

**Monumental through Design,
Identity by Definition: The
Architecture of Uganda prior
to Independence.**

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Monumental through Design, Identity by Definition: The Architecture of Uganda prior to Independence.

Introduction



Figure 1: Uganda.

Source: CIA World Factbook 1998.

“Throughout history monumental architecture has been employed to embody the values of dominant ideologies and groups, and as an instrument of state propaganda.”¹ To an extent however, the presentation or representation of national identity through architecture has been an invention of sorts, particularly in the former European colonies of Africa, where unified national identities has never existed. The function of this representation was two fold; firstly to provide a visible symbol of economic and political development, and secondly to provide a recognisable symbol to which people could eventually identify.^{2,3}

This paper will explore the issues of ‘identity’ and ‘monumentality’ in relation to state architecture in Uganda particularly during the decade prior to its independence from Britain in 1962. The issue of identity arising from the notion that architecture can be used to communicate values, aspirations and ideologies, thus expressing a particular identity,⁴ with monumentality and monumental architecture defining architecture of high significance, and in most cases manifested through state buildings. These issues will explore in relation to three questions in particular;

- i) Why were these buildings constructed?
- ii) For whom were they built?
- iii) Who do they represent?

¹ Curtis, W.J.R. *Modern architecture since 1900*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1982, pp211.

² Ranger, T. “The invention of tradition in colonial Africa.” In *The invention of tradition*, ed. Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp237.

³ Vale, L.J. *Architecture, power and national identity*. New Haven: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp22.

⁴ Lang, J., Desai, M. and Desai, M. *Architecture and independence: The search for identity - India 1880 to 1980*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp1.

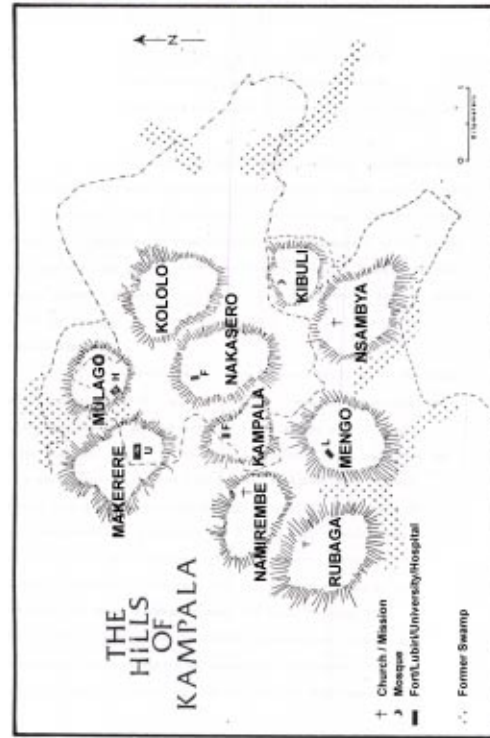


Figure 2: The Environs of Kampala.
 Source: Miner, 1967, pp298.

These questions will be examined in relation to the architecture of two buildings in Kampala; the Bulange⁵ at Mengo (1954), home of the Lukiiko⁶, and the Uganda Legislative Building⁷ at Nakasero (1962), the seat of Uganda's Government. Designed by foreign architects, the Bulange by Cobb, Freeman & Powell and the Uganda Parliament by Thomas Peatfield & Geoffrey Bodgener, these buildings were constructed during the twilight years of British colonial rule in Uganda. Have these buildings become the symbols they were intended to be or have they lost this intention, indeed, did they have any symbolic value in the first place?

The unique presence of two seats of government within the city of Kampala is a legacy of colonisation which saw two urban traditions - African and European - develop in close proximity. The City of Kampala is made up of the indigenous city of Mengo, the capital of the Kingdom of Buganda, one of four kingdoms within the modern state of Uganda - from which Uganda gets its name, and of the colonial settlement of Kampala, founded by Captain Frederick (later Sir) Lugard in December 1890 on Kampala hill. The allocation of Kampala hill to Lugard and the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA)⁸ was a clear message from the reigning monarch, Kabaka (King) Mwanga, that he was the undisputed monarch - Kampala was not only the smallest hill in the area, but also the location of the kraal for the Kabaka's antelope, the 'Impala', from which Kampala derives its name.^{9,10} This action was a clear precursor to events in the decades to follow, an indication of the tension between the two authorities, and a possibly influential factor in the design of their respective parliaments during the 1950s, monumental in style, and designed to evoke a sense of identity.

⁵ Parliament Building of Buganda.

⁶ Legislative Council of the Kingdom of Buganda.

⁷ Now the Uganda Parliament Building.

⁸ Lack of capital, forced the IBEA Company to abandon its commercial efforts in East Africa, forcing the British government to declare Uganda a British Protectorate in 1895.

⁹ Kendall, H. *Town planning in Uganda*. Entebbe: The Government of Uganda, 1955, pp19.

¹⁰ Ingrams, H. *Uganda: A Crisis of Nationhood*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960, pp93.

