'Adapt, not Adopt': Anthony Almeida and Modernist Architecture in Africa after Independence

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January 2021
Word Count: 8717
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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my parents for inspiring me to look deeper into Tanzanian architecture, and to my sister for always listening, and always questioning. I would like to especially thank my supervisor, Alan Powers, for broadening my horizons on the scope of Modernist architecture, and for always providing relevant and insightful advice.

Furthermore, many thanks to the late, great, Beda Jonathan Amuli and Anthony Almeida — two architects who I never got a chance to meet but undoubtedly moulded the city I grew up in.

Lastly, the architecture of Africa is still underappreciated on a global scale — please consider supporting, and following, the work of organisations such as DARCH — involved with preserving the highly unique architectural heritage of Dar es Salaam, and ArchiAfrika — an organisation involved with broadening the discourse on Africa's built environment.

Thank you.

Abstract

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a transformative period on the African continent, with a vast majority of former colonial states gaining their independence. This post-independence era gave rise to a building typology that engaged with the principles of Modernist architecture and saw the formation of a distinct, regional style far different from Modernist structures in Europe. This period also gave rise to the first generation of African-born architects who realized projects in their communities. It is one of those African-born architects who will be the analysed in this dissertation — Anthony Almeida, who opened his own architectural office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and completed over 400 projects in his lifetime. Starting with what came before Modernism on the African continent I will introduce the architecture in Africa of the pre-independence period, then analyse Anthony Almeida's works with reference to Le Corbusier's principles. A comparison will then be made of Almeida's work with Beda Amuli's, another Tanzanian architect, and how their work in the post-independence period highlighted aspirations of an independent Tanzania. Then, I will analyse how countries used Modernism in differing ways to display their aspirations as new nation-states under independence with reference to two case studies — Ghana and Tanzania. Through examining, comparing, and contrasting Almeida's work with that of others around the world and on the African continent, I will seek answers as to the viability of Modernism in the African setting, and highlight the highly unique nature of Modernist responses in the African continent. Although Africa is a continent of fifty-five countries with unique cultures, customs, and traditions, the title of this dissertation includes African architecture in a general sense for two reasons. The first reason being the shared legacies of an overwhelming majority of African states under the colonial rule of European powers, and the second reason being the extensive parallels that can be drawn between Almeida's work and that of other architects on the African continent.

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Introduction

It is a very loaded word — modernism. Academics, historians, and theorists alike have disagreed on what it means; on how the word itself somehow says a lot whilst saying nothing at all. In the world of architecture, this word becomes even more loaded — its weight increased by having an architectural movement named after it. That Modernism is the one with a capital 'M' — defined as an architectural style that rejected ornament and embraced minimalism. It is the world of Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier, of the open plan, of form following function. Examining modernism through only that lens, however, is quite limiting. Hidden beneath that lens is a quite simple, stripped-back definition of what it means to be modern in an architectural sense — 'tackling today's problems with today's solutions.'[1]

This essay is part historical analysis and part speculative effort — fusing these two definitions of modernism to ask the question: 'where have we come from?' to implore the reader to ask themselves, 'where do we go next?'. Modernist architecture and its principles were not simply copied over from European precedents by architects working locally in Africa. Modernist principles were assimilated, translated, reinterpreted, and adapted to create rich architectural offshoots of Modernism — each tailored to address the needs of newly-independent African states. In shaping these new states there came a host of foreign architects working on the continent, but in shaping these new states the late 1950s and 60s saw too the emergence of the first generation of African architects, eager to play their part in shaping their post-colonial countries.

Born in 1921 to parents who had emigrated from Goa to Dar-es-Salaam, Anthony Almeida is part of this first generation of home-grown African architects who will be the overarching figure of this dissertation. As one of the few formally trained local architects in Tanzania at the time of its independence in 1961, Almeida is a seminal figure in the architecture of African Modernists, described as having work 'comparable in quality' with that of distinctive European modernists such as Antoni Gaudí, and Alvar Aalto.[2] There are, unfortunately, not a large number of academic papers on the Architecture of Anthony Almeida specifically, however, there is a large number of papers and books that look at Modernism in a general African context — however with a strong focus on West Africa. This piece of work seeks to play its part by bridging that gap — having a more in-depth

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[1] Almeida, "'To Be or Not to Be - Traditionalist, Modernist or Internationalist - That Is the Question' for Architects in Tanzania."
[2] Folkers, *Modern Architecture in Africa*. 143

examination into the architecture of Anthony Almeida and critically exploring Modernist architecture in an African context, adding to the literature of Nnamdi Elleh, Antoni Folkers, and others.

This dissertation will seek to examine the overall origins of Modernism and examine this architectural style alongside a constantly evolving political situation, as a majority of countries on the African continent transitioned from colonialism to become independent states. Whilst the main subject of study in this dissertation is Anthony Almeida, the examining of his works contextually with reference to his fellow architects around the continent allows for a better review of how his works fit into the Modernist canon. Curtis writes in *Modern Architecture Since 1900* of how Modernism 'purged defunct authority, reordered the fundamentals of the discipline and instated new liberties of the future' — and his words are very applicable to the 'African' Modernism that emerged after independence. The independence movement in Africa highlighted architecture's propensity to display social change — seeking to serve the need of newly independent African states to re-imagine themselves outside the confines of colonialism.

The responses in the Modernist architecture of Africa after independence ranged from the spectacular to the understated. This examination into Modernism intertwined with the legacies of colonialism hopes to shed some light on this cultural exchange borne out of cultural exploitation. Can lessons be learnt from Almeida in how to consciously, in his words, 'adapt, not adopt'?[3]

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[3] Almeida, "'To Be or Not to Be - Traditionalist, Modernist or Internationalist - That Is the Question' for Architects in Tanzania."

Chapter 1: Before Modernism: Pre-Independence

'Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter'

Chinua Achebe

On the European continent and western world, the fruits of Modernism in architecture were borne out of the industrial revolution — structures such as William Le Baron Jenney's Home Insurance Building in Chicago, built from the years 1884 to 1885, exemplifying an architectural typology that was able to do without traditional masonry construction, supported by a steel frame. During the years that the Home Insurance Building was being constructed, however, a conference was taking place in Berlin that would change the course of the African continent — The Berlin Conference — which was a culmination of the 'Scramble for Africa' that was taking place in the 1870s and 1880s as European nations looked to exploit African resources for their industrial sectors. This conference officially formalised the colonisation of African states, and arbitrary borders were drawn by European countries with no consideration paid to the Africans living on it — and the diverse ethnic make-up of the people who made up those states.

Building in Africa was as varied as the social and cultural make-up of the continent. Ancient indigenous construction techniques and building typologies were as wide-ranging as the thousands of different ethnic groups on the continent — many of which were nomadic, carrying temporary and collapsible structures with them as they moved from place to place.[4] Straw, clay, plants, and termite earth are examples of the perishable materials used, meaning in some African states the idea of a 'monument' to exist throughout multiple generations did not exist. An example of this is the succession of the Kabaka (King) of what is present-day Uganda. When the Kabaka felt death approaching, he disappeared into the forest, the old palace structure left to the elements — thus leaving the next generation to construct their own monuments.[5]

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[4] Denison, "Africa, 1830–1914." 4
[5] Folkers, *Modern Architecture in Africa*. 24

Figure 1 - Mausoleum of Buganda King in Kampala – with a straw roof

However, not all structures on the African continent were limited to these perishable materials. Builders on the African continent constructed more permanent structures in a variety of places around the continent. The architecture of the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe — constructed between the 11th and 14th centuries — contains spectacular monuments made out of cut granite blocks. Nearer Anthony Almeida's hometown of Dar es Salaam, the 13th to the 16th centuries saw the small islands of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara increase their importance as centres of the Indian Ocean trade. Described by the Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta as 'amongst the most beautiful of cities',[6] the city of Kilwa saw the construction of monuments such as The Great Mosque of Kilwa Kisiwani, a vaulted structure fashioned out of coral stone. The use of this construction material is a common theme throughout the East African coastal cities preceding the 15th century, further emphasising the co-existence of both perishable, temporary structures and more permanent, lasting monuments in the pre-colonial African architectural context.

