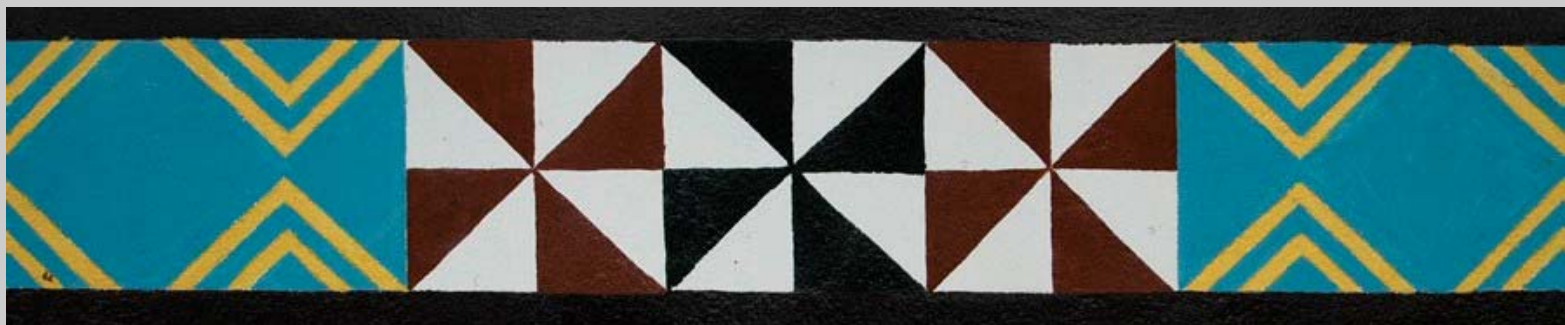


The King's Palace

24 March 2012



Until 1959, Rwanda's King lived in the Palace. All huts had a spike at the center of the roof. Only the King's Palace had three spikes on top. The lower two spikes represent the horns of the King's traditional cattle. Whenever the King died, the next King (son or brother of the last king) was required to construct a new palace.



Bamboo fence around the King's Palace



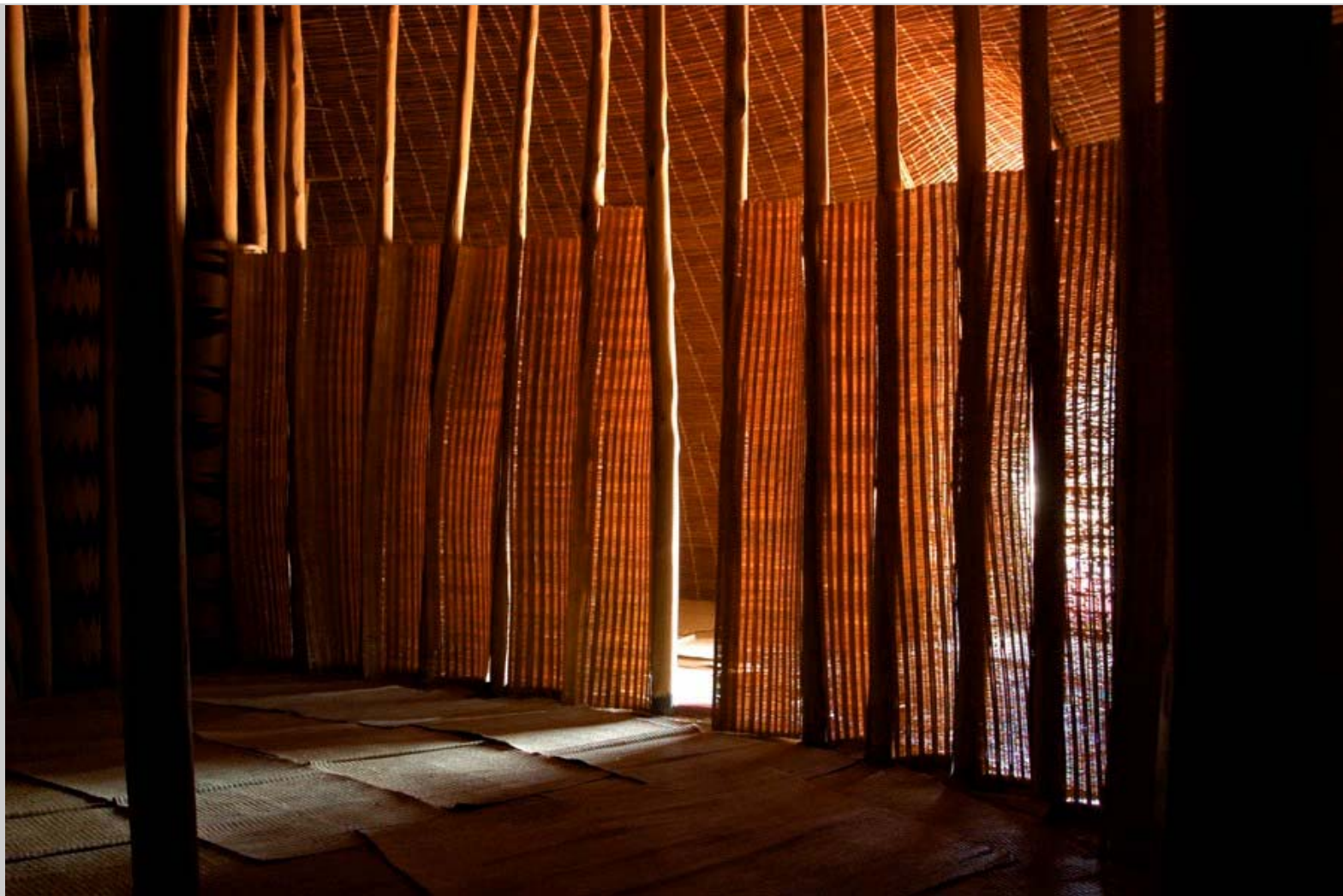
**Every hut has only one entrance.
The entrance to the King's Palace has unique features.
The King's stool is just inside the entrance on the left.
Visitors were required to remove shoes and enter over the
white ridge on the floor after they received permission from the King.**



