confrontations are engaged among architects from around the world is at Nigeria's new Federal Capital City, Abuja. In 1975, the Nigerian military proposed that building a new Federal Capital Territory at Abuja would resolve the problems of nepotism and ease ethnic tensions among the 250 cultural groups which constitute the Nigerian nation. In addition, it was suggested that a new Federal Capital Territory would be the place where all Nigerians can come together and debate the issues that impact their lives regardless of their ethnic group, religion, gender, or political affiliations [fig 6]. Coming 15 years after the country's independence, and immediately

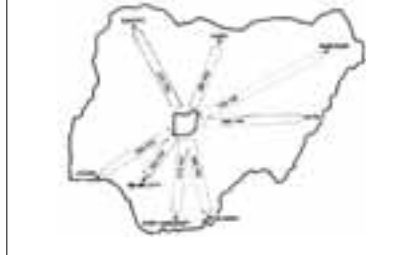
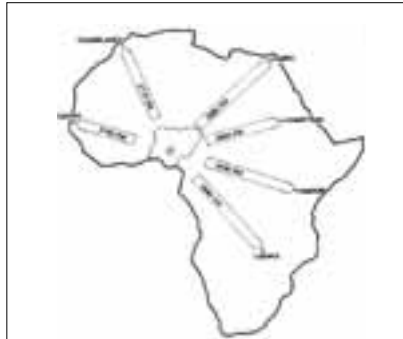


fig 6 A map showing Abuja within a continental setting. Below: A map showing the centralized location of Abuja in Nigeria

after the end of the nation's bloody Civil-War that cost an estimated 1.7 million lives, the idea of a new capital city that would unify the country was in many circles a refreshing one. One of the indispensable truths is: Abuja was founded in the era of the oil boom and the emergent postcolonial elite were eager to exploit nationalism in order to spend the huge oil revenues. Spending the huge oil revenues was achieved through the advancement of the argument that, Lagos, being an Island metropolis, was too crowded to continue to serve as both the capital of the State of Lagos and the capital of the Federal Government of Nigeria. That argument was persuasive in many quarters of the military intelligentsia, the members of the business classes, and the civilian ruling elite. Likewise, despite unresolved heated debates within the public sphere on the issue, the Nigerian masses also eagerly bought into the modernization and nationalist argument.

In June 1979, the Federal Capital Development Authority of Nigeria commissioned International Planning Associate (IPA), led by Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd of Philadelphia, to produce a Master Plan for the New Federal Capital City and its regional grid [fig 7].

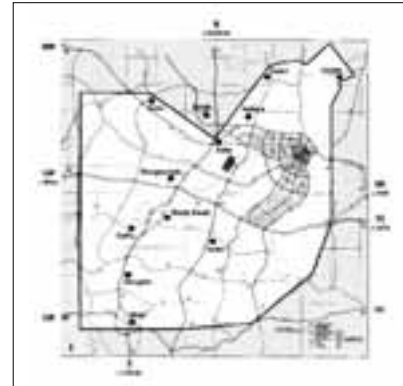


fig 7 International Planning Associates (IPA) was commissioned to prepare the regional and urban master plan of the Federal Capital Territory while creating room for Tange's monumental Federal Government District in the Central City Area. The dots indicate the locations of satellite towns in the peripheries of the Central City within the Federal Capital Territory (FTC).

Also, the Japanese modernist architect, Kenzo Tange, was enlisted to prepare the master plan for the Central Area of the city [fig 8]. In addition, Doxiades Associates and Milton Keynes Development Corporation of UK were invited to develop the locations for the numerous satellite towns that were to be planned within the territory and the residential quarters.

In the first master plan prepared by IPA, Aso Hill directed the axial plan of the town because of the insistence of the Nigerian authorities that the rock should be the focal point of the city [fig 9]. The aim was to create a controlled natural setting in the Gardens of the Parliament Buildings. The National Assembly Complex and its supporting legislative offices, the official Ministerial Residences, the National Monument, and the National Botanical Gardens are located on a promontory at the eastern end of the axes with Aso Hill overlooking the body of the Central Area just as Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. overlooks the rest of the Mall [fig 10] ³, compares with Tange's Central City master plan (right) and the Three Arms Zone.