Figure 2 – Architecture of Great Zimbabwe

Figure 3 – Ruins of the Great Mosque of Kilwa

The states which made up pre-colonial Africa each had their own unique architectural morphology and iconography, shaped by their own distinct socio-cultural characteristics.

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[6] "Traveller Ibn Battuta's Journey to Kilwa Kisiwani — Google Arts & Culture."

This diversity of architectural expression was always rooted in the vernacular — local knowledge and materials making for energy-efficient and sustainable buildings. The forced homogenisation of African states as a result of colonialism, however, meant that indigenous African architecture was largely ignored, and seen as 'primitive'. While Modernism in the western setting was a rejection of previous architectural styles, Modernist architecture in the African setting effectively started on a blank slate — the extensive array of pre-colonial architecture in Africa largely ignored.

Towards Independence

The 'Scramble for Africa' had brought Tanganyika[7] under German rule in 1885, which saw the development of a variety of civic buildings in Dar es Salaam which referenced German architecture. The open verandas, central courtyards, and deep shade-providing eaves of these buildings made for climate-conscious architecture — however, it was architecture that was for the select colonial elite, existing in a segregated society. That segregated society was enhanced by the UK, who became Tanganyika's new colonial rulers in the aftermath of the First World War. With a substantial heritage of German buildings already present, the British did not contribute greatly to the architecture in Dar es Salaam, instead redeveloping and renovating the existing structures, many of which were 'Saracenic' in architectural style, drawing elements from Islamic architecture present in East African coastal cities.

The dissolution of colonial rule — and formation of newly independent states, happened in a majority of African countries in the years of 1957 to 1966. In this period, thirty-two African countries became independent, the year 1960 in particular seeing a total of seventeen African countries become independent. A year later, in 1961, Tanzania gained independence from British rule. The cultural and social landscape of the continent was thus transformed — and so was the architecture of the continent. Independence brought about rapid urbanisation — as cities all over the continent were de-segregated and Africans finally allowed to live where it was illegal to do so in the previous colonial government. Dar es Salaam, characterised by an urban fabric with distinct zones for Europeans, Asians, and Africans, finally had undisturbed freedom of movement. New types of housing and institutional buildings emerged throughout the continent, as newly independent states used architecture to define and determine the character of African independence.

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[7] Tanganyika merged with the state of Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964

The settlements and buildings that European colonial administrators had left behind in African countries bore the influence of old, European traditions — not conveying a specific local expression. The Central Railway Station in Maputo, *(Fig.4)* built in 1913, was constructed in a neo-baroque style, and churches such as the German Protestant Church in Dar es Salaam *(Fig.5)* constructed at the end of the 19th century, were built in a Neo-Gothic style — imposing the European architectural doctrine on the African continent.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Modernism thus became the architectural answer for the aspirations of newly independent countries. Its so-called 'International Style' was a logical choice — standing for a functionalist and egalitarian attitude, free from the precedents of the colonialists. The 'International Style' label, however, had its roots thirty-odd years before the general independence movement in Africa. In a press release for the 1932 Modern Architecture exhibition in New York, Phillip Johnson described the International Style as "probably the first fundamentally original and widely distributed style since the Gothic".[8] The Modernist style was thus codified — an organisation, CIAM, set up to advance a universal identity of Modern Architecture. The mixed nationality of its pioneers saw the International Style rapidly spread around the world, building designs which had the repetitive modular forms and rejection of ornament and colour representative of the International Style finding a home in South America, India, and Africa. In several cases, the pioneers who had laid out the concepts of the International Style in their own countries made direct contact, such as Le Corbusier's work in South America. In other

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[8] MoMA, "Press Release, Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, MoMa."

cases, those who had been assistants or admirers of the pioneer Modernists had returned to their own countries as disciples of the new ways.

Towards independence, there was also a significant shift happening in the case of the architectural practitioners themselves, as the profession gradually began to change from a field dominated by foreigners, to a field where local talent was finally able to flourish. Many of these celebrated local architects had received their education overseas, as in the case of Anthony Almeida — but some too were trained in the architecture schools opened on the continent after independence, in the latter years of the decade of the 1950s. The immediate decade of the postcolonial period saw the death of the orthodoxy of 'Tropical Modernism' — a style defined by the colonial Modern architects. This orthodoxy is best characterised by the work of British architects Fry and Drew in British West Africa — which whilst suited to the climatic conditions, can be argued that it endorsed colonialist ideals. Fry, for example, asserted in an article that native building techniques were 'unsuitable for the development of a modern civilisation'.[9] The Eurocentric view that Africa was an 'architects paradise' to Western architects meant that African culture had little say in the 'Tropical Modernism' movement, relegated to the background while the Western-defined characteristics of Tropical Modernism took centre stage.

The coloniality of Modernism on the African continent cannot be ignored — and in examining the legacies of Modernist architecture in Africa it is a worthwhile endeavour to examine how Modernist architecture in the context of post-colonial Africa acted both as a barrier — a style delineating the have and have-nots — and as an equalizer — a truly democratic architectural style which underlined the equality of all citizens in a new, independent, society.

Critical Regionalism

Kenneth Frampton's seminal essay 'Towards a Critical Regionalism, Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance' sought to address the problem of the dominance of western modern architecture over other architectural ways of thought. He argued for 'Critical Regionalism' – an architectural approach tied to the geographical and cultural context of a particular location. Frampton argues in this paper that the progressive qualities of modern architecture should be adopted without ignoring where the architecture is placed. He writes that 'architecture can only be sustained today as a cultural practice if it assumes

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[9] Windsor-Liscombe, "The lagos hotel affair: negotiating modernism in the late colonial domain": 59-60, quoted in Folkers, *Modern Architecture in Africa*. 164

an arriere-garde (rear-guard) position'.[10] Architecture should strike a balance, distancing itself from 'the enlightenment myth of progress'[11] and also distance itself from a desire to return to the forms of a pre-industrial past. Achieving this middle ground is quite a precarious situation to be in — too much globalization, and you risk eliminating the identity of a place, too little expansion of local culture, and entire areas can become dilapidated. This conundrum is best described by philosopher Paul Ricoeur's query:

'How [can we] become modern and yet return to sources; how [can we] revive an old, dormant civilisation and yet take part in universal civilisation.'[12]

It is a query that Jord de Hoolander's film 'Many Words for Modern' provides further insight to in the context of the architecture of Anthony Almeida. Following Almeida and some of his colleagues, the film ponders what is left of the ideals of the first generation of architects in Dar-es-Salaam in the first decade of post-independence — documenting the human pursuit of modernity in both architecture and contemporary urban life. Almeida says in the film that he introduced 'Modern solutions, not Modern architecture' — although the influence of Modernist principles is clear to see in his works.