Crossing the line



The Main Chamber of the King's Palace
A fireplace is just out of view in the foreground.
Layers of grass under the woven floor mats makes for soft, muffled walking.
The vertical semicircular room dividers of woven plant fibers
separate the main room from the King's bedroom
which is entered via the central opening.



**From the Main Chamber looking to the Entrance of the Palace
The interior is softly lit as outdoor light filters through the bamboo screens.**

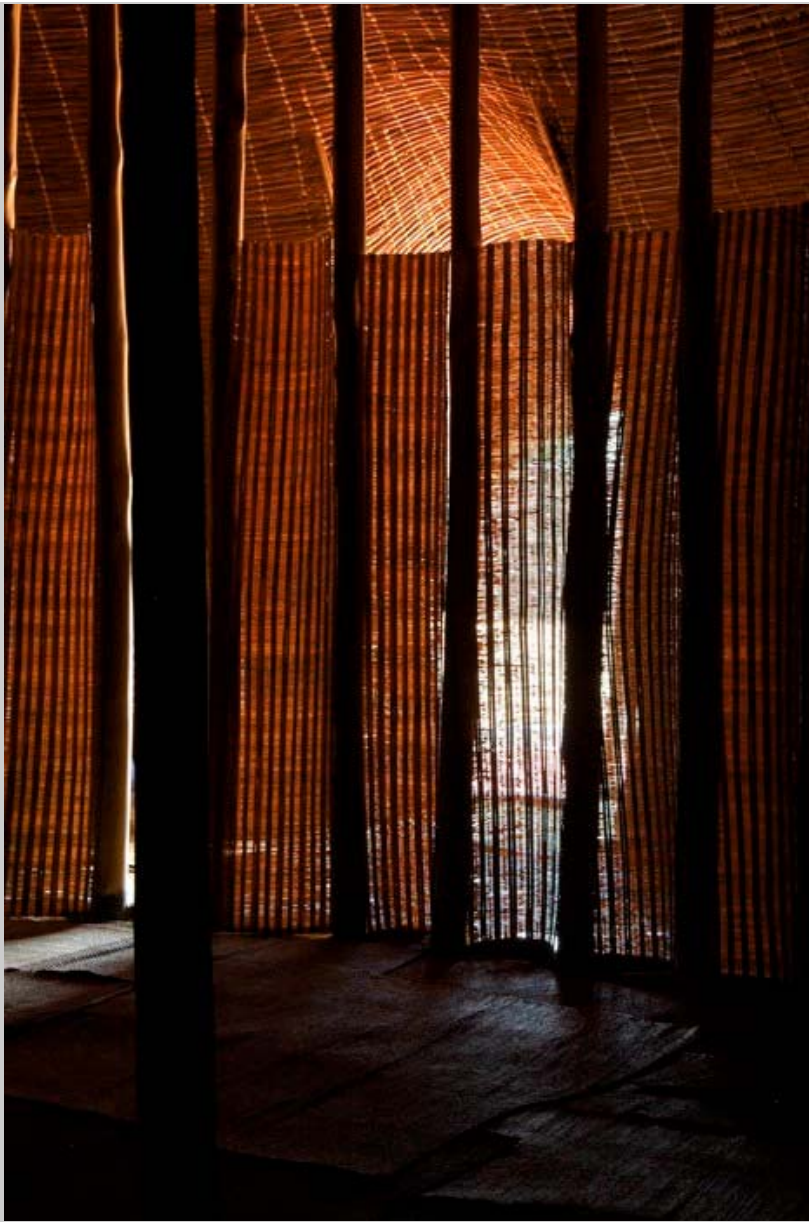


Ceiling and supports



An exterior of thatch made of elephant grass and interior of woven bamboo provide excellent waterproofing and insulation.

Even when the tropical sun is fiercely hot, the inside temperature remains very comfortable.