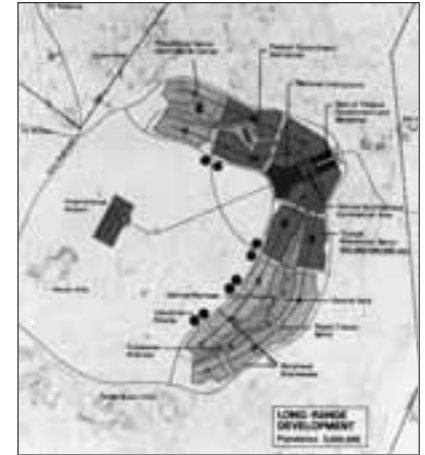


fig 8 Tange's commission was to prepare the master plan for the seat of federal government within the regional and urban master plan prepared by IPA. Abuja's city alone was designed to accommodate three million inhabitants.

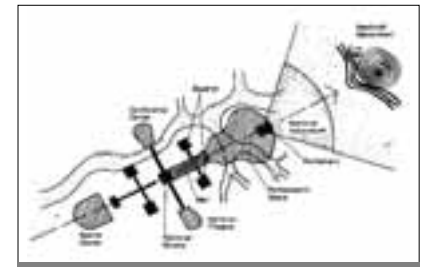


fig 9 A sketch showing Aso Hill as the focal point of the city.

By ending Abuja's Mall so abruptly through the application of artificial barriers, IPA re-enacted the design of Washington's Mall by calling our attention to the reality that L'Enfant's vista was also abruptly terminated by topography as it came to a dead halt at the swampy shores of the Potomac River. ⁴ Also, by locating the Presidential Palace at the terminus of the National Mall, IPA achieves a design reminiscent of the intersec-

² Ibid.

³ It can be said that the principal differences between IPA's Master Plan and Tange's Master Plan are determined by how the teams utilized natural and manmade elements in defining monumental spaces around the Central City. Also, Tange's design had to fit within the template already laid down by IPA.

⁴ Robert A. M. Stern and Raymond W. Gastil, 'The Mall in Washington and Its Influence', in ed. Richard Longstreth *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, (Washington, D.C., and Hanover: National Gallery of Art and University Press of New England, 1991), 263.

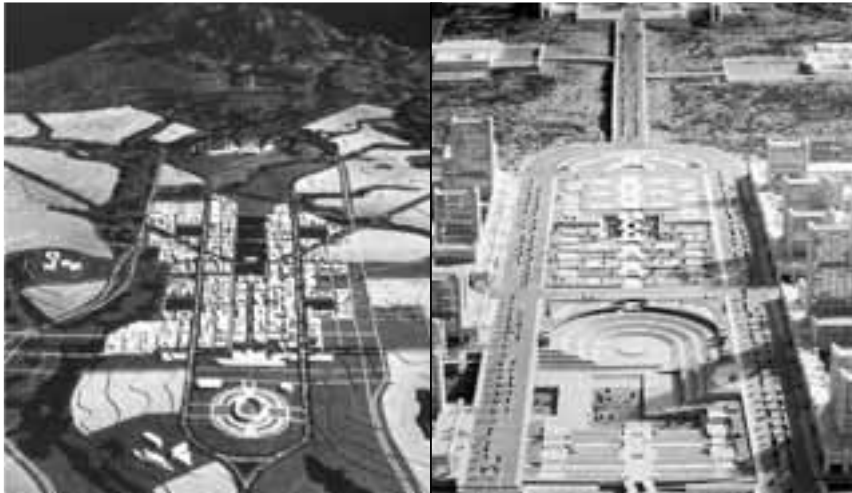


fig 10 How IPA's Central City master plan (left), compares with Tange's Central City master plan (right) and the Three Arms Zone.

tion of the United States' National Mall with the open space emanating from the White House Gardens. The location of the Presidential Palace in the Center of the Mall achieves two design objectives for IPA. It makes reference to the fact that America's democratic culture allows for an open society which calls for the leader and the people to have certain physical and ideological proximity. Secondly, it is a reference to the tradition of locating the residences of Nigeria's traditional monarchs in the center of the town.