'Towards a Critical Regionalism' and *'Many Words for Modern'* provide a suitable basis where questions can be asked — questions on if local architects like Anthony Almeida, born and raised where they work, are truer proponents of 'critical regionalism' perhaps, than foreign architects such as Fry and Drew in West Africa. Hilde Heynen in *'Modernism and Colonialism'* says that Modern architecture is a 'social project, a social idea' and for her, it is 'not so much a matter of style'[13]. This is a statement Anthony Almeida would have agreed with, as his definition of a modernist architect was an architect who 'tackles today's requirements with today's solutions.'[14]

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[10] Frampton, *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance*.
[11] Frampton.
[12] Ricœur, *Universal Civilization and National Cultures*.
[13] Heynen, "The Intertwinement of Modernism and Colonialism: A Theoretical Perspective."
[14] Almeida, "'To Be or Not to Be - Traditionalist, Modernist or Internationalist - That Is the Question' for Architects in Tanzania."

Chapter 2: Anthony Almeida and Le Corbusier

'As far as I am concerned, I am a die-hard modernist, who believes that an architect had to be imaginative, innovative and daring and yet is required to correctly and satisfyingly interpret the users' needs'

Anthony Almeida

In 1931, after the death of his mother, Anthony Almeida was sent from Dar es Salaam to British-ruled India by his father for his secondary education. Upon completion of his studies in Bangalore, he headed to Mumbai, seeking further studies in the field of Civil Engineering. Discovering that he did not meet the requirements for the engineering school there, Almeida was forced to look for work, and it is during this search for employment that Almeida came across a signboard for the Sir J.J School of Architecture, Asia's first architecture school — and applied for the next course intake, managing to get accepted. This architectural education, spanning the years of 1941 to 1947, made Almeida keep abreast of Modernist trends going on in architecture at the time, the works of the likes of Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Alvar Aalto providing ample inspiration in the university library. The heads of school during Almeida's scholarly years were Claude Batley and C.M Master, both of them key players in architecture firms at the time actively engaged in shaping the Modernist Art Deco appearance of Mumbai. Claude Batley, in particular, was a staunch Modernist, critical of revivalist styles and an advocate for functionalism in Architecture, espousing a Corbusier-inspired return to 'the primary essentials'.[15] Modernism, consequently, played a foundational role in Almeida's foundational years of architectural study. As Almeida concluded his education, Modernist architecture had also matured — the International Style had spread around the world, but there were the beginnings of 'regionalist' thinking too, as architects such as Le Corbusier showed a clear concern with the vernacular.

It is this through the principles of this 'Modernist master', Le Corbusier, that the architecture of Anthony Almeida can be compared to and analysed, as Le Corbusier's Modernist principles feature heavily in the works of Anthony Almeida. Working in the office of Peter Behrens in Berlin, Le Corbusier absorbed the ideas that would inform nearly all of his projects — the main philosophy being that a 'new architecture should rest on the idealization of types and norms designed to serve the needs of modern society.'[16]

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[15] Dalvi, "Contemporary Voices on Bombay's Architecture Before the Nation State."
[16] Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*. 163

This ethos was later immortalised in the book 'Towards a New Architecture' (1927) which was a collection of articles Le Corbusier had written for the magazine 'L'Esprit Noveau'. In it, Le Corbusier outlined his 'Five Points of A New Architecture', which formed the backbone of his architectural language throughout his career, despite him constantly evolving and refining his techniques as the years progressed.

The first and central element was the *Piloti* – lifting the building off the ground, supporting it by a grid of reinforced concrete columns that bear the structural load. This first element directly informed the second element — the free ground plan, which allowed for the flexibility for the use of the interior spaces, allowing rooms of differing sizes to be slotted into the building skeleton. The roof garden was the third principle – 'giving back' the space that a building takes up on the ground by providing a roof garden which would introduce 'nature back into the city'. The fourth and fifth principles were horizontal windows and the free façade — the former allowing more light into the building and emphasising the planarity of the form, and the latter principle setting the façade free from structural constraints.

Almeida completed his architectural education in 1948, gaining enrolment as a chartered member of the RIBA, and after seventeen years, found himself heading back to Dar es Salaam. After working at local firms and frustrated at the lack of architectural input he was having, Almeida started his own architecture firm in 1950 and started out with typical commercial cum residential buildings for the Asian business community, which existed as a semi-privileged caste in the colonial racial hierarchy. The requirement by his clientele to fit as many flats as possible into the building area, coupled with the absence of large-scale offers for public buildings — meant that Almeida had a frustrating first few years as an architect in Tanzania, not able to apply the Modernist principles, or any principles, that he had absorbed and learnt from his period of study at the Sir J.J School of Architecture.

The breakthrough came in the year of 1955 when Almeida got an offer from the Goan community to undertake the work of a co-educational primary school for 500 students. Approval for the scheme had to come from the colonial government — which was contributing one-third of the cost, and thus Almeida had to show his proposed scheme to the Director of Education of the colonial administration. The British planning bureaucracy, however, was quite conservative, and Almeida had to defend his 'very Modern' and 'radical' scheme for the school. Known as St. Xavier's Primary School, it exemplified Almeida's climate-responsiveness and modern functionalism and did not

resemble in any way the design of schools in Tanganyika. The floor plan, as remarked by the Director, reminded him of an airplane[17] — and the elevated classrooms were seen by the authorities as a 'waste of space'. In Almeida's portfolio, it is the project which most closely adheres to Le Corbusier's 'Five Points'. Far from being a simple replication of the 'Five Points' however, the school also bears a remarkable similarity to Le Corbusier's Pavillon Suisse, a student accommodation project completed in 1931.
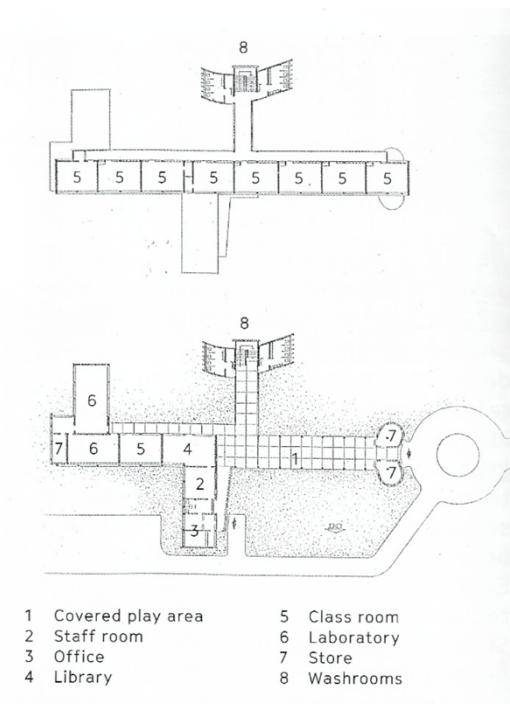

1	Covered play area	5	Class room
2	Staff room	6	Laboratory
3	Office	7	Store
4	Library	8	Washrooms

Figure 6 - Floor Plan of the Primary School

Figure 7

Figure 8

The school *(Fig. 7)* features structural columns on the east of the plan — elevating the building and directly influenced by the first of Le Corbusier's principles, and features horizontal windows which run the length of the façade, harkening back to Le Corbusier's principle of the presence of horizontal windows and bearing a faint likeness to the strip windows present on the rectilinear façade of Pavillon Suisse. Due to the buildings function as a primary school, it is not an entirely open-plan building, however, the detachment of the washrooms from the main building structure achieves a similar function to the aim of having a free ground plan as the extra area gained below the classrooms can function as a multi-use space, serving the open-ended purpose of both work and play *(Fig.8)*. Whilst Corbusier's Pavillon Suisse was ultimately based on the principles of the Five Points, it was built in a transitional period of his career, as he moved away from his 'Purist' phase of

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[17] Almeida, "Autobiography of Anthony Almeida."

the 1920s and explored the layering of materials. The building was elevated on pilotis, yet these were markedly different from the slender columns of Corbusier's 1920 works. The principles of the 'Five Points' were adjusted for a greater size, and the project served as the embodiment of Le Corbusier's vision for a society where 'man, nature, and the machine' were able to co-exist in harmony. The public spaces in Pavillon Suisse are set on the ground floor in a curvaceous block, contrasting with the rectilinear nature of the slab-like student accommodation above. This is mirrored in some capacity in St. Xavier's School with the curved stone wall at the entrance of the school, in Almeida's case placing this change of materiality to constitute a formal entrance for the school, despite the school building being accessible from multiple entrances.