Research for this paper was largely based primarily on a review of available literature, and limited information gathered from Architectural practitioners who have worked or are working in East Africa. Extensive use is also made of the World Wide Web (WWW) which proved to be a valuable source for current information, particularly news from Uganda as well as for personal correspondence. The lack of primary data on Uganda has meant that analogy has had to be used to support and strengthen arguments. The range of issues addressed in the paper are wide and varied, but due to the limited scope and length of this research paper, and the relative lack of in-depth information on architecture in East Africa, they will not be dealt with in detail. They are significant nevertheless, and raise important questions that would benefit from further research at postgraduate level, particularly as much architectural and urban planning work in Uganda, and indeed in much of Africa has not been adequately documented, as is exemplified in the document “Town planning in Uganda”¹¹ which describes the planning efforts of governments between 1915 and 1955, but fails to mention the work of Ernst May who served as planner for Kampala in 1947, and who was responsible for the urban plan of the city. Further, due to the length and scope of this paper, documentation on the history of Uganda, is not included as the social and political history of Uganda has been extensively documented. The paper does give brief historical and contextual perspectives when and where appropriate, and provides some worthy references in a separate section in the bibliography.

¹¹ Kendall, 1955.

Whose Architecture? Expressing Identity in Architecture

East Africa's past can be summed up in one sentence, "... the destruction of traditional values and their replacement by alien ones."¹² During the relatively short period of European colonisation, between the 1880s and 1960s, largely alien traditions and cultural values were introduced, many having no historical basis in Europe nor in the colonies. These 'Invented Traditions', as Hobsbawm suggests were "... a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which [sought] to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically [implied] continuity with the past."¹³ It has thus been suggested in previous scholarship on other particularly analogous cases of European colonial practices in Africa and Asia, that these 'invented traditions' provided for the colonisers a model for command, giving a sense of hierarchy, while providing for the colonised a model for 'modern behaviour', and in so doing, reinforced a superimposed order.¹⁴ The result was the creation of a clearly defined hierarchical society in which the Europeans were perceived as the natural and undisputed masters.¹⁵ In the case of Uganda and Buganda in particular, invented traditions are of particular relevance as the Buganda Monarchy owes its current status to invented and borrowed traditions forged as a result of the British-Buganda alliance set up in the 1910s and cemented with the founding of 'Kings College' Budo in 1906, specifically to train the Baganda (The people of Buganda) elite in the British neo-traditions.¹⁶

¹² Martin, R. "The architecture of underdevelopment or the route to self determination in design." *Architectural Design*, no. 7, 1974, pp626.

¹³ Hobsbawm, E. "Introduction: Inventing traditions." *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp1.

¹⁴ Wright, G. "Tradition in the service of modernity: Architecture and urbanism in French colonial policy, 1900-1930." In *Tensions of empire: Colonial cultures in a Bourgeois world*, ed. Cooper, F. and Stoler, A.L. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp323.

¹⁵ Ranger, 1983, pp221.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp221.

As a direct result of colonisation, western archetypes have come to dominate over 'Indigenous' and 'Islamic' archetypes, which together form the three major cultural influences in Africa, described by Professor Ali Mazrui¹⁷ as 'Africa's triple heritage', a concept, formulated to explain the historical and political development of Africa. To some, this domination was seen as a natural consequence of a more advanced society interacting with a less advanced society,¹⁸ derived from a Eurocentric bias in an apparent belief that "... European existence [was] quantitatively superior to other forms of human life."¹⁹ The traditions of the colonised, as a result of this interaction have been irreversibly transformed, the degree to which this has occurred depending to an extent on the proximity of indigenous settlements to the colonial centres and the extent to which they interacted.²⁰

The emerging nations of the post-colonial world were all keen to use architecture not only to house their new governments but also as the ultimate proclamation of the worthiness of the new regimes, to define a nation, reinforce nationalist sentiments and as a proclamation of self worth.^{21,22} Some went as far as to plan new cities altogether, as was the case in Nigeria, which moved its capital from Lagos to Abuja, to symbolise a new beginning, justified by the fact that these new towns were at the geographic centre of the nations. Location was important as "... the placement of parliament buildings [was] an exercise in political power, [and] a spatial declaration of political control."²³ According to Vale meaning and symbolism can be embedded in a building in three ways: literally, as a metaphor, or through mediated reference. Examples such as the Capitol in Washington D.C. (1800-

¹⁷ Mazrui, A. *The Africans: A triple heritage*. London: BBC Publications, 1986

¹⁸ Jayewardene, S. "Reflections on design in the context of development." *Mimar* March, 1988, pp70.

¹⁹ Serequeberhan, T. "The critique of Eurocentrism and the practice of African philosophy." In *Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader*, ed. Chukwudi Eze, E. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, Publishers, 1997, pp142.

²⁰ Tessler, M.S., O'Barr, W.M. and Spain, D.H. *Tradition and identity in changing Africa*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973, pp316.

²¹ Curtis, 1982, pp211.

²² Vale, 1992, pp7.

²³ *Ibid*, pp10.



Figure 3: The US Capitol, Washington D.C.
Source: Private Collection.



Figure 4: Parliament House, Canberra.
Source: Private Collection.

