



Cultural Heritage Digitization in West Africa: An Action Research Approach in Djibouti

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Abstract

Cultural heritage in West Africa is under threat due to rapid urbanization and climate change. Digital preservation initiatives are crucial for safeguarding vernacular architecture. An iterative process involving workshops, interviews, and field surveys to gather data on architectural features, cultural significance, and preservation challenges. Digital tools were used for documentation and archiving of findings. The digitized archive includes over 150 structures, with a focus on traditional mud-brick houses and their intricate decorative elements, revealing the complex interplay between design and environmental adaptation. This study demonstrates the efficacy of an action research approach in enhancing digital preservation efforts for African vernacular architecture. The findings underscore the need for community engagement and adaptive technologies in future initiatives. Recommend integrating local expertise into digital documentation processes, promoting open-source software solutions, and establishing regional hubs for collaborative knowledge sharing.

Keywords: *West Africa, Vernacular Architecture, Digital Preservation, Methodology, Heritage Conservation, Community Engagement, Indigenous Knowledge Systems*

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