

Introduction



One of Tuti's roads



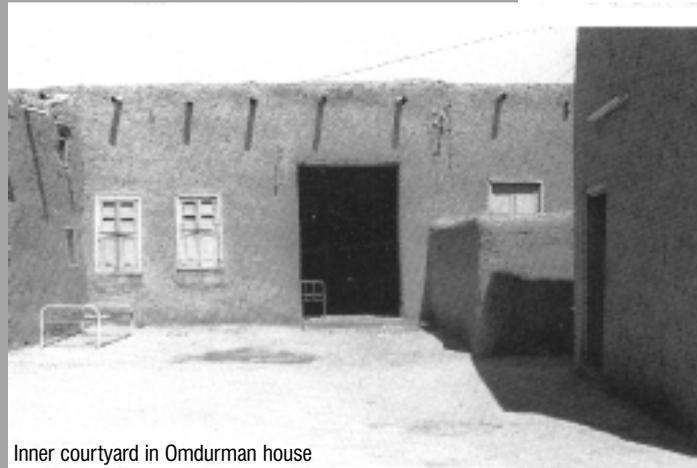
The Blue Nile between Tuti Island and Khartoum city

Tuti is an Island at the confluence of the White Nile and the Blue Nile in Khartoum city the capital of the Sudan. It can be described as a rural "eye" in the center of an urban conurbation, which makes it a surprising place.

I visited the Island two years ago for the first time, and was amazed by its architecture and preserves a significant ambiguity, that makes it special and different from the surrounding cities. Although it is in the middle of an urban and developing area, it sustains its own language and style, which is supported by the reluctance of the inhabitants for any changes.

Looking at the Island layout, encouraged me to study the philosophy behind the vernacular and Islamic architecture, since both represent the main language adopted in the Island.

The Island suffers from different constraints, starting with being totally separated from the surrounding cities and from the overcrowded and compacted nature



Inner courtyard in Omdurman house



Inner courtyard in a Tuti house



Corner kiosk

of houses at the center of the Island village. In addition, these houses radiate outwards in a haphazard and random layout, as well as the unavailability of space for cars to manoeuvre, which resulted in having only one route of transportation that links the edge of the Island with the center.

The attempt is not to replan the Island. The intention is to redevelop the areas that will help to establish a significant connection between the edge and the center, as well as placing landmarks that could be used as bearings and point of reference.

The question raised is how to build or add new structures in an old settlement without affecting its identity?

Architecture has always been a communal art. It locates a building within a community to be seen by everyone, and it forces itself on everyone.

Thus it is critical to locate a building that does relate to its surroundings, as a bad painting will always end up on the painter's studio wall. The architect can be a director, because people are forced to pass through the building door he designed, and the fear of any architect is to place anything which is forced upon the community.

This was the challenge and anxiety which faced me in placing a new structure within this old historical and homogeneous settlement.

While certain architectural features have become fixed and eternal, correspondingly, the modern world has helped us find our architectural roots and remain true to our identity.



One of Tuti's two storey houses



One Tuti's newly built houses



Residential street in Omdurman

As Hassan Fathy, an Egyptian architect, stated in *Casabella* 653, February 1998, quoted by Attilio Petruccioli, p.p. 52-79 "culture is the unique response of man to his environment in his attempt to answer both physical and spiritual needs." To locate a building in such a setting we need to understand, appreciate and evaluate the architectural quality of the area, and to develop a sense of dimension, topography, climate, material, structure, proportion, and of the surrounding physical environment - both natural and human made.

The challenge is to resist the influence of Western technology, that is designed only to suit their culture and environment; and to avoid creating an alien environment in an Islamic community. This appears distinctly in some Middle East countries that imported Western technology, planning and construction expertise; that resulted in direct imitation of Western models that were never designed for their communities and does not match their culture. Many Muslim architects and planners are reacting to this invasion by reasserting their Islamic heritage.

The fear of adaptation and imitation was the main attitude in handling the matter, which led to think seriously about the essence of the Islamic architecture and to use modern technology as a tool in expressing the architecture of the Island. The forms of architecture that will be involved will have a regional identity, a stylistic evolution and a relevance to the eternal principle of Islam.