1807) (Figure 3) and more recently the new Australian Parliament House in Canberra (1988) (Figure 4), are two examples of state buildings with embedded meaning, although the new Australian Parliament House departs significantly from the usual iconography of the Capitol, built into, rather than on top of Capitol hill.²⁴

Colonial and Post-colonial governments were aware of the value of using monumentality in state architecture, to present a sense of progress, to promote national pride and unity and to bring international recognition. Edwin Lutyens Viceroy's House (1913-30), now Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India, in New Delhi was explicitly designed by the British colonialists as a monumental icon. Representing neither English, Roman, nor Indian aspects, it is an imperial structure in its own right, a symbol of the importance of the Indian Empire to the British (Figure 5). A similar approach was followed by the designers²⁵ of Bhubaneswar, the capital of the post-colonial Indian state of Orissa. Like most post-colonial governments, the Orissa Government had a vision, to have "... the Secretariat and the various departmental buildings ... constructed to fit with [their] imperial vision" Their proposal was to have the main public buildings, including the Secretariat and the Governors' residence built around a square, "... dominating the skyline by their pleasing monumental proportions" ²⁶ This monumental symbolism that the Orissa government attempted to embed in their new capital was regarded as the most appropriate way to represent the ideals of the administration.²⁷ The independent Mexico exploited architectural monumentality at the Universal Exposition's of Paris in 1889 and 1990. In 1889 it was to emphasise Mexico's unique cultural heritage, the aim being to attract foreign capital, thus the use of a pre-Columbian

²⁴ Ibid, pp80.

²⁵ The design team was headed by Otto Koenigsberger, and comprised a number of Indians trained in Britain.

²⁶ Kalia, R. *Bhubaneswar: From a Temple Town to a Capital City*. Delhi: Oxford University, 1994, pp109 & 147.

²⁷ There were clashes between the design team and the Orissa government, the former approaching the development along secular lines, looking to accommodate the requirements of modern life, while the latter favoured the religious monumentalism of the past.



Figure 5: Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
Source: Irving, 1981, pp242.

design, while in 1900 the aim was to convey the message that Mexico was equal to the developed nations, thus the use of a western design.²⁸

Typical discourse on African architecture has tended to freeze it in the distant past, portraying a continent in which the only form of architecture are grass thatched mud huts, therefore promoting the Eurocentric view that the African traditional way of life did not change over time.²⁹ The expression ‘African Architecture’ unlike its analogous cousins ‘Islamic Architecture’ and ‘Asian Architecture’, has thus become synonymous with primitive, pre-modern and of the old empire, the assertion being that African society was “... profoundly conservative - living within age-old rules which did not change; living within an ideology based on the absence of change, [and] living within a framework of clearly defined hierarchical status ...”³⁰ Even though this account was by no means intended to indicate the backwardness of Africa but to emphasise its strong traditions, it has become so. A more recent publication by Nnamdi Elleh,³¹ has been one exception, taking ‘African Architecture’ as having developed in relation to various cultural, political economic and religious facets of the social development of the African continent.

²⁸ Fernández, M. “In the image of the other: A call for rethinking national identity.” *Design Book Review* Vol.32/33, 1994, pp54.

²⁹ Wright, 1997, pp331.

³⁰ Ranger, 1983, pp247.

³¹ Elleh, N. *African Architecture: Evolution and Transformation*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996, 1996.

Spheres of Influence

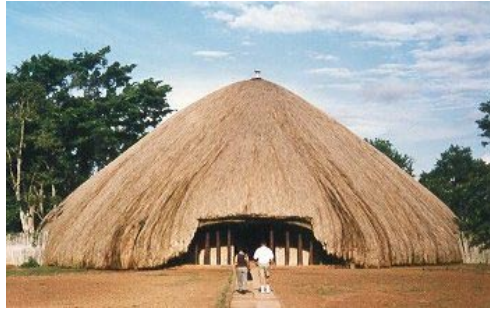


Figure 6: Traditional Palace, Kasubi, Kampala - Now the Kabaka's Tombs.

Source: Mukasa Ssemakula.



Figure 7: The Twekobe, Mengo, Kampala - Official Residence of the Kabaka.

Source: Ingrams, 1960, Plate VIII(a).

As suggested by the 'triple heritage' concept, foreign influence in East Africa comes from two areas; firstly, the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East, with whom trade had been carried out by traders plying the Indian Ocean for centuries before Europeans arrived, (but was largely restricted to the coast until the early 1800s); secondly, from the West, with influence from the Iberian peninsula, most notably the Portuguese who built Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya, during the 1500s. Their influence, like that of the Islamic traders, was restricted to the coast of East Africa. English influence began in the mid 1800s, eventually becoming the main colonial power in the region. Further influence also came from France, as part of the Catholic missions (the White Fathers), and from Germany who colonised Tanganyika³² later ceding it to England after WWII. A more recent influential group has been from the Indian sub-continent, when skilled Indians labourers were brought into East Africa during the 1900s to assist in construction of infrastructure, staying on, and becoming influential in their own right.

In pre-colonial Buganda, monumental structures were built for the veneration of the Kabaka. Palaces were always the largest structures in the Kibuga (city), giving whoever sat in it a considerable amount of authority.³³ From the traditional (Figure 6), through the Islamic - Islamic influence in architectural terms was minimal, however the design of the official residence of the Kabaka, the Twekobe (Figure 7), a late nineteenth century building exemplifies early Islamic architecture in Uganda - to the present Western influenced forms, the monumental Palaces exemplifying the status of the Kabaka as the supreme ruler of Buganda. The arrival of the Europeans missions saw the construction of monumental structures for reasons other than for the veneration of

³² In April 1964 Tanganyika and the Island state of Zanzibar united as the United Republic of Tanzania

³³ Low, D.A. *Buganda in modern history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, pp13.