Also, like Washington, D.C.'s Mall which is flanked by low-rise museums, IPA proposed a Mall at Abuja which is equally flanked by low-rise museums and federal ministerial buildings.⁵ It is in the Central Business District that IPA allowed medium rise buildings. Two principal diagonal avenues which emanate from the plaza separating the Supreme Court Building and the Presidential Palace can be read as references to Pennsylvania and Maryland Avenues in Washington, D.C. In addition IPA planted an obelisk at the base of *Aso Rock* in a manner reminiscent of the Washington Monument at the intersection of the Mall and the gardens of the White House.

We cannot ignore the visual image which the National Sports Center evokes at Abuja. Whereas the Lincoln Memorial is a terminus which venerates a great American leader and historical heritage, the National Sports Complex at Abuja is planted as a terminus for the Mall

and as a place Nigerians would visit for collective national experiences either through sports, independence celebrations, or political events.

The American team prepared Abuja's master plan in order to symbolically exploit modern architecture and urban design to represent Nigeria's new Federal Constitution that was re-written in 1979. While focusing on the unique needs of the Nigerian people, the constitution was derived from the United States' model which separates powers between the executive, the legislative, and judicial branches.

Here, we are once again reminded that the manner in which the Nigerian authorities and IPA imbued the master plan of Abuja with constitutional and naturalistic rhetoric can be compared to the manner in which Nyerere incorporated the ideals of the *Arusha* and *Ujamaa* into the master plans of Dodoma.

Given that Tange had to work within the parameters which were already specified by IPA in the regional master plan, and the Federal Capital Development Authority also demanded that *Aso Hill* should be the most prominent object in the Central City, what did Tange and his team bring to the Central City of Abuja and how would he interpret the revised 1979 Nigerian Constitution on his master plan?

Looking at his 1979 proposal, one can observe how Tange attempted to continue the design of the Central City from where IPA had stopped. In this first design, the National Assembly retained some of the features which IPA envisioned. Also, the Presidential Palace, and the Supreme Court remained where IPA had intended for them to be built.

But Tange's obsession with the concept of the Axial City, which he felt facilitated the circulation of information, was already at a loggerhead with certain aspects of the capital city which IPA proposed. IPA's two diagonal avenues were the first to disappear from Tange's drawing board. The diagonal avenues reminded Tange of baroque urban forms and the radial city which he did not like at all as expressed in many of his writings.

By the time he revised his proposal and presented it to the elected President, Shehu Shagari, in 1981, he favored a Central City which was designed along a monumental Civic Axis like his experimental designs for Tokyo during the 1960's. Therefore, in the revised proposals, Tange did away with the romance with medieval Nigerian urban forms. He created a democratic shrine called the Three Arms Zone on the foot of the Hill. Tange's Three Arms Zone consists of the National Assembly, the Presidential Complex, and the Supreme Court. The three buildings are located on a large parcel of land which is one kilometer in diameter.

First, the river that runs down the foot of *Aso Rock* forms a moat between the central part of the city and the shrine of power. This moat can only be crossed by a bridge which can be easily barricaded in times of disturbances. So, marching to the shrine of power, as is the tradition in most democratic societies, has been neutralized. Any march will stop at the National Mall in the Central City, which is about one kilometer from the Three Arms Zone. This outcome is not by accident.

There is also a difference between Tange's Three Arms Zone and IPA's conceptualization of the base of *Aso Rock*. On the IPA model, *Aso Rock* was nature's reserve and only the Nigerian National Assembly Building was placed there.

