

Zachariah DeGiulio

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Abstract

Zanzibar Pizza Hut: Stone Town's Duckorated Sheds examines three cultural artifacts produced in Zanzibar's Stone Town—Christ Church at the Old Slave Market, the kanga cloth, and the Zanzibar Pizza. These artifacts, which emerged in 1897, the early twentieth century, and the late 1980s, respectively, demonstrate a similar set of contradictions between what these objects' suggested meaning is and what the conventions of naming imply, contradictions that produce what I'm calling Duckorated Sheds. Ultimately, the symbolic forms of these architectures have meanings that are obfuscated by the descriptions around them.

The shared salience of these cultural artifacts lies in the way they exist in and amplify multiple temporalities—knotting together the supposedly rupturing moments of the end of slavery, the inauguration of colonial power, and the late-millennium embrace of corporate multinational capitalism. The logics of Duckorated Sheds suggest less a rupturing event than a continuation of existing modes of thinking, being, and non-being—a continuation of slavery and of colonization in all its metastasized recapitulations. These objects ultimately lubricate the semiotic friction that occurs when a restructuring event alters the modes by which meaning is rendered.

Zanzibar Pizza Hut takes these specific Duckorated Sheds and applies their logics to the design of a pavilion in Stone Town's Forodhani Gardens, a colonial vestige that sits underutilized during the day but serves as the site for a food market in the evening, mainly geared towards tourists. Zanzibar Pizza Hut attempts to design for a variety of actors, all the while maintaining the awareness of the underlying continuities produced by the logic of the Duckorated Shed.

Zanzibar Pizza Hut

The transcontinental connections and systems of exchange that would later be called "Swahili culture" proliferated along the Indian Ocean coast beginning in the eleventh century.¹

However, Swahili culture as a moniker of self-identification emerged in the late nineteenth century after the British Empire became the dominant bureaucratic actor within Zanzibar.² In 1896, the British engaged in the world's shortest war, a 38–45 minute skirmish that left 500 Zanzibaris and one British sailor dead, and several of the Sultan of Zanzibar's buildings destroyed.³

During this war, Zanzibar became a British Protectorate, abolishing slavery in the process. One form of subjugation, slavery, became replaced by another—colonialism. Through this undertaking, administrative modes of naming, identifying, and, ultimately, subjugating produced a distinct, common group identity—*waswahili*, or Swahili people. As art historian Prita Meier writes "British overlords 'created' colonial citizens by policing local life, demarcating the cosmopolitanism of local culture and by appropriating existing material enactments of selfhood."⁴ Swahili identity was intimately bound up with these modes of creation, being, and non-being.

As commodities, humans, and human commodities from around the world collided in port cities across the Indian Ocean, they converged at the greatest scale in Zanzibar, the nexus of Swahili culture.

This thesis examines cultural artifacts in Zanzibar to further expand upon Meier's assertion that in Zanzibar, "object entanglements are highly fractured in contrast to the romanticized ideas of a unitary Swahili material culture."⁵ In Zanzibar Pizza Hut, I will examine three cultural objects underexamined by Meier—the kanga cloth, the Zanzibar Pizza, and Christ Church at the Old Slave Market.

In my examination, I draw from Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*, which uses Las Vegas as a mode from which to understand a post-1968 return to emphasizing historical reference within architecture. Venturi, Scott-Brown, and Izenour distinguish between the Duck and the Decorated Shed in regards to architectural regard for ornamentation—architecture whose form and structure is constitutive and referential to its purpose, the duck, and architecture whose ornamentation and signs serve as appendages to an unremarkable, banal form, the decorated shed.⁶

¹ For more on transcontinental exchange, see Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4806522>.

² Prita Meier, *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere*, African Expressive Cultures (Bloomington ; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016), 1–25.

³ For more on the Anglo-Zanzibar War, see Norman R. Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar*, Studies in African History ; 16 (London: Methuen : distributed by Harper & Row Publishers, 1978).

⁴ Meier, *Swahili Port Cities*, 23.

⁵ Meier, 23.

⁶ Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, Facsimile edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017), 65–80.

Denise Scott Brown, who spent her childhood in Johannesburg, claimed in 2017 that “my view of Las Vegas is an African view.”⁷ If we cautiously accept Africa as an epistemological category, can we repatriate this African way of viewing towards an examination of these three cultural artifacts? I would like to propose that this process of repatriated viewing allows for us to view the kanga cloth, the Zanzibar Pizza, and Christ Church at the Old Slave Market as not ducks, nor decorate sheds, but Duckorated Sheds, whose entangled histories and combinatory logics offer new possibilities.