Figure 8: Rubaga Anglican Cathedral, Namirembe, Kampala.

Source: Ingrams, 1960, Plate XXIV(b).

the Kabaka. The Anglican Cathedral at Namirembe (Figure 8) designed by Beresford Pite in a modified Arts & Crafts - Gothic style,³⁴ and completed in 1919 was among the first, followed closely by the Roman Catholic Cathedral on the adjacent hill of Rubaga consecrated in 1925 (Figure 9). Designed in the Romanesque Style by Bro Gilbert of the Lay White Brothers. Rubaga Cathedral was, until the early 1990s, the largest Roman Catholic Cathedral in Africa, a distinction now held by the 'Basilique Notre-Dame de la Paix in Yamoussoukro, C^TMte d'Ivoire completed in 1989 (Figure 10).

The rise of nationalism throughout the British and French colonies after WWII produced the most significant development in terms of architectural representation. Evidence of this in Uganda are the Bulange, the parliament of the Kingdom of Buganda, designed to give one of the oldest kingdoms in Africa a modern demeanour, and the Uganda Parliament Building, to portray the emergence of the new 'unitary' state of Uganda.

These two buildings were not the first non religious western inspired monumental buildings in Kampala. A number of other buildings, including the Kampala railway station circa 1930 and the Main building at Makerere College³⁵ designed and built during WWII are but two early monumental structures. The Makerere main building designed by Architect Cecil T. Mitchell of the Uganda Public Works Department (PWD) and completed in 1941 is significant not only for its architecture, but also as it was one of the few public buildings completed during the war. In terms of Vale's categorisation of monumental structures,³⁶ the Makerere main building can be seen to symbolise the international identity of the Makerere University, the pre-eminent institution for higher education in East Africa (Figure 11).

The developments in Europe preceding and during WWII had a significant effect on architecture in the colonies. Persecution of Jews

³⁴ Cruickshank, D., ed. *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*. Oxford: Architectural Press, 1996, pp1161.

³⁵ Now Makerere University

³⁶ Vale, 1992, pp53.



Figure 9: Roman Catholic Cathedral,
Rubaga, Kampala.

Source: Ingrams, 1960, Plate XXIV(a).



Figure 10: Basilique Notre-Dame de la Paix,
in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire- Designed as
a monumental icon first, and a place of
worship second.

Source: Père Piotr Janv. Karp, S.A.C.

by Hitler's 3rd Reich led, to an exodus of many prominent Architects from Germany including Ernst May and Otto Koenigsberger, to the many European colonies around the World.^{37,38} Further, Western Europe saw the 'socialist purpose' held by Architects as undesirable, condemning the large cubic housing estates with flat roofs, as a support for communism.³⁹ There was also the collapse of the New Internationalist movement, particularly in England, leaving a number of its proponents out in the cold. From this background, the diaspora of the Modern Movement, migrated to the colonies spreading their theories of modernist architecture, and ensuring that the battle of the styles that had been played out in Europe was played out in the colonies as well, only to a lesser extent.

Amongst the diaspora was Ernst May whom having been stripped of his German citizenship by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, and disillusioned by the Soviet Union where he had worked from 1933, migrated to East Africa in 1937 to farm. His cubist and flat roofed designs were seen as undesirable by Stalin, an interesting development, given that this architecture were rejected by Western Europe as being 'communist'.⁴⁰ May resumed his architectural practice in Kenya after a two year internship in South Africa between 1940 and 1942, practicing in Kenya till 1952 when he returned to Germany. May's work in East Africa was mainly in the area of Urban Planning, and was responsible for the Kampala Town Plan (1947), as well as for the Aga Khan Maternity Hospital (1952) in Kisumu, Kenya.

Amyas Connell, of the British firm Connell, Ward & Lucas, and a leading proponent of the New Internationalist movement, was another prominent European architect to find his way to East Africa. Suspended from Wells Coates Modern Architectural Research (MARS) Group for neo-classical tendencies, an indication of the attitude towards

³⁷ Curtis, 1982, pp212.

³⁸ Ogura, N. "Early modern architecture in East Africa and its adaptation to climate." *Journal of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Engineering*, no. 367, 1986, pp108.

³⁹ Curtis, 1982, pp211.

⁴⁰ Ogura, 1986, pp110.



Figure 11: Makerere Main Building, Kampala.
Source: Private Collection



Figure 12: Nairobi Skyline - Kenya
Parliament Building in the foreground. Note the clock tower.
Source: Private Collection

monumentality in Europe at the time, the partnership of Connell, Ward & Lucas was dissolved in 1939.^{41,42} Leaving England in 1947, Connell moved first to Tanganyika and then to Nairobi, Kenya, setting up Triad Associates with his son James Connell. In Kenya, Connell found a more receptive clientele, and was able to fulfil his modernist dreams working on buildings of a larger scale than he had done in England. This was something many in the New Internationalist movement were unable to do as the general attitude and ideology in the Europe after WWII was initially hostile to any kind of monumentality and iconography as it was thought to be inappropriate for the capitalist agenda.^{43,44} Connell's major projects in Kenya included the Kenya Legislative Council Building (1952), now the Kenya Parliament Buildings (Figure 12), and the Aga Khan Hospital (1958) both in Nairobi. There is therefore no doubt that the works of both May and Connell did have an influence on the architecture of Uganda, not only paving the way for other European Architects to move to East Africa, but also setting a precedent for public architecture and introducing modernist architecture to the area.