Hence, *Aso Rock* was a park where people could escape to from the busy activities in the city. Moreover, in IPA's proposal, nature flows into the central city and merges with the mall. On the other hand, Tange's project appropriated *Aso Rock* as the center of origin for all the arms of the government of the Nigerian Federation,

thereby imbuing the government with certain auras that are associated with naturalistic powers.

In Tange's opinion, 'the National Assembly is the most important symbol of the new capital. The Assembly is bicameral and the Upper and Lower Houses are identified with triangular shapes which are selected from visual traditions from around the country'.⁶ However, the triangular shape was rejected by the Nigerian authorities who feared that it symbolized the two houses fighting between themselves. That was not the image that a country which had just emerged from a violent civil war wanted to project to the world. In response, Tange produced a circular domed design which evokes the shapes of *Aso Rock* and the traditional round hut. This last design was approved, but it was never built.

The version of the National Assembly which is actually built is loaded with tensions which carry over to complex areas such as defending the economic and political interests of Christianity in the country versus defending the economic and political interests of Moslems within the country [fig 11]. The National Assembly building also complicates the relationships between Northern and Southern Nigeria by insinuating that the building which resembles a mosque symbolizes the Moslem and military dominance of the political apparatus of the country. It also represents the loss of political power in the south, meaning the movement of the Federal Capital from Lagos, versus the gain of political power in the north, meaning the location of the Federal Capital in Abuja. The completed National Assembly Building also calls attention to governance and accountability, as well as issues relating to law and order.

The forms Tange proposed for the National Assembly, the Presidential Complex, and the Supreme Court, have been designed with different modifications in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. The Royal Palace of King Fahad in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is almost a copy of the



fig 11 The Completed National Assembly Complex, 1999. S. M. I. International and Ingenieur Und Tiefbau.

⁵ *The Master Plan for Abuja, The New Federal Capital of Nigeria*, op. cit. p. 80.

⁶ *Kenzo Tange Associates, Volume 2, 1983*, (Tokyo: Kenzo Tange Associates), 112.

Presidential Complex at Abuja. The façade, the hallway, and the volumetric composition of the palaces read identically. Viewed from this perspective one can suggest that at the Three Arms Zone, the Nigerian nation was not getting anything new from Tange. Instead, they were getting his famous signature on the city.

Unlike IPA's vision of Abuja's Mall as a possible source of democratic culture from the United States to Nigeria, Tange envisioned the Mall as a social catalyst which would keep the Ministries Zone active after working hours and as a mega-structure for the development of commercial interests. These are two different ideologies on how the Mall at Abuja should be articulated. Also, Unlike the IPA proposal which called for low rise buildings around the mall like in Washington, Tange's mall is flanked on both sides by high-rise mega-structures. No doubt, the fundamental architectonic elements, the volumetric organization, and the massing of the mega-structures which flank Tange's mall are derived from his famous Yamanashi Press and Broadcasting Center, a project he completed in Japan between 1961 and 1966.

Not all his intentions at the Mall have been followed. First, the two prototype secretariats were increased to three models. The Office of the Executive President was later done by Albert Speer of Germany and Julius Berger Nigeria Limited, also a German firm. The building across the Mall from the President's Executive Office was done by a Nigerian architect, Fola Alade, and his foreign partner. These changes, I suggest, are not the consequences of lack of finances for the projects or due to collective stylistic adjustments by the authorities. Rather, they are the evidence of the economic, cultural, and political struggles among the competing elite within the country.

