

Abstract

‘Architecture arises out of our need to shelter the human animal in a spatial environment and to enclose the social animal in a group space .In this sense architecture serves our institutions and expresses the values of our culture’. Robert Geddes, FAIA

From the above statement, it is clear that architectural identity is as a result of integrating people, their activities and the environment they live in. This also indicates that change of environmental setting or human practices result to a different architecture.

This understanding motivated the author to undergo an investigation to find out the characteristic of the architecture practiced by Tharaka people a subgroup of Meru, (a Bantu community living in Eastern Kenya).

Tharaka is located in a differing geographical setting compared to most of the other Meru subgroups. They also have a number of cultural practices differing slightly from those of other Meru subgroups. This therefore would logically mean that their architectural practices would differ much or slightly due to those variations.

The author also had an assumption that the Tharaka architecture is therefore not as the generalized Meru Architecture.

To determine the reality, the author undertook a study through various tools, namely: literature review, observations and measurements as well as engaging key opinion holders from selected sub locations of Tharaka through interviews and focused group discussions. The data collected was analyzed and recommendations made.

This research therefore brings to light the findings of the built form as well as the underlying principles that cause it to be so.