Figure 9 – Exterior view of Pavillon Suisse

Figure 10 – Exterior view of St. Xavier's Primary School

The first high-profile project of Almeida in his native Tanzania was a radical one — suited to the environment but undoubtedly drawing from Le Corbusier's line of thinking to a certain extent. Even with this early project, however, the beginnings of a distinct architectural approach are seen to take place, as Almeida slowly earns the freedom to experiment, fragment, and abstract the canon of the 'International Style'.

Another significant project of Almeida's that can be analysed in tandem with the architecture of Le Corbusier is that of his residence, completed in 1963. Situated near the beach, it is a very unassuming building — almost unnoticeable from the main road which runs directly outside it. It consists of three narrow single-storey volumes which are staggered — and their positioning makes it so as wind can pass through all the rooms. The free ground plan *(Fig. 11)* of the residence allows the building to be able to have three zones — covering the activities of leisure, dining, and sleeping — without necessarily putting hard barriers between them. The residence also utilises a horizontal canopy and vertical apron for solar shading — with the gap in-between allowing air to circulate. The

bedrooms are placed on an elevated level towards the back of the house, and a 'playful'[18] bridge (numbered 7 on the floor plan) connects two covered volumes of the house, meant to be resembling a stream.
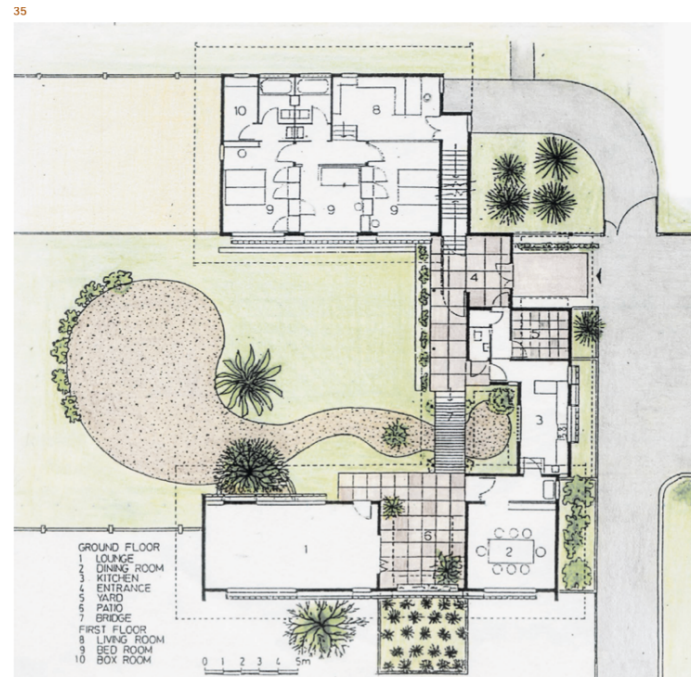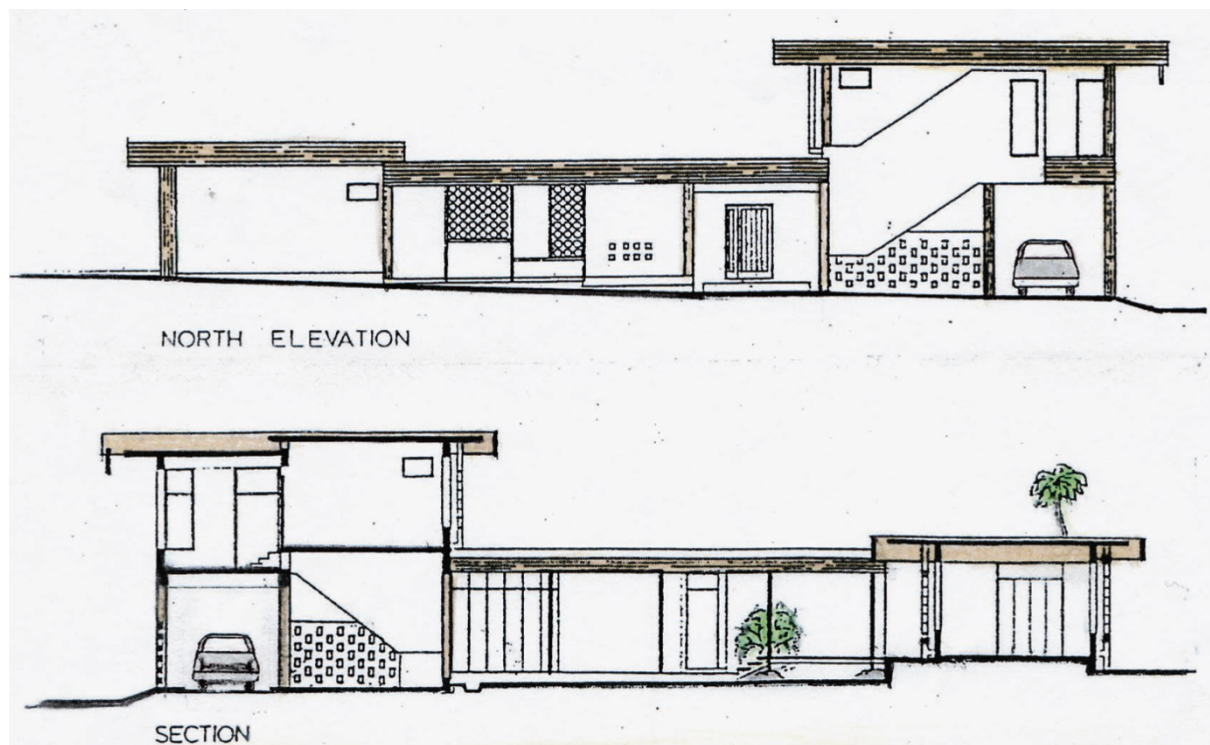

Figure 11 - Floor Plan of the Almeida Residence

Figure 12 – North Elevation and Section of the Almeida Residence displaying staggered volumes

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[18] Hollander, *Many Words for Modern: A Survey of Modern Architecture in Tanzania*.

Figure 13 - Exterior view of the Almeida Residence

Figure 14 - The Brise-soleil

There are the remnants of the early works of Le Corbusier present, such as the ample space afforded to the driveway reminiscent of the Villa Savoye with its driveway which aimed to establish a seamless transition from vehicle to house. However, from the overall articulation of the building, it is very much clear that Almeida was paying attention to the evolving contemporary styles of Modernism. A little more than a decade before the construction of the Almeida residence, in 1952, Le Corbusier had entered his 'Second Period', which saw an increased emphasis on architectural mass over volume, and a greater sensitivity to vernacular and regional concerns.[19] Concrete was heavily deployed, such as in the sober Monastery of La Tourette in France. The 'Purist' phase of Le Corbusier seemed long gone here, the smooth white walls of Villa Savoye replaced by stout, robust walls, and in the place of strip windows, rhythmically placed brise-soleil. Le Corbusier later went on to design in the cities of Chandigarh and Ahmedabad in India, concrete featuring heavily once again, the elaboration of his earlier principles displayed by the design of buildings which seemed to sit heavier on the landscape.