The proposition that Abuja is the center of struggle for social hierarchies by competing interest groups within the Nigerian nation is driven home by the strong fistful sculpture created by Duke Igbiniedion at the Three Arms Zone in 1999. Igbiniedion hails from the south and drew his inspirations from his Edo culture. He was aware of the historical and symbolic meanings of the



fig 12. The Hassan II Mosque, Casablanca, 1985-1993, by Michel Pinseau

mace before he used it at the Three Arms Zone in an ensemble that seemingly unifies the citizens of the country. He understood the counterpoint it would provide to the mosque-like structure that dominates the Three Arms Zone by providing a strong symbol of ancestral culture. This strength comes from the symbolism of the sword. Besides, both extremist Christians and Moslems frown at his sculpture and shunned it as pagan satanic act. Here, Igbiniedion is exploiting the culture of ancestor worship and its symbolism in order to contest power at the center of Nigerian government.

The 1950's through 1975 were not particularly unique in the exploitation of architecture as instruments of national development and the consolidation of social hierarchies in Africa. I would have liked to stop my analysis with structures that were built after 1975, however, the recent development in Southern Africa and the fall of the Berlin Wall paved the way for new alignments and methods for the struggles. The new alignments include religious formations that are as politically involved as the trade unions, political parties, and military regimes that have dominated the institutions of the continent since independence [fig 12 + 13]. As a result, from 1980 through the turn of the twenty first century, African leaders were still exploiting certain architectural ideologies for social and economic gains. However, in the last examples I am providing here, what is exploited is architectural style and building forms. That is to say: Based on the stylistic renditions of the two structures no one would classify them as modern architecture. Both evoke architectural languages from epochs that are long gone. Perhaps, we can classify both objects as two post-modern projects by two highly ambitious postcolonial leaders. That said: If we can look beyond the veils of the postmodernist representations and dig deep into the intensions of the objects, we will discover that they share in common the cultural, economic, and political aspirations that were expressed at Dodoma and Abuja through the Moslem and the Christian religions. Here, I am referring to the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Morocco, and Our Lady of Peace Basilica, in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire.



fig 13. Our Lady of Peace Basilica, Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, 1985-1990, by Pierre Fakhoury

The Hassan II Mosque demonstrates how the King ritualistically replicated architectural elements from antiquity to assert his legitimacy to the throne, reinvent his monarchy, consolidate his power, and secure its survival into the future for his children and grandchildren.

The King justified the construction of his Mosque with a mythological narrative which suggests that he was fulfilling one of the prophecies in the Holy Koran (Sourate XI, Verse VII-Hud). It reads as follows: 'And his throne was over the waters' ⁷. Other reasons given for the construction of the edifice include: (1) Commemorating the founding of the Moroccan monarchy since 789 AD; (2) Commemorating the founding of the Alwalid Dynasty in the 1600's; (3) The King's sixty-third birthday; and most importantly, (4) Celebrating Prophet Mohammed's birthday.

Let us keep in mind that the Mosque was designed and built between 1985 and 1993 when Morocco was experiencing the greatest upsurge in Islamic activities, fighting an endless war in the Western Sahara, and the economy was in shambles. Never has the kingdom been more threatened since Hassan II assumed power in 1961. During those years of national tumult the King and his followers intended to utilize the Islamic virtues that were conveyed by the mosque to depict images of the King's supremacy and longevity. Using the mosque, the consolidation and national stabilization process during the upheavals was achieved through engaging the people's senses with visual abstractions and icons of the King that are familiar to the Moroccan people. ⁸

The most obvious example of this conflation of the King's identity and the image of the mosque can be observed on the 20 Dirhams currency. On one side of the 20 Dirhams currency lie two symmetrically juxtaposed images: one of the King, and the other of the newly built mosque. On the currency, the King's image and the mosque are flanked by the bluish waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Although the images of the King and the mosque are symmetrically juxtaposed, keeping the King's image in the foreground of the note makes it the most prominent object on the currency. The King's image is delineated in a reddish-brown cross-hatching technique which allows one to recognize his outfit as that of a modern Head-of-State.

