

Kenya. Nyanza Region: traditional house evolution in relation with available building materials changes. Colonialism, slums and cultural identity

by Boghi Fabrizio

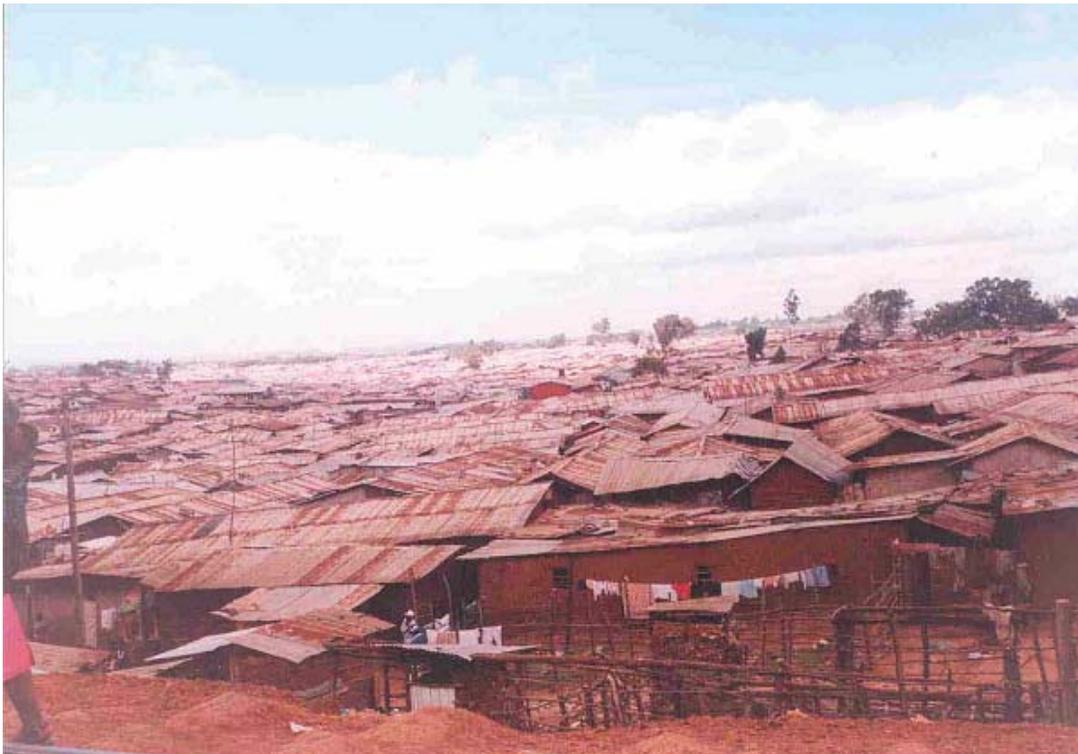
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The research aims at offer a description of some Kenya life aspects, with particular interest towards housing, underlining the extreme necessity of a drastic change and provide some useful information for an improvement of the wretched life conditions which the majority is forced.

After a short introduction by which I describe my stay in the country and I sketch reasons and purposes of the research, there's a description of Kenya geographical regions with references to policy, religion and different ethnic groups.

The following chapter is dedicated to the events that conditioned Kenya state birth; a special attention is addressed to physical and psychological violence perpetrated for several centuries by Europeans conquerors, through a policy that have drastically mined, the opportunities for an autonomous development of the whole continent, erasing systematically cultural and historical consciousness of exploited populations. These aspects are also faced in the following chapter that threatens the apparently unceasing phenomenon of massive urbanisation and the consequent proliferation of slums. In this part I've tried to bring to light the drama of these boundless ghettos in which millions of people live inhuman conditions.



Kibera slum

Subsequently the thesis aims at illustrate African traditional housing, shortly describing technics, materials and shapes that share and distinguish buildings in the immense continent, both in rural and urban ambit.