Prior to colonization, enslaved people wore *marekani* cloths, imported from places like Salem, MA and dyed with indigo.⁸ Meanwhile, Zanzibari elites highly coveted *kisutu* cloths, manufactured in India using a woodblock printing technique produced under the British and sold in the East African market. As *waswahili* identity congealed in the late-nineteenth century upon the abolition of slavery in 1897, formerly enslaved people began experimenting with methods of printing, carving vegetables to imprint dyes, using unripe bananas as a wax, or woodblocks like those used in the *kisutu* cloths. Text began to figure prominently on these adorned textiles, a marker of inscription for formerly enslaved people into the dominant social order of British colonization and the English language.⁹

By the 1930s, British manufacturers began noticing these texts and began printing Swahili proverbs on cloths that they sold to Swahili markets. Since then, their manufacturing has dispersed beyond just Britain, and the vibrant designs are both figurative and non-figurative—reflecting the tensions between Christian and Islamic practices contained within the archipelago’s cultural landscape. Those elements that are figural are often symbols of power—from cashews to abundant agricultural bounty to presidents.¹⁰

However, rarely do people purchase or wear the cloths solely for their visual appeal. Rather, *Kangas* are worn in order to communicate the short messages subtly incorporated into their design, both in the act of wearing and in the act of giving. Sold as a long cloth with the design reprinted twice, cloths are typically cut in half and either worn together or given as a gift to someone else, sometimes commemorating a celebratory occasion, or sometimes to cross the boundaries of cultural taboos—like confronting a neighbor over a domestic dispute. In effect, the designs operate as a duck, encouraging visual interpretation. However, the messages, while not fundamental to the cloth’s design, convey a message often contradictory to the aesthetics of the fabric and strangely entangled with a variety of meanings. When combined, they often produce a Duckorated Shed.

A similar contradiction emerges in the night market sited at Forodhani Gardens within Zanzibar’s Stone Town. The rapid influx of tourists in the 1990s catalyzed the re-appropriation

⁷ Robert Venturi & Denise Scott Brown - *My Love of the South African Landscape (Part 1) (21/118)*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCMg-7FE51I>.

⁸ See Rose Ong’oa Morara, “One Size Fits All: The Interplay of Kanga, Makawa, Swahili Poetry, and Taarab in the Communication of Zanzibari Women” (Dissertation, Arkansas State University, 2009); Sarah Fee, “Cloths with Names’: Luxury Textile Imports in Eastern Africa, c. 1800–1885,” *Textile History* 48, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 49–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00404969.2017.1294819>.

⁹ Sharifa Zawawi, *Kanga: The Cloth That Speaks* (Bronx, NY: Azaniya Hills Press, 2005); Chieko Orimoto, *Kanga Collection =: Kanga Kwa Jumla = Kanga Korekushon* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2016).

¹⁰ Ong’oa Morara, “One Size Fits All: The Interplay of Kanga, Makawa, Swahili Poetry, and Taarab in the Communication of Zanzibari Women.”

of the Former British Jubilee Gardens into a night market prominently selling Zanzibar Pizza, a culinary concoction that resembles a *mutabbaq*, a popular flatbread across the Indian Ocean Coast.¹¹ *Mutabbaq* means folded in Arabic, demonstrating how the mixing of ingredients creates a constitutive relationship. Similarly, the Zanzibar Pizza consists of an unleavened bread into which a variety of fillings are placed—from onions to Babybel cheese to Nutella—wrapped up and grilled into a circular pie. While the dish suggests a variety of cultural influences, it more closely resembles its culinary counterparts along the Indian Ocean rather than the Italian dish more familiar to European tourists. However, the name renders the food familiar for the mostly European tourists who descend on Stone Town, in increasing numbers since the late 1980s. While the Zanzibar Pizza enacts a culturally similar act of folding to that of the *mutabbaq*, its description as a pizza, a piece of bread ornamented with vestigial toppings, renders it as a Duckorated Shed as well.

This contradiction figures similarly in missionary architecture as well. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) was established to bring Christianity to today's Tanzania, Kenya, and Malawi. Privileging methods of culturally sensitive assimilation, the UMCA's approaches diverged from those of most other Anglican missionary societies at the time, which utilized heavy-handed methods of proselytization.¹² This approach of cultural sensitivity was shepherded by Bishop Edward Steere—an early head of the UMCA, translator of both Swahili folk tales and the Bible, and co-architect/builder of Christ Church in Stone Town. This UNESCO world heritage site sits on the world's last slave market—the demolition of which helped usher in the establishment of Zanzibar as a British protectorate.¹³ Anglican missionaries facilitated conversations between the British government and the Sultanate, leading to the deployment of military force and the swift demise of the independent Sultanate of Zanzibar.