However, the date '1416-1996', on the lower right corner of the bill anachronistically destabilizes the entire composition. We know that the building was planned in 1985 and inaugurated in 1993. So, what do these dates mean in this context of the mosque? Since it is something that people handle on a daily basis, money is an ideal tool to impress the desired images of the King on the Moroccan people through the visual abstractions and icons that are familiar to them. As a result, the mosque is a point of surveillance designed to keep track of those who were for the King and those who were against him.

Physically, the urban design opens up a new expansive ten-lane boulevard. The main purpose of the boulevard is to create a shopping avenue beyond anything that Morocco has ever seen. In addition, it is a quotation of the colonial urban design schemes in Rabat. Namely: Avenue Mohammed V which was done by Henri Prost under Resident Governor Lyeauty between 1917 and 1923. ⁹

Pinseau's scheme can only be achieved by bulldozing thousands of apartments on the edge of the ancient medina of Casablanca. Thus, we might ask, how different is the King's urban ambition from the colonial urban ambitions of the French which many scholars have discussed in detail?

Like its Casablanca counterpart, the colossal excesses of Our Lady of Peace Basilica at Yamoussoukro, Côte-d'Ivoire, will continue to attract discussion for years to come. Realized at an estimated price of \$300 million between 1987 and 1990, this personal gift from President Houphouët-Boigny to Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church holds a unique position in the history of art and architecture in Africa. ¹⁰ Keeping in mind that only 15% of Ivoirians are Catholic, what is the benefit of this monument in the life of Ivoirians? Also, can we look at this edifice and make sense of the tumults going on in the country today along lines that go beyond north versus south and Moslems versus Christians by realizing that architecture and the ways of living in the contemporary times have a lot to do with the multitude of problems? Or, have we given up on the ideals of the architectural Modern Movement to the extent that we dare not reflect on it even when some of its ideals

⁵ See Mohammed-Allal Sinaeur et al., 1993. *La Mosquée Hassan II. Casablanca, Morocco: Edition Daniel Briand*, 11. Also see Halod and Khan 1997, p. 56.

⁶ So far, the most elaborate study of how the Moroccan Monarchy is constantly renewed through ritual and the details of the ritual is by Combs-Schilling in *Sacred Performances* (1989).

⁷ See Nnamdi Elleh, *Architecture and Power in Africa*, (Praeger, 2002), for the detailed comparative study of the Hassan II Mosque and Our Lady of Peace Basilica.

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⁹ See Nnamdi Elleh, *Architecture and Power in Africa*, (Praeger, 2002), for the detailed comparative study of the Hassan II Mosque and Our Lady of Peace Basilica.

which remain unresolved in developing countries are still causing political problems along ethnic, racial, national, and religious lines? In the Côte d'Ivoire, the on going civil war seems to implicate a rebellion of the Moslem population who have for a long time felt marginalized by the Christian communities since the period of independence. What lies at the root of the rebellion are disenchantments due to lack of access to physical and social infrastructure such as good housing and education.

When Our Lady of Peace Basilica was completed in 1990, the then curator of the National Museum of Culture, in Abidjan, Francois Mathew, proclaimed that 'Rome is no longer in Rome, Rome is in Yamoussoukro'¹¹. This statement is designed to disorient the viewers of the edifice and to erase historical, political, cultural, religious, and mental boundaries which differentiate the Basilica in Rome from the one in Yamoussoukro. Also, like in Casablanca, where the King suggested that he was building the mosque in order to fulfill one of the edicts of the Quran, the Lebanese-Ivorian-French architect, Pierre Fakhoury, who designed the basilica, gave what is essentially a technical solution a mythological meaning by suggesting that anchoring the church on a granite foundation was specifically intended to conform to the biblical passage: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church'.

In order to demonstrate the scale of the President's achievement, the architects prepared three drawings comparing the Basilica with three major monuments from around the world: St. Paul Cathedral in London, Notre Dame in Paris, and of course, St Peter's Basilica in Rome. There is no doubt that Our Lady of Peace Basilica dwarfs all these ancient monuments. One might ask: Why? [fig 13 + 14].