In the Almeida residence, the 'muted' nature of the building is livened by the presence of an expressive, circular-patterned brise-soleil, recalling Le Corbusier's desire to have the brise-soleil as a 'techno-cultural object able to mediate a variety of climatic conditions.'[20] Almeida, in *Many Words for Modern*, says that he did not envision how his 'dream house' would look like. Instead, when he obtained the plot, the primary concern was to take full advantage of the sea view and the prevailing sea breezes. He goes on to discuss the reasons for his design in a very manner-of-fact way, stating the climactic considerations that pushed the design to its final iteration. It is clear, however, that Almeida must have been

[19] Bacon, "Le Corbusier and Postwar America."
[20] Barber, "Le Corbusier, the Brise-Soleil, and the Socio-Climatic Project of Modern Architecture, 1929-1963."

influenced by the later Modernism of Le Corbusier, a Modernism of greater harmony between form, texture, and materiality.

Two other buildings in Almeida's portfolio — the Central Library (1968) and the Joint Christian Chapel (1975) contain features that adhere to a selection of Le Corbusier's principles. The former building is a low-level structure *(Fig.12)*, with solar shading provided by fibre-cement brise-soleil similar to the Almeida residence. The latter building **(Fig.13)** is more brutalist in appearance, a combination of stacked volumes that echoes the 'heavier' work of Le Corbusier, such as his Unite d'Habitation in Marseille and buildings in Chandigarh. These two buildings will be explored in more detail later on in this paper, as examples of how the Modernist canon was disseminated and adapted by Anthony Almeida in Tanzania.
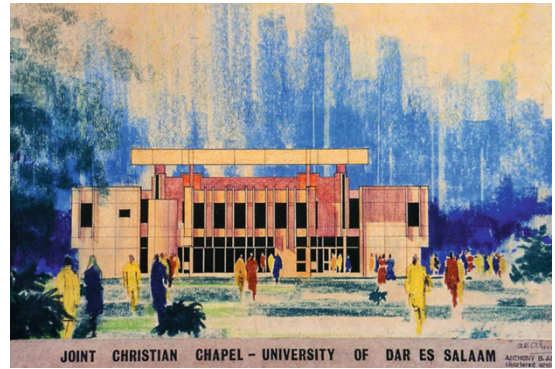

Figure 15

Figure 16

An analysis of Anthony Almeida's architecture with Le Corbusier's principles and his works reveals how pervasive — and how influential, Le Corbusier was in guiding the different offshoots of Modernism. This analysis, however, also reveals the highly individualistic and sensitive architecture of Anthony Almeida, who was schooled in the early Modernist school of thought but went on to adapt, adjust, and re-imagine Corbusian methods in a completely divergent environment.

Chapter 3: Anthony Almeida and Beda Amuli – Architecture after Independence

'Open the windows and doors of your houses and let the winds pass through, but in doing so be careful not to be swept off your feet.'

Mahatma Gandhi

Modernist architecture arrived in the city of Dar es Salaam through the British, Tanganyika's colonial power at the time — and can be best represented by the work of Charles Alfred Bransgrove, who arrived in the city in 1947. Passing away in the year 1951, Bransgrove has an extensive portfolio in the city centre of Dar es Salaam, designing structures that while suited to the local climate, still substantiated the racial class divide present in the country, with Europeans at the top of the racial hierarchy. The British Legion offices (1952) for example, were designed with a range of shading elements and ventilation openings which were suited for the local climatic conditions; however, they were designed for a European clientele — and not for the majority black African population. Bransgsrove's work can be compared to Fry and Drew's commissions in the British West African Colonies — as even though the local topography and climate was taken into account in the design process, they still participated in the colonial project — imposing foreign pedagogy and the cultural ethos that came with it.

The struggle for independence in Tanganyika ultimately lead to its independence from Britain in the year 1961, and with this came the evocative leader Julius Nyerere. His administration promoted the decolonisation of the civil service, whilst promoting a harmonious, equitable relationship between indigenous Africans and the country's European and Asian minorities. The racial segregation which had made up Dar es Salaam's urban structure was abolished, and with that came a new generation of local architects. Notwithstanding Anthony Almeida, one of his local architect contemporaries was Beda Jonathan Amuli (1938-2016), the first black African to open an architecture practice in all of East and Central Africa. On the cusp of independence, Amuli received a scholarship from TANU, the ruling party, to study architecture at the Israel Institute of Technology, becoming the first African to do so. His architecture is that of a post-independence age — and while undoubtedly Modernist, a few of his projects illuminate the emergence of a clear deviation from the International Style. Hannah Le Roux writes of West African architecture of a 'diversity of expression'[21] that came with the post-

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[21] Schröder et al., *African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence : Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zambia.*

independence period — and in the East African state of Tanzania, that diversity can be exemplified in Amuli's 1974 project of Kariakoo Market.
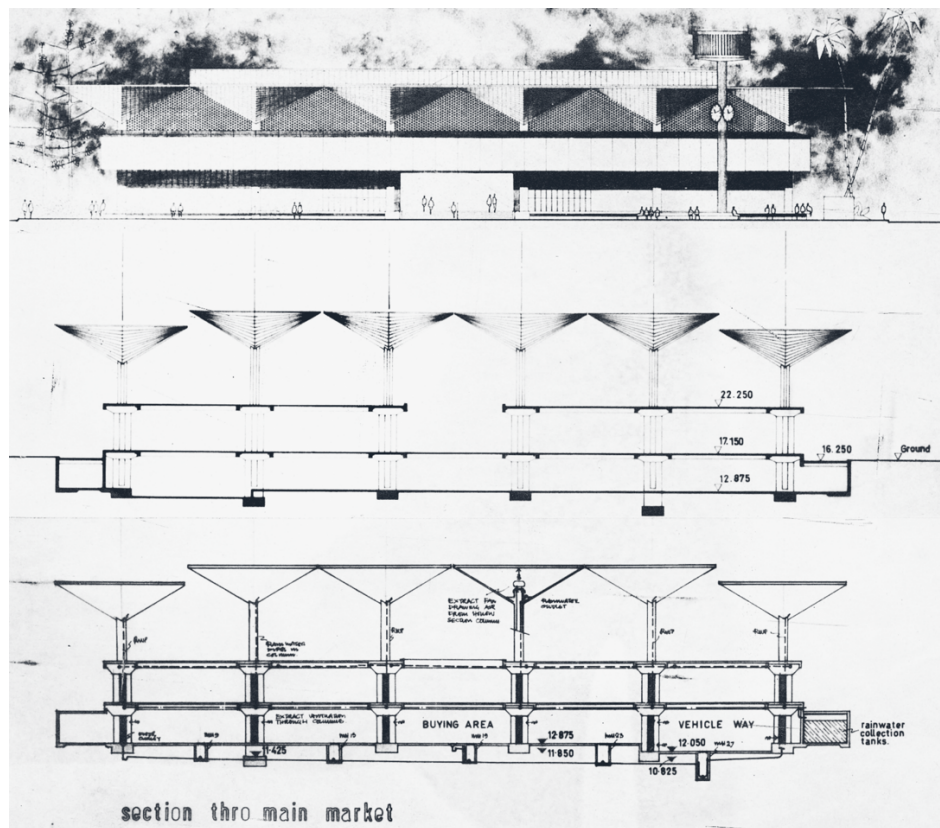

Figure 17 – Views and Sections Through Kariakoo Market

The design for the market was from a student project he had worked on during his student days, and the concept was an African market under the covering shade of trees. Amuli's challenge was how to translate the shape of a tree — with its stem and branches, into a sturdy, concrete structure. The result was a building that was can be classified as a member of the more sculptural branch of Modernism — Brutalism. The surface area of approximately 540 square metres is structured with free-standing concrete pillars that are topped with mushroom-shaped crowns which expand to sunshades 15 by 15 metres wide *(Fig.18)* — the 'trees' of the African market. Several levels are made use of in the structure, goods deliveries taking place on the cooler basement level, while the area for sales is located two floors above ground. The central staircase creates a chimney effect, which transports hot air into the roof, from where it can escape through the off-set between the shading 'tree crowns'. The environmental and ecological considerations of the design are

underscored by the multi-purpose use of the sunshades – which collect rainwater used in running the market.