⁴¹ Holder, J. "The angry young men of Modernism." *Architects' Journal* Vol.200, no. 10, 1994, pp63.

⁴² Sharp, D. "British modern architecture of the 30s: The work of Connell, Ward and Lucas" *Architecture and Urbanism*, Vol. 240, no.9, 1990, pp47.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Frampton, K. *Modern architecture: A critical history*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp222.

Monumental Design - Forging and Independent Identity

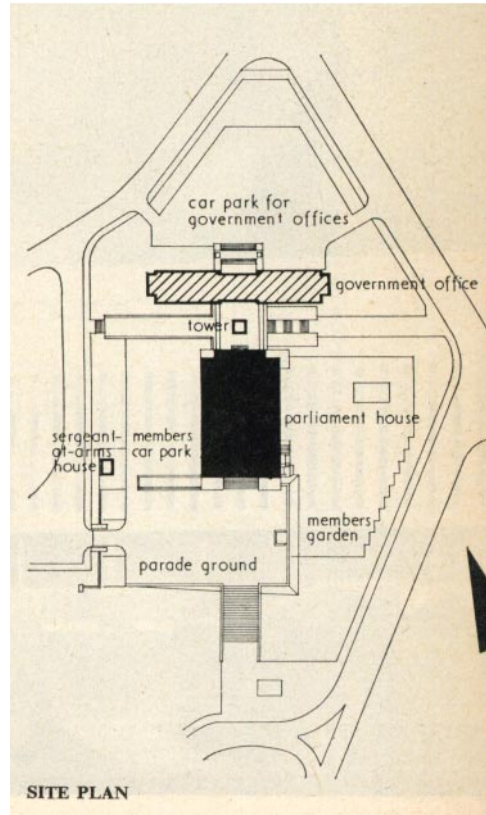


Figure 13: Parliament House Location Plan.
Source: _____, 1962, pp488.

The Uganda Parliament Building

The design for a new Parliament building can be viewed as an exercise in the promotion of national identity, promoting national over state interests and to symbolise the unity within the new nation.⁴⁵ The colonial administration in Uganda put forward a proposal for the design of a new legislative building to house Uganda's growing legislative council. The building was to represent a unified country, and be a dignified symbolic expression of national unity, representing the many peoples of Uganda.⁴⁶ Of issue here is the question of imagined or invented group identity, as Uganda as a geographic, and ethnic entity, is a colonial paradox as it is far from being culturally homogeneous.⁴⁷

Of particular concern to the architects, Peatfield and Bodgener, winners of the international design competition for the design of the Parliament building,⁴⁸ was the proximity of the site to adjacent office buildings. As Vale points out, a "... government's spatial relation to other important structures sends additional complex messages about how the leadership wishes others to regard the institution it houses. Its apparent dominance or subservience depends on the scale of the building and ... may be influenced by its relative degree of isolation and its accessibility to the public."⁴⁹ In this case the selected site was a diamond shaped block adjacent to the Kampala City Council buildings, bound by Nile Avenue to the North, Said Barre Avenue to the East, Parliament Avenue to the South-east, Kimathi Avenue to the South, and Queens Garden Grove

⁴⁵ Vale, 1992, pp48.

⁴⁶ _____, "Parliament buildings, Kampala." *The Architect & Building News* October 3, 1962, pp487.

⁴⁷ Finnstrom, S. "Postcoloniality and the Postcolony: Theories of the global and the local." In <<http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/poldiscourse/finnstrom/finnstrom1.html>>, [Accessed: May 13, 1998].

⁴⁸ This was Peatfield and Bodgener's first project in Africa.

⁴⁹ Vale, 1992, pp9.



Figure 14: Parliament Building, Kampala.
Source: Colonial Office, 1961, Frontspiece.



Figure 15: Independence Arch, Kampala.
Source: Private Collection

to the West (Figure 13). It was deemed undesirable for the occupants of the adjacent buildings to be able to see through the windows of parliament house, thus the use of narrow slit windows, which also had the added benefit from a climatic point of view. Of even greater importance to the architects, was the need to reconcile the dreams of the administrators, who still represented the colonial administration, and the feelings of the newly emerging nation, lead by Africans for Africans.

The significance of hills in Baganda culture, begs the question as to why the Uganda Parliament building was not located on a hill crest, but on the slopes?⁵⁰ Was it a deliberate ploy by the colonial administration to lessen the status of the Uganda parliament and therefore the Uganda Government, or was it truly the case that an appropriate site was unavailable? Given that the crest of Nakasero and Kampala hills were both available and owned by the government,⁵¹ the latter can be disqualified, suggesting that other factors influenced the choice for the location of the Uganda Parliament (Figure 16). This will not be investigated in this paper.