At Christ Church in Zanzibar's Stone Town, architectural ornament renders visible the struggles for power and conquest. As the Church's designer and builder, Edward Steere, wrote, "Do not call it a Cathedral. It is the Memorial Church in the Old Slave Market. The fact of the slave-market site and the memorial character are what justify its costliness."¹⁴ Crenelated parapets suggest the defensive architecture of Oman (the Sultanate that Zanzibar was a part of until the mid-nineteenth century), but serve purely decorative purposes. These crenelations, both on the church and across Swahili architecture in Stone Town, suggest a military presence that only existed on a large scale during British colonialism. These crenelations ultimately serve as ornamentation to a form that contains within it the layered histories of colonization, but whose signs—a memorial to slavery—suggest alternative layered histories. The church, a duck,

¹¹ Sarah Khan, "The Mysterious Origin of Zanzibar Pizza," accessed May 1, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20201216-the-mysterious-origin-of-zanzibar-pizza>.

¹² G. Alex Bremner, "The Architecture of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa: Developing a Vernacular Tradition in the Anglican Mission Field, 1861–1909," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68, no. 4 (December 2009): 514–39.

¹³ Unesco, "Christ Church Anglican Cathedral (Former Slave Market in Zanzibar)," *CIPDH - UNESCO* (blog), accessed December 11, 2021, <https://www.cipdh.gob.ar/memorias-situadas/en/lugar-de-memoria/catedral-anglicana-iglesia-de-cristo-antiguo-mercado-de-esclavos-de-zanzibar/>.

¹⁴ Henry Morton Stanley, *Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald 1871–1872, 1874–1877*, ed. Norman R. Bennett (Boston University Press, 1970), 184.

becomes a memorial, and its combination, as figured through this architectural artifact, operates as a Duckorated Shed.

When examining these three cultural artifacts—the kanga cloth, the Zanzibar pizza, and the Memorial Church at the Old Slave Market—a similar contradiction emerges between what these objects' suggested meaning is and what the conventions of naming imply. Ultimately, the symbolic forms of these architectures have meanings that are obfuscated by the descriptions around them.

The shared salience of these cultural artifacts lies in the way they exist in and amplify multiple temporalities—knotting together the supposedly rupturing moments of the end of slavery, the inauguration of colonial power, and the late-millennium embrace of corporate multinational capitalism. These three artifacts enact a material articulation of slave narratives, defined by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., as “the attempt of blacks to write themselves into being,” whether written into being through pizza, lettered cloth, or crenelated parapet.¹⁵

The Swahili word for development is *maendeleo*, whose root, *-endelea*, most frequently means “continuation.” The slave narratives embedded in these objects—which are intimately tied with notions of development—suggest less a rupturing event than a continuation of existing modes of thinking, being, and non-being—a continuation of slavery and of colonization in all its metastasized recapitulations. These objects ultimately lubricate the semiotic friction that occurs when a restructuring event alters the modes by which meaning is rendered.

As an architecture student, I am called to project outward, to imagine utopian possibilities. However, the non-possibility of utopia (etymologically, the roots of utopia are eu- “non” and -topos “place”) places the notion of utopian possibilities on fundamentally unstable ground.

Rather than learning from the Duckorated Shed to attempt, and inevitably fail, to project the utopian, my thesis, Zanzibar Pizza Hut, borrows from notable Senegalese architect Pierre Goudiaby Atèpa, who built off of Constantinos Doxiades's notion of entopia. In his 1973 undergraduate thesis, in the thick of pan-African independence movements, Atèpa wrote, the “Ideal African city moves from reconstruction towards escape and would best fit Doxiadis' definition of an ‘ENTOPIA’..., conceived with ‘reason and dream,’ between dystopia and utopia.”—a realistic imagining.¹⁶

Zanzibar Pizza Hut is not intended to be a utopian proposition, but is rather situated between reconstruction and escape, between dystopian and utopian.

To think architecturally is to think entopically, and to think entopically through the Duckorated Shed is to operate on a site, using cultural artifacts whose value lies in their ability to confirm and evade meaning. Zanzibar Pizza Hut attempts to concatenate these cultural artifacts, speculating on a future that sits between reason and dream.

¹⁵ Henry Louis Gates Jr., “Introduction,” in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xxiii.

¹⁶ Pierre Goudiaby, “The Ideal African City” (Thesis, Rensselaer, NY, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1973), 3–5.

Zanzibar Pizza Hut is an entopic deployment of operations learned from an examination of the Duckorated Sheds onto the site of what is today called Forodhani Gardens, presently named for its proximity to the former British Customs house, *forodha* in Swahili. Built, however, by the British as the Jubilee Gardens in 1936, Forodhani Gardens is also a colonial vestige that today serves several purposes. One of the largest public spaces in the area, the park contrasts with other major public spaces of Stone Town, like the small alleys where people can set up TVs outside, or the segregated mosques that many, but not all, attend.

