ABDUL-WALIYAH NYANJIAH, an architect, opines that modifications in grass-thatched houses increased in the late 1980s when they used thatch in urban settings. Some of the designs were simpler buildings such as the rectangular styles. Architecture was seen as a way of life because there were no computers to ease the job. One had to draw a structure, indicate where the wall stem, roof, and windows should be, and then note the mathematics and art designs, indicate the size and type of material such as bricks and nails, among others, he said.

He says the modern architectural education was first introduced as a course at Makerere University in the 1990s. Did you know? A design that would take a year in 1980 to do one can be done in a day with the use of a computer. Modernism in Uganda took shape in 1953 when the Israelites undertook major housing projects such as construction of the Bugolobi flats in Kampala. Architecture was first introduced as a course at Makerere University in 1992.

Despite the architectural history in the continent, and as it is celebrated in its 55th anniversary, Africans have their own architectural designs, although these were not documented until after the arrival of the colonists. Thatched houses were designed by nature. This style varied according to regions and tribes.

In the west, people from Toro sub-region designed thatched houses with thatch covering the entire structure from the roof to the ground, while in the north, among the Acholi, Dinka and Dur, the thatched houses were built taller than those in other regions, but without thatch covering any part of the roof.

In the central region, Bunyoro and Kigezi designed huts with thatch covering the entire structure from the roof to the ground. Bunyoro, Kigezi and Hima had similar designs. Thatched houses were designed by nature. This style varied according to regions and tribes.

The most famous designs for home roofs were thatched (nymuwa in swahili – like a dress). Next in line was a design called ‘skillion and lean to roof’, which locals nick-named French cut. Thatched houses were designed by native. The styles varied according to regions and tribes.

Although Africans had their own architectural designs, they were never documented until after the arrival of the colonists, and has a house built in modern architecture copying the thatched designs.

Going forward...

According to architect Mutelwi Mulwanira, an architect, says Ugandans should rely on professional architects because the structures they are building are not for today, but for tomorrow.

“Let us not be too late in beginning making physical plans for upcountry areas that are not yet populated or towns that have not yet grown into slums,” he says.

USE PROFESSIONALS

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