It is evident that the designers of the Uganda Parliament building were faced with a challenge without much precedence. The building was being commissioned by the colonial administration for Uganda's impending independence. This is in contrast to Legislative buildings in most other colonies and former colonies which were usually built either for the colonial administration as miniature versions of Westminster, as was the case with the Kenya Legislative building designed by Amyas Connell and completed in 1952, or by the newly independent states themselves as a symbol of triumph over the colonial administration, as was the case with Cecil Hogan's design for the new National Parliament building in Papua New Guinea opened in 1984, a

⁵⁰ Ingrams, 1960, pp48.

⁵¹ The crest of Kampala Hill and Nakasero Hill were the location of the British Forts, which to this day remain as 'historic sites' although they are in a state of neglect and disrepair. Kampala Hill was proposed as a site for a National mosque during the 1970s, which was only partially completed.



Figure 16: Kampala Skyline - Uganda
Parliament Building to the right, obscured by
other buildings.

Source:Private Collection

decade after the country's independence from Australia. The solution Peatfield & Bodgener arrived at, takes some cues from the Kenya Legislative Council Building, indicated particularly by the presence of the Parliament building's light tower between the Legislative chamber and Government office complex, lit when parliament is in session - in Nairobi, the tower is a miniature replica of Big Ben. Connell later made additions to the Kenyan Parliament House in 1963, drawing inspiration from Indian Moghul models in an attempt at expressing Kenya's mixed cultural heritage, and to provide an independent identity in the new political milieu.⁵² The use of African sculptures framing the entrance to Uganda's Parliament building suggests an attempt at giving the building an African identity (Figure 14). The addition of the Independence Arch above the main vehicular entry was to commemorate Uganda's independence on October 9, 1962, a further statement of nationalism and identity (Figure 15). The three storey structure incorporates the main debating chamber, three committee rooms and offices for cabinet ministers and associated staff. The monolithic structure enveloping the debating chamber at its centre is seen to reflect the solidity of the government. It is punctuated by narrow slit windows set in deep splayed recesses giving it an inward looking character.⁵³ This is rather ironic given that the intention was to give "... a sense of openness ... befitting a democratic institution."⁵⁴

The Bulange

In contrast to the Uganda Parliament building, the origin of the Bulange is somewhat different. The purpose of the Bulange was to assert the strength of the Kabaka as the reigning monarch in Buganda, and to promote the status of Buganda within the Uganda Protectorate, and externally as a state in its own right. These were issues that had been eroded by the British colonial office subsequent to the signing of the Buganda agreement in 1900.

⁵² Sharp, D. "The modern movement in East Africa." *Habitat International* Vol.7, no. 5/6, 1983, pp323.

⁵³ _____, 1962, pp488.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp487.



Figure 17: The Washington Mall and the US Capitol, Washington D.C.
 Source: Private Collection

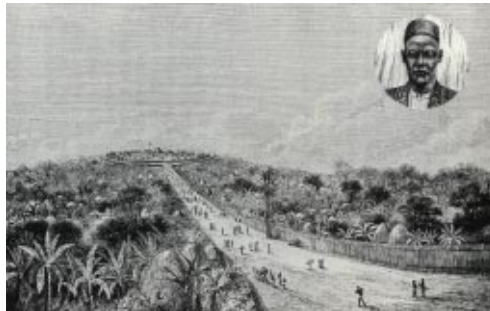


Figure 18: The Kings Way as seen by Stanley in 1875, Kampala.
 Source: Ingrams, 1960, Plate V(b).

Completed in 1956, the Bulange, was intended to be a powerful, monumental symbol of nationalistic pride. The main approach to the Bulange is via a ceremonial road, the ‘Kings Way’,⁵⁵ not unlike the approach to Lutyen’s Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. In contrast, the approach to the Uganda Parliament Building, which is supposed to be the most symbolic building in the country, is rather low key. The powerful axis created by the Kings Way, framed by the Lubiri, the Kabaka’s official residence (Twekobe), and the Bulange, a mile away on an adjacent hill is reminiscent of the Mall in Washington DC, framed by the Lincoln Memorial at one end, and the US Capitol at the other (Figure 17 & 18).

Designed by the architectural partnership of Cobb, Powell and Freeman, the Bulange was completed in 1956, in time to be officially opened by the Kabaka, Edward Mutesa II, who had recently returned from England where he had been exiled by the colonial administration for his criticism of changes made to the Buganda-British agreement of 1900 (Figure 19). The Baganda also felt that there the Kabaka was not recognised as a ‘proper’ monarch, an issue that led to a demonstration by students of Kings College, Budo, the institution set up for the promotion of invented traditions. It is ironic that the imported college traditions to influence indigenous traditions had also unwittingly inflamed the political passion of students.⁵⁶ Further tensions arose during negotiations towards the granting of self rule to Uganda during the 1950s which alienated Buganda to the point that the Kingdom felt that succession was the only justifiable option.⁵⁷ Thus, the construction of the Bulange was to a degree a response to these rising passions, a statement that the indigenous state was as progressive and as modern as the colonialists were. The Bulange thus came to represent the emergence of Buganda as a political and cultural force in the shaping of the Independent nation of Uganda, as well as being a display of a modern monarchy. The stirred relations between Buganda and central government eventually led to the abolition of Kingdoms in 1966,

⁵⁵ The Kings Way was changed to Republic Road after Kingdoms were abolished in 1966. It is also known locally in Uganda as the ‘Royal Mile’.

⁵⁶ Ingrams, 1960, pp124.

⁵⁷ Tessler, et al. 1973, pp5.



