
Earth architecture in AFRICA

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**What do we think of when
we think of African
indigenous architecture?**

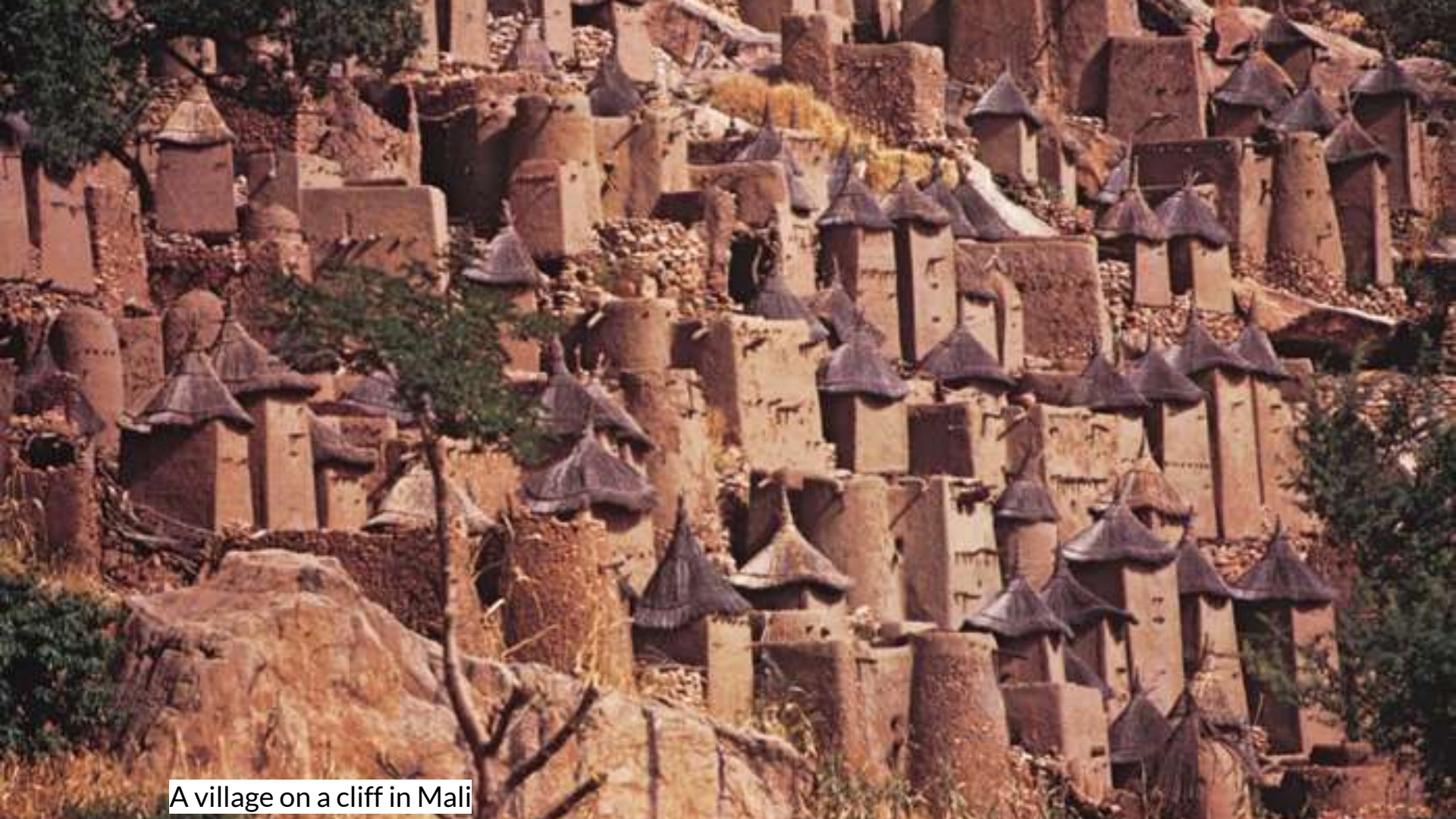
Maybe this?



Traditional houses of Sotho people, Lesotho
<https://www.britannica.com/art/African-architecture>

