INTRODUCTION
In the rapidly changing lifestyles and cultural meltdown, there is a risk of
loosing a peoples heritage as we adopt foreign ways of life and cultures. Cultural centers are buildings or developments designed with the sole
purpose of giving identity to a people and celebrating their heritage. The heritage in this case refers to the people’s arts, crafts, architecture, oral
traditions and socio, cultural and religious practices. These memorial places help us and the future generations to remember who we were, who we are and we can then determine what to become in future. The project aims to showcase
the traditional Meru setup, built forms, clothing, artifacts and ornaments, socio cultural
practices and religious believes, life stages and the heroes of the community from their origin to present day.

JUSTIFICATION
Very little factual history exists for the Meru people, and their oral history is a mix of
fable and fiction. The Meru Tribe is quite unique in this regard, as many of their
traditional tales parallel the stories of the Old Testament Bible. Much of the cultural practices, artifacts and built forms of various communities across
Africa have been lost and forgotten due to the rapid modernization. They have been substituted with foreign cultures and materials hence the need to
preserve them for posterity and inspiration in design for other artistic projects. The artifacts and built forms do not exist in solitude but in an ecosystem of cultural
beliefs rituals and practices. There is no other near perfect way of preserving this complex combination of various cultural artifacts and built forms forming heritage of a
people than a cultural Centre. Since the creation of the informal education, there has been a discord in the transmission of oral traditions. The cultural Centre will act as a retreat where young people can learn about their past cultural practices and heritage and at the same time being a tourist attraction center.

THE CLIENT: NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA
The National Museums of Kenya is a State Corporation that manages
Museums, Sites and Monuments in Kenya. It is a regional centre of excellence in
heritage research with a wealth of expertise in subjects ranging from paleontology, ethnography and biodiversity research and conservation. Its headquarters and the
National Museum (Nairobi National Museum) are located on Museum Hill, near
Uhuru Highway between Central Business District and Westlands in Nairobi. The NMK was founded by the East Africa Natural History Society (E.A.N.H.S) in 1910. The museum houses museum collections and exhibits, both
temporary and permanent exhibits. Today the NMK manages over 22 regional
museums, many sites, and monuments across the country. Currently NMK, is rehabilitating the Njuri Ncheke shrine at Nchiru after several
decades of neglect. The council of elders and the NMK have reached an
agreement allowing the later to manage the shrine as heritage site.

ECOLOGICAL REASONS
Tourism is one of the leading foreign exchange earners to the Kenyan economy. The main tourist attractions in Kenya include the
flora and fauna, geographical features like the snow capped mount
kения and the great rift valley, cultural tourism which includes the
masai and the coastal cultures of the lamu amongst others. The Meru county economy is heavily reliant on agriculture of which the main
crops include maize, tea and coffee. These are heavily affected by weather
changes and hence the need to explore alternative means of supporting the
county’s economy. The project will promote cultural tourism within the region complementing other tourist attractions within the county. It is in this light that
the project is aimed at preserving the culture and at the same time being a tourist attraction center.

SOCI-CULTURAL INTEGRATION
Kenya has 42 tribes and this gives a very rich diversity of culture and cultural practices. However during post election violence of the
2007/2008 and after the shooting of muslim cleric About Rogo
Mohammed in Mombasa (Tue Aug 28, 2012), this diversity proved to be a nightmare as neighbours turned against each other due to their
ethnical and religious differences. This calls for cultural and religious
tolerance for a peaceful and prosperous country. One way of fostering
tolerance is enhancing interaction amongst the different groups. On a
smaller scale, the meru sub tribes of Tharaka, Tigania and Lgbembe have been warring over the boundaries since 1992. The project seeks to
foster understanding and cultural integration to promote peace within this region.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT
To design an architectural piece that represents the collective
diverse culture and cultural activities of the Meru community.
To promote the cultural tourism to compliment other tourist attraction
centres within the Meru region which include the Meru national park, Meru
museum and Lewa downs conservancy amongst others.
Create a fully equipped cultural training centre for children (boys and girls),
age 12-15 years old, within Meru region.
To enrich the consciousness of the Meru people about their cultural
heritage.
To showcase sustainable cultural centre design, economically and socially
utilising principles of low energy architecture.

PRELIMINARIES
PROJECT SELECTION & JUSTIFICATION

8TH YEAR PROJECT: THE MERU CULTURAL CENTRE NCHIRU