Figure 19: The Bulange, Kampala.
Source: Ingrams, 1960, Plate XI(a).

beginning a 30 year occupation of the Bulange and the Lubiri by the new Republican government and the Uganda Army, justified as protecting national interests particularly the threat to national unity.⁵⁸ It is largely from this conflict, that the building attained its current symbolism. Not only the Kabaka and the Lukiiko, but the image of the Bulange itself were perceived as a threat to the continued existence of Uganda as a nation. The reinstatement of the Kingdom of Buganda in 1993 and the return of the Bulange in 1996 came only after extensive negotiation and agreement that the Kingdoms would not engage in any political activity. The delay in the return of the Bulange could indicate the misgivings the Uganda government had about the status of the Lukiiko. It could also be construed that this was a gesture by the Uganda government to recognise that there is richness in diversity and that architecture is made what it is by the occupants.

The design of the building itself is a mix of modernism with a classical parti, a theme used in government buildings around Africa at the time, such as the Customs House in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.⁵⁹ The distinct expression of verticals, extensive ornamentals and pronounced pediment, in line with its status as a monumental building, suggest a Continental European influence in its architecture, this is yet to be explored in detail. Like its national counterpart, the Bulange has at its heart the main debating chamber, the great Lukiiko Hall, with offices in the wings of the building. Compared with the Uganda Parliament building, the Bulange appears to be more of a monumental icon given its scale in comparison to surrounding buildings, and its location in Kampala.

The preference to western motifs over the traditional motifs in public buildings is explained by Wright using the former French colony of Vietnam as an example, where “... ornamental references to classical and baroque monuments, [were] a visible expression of the supposed universality of [the] western concepts of order and beauty.”⁶⁰ Not only did the style and form of these buildings give an indication of their

⁵⁸ The name of the Bulange was changed to Republic House during this occupation. It has since reverted to its former name.

⁵⁹ Elleh, 1997, pp176.

⁶⁰ Wright, 1997, pp332.

status, the choice of colour was important as well. According to Landow, the choice of colours for the exterior of the buildings indicated the status of the building, and in the case of Africa, it emphasised the difference between perceived progress and modernisation and continued existence as a 'primitive' society. At the turn of the century, white was the preferred colour for the exterior walls of mission buildings, chosen in the belief that "... only white houses were cool enough to be comfortably lived in."⁶¹ Standing out from the terrain, these colonial buildings were in sharp contrast to indigenous structures that were always either brightly coloured or finished in natural colours, an aesthetic ethos that emphasised the unity between the terrain and architecture. There is little wonder that the majority of new buildings government and commercial have been finished with a white coat of paint. The Bulange and the Uganda parliament are no exceptions, the façade of the Uganda parliament in this case is finished in natural white stone, ensuring it retained its colour.

⁶¹ Landow, G.P. "White Colonists, White Houses." In <<http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/landow/post/zimbabwe/td/paint.html>>, [Accessed 11 May 1998].

Identity through Architecture

Architecture in Uganda during the 1950s and 1960s can rightly be described as the ‘Architecture of Independence’ as it reflected the ‘image’ of the post-colonial states; the Bulange reflecting the resilience of the Kingdom of Buganda, and the Uganda Parliament, the new Unitary State of Uganda. These were certainly monumental buildings designed as symbols of identity, and with which people could identify. However, the question is whether the symbolism in this ‘architecture of independence’ is apparent to the people of Uganda today? Referring to a passage by Laclau discussing political identity:

“The social world presents itself to us, primarily, as a sedimented ensemble of social practices accepted at face value, without questioning the founding acts of the institution. If the social world, however, is not entirely defined in terms of repetitive, sedimented practices, it is because the social always overflows the institutionalized frameworks of ‘society,’ and because social antagonisms show the inherent contingency of these frameworks, Thus a dimension of construction and creation is inherent in all social practice.”⁶²

It is evident that identity is not fixed, stable nor unified, thus the aim of representing the social world, a transitory identity in a fixed form, is difficult if not impossible, particularly when trying to represent an amalgam of disjointed groups. The relevance of representing identity in architecture is thus questionable, given different programs and activities can be accommodated within the same space. In such cases the intended symbolic meaning designed into the building could be lost. The Bulange is a prime example, used as home of the Buganda Lukiiko for 10 years before being forcefully occupied by the Uganda Army as its headquarters for over 20 years and off limits to the general

⁶² Laclau, E. “Introduction.” In *The making of political identities*, ed. Laclau, E. London: Verso, 1994a, pp3.