Figure 18

Figure 19 – Exterior view of the market

Figure 20 – Basement level and the central staircase

Nyerere, as narrated by Amuli, was 'very happy' to see 'local people designing structures like this'[22] and this reaction points to the inherent optimism of Modernist architecture after independence and the much-needed importance of having local architects shape their independent states. While the brutalist movement fell out of favour internationally in part due to its harsh and abstracted style, Kariakoo Market is situated in a different class — of 'celebratory' brutalism — which imposes itself on the urban streetscape but still blends in,

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[22] Hollander, *Many Words for Modern: A Survey of Modern Architecture in Tanzania.*

in the same manner a tree is an unmissable landmark of nature, yet still an unquestionable part of it. In many ways, it mirrors the work of Mexican architect Felix Candela, most well-known for his sculptural and imaginative use of concrete-shell technology. Amuli mentions in *Many Words for Modern* that the best way to translate his vision for an 'African market' in the city was through the use of a 'hyperbolic paraboloid structure' and considering that Candela garnered international attention from the 1950s, Candela's bold concrete shell structures certainly were in Amuli's radar when designing Kariakoo Market. The design decisions undertaken for Kariakoo Market make for a case study of a context-appropriate building with the use of modern materials, and Kariakoo Market can be analysed as a model for the 'Critical Regionalism' Frampton writes about, elements such as the 'umbrella' tree crowns serving a structural, environmental, and stylistic purpose.

Chapter 4: Monumentality and Modernism

'We are a poor country… building in a nation committed to the principle of Ujamaa. We have to build in a manner that is within our means and which reflect our principles of human dignity and equality as well as our aspirations for development.'

Julius Nyerere

A newly independent Tanzania brought with it a new political system seen as appropriate for the post-colonial age — socialism. This socialism, however, was an 'African Socialism', termed as 'Ujamaa' — Kiswahili for 'familyhood'. This political system was used as the basis of a national development project, an attempt by President Nyerere to return to the traditional African values of a society not divided by caste or class, where 'those who sow reap a fair share of what they sow'.[23] This political ideology, however, was not explicitly translated into the architecture of Dar es Salaam. A return to the indigenous African vernacular style did not happen, and with the peaceful transition of the colonial government to an independent one, none of the architecture that was built during the colonial period was destroyed. The colonial buildings thus became repurposed — Bransgsrove's Modernist structures, for example, used as banks and office complexes in a de-segregated city. Pre-independence, Modern architecture in Dar es Salaam had been used as a method for division, only accessible for certain communities whilst excluding others. Modernist buildings in Dar es Salaam thus exist in a unique state, serving as an apparatus and a symbol for the colonial state, but also serving as symbols for a post-colonial Tanzania.

The system of equal opportunity and self-help that defined Nyerere's humanist socialist policies was compatible with Almeida's design ethic — modest, efficient structures that were far from overstated. Almeida's 'eleventh commandment' was a quote from the American magazine *Architectural Forum* from 'Studio' Buddha, which said

'Except to an ignoramus or intellectualist, nothing imitative can equal that which is imitated. Instead of imitating effects, search for the principle that made them original and owns your own effects.'[24]

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[23] Nyerere, *Ujamaa--essays on socialism*. 4

[24] Almeida, "'To Be or Not to Be - Traditionalist, Modernist or Internationalist - That Is the Question' for Architects in Tanzania."

That quote puts into perspective why Almeida leaned towards the Modernism contemporary at the time as his architectural style of choice, and not a return to the indigenous forms that he was worried his interpretation would be kitsch, quoting in an article Charles Correa, who said 'when we architects imitate the vernacular, we are making paper flowers.'[25]

The Modernist architecture in the immediate period following independence in Dar es Salaam thus served as instruments of development, rather than a direct symbol of an independent state. The Central Library designed by Almeida was a very significant commission by the state government — particularly when considering the emphasis that Nyerere's government placed on education and self-reliance. Located in the city centre of Dar es Salaam, the design of the building in no way draws attention to itself as a significant landmark. It is significantly set back from the main road which runs along its front — and it is very restrained, stripping the building into its essential function as an educational tool for the post-independence generation.
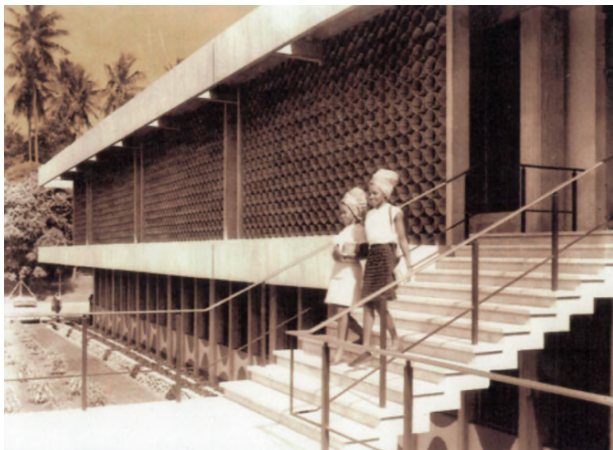

Figure 21 – Main staircase of the central library

Figure 22 - Exterior view of the Central Library

The non-monumentality of such a fundamental building of a post-independence government makes Dar es Salaam, and Tanzania, have a fairly muted 'African Modernism' when compared to its counterparts across the continent. Ghana, in particular, is an appropriate example, especially considering that their first leader of a free government, Kwame Nkrumah, was in many ways very similar to Julius Nyerere. He implemented socialist economic policies similar to Nyerere, however, he did later grow disillusioned by the label of 'African Socialism', advocating instead for more orthodox Marxist-Leninist

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[25] Almeida.

socialist ideals. Whilst in the larger context of Ghana, the buildings that arrived after independence still had a strong basis in the colonial Modernist era of Fry and Drew, the Modernist monuments that were constructed were intended to reveal the direction set by Nkrumah's government. A monument that fits this description is the 'Africa Pavilion' of the International Trade Fair in Ghana's capital, Accra, by Polish architects Jacek Chyrosz and Stanislaw Rymaszewski. Completed in 1967, the pavilion features a wide circular structure raised above the ground, supported by diamond truss beams. The 'confidence of the project's geometry'[26] — accentuated by the oculus in its roof, highlight the aspiration of a country re-imagining itself, in a more sculptural Modernism than that present in Almeida and Amuli's works in Tanzania.