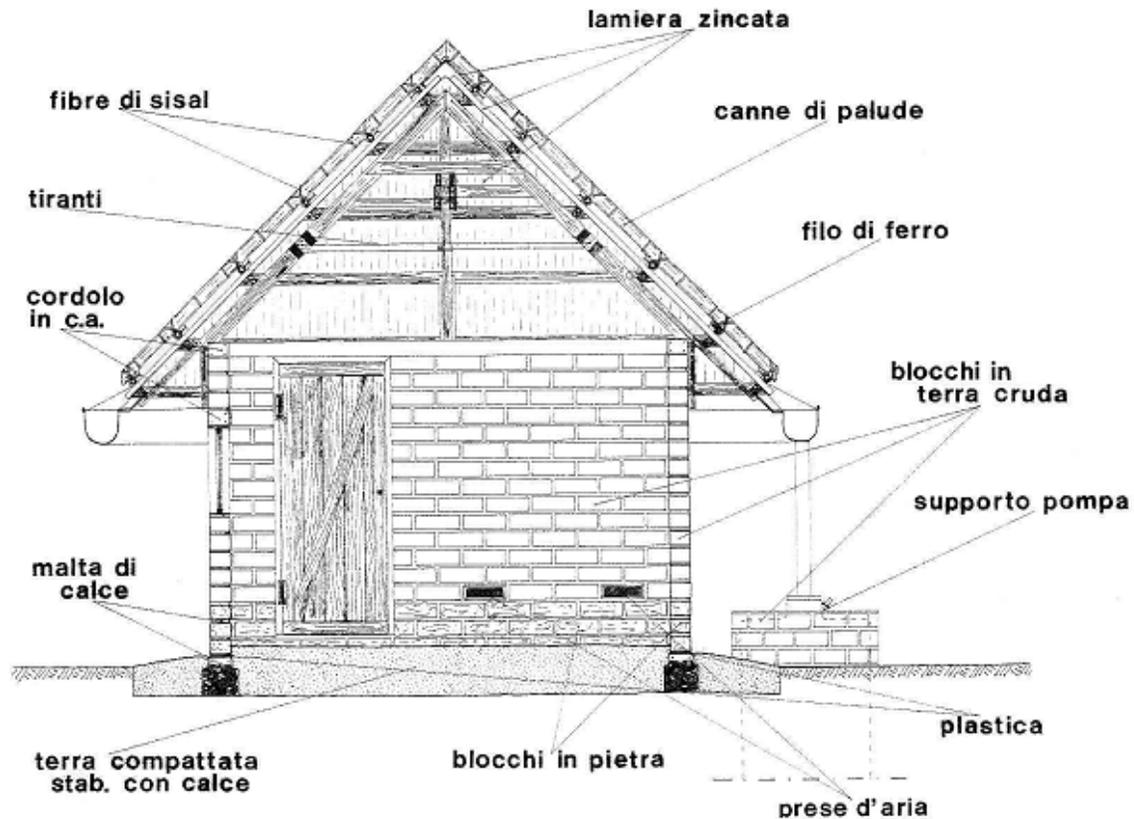
The speech about traditional building materials (earth, stone, tatching roofs, etc.) and their progressive replacement with others more recently diffused (cement, iron sheets, etc.), continues more in depth in the following chapter where are also described stabilising properties of some binders (gypsum, cement and lime-pozzolana, etc.) and their availability in Kenya country. The employment of these binders, combined with a manual press, allows the low cost production of soil stabilized blocks with good mechanical performances.



Semi-traditional Luo house

The research finishes with the description of the laboratory analysis made on quality of soil samples, taken from Nyangoma Division – Kenya – (granulometry and sedimentation) and two cylindrical test pieces (compression resistance).

Nyangoma is the site where I imagine to plan the small house built by soil blocks stabilized with lime and rice husk ash and compressed with a Brepak press; the roof is realised with the combination between iron sheets and water reeds.



Vertical section of my proposal

Finally I underline the immediate need of a deep change in national and international policies to promote and improve life conditions in rural areas by a different kind of development, realising irrigation programs and infrastructures. Better conditions in countryside should assure less overcrowding in slums, and this situation combined with local clearance interventions, should improve life quality in towns. But this kind of policy means very big investments and deep cultural, political and economic change, often in contrast with the arrogant interests of globalized economy.

In a so wide contest, my thesis proposal too could acquire more significance, offering the opportunity of low cost comforts which allow a money saving that could be invested for other needs.

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