Figure 20: National Theatre and Cultural Centre, Nakasero, Kampala.
Source: Private Collection.

public. The building fabric remained, but the symbolic intent had been altered. Clearly, "... the flag over the citadel may change, but there will always remain that architectural element ...".⁶³ A not too dissimilar fate befell the Uganda Parliament building, built to symbolise a parliamentary democracy, yet of the eight plus governments it has housed, only three have been democratically elected. With the use of these buildings shifting from their intended purpose, viewed no longer as a symbol of nationhood, but of corruption and bad government, it is evident that the professed identity is imaginary, or long past, indicating that identity is always shifting and never complete, and therefore difficult to capture in architectural composition.⁶⁴

So why the search for identity through monumentality? The answer lies in the notion of status and meaning in architecture, powerful elements in the selection of archetypes as they portray to the reader - the public - the function of the building and its status. Rakatansky uses the example of 'everyday items' which if designed without the theoretical and conceptual context, the meaning could be ignored, and potentially be lost.⁶⁵ Architecture thus serves an important purpose in the non-verbal communication of cultural values and aspirations.⁶⁶

In a sense however, modern architecture in the post-colonial world has been yet another cultivated, colonising influence, the technological legacy left behind after the withdrawal of the European Colonisers becoming their most enduring legacy.^{67,68} This is part of what Laclau calls 'historical mutation',⁶⁹ exemplified by the National theatre and cultural centre in Kampala (1960s) (Figure 20), designed by Peatfield

⁶³ Rakatansky, M. "Why architecture is neither here nor there: Migrancy and mimicry." A paper delivered at the Building dwelling drifting: Migrancy and the limits of architecture, 3rd 'Other Connections' Conference, Melbourne, 1997, pp269.

⁶⁴ Fernández, 1994, pp50.

⁶⁵ Rakatansky, 1997, pp274.

⁶⁶ Lang, et al. 1997, pp1.

⁶⁷ Headrick, D.R. *The tools of empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp210.

⁶⁸ Curtis, 1982, pp333.

⁶⁹ Laclau, 1994a, pp1.



Figure 21: Martyrs Shrine, Namugongo.
Source: Dahinden, 1976, pp296.

and Bodgener in the “... European tradition, built by Europeans in Africa for Europeans ...”⁷⁰ Although this is one of the oldest formal theatres in Africa, it did not respond to traditional theatre in Uganda. A direct consequence of the introduction of this form of theatre, has been a reconfiguration of theatre in Uganda to meet the western concept of theatre - architecture determining social and cultural evolution.⁷¹ More recently, a few buildings that draw on Uganda’s rich African heritage have been constructed. For the most part these have been designed by foreign architects such as Swiss Architect, Justus Dahinden who designed the Mityana Pilgrims Shrine (1963-1965) and the Namugongo National Shrine (1976) (Figure 21), monuments dedicated to 22 Ugandan Christian Martyrs put to death by Kabaka Mwanga in 1886. Although the foreign imagery is reduced in these buildings, it persists in the image of the architect. Given these circumstances, is it really possible that architecture can be used as a symbol of identity?

⁷⁰ Kultermann, U. *New direction in African Architecture*. London: Studio Vista, 1969, pp54.

⁷¹ Mbowa, R. “Theatre and political repression in Uganda.” *Research in Africa Literatures* Vol.27, no. 3, 1996, pp88.

Conclusion - Revealing Identity



Figure 22: Reichstag, Berlin.

Source: <http://www.bundestag.de/btengver/berlin/>

Whose identity do these buildings actually portray and are they a representation of the state, or is their status an acquired representation, coming from the fact that these buildings are the seats of governments? As has been discussed, the identity of state buildings is more often than not that of the politicians and governments housed within their walls, rather than the people they supposedly represent. Whether or not this identity is or can be translated to the general population depends to a large extent on the message sent out by the occupants of the building - the government officials - and not by the building itself. Reflecting on the three questions posed in the introduction, the available evidence suggests that the two buildings, the Uganda Parliament Building and the Bulange, stand today as testament to the search for symbols of identity, provided through their monumental designs. However, as has been pointed out in this paper, the use of architectural monuments to represent a group, or groups of people may be inappropriate as changing social and political conditions, could bring about the loss of the intended symbolic representation embedded in the buildings by the architect.

The use of architectural monuments as an expression of identity continues, with recent examples in Germany, and South Africa. The new Reichstag in Berlin, the new home of the German Bundestag which is to be transferred from Bonn, has been commissioned to symbolise the unified Germany. Designed by Norman Foster, the building is to be the landmark in “the heart of the Republic.”⁷² (Figure 22) The proposal for a new Constitutional Court Building in Pretoria, South Africa is yet another example, intended to be a “... new architectural [expression] of identity ... to which all South Africans can relate.”⁷³ The site selected for the new building has significant historical and emotional significance, as it was the location of a prison compound where numerous political prisoners were detained. Thus, symbolic

⁷² German Bundestag - From Bonn to Berlin, <<http://www.bundestag.de/btengver/berlin/conv.htm>>

⁷³ Competition for the new Constitutional Court building of South Africa, <<http://www.joburg.org.za/competit.htm>>

identity stems not only from the building, but from the site as well. In both these cases, there was no 'physical' need for new buildings, however the social and political transformation brought about by unification and democracy created an emotional need.

The post-colonial period has been a painful discovery that the invented traditions and value systems were inappropriate for Africa. It is thus up to Africa and Africans to rediscover who they are, and where they want to go in terms of architectural expression. Answering the question "What is Ugandan about architecture in Uganda," Wakhweya aptly points out that the architecture of Uganda is defined by " ... all the buffeting the country has endured."⁷⁴ Buildings are culturally grounded in the real or imaginary history of a place and thus reflect the social, cultural and political identity of a particular point in time. Buildings can be monumental in design, but they cannot define an identity, particularly a future imagined identity.

⁷⁴ Wakhweya, R.W. "What is Ugandan about architecture in Uganda? ... In search of a definite direction." Honours, Oxford Brookes University, 1993, pp52.

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