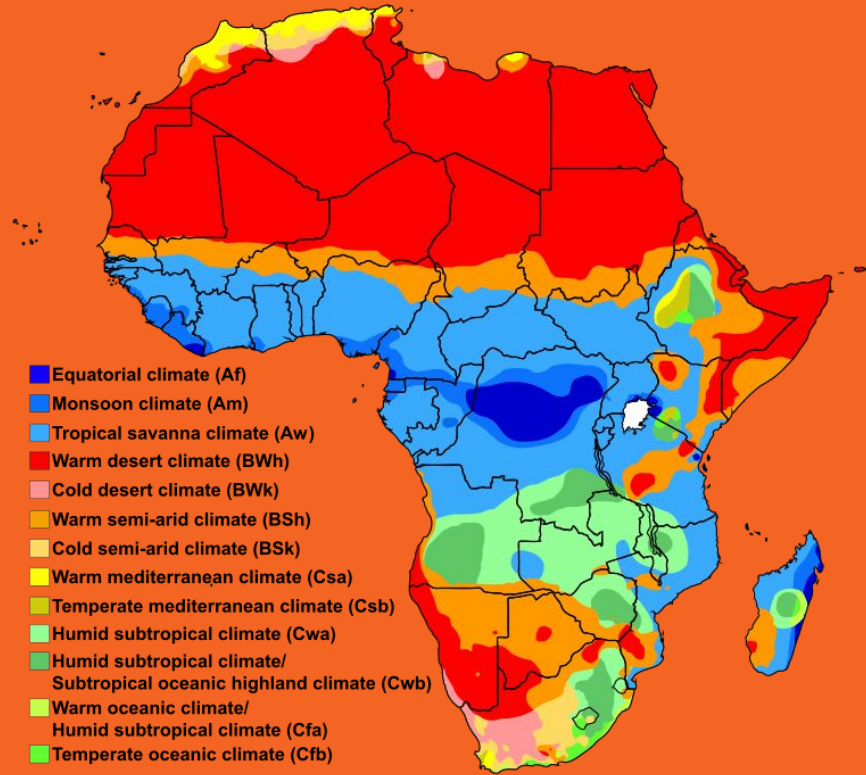


Contemporary vernacular architecture from Nigeria



A village on a cliff in Mali

African
architecture was
determined by
climatic conditions,
natural resources
and habits of its
people.



**Traditionally it was all
about local materials, earth
was the dominating
material.**

Varies from dome dwellings and beehive huts to tombs and palaces depending on the location.



Mbuti home

Egypt, Northern Africa





Kenya, Eastern Africa

South Africa, Southern Africa





Ghana, Western Africa



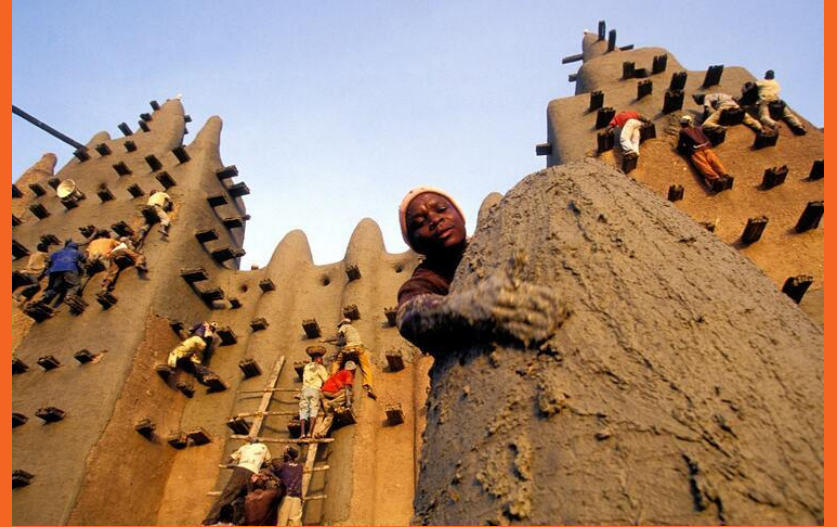
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Functionality and practicality seems to be the driving forces of choosing construction types.

Clay has an excellent cooling effect and need only little man power. Also, it is somewhat easy to work with.

It is no wonder it is highly used in hot African environment.

**Building engages
everyone from the
village.**

**Community works
for the community.**



Burkina Faso
traditional way of
making a house out
of adobe and
natural plaster



Water is thrown to sand to form mud and, the whole community takes part in the building process



**The mud is put
to a frame to
form bricks,
then the bricks
are left to dry in
the sun**



The bricks are piled up to form walls, mud is used as mortar

A circular shape is common, as it provides more floor area in relation to the circumference of the walls and so is more material efficient than a rectangular plan. A circular shape also endures the changes of winds better than a square one.



Earth, water and cow poo (for fibres) are mixed together and the mixture is patted to the walls by hand



Carvings of worshipped animals are added to the walls as decorations



**Floor is batted
to make it hard
and durable**



**Walls are
finished with
natural waxes
and painted with
decorative
paintings,
everyone paints**



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It is contradictory, that the internationally strong image of traditional housing is being forgotten in Africa. Traditional African architecture is missing from most of the curriculums of the African architecture schools.

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Traditional African architecture did not have time to develop to its full potential before colonialism started to influence. It is often associated with poverty. The neglect towards indigenous architecture is resulting in losing the tradition and knowledge.

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The indigenous architecture styles and building techniques are very varied. The colonial administrators failed to acknowledge local architectures. And when colonialists were succeeded by freedom fighters, they took over the western style buildings. Colonial architecture boomed in post-colonial time. International style took over and displaced indigenous architecture.

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New initiatives towards traditional building methods are now breaking through. Earth architecture and traditional building would be affordable, but it is difficult to get building permits in some countries because there are no existing codes.

Contemporary earth architecture in Africa

Joelle Eyeson, Hive
Earth, Ghana.

Decorated rammed
earth walls



Kere Architects, Francis Kere: Centre for Earth Architecture, Mali



Walls are made with BTC (compressed earth blocks)

Mass Design Group Maternity Waiting Village
Kasungu, Kasungu District, Malawi



Levs Architecten: Vaulted brick primary school
Mali



Sources

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