Another structure which underpins the propensity for 'Monumental Modernism' in Ghana compared to Tanzania is the Independence Arch in Accra, which is the keystone landmark of the Independence Square. The Square and the Arch are found south of the main traffic junction and were completed in 1961 by the Public Works Department in time for the forthcoming visit of Queen Elizabeth II.[27] The grand and expansive gesture of the arch can be viewed as a Modernist statement — highlighting the hope and ambitions of an independent country. Emphasising its status as the highlight of the square – the wide Independence Arch is placed at the edge, where it meets the ocean, serving as a 'triumphal arch positioned at the edge of the African continent.' The articulation of the curved form of the arch contrasted with the cuboidal form of the Presidential Box is almost sculptural, displaying a post-colonial, less rigid form of Modernist architecture. The monumentality of the Arch and the Square dominates its context in a manner which Almeida's Central Library does not — and calls attention to Nkrumah's aspirations for Ghana as the leader of the independence movement in Africa. In Almeida's Central Library and Tanzania in general, Nyerere's Pan-African dream was not visible in its architecture, while in Ghana the Pan-African vision envisaged by Nkrumah is seen in the Independence Arch and Square, in a space 'matching the significance of such a vision.'[28]

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[26] Schröder et al., *African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence : Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zambia.*58
[27] Schröder et al. 47
[28] Schröder et al. 47

Figure 23 – Independence Square in Accra, with the Independence Arch in the background

Figure 24 - 'Africa Pavilion' of the International Trade Fair in Accra

The 'non-monumentality' of Tanzania's Modernist buildings can also be viewed in an African context with Modernism's offspring of Brutalism. Characterised by an emphasis on textures and the extensive use of raw concrete, the Brutalist style produced highly expressive forms on the African continent. Like Ghana's Independence Arch and Square — which was built in what was Accra's racecourse and cricket oval frequented by the European minority, Amuli's Kariakoo Market sent out a statement in terms of its location. It was placed in the business centre located in the formerly 'African' area of Dar es Salaam which the colonial government had taken no interest in developing. With its expressive concrete pillars, Kariakoo Market was also part of a more sculptural branch of Brutalism, nevertheless, it does not quite stand out as a monument in a similar way to other Brutalist structures on the African continent — a case in point being the recognisable La Pyramide in Ivory Coast.

Built in 1973, one year before Kariakoo Market, La Pyramide is a completely different interpretation of the brutalist aesthetic. The city of Abidjan had grown since Ivory Coast's independence in 1960, and the city became the financial centre of the country — lined with hotels and Modernist skyscrapers in the Central Business District. La Pyramide is located in this heart of the city, a distinct landmark that imposes itself on the street front. Rinaldo Olivieri, an Italian architect, was commissioned with its design, tasked to design a new commercial centre. Olivieri aimed to design a structure that would not repeat the mistakes Modernist architecture had made in Abidjan — namely constructing glazed towers not suited to Abidjan's tropical climate.

In similar fashion to Amuli, Olivieri looked to the African village market for inspiration, envisaging the triangular site as a covered market with a large central hall of activity. The hall is enclosed by shops open to the outside and to the central internal hall and is topped

by twelve floors which contain restaurants and office spaces, stepped back on each floor which results in a pyramidal form. The three basement levels contain a nightclub, supermarket and parking garage for 1800 cars. Aluminium brise-soleils shade the interior, and vertical circulation is aided by the placement of two cores, with multiple staircases, elevators, and washrooms. The highly symbolic architectural style of such a building underpins the economic and political ideology of Ivory Coast's first president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who had instituted a system of economic liberalism[29] to attract foreign investors. Houphouët-Boigny's political viewpoint that capitalism was the appropriate system paved the way for imposing, dramatic, structures like La Pyramide to be built in Ivory Coast which would not have been built in socialist Tanzania.

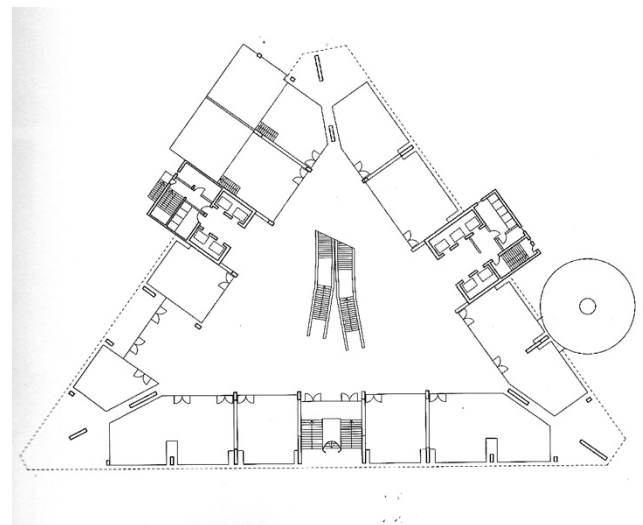*Figure 25 - La Pyramide – context on the streetscape*

Figure 26 – Floor plan of La Pyramide

A year after the opening of Kariakoo Market came Almeida's Joint Christian Chapel project, which was for Tanzania's first University campus. This project can be viewed as wholly representative of Nyerere's socialist policies, as it provided worshipping space for different Christian denominations. The Greek cross plan *(Fig.23)* contains one arm which contains space for facilities and the communal choir, and three arms which can be closed off with the use of folding partitions, providing privacy for Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic students who can use the building independently. The partitions are removable — thus allowing for a flexible space which can then act as a communal church for larger services. The building contains a cassette roof with wide eaves, making the roof appear as if it is hovering over the building. Coloured glass louvres, in vertical strips, are placed in between the arms of the cross, creating an intimate space, yet which has a quality

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[29] Schwab, "Félix Houphouët-Boigny: A French Client in the Ivory Coast."

of openness. The exposed concrete of the building and stacked volumes in the façade exhibits a brutalist appearance — nevertheless a quite muted one.
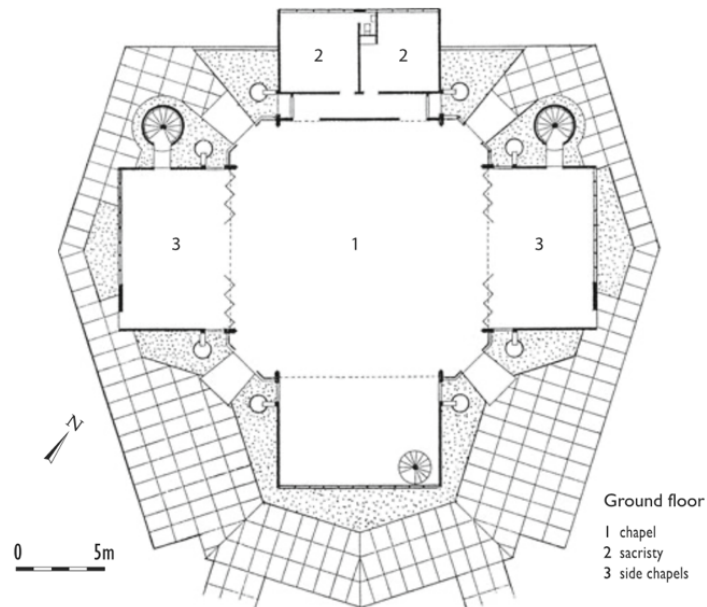

Figure 27

Figure 28 – Exterior view of the Chapel

Figure 29 – Main communal space of the Chapel

Sigfried Giedion writes in *The Need for a New Monumentality* of monumentality deriving from 'people's eternal needs to form their own inner symbols', and that the 'demand for monumentality cannot be suppressed in the long run'. This monumentality reveals itself in different ways with Modernist architecture on the African continent; dependent on the countries' political systems, as with the capitalist Ivory Coast, or on the personality of its leaders — as with Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Modernist monuments built in post-independence Dar es Salaam, as seen with the case studies of Kariakoo Market and the

Joint Christian Chapel — were quite 'non-monumental' when compared to the Independence Arch in Accra and La Pyramide in the Ivory Coast. In creating a civic iconography for independent Tanzania, Almeida and Amuli opted for a restrained, more regional modernism than their counterparts in Accra and Abidjan.