Our Lady of Peace Basilica is a celebration of the roles the President assumed at the beginning of his political career: an African Chief, a farmer, a landowner, a Catholic, and above all, an anti-Communist. The President aligned himself with a conservative, international elite who looked out for him, and he identified that elite as his 'metropolitan fraternal' colleagues. As a result, he shares a common world view with this international elite rather than with his own people - a factor, perhaps, influenced by the French assimilation policy. It is therefore not surprising that the President went to the metropolé in order to select an architectural style that will appeal to his preferred audience. Unlike the mosque which is a center of surveillance, the basilica is a center of differentiation. It differentiates those who have good Western taste from those who do not, and above all it perpetuates the aura of colonialism at the expense of the Ivorian people's cultures.



fig 14. *The figure in the foreground of this photo demonstrates the immense work that remains to be done in the developing cities of Africa. Such sights raise questions regarding the appropriateness of grand projects when the basic needs of the people are not yet met.*

The evidence of his alignment transcends political practices. For example, the majority of the saintly figures represented on the stained glasses are Europeans, except for one African looking figure which is kneeling before a figure of Jesus Christ. Certainly, the African figure has a distinct resemblance to President Félix Houphouët-Boigny himself. If Fakhoury and the President had cared and wanted to impress their Ivorian audience while advancing African and religious practices in the country, they would have discovered that the people of Côte d'Ivoire have visual icons for representing columns, portals, windows, roofs, and all the architectonic elements which constitute buildings.

This is not a harsh criticism of the late president and his architect. This point becomes obvious upon visiting the second largest church building in the Côte-d'Ivoire, the Cathedral of Saint Paul, Abidjan, by the Italian architect Aldo Spirito. It was completed and inaugurated by Pope John Paul II on 10th August 1985, on the same trip that he laid the foundation stone for Our Lady of Peace Basilica. Unlike the Yamoussoukro stained glasses, the ones at St. Paul's Cathedral contain narratives which tie the lives of Ivorian Catholics to the faith.

CONCLUSION

Some of the major modernist architectural projects that were proposed in Africa between the 1950's and the 1970's share common developmental and modernization intentions. They also have nationalistic tendencies, as well as economic and political prerogatives that were often hidden among competing interest groups. These projects can be seen as late modernisms with multiple social agendas. Among them: the need for scientific planning and housing development for the masses; the provision of security, education, health, 'good-life' and happiness, prosperity, glamour, fame, etc. All the grand schemes were planned to take advantage of the opportunities provided us by the machine age in order to fulfill the visions of the African leaders who planned the projects.

How far have we gone towards fulfilling these grandiose dreams in African cities and rural settlements? What about those who sleep under the highway bridges in the cities of Lagos; who live in the shantee towns of and the poorest parts of Cape Town, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Kinshasa, and Nairobi? Do the people who really do not have adequate places to reside and good healthcare facilities when they are terminally ill have places to go in towns such as Yamoussoukro? Do we have room for the members of the underprivileged classes as we examine the failures and successes of the Modern Movement in architecture in Africa? Or, are the kind of shack houses that the people of the lower classes live in outside the perimeters of our conference? These are not questions that we can ignore or take for granted. They are the problems that stare us in the face every day and challenge us as the architects and planners of our societies.

Thank you.

¹⁰ There is no formal financial accounting for this project due to the justification that it is a personal gift to the Church of Rome. However, several sources have been speculating on its overall cost, which is plausible considering the scale at which the project is completed. See *Time*, July 3, 1989, vol. 134, no 1; and September 17, 1990, vol. 136, no 1, p. 61; Côte-d'Ivoire Country Report, no 1, 1990, the Economist Intelligence unit; *West Africa* no 3812, September 17-23, 1990; and *Africa Confidential* vol. 29, no 20, 7 October 1988, p. 5.

¹¹ See the *Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, (Yamoussoukro, Cote-d'Ivoire, Published by the church, 1990)*, p. 10.

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