The Garden is often a launching point for tourists looking to go on a sunset cruise or snorkeling. It's also essentially the only place you can purchase a Zanzibar Pizza at the Night Market, which emerged in the early 90s as President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, or Mzee Rukhsa "Mr. Anything Goes" privatized much of Tanzanian industry mostly for the benefit of a global elite.

While the night market emerges only after sunset, the part of the park the Night Market is set up on remains highly underutilized during the day. No structure exists to shade from the sometimes sweltering heat. While tourists contribute millions of Tanzanian shillings in taxes annually through their purchase of the pizzas in the evening, the tax money rarely benefits the *vijana*, or young men, who occupy the park most hours.¹⁷ *Vijana*—who are almost never women, as there's too much traditionally female work to be done at home—often crowd the small pavilion in Forodhani Gardens to gain shelter in the shade. They often sit, waiting to engage global capital figured through Euro-American tourists. The hustle in hopes of the possibility of prosperity—perhaps someone will want a sunset cruise or a tour of prison and will pay \$75 for it. Because *vijana* often hold secular globalized capital in such high esteem, their frequent desire for being incorporated into a particular form of the global market alienates them from the other public and semi-public spaces of Stone Town—namely, the mosque. This increasingly secularized youth culture, though, continues to be spatially excluded from these other public spaces.

Zanzibar Pizza Hut as an entopian Duckorated Shed attempts to provide further refuge for *vijana*, while simultaneously activating an underutilized space. While Christ Church at the Old Slave Market served as the first example of a barrel vault on the island, its structural instability required the imposition of lateral tie bars later on. Columns imported from England installed upside-down while Bishop Edward Steere visited his wife overseas suggest an object of resistance for the *vijana* of yore. And the enlarged narthex in the rear allowed the unconverted—the *vijana* not-yet or never convinced by the allure of Christianity—to observe the spectacle of the church service. These elements hold entopian potential in the Zanzibar Pizza Hut. Tie bars and the motif of the arch, informed by other post-independence modernisms across the continent along with artforms like the *maquettes extrêmes* by Congolese artist Bodys Isek Kingelez, ground the underutilized site.¹⁸ The barrel vault, when multiplied, produces a shade structure for the *vijana* who hope to at some point more directly engage with global flows of exchange. For now, they also have a place to rest in the sweltering heat. These vaults also contain storage space for the food vendors who typically schlep their stands home every day. The vaulted space can

¹⁷ For more on the histories of youth culture and the implications of the usage of *vijana*, see Andrew M. Ivaska, "'Anti-Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses': Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of 'National Culture' in 1960s Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania," *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (November 2002): 584–607.

¹⁸ Chika Okeke-Agulu, "Kingelez's Audacious Objects," in *Bodys Isek Kingelez* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 32–37.

cover the stands during the day, stowed away behind the kanga curtains, which can provide a variety of messages depending on who is hired to man the security of the storage.

Upside-down columns pay homage to the resistances of *vijana* past while providing a critical infrastructure for the inverted barrel vaults above. The vaults collect rainwater and deposit them in a tank below. This tank then dispenses water at another set of columns that contain a basin for washing, crucial for the stands that then set up around the perimeter at night.

Since rain is rare in the evening, the stalls are set up uncovered along the perimeter of the Zanzibar Pizza Hut. The proportions of this setup reflect in plan the compositional proportions of the kanga, while its orientation gestures towards its formal origin point—the church. The barrel vault also serves a similar function to the narthex space, allowing those excluded from exchange to observe. In the Zanzibar Pizza Hut, those without a place now have a place, providing agency for the *vijana*, whose frequent desire for inclusion in global multinational corporate capitalism often leaves them without a space in Zanzibar’s Stone Town.

Zanzibar Pizza Hut chains together material artifacts that lay bare material articulations of slave narratives. Ronald Judy, however, suggests that slave narratives’ fantasies of claiming agency ultimately reify the very structures of meaning that these narratives purportedly undermine.¹⁹ Ultimately, attempts at facilitating agency run the risk of cementing positions of alterity. And as Achille Mbembe writes, “Africa and the Black Man have become signs of an alterity that is impossible to assimilate; they are a vandalism of meaning itself, a happy hysteria.”²⁰ It is my hope, in Zanzibar Pizza Hut, that this happily hysteric proposition ultimately provides a substrate that is *atopian* (without a place) from which we can interrogate the nothingness that structures meaning—the negativity that structures positive being, the slave that whose presence incites the master to recognize his existence.

¹⁹ Ronald A. T. Judy, *(Dis)Forming the American Canon: African-Arab Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 88–97.

²⁰ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 38.