Chapter 5: Looking Towards the Future – The Nature of Africa's Architectural Modernity

Today's Africa is very much different continent from that of the 1960s and 70s. Cities have grown — and with that has come a proliferation of new architectural practitioners and architectural styles from the continent. Some of the Modernist buildings built during the immediate post-independence period are in use similar to when they were first unveiled, such as Almeida's Joint Christian Chapel which remains more or less in a similar condition today to the 1970s. Some of the modernist landmarks, however, have suffered different fates. La Pyramide remains mostly empty — its inefficient ratio of rentable spaces to circulation infrastructure leaving only a few shops are open for business. The buildings that populate the city centre of Dar es Salaam today are Modern buildings in the 'International Style', however with curtain wall facades that are at odds with the climate. There is a certain nostalgia from some Tanzanian architects about the Modernist period after independence — Nuru Inyangete says that 'cultural identity and indigenous African methods' have been left behind in an increasingly globalised age.[30]

Critical regionalism, perhaps, needs to be revisited, particularly in the case of Dar es Salaam, although what exactly constitutes critical regionalism is still very much up for debate. The work of African architects Hassan Fathy **(Fig.30)** and Demas Nwoko **(Fig.31)**, in Egypt and Nigeria, can be viewed as closer to the critical regionalism that Frampton advocated perhaps, as a result of their explicit use of vernacular building materials and techniques, 'a commitment to place rather than space'. On the contrary, Beda Amuli used a 'western' material — concrete — to realise his Kariakoo Market project. It is another type of critical regionalism, one that utilised western building methods, yet with its sculptural design and conceptual reference to the 'African market,' fits in seamlessly into its context. Almeida's Central Library is made up of Western materials and draws from the vocabulary of Modernist architects like Le Corbusier but is a very appropriate design — stylistically and environmentally — for the Tanzanian context.

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[30] Hollander, *Many Words for Modern: A Survey of Modern Architecture in Tanzania*.

Figure 30 - A private residence in Faiyum, Egypt built by Fathy in 1984

Figure 31 - Nwoko's Dominican Chapel in Ibadan, Nigeria

Figure 32 – Dar es Salaam today, featuring a multitude of buildings in the 'International Style'

Edward Said, a Palestinian intellectual, writes in his book *Orientalism* on the unequal relationship between the West and the Orient, writing that the Orient is not an unmovable fact of nature, and it is only in the 'East' due to its point of reference being Europe. He writes:

'(Orientalism) is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly a different (or alternative and novel) world [...] it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power, but rather is produced and exists in an un-even exchange with various kinds of power.'[31]

Said highlights that the knowledge which is produced by Western artists, scholars, and authors that address the 'East' or the colonies will always suffer from an unequal balance in the relationship as Europeans are always in an unequal relationship with the people they

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[31] Said, *Orientalism*.

are writing or depicting about. The Western interpretation thus becomes the dominant perspective — promoting the idea of western superiority. This can be seen in the overlying attitude of Tropical Modernism as a colonial project, which presented the European architects as 'rational' and objective, able to solve the design problems that came with the climate with architecture that was suited to the climate but ignored indigenous knowledge.

Almeida and Amuli, and Fathy and Nwoko, while having different approaches to Modernism are thus not orientalist architects — they simply made buildings that worked. Fathy and Nwoko had a more literal return in their architectural forms to traditional African building methods — yet Almeida and Amuli, though not going looking back to indigenous forms for their Modernist projects, looked to values to inform their projects, and Modernist architecture was a tool which suited those values. Nyerere's socialism of self-reliance and hope for a return to 'African' values in a post-colonial Tanzania meant that a sensitive, 'regional' Modernism was an appropriate response to a nation which sought to seek absolute equality for all its citizens.

Ultimately, the viability of Modernist architecture depends on its users. Le Corbusier's Modernist Chandigarh, for example, is much derided today as a city unconnected to the cultural values of its location, however, residents such as MN Sharma, chief architect of the city, describe it as 'the greatest experiment in the contemporary history of planning and architecture',[32] highlighting Modernist architecture's capacity to evolve with the people who interact with it. Nyerere's socialism had meant that he called for the relocation of Tanzania's capital from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma, seeking to do away with Dar es Salaam's slave-trading and capitalist past. However, in the post-independence period and to this day, Dar es Salaam is still considered the true capital, seen as the 'pre-eminent site of metropolitan identity.'[33] Dar es Salaam's past is viewed in an ambivalent manner, and Modernism is viewed as 'progress', and Modernist buildings represent that progress. Tanzanian, and Africa's Modernist architecture has the capacity of evolving — dependent on the inhabitants of a respective city.

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[32] Crabtree, "Le Corbusier's Chandigarh: An Indian City Unlike Any Other."
[33] Denison, *Africa since 1914*.

Conclusion

'A nation which refuses to learn from foreign cultures is nothing but a nation of idiots and lunatics… But to learn from other cultures does not mean we should abandon our own.'

Julius Nyerere

Nyerere's quote above articulates the nuance around the debate on the Modernist architecture of African countries. Almeida's architecture exists in this state perhaps, straddling a middle ground in which Modernist principles were taken from a Western context and applied to highlight the aspirations of a new, independent state. The contemporary architectural style when Tanzania was liberated from colonialism was Modernism — and Almeida used this architectural style in part because of his design ethos, and what were simply context-appropriate solutions. Almeida's Central Library's staircase was wide and inviting, an unassuming building which meant that African citizens, their education neglected during colonial rule, did not feel intimidated by a building which harbours knowledge. The Joint Christian Chapel has an expressive façade yet has a quiet neutrality, not ascribing to the explicit forms of religious architecture as was seen in colonial churches around the African continent.

The complicated relationship of Modernism on the African context is as much due to all the different personalities working at the time — from foreign architects who instilled a western hegemony in their works, to foreign architects who were sensitive in their responses and looked to local, indigenous forms, to local, indigenous architects themselves, who strived to find the right balance between the use of modern building methods and an architectural response that would still preserve indigenous African values and represent an evolving African identity.

Anthony Almeida, shortly before he died in 2019, wrote a newspaper article lamenting the rise of 'Manhattan-style' skyscrapers in Dar es Salaam as 'notorious behemoths' which 'trap the sun's rays during summer and haemorrhage heat throughout the winter, requiring year-round controls'.[34] Almeida, while contemplating what type of an architect one should be in Tanzania, categorized three different types. There was the 'Nationalist', described as the follower of state-controlled architecture. There was the 'Internationalist',

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[34] Mosha, "Historical Paradigms of Architects Le Corbusier and Anthony Almeida on Modern Architecture and City Planning with an Overview of Dar Es Salaam – Tanzania."

a blind follower of the 'International Style' who was, by all accounts, the target of his ire when he wrote the newspaper article, and the final category was the 'Modernist', which he categorised himself as — an imaginative and innovative architect, yet who is required to satisfyingly interpret the users' needs. By Almeida's definitions, to 'adopt' was to be an Internationalist, and to 'adapt' was to be a Modernist.

The post-independence age in African countries was a tumultuous period of uncertainty yet coupled with unbridled hope. Governments looked to Modernist architects to build their cities, and Anthony Almeida was part of that cornerstone generation of African architects who was able to play his part building his native city on his own multicultural terms, on Modernist design principles cultivated in an Architecture school in India, which were simply seen as applicable solutions to the applicable problems of the Tanzanian context. Almeida refused the notion that Western architecture had the monopoly on modernity, noting the freezing of Africa's progress during colonial rule. As he said, Almeida did not simply 'adopt' Modernism — copying Modernist principles such as Le Corbusier's for the sake of it, but 'adapted' — altering the Modernist principles for new use in an independent Tanzania.

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