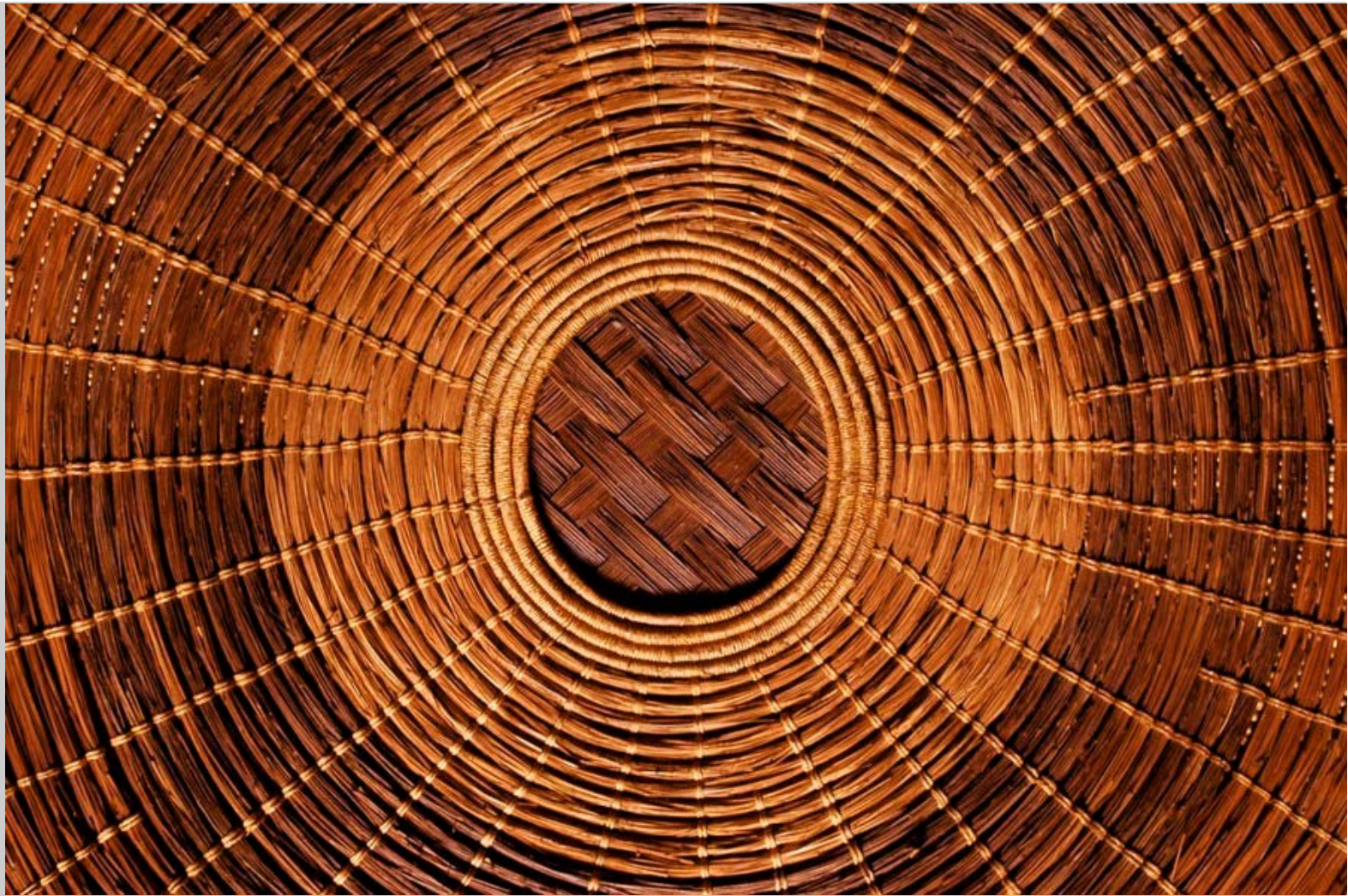
Filtered light



Woven baskets in the King's bedroom



Roof supports



Center of the dome



Elegantly simple construction of natural materials



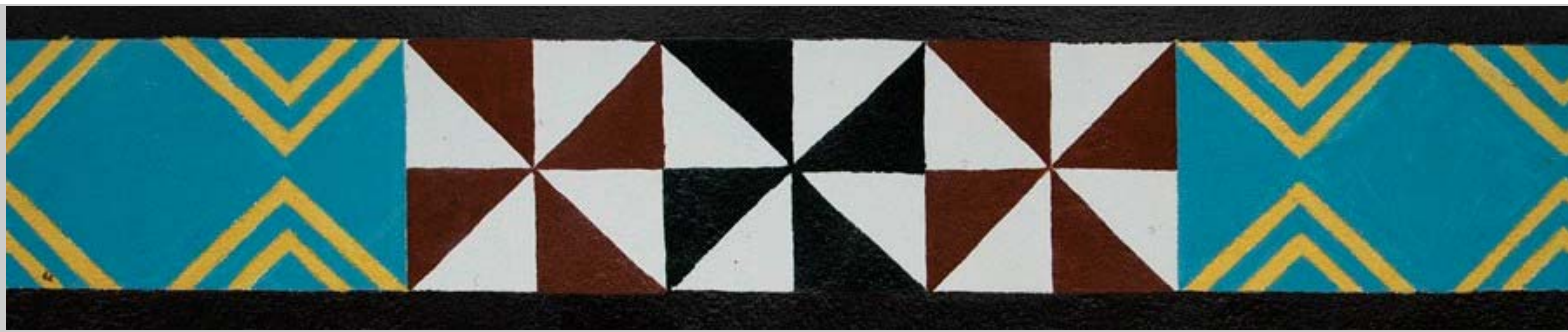
Sunlight through a bamboo screen





Milk jugs in the Milkmaid's hut

The Queen Mother selected a young girl from the tribe to serve as the King's milkmaid. It was her duty to provide the finest milk for the king. The Milkmaid lived alone in her special hut just behind the King's Palace. Milk was kept in wooden bottles topped with conical woven lids. Gourds stored other liquids.



The Milkmaid's Hut (left) and the Beer Hut (right) are located just behind the King's Palace



A select young man lived alone in the Beer Hut and made banana beer exclusively for the King.



Vessels in the Beer Hut





The King had a herd of Traditional Cattle with distinctive horns.

These were a sign of his great wealth.

The herd is kept in a pen behind the King's Palace.

Each animal was decorated with woven necklaces and was identified by a unique song sung by the attendants.

When the King participated in ceremonial events, he was accompanied by his cattle.



A bull from the King's herd



**Evidence of skirmishes:
A bull's horn**



A pair of frowns



After Germany lost World War II, Rwanda became Belgian colony. In 1959 the Belgians built this modern palace for the King of Rwanda. Lavishly decorated with fine furniture, it now serves as museum with many photographs showing the colonial history of Rwanda. When the last King died, his brother became King but the brother is living in the United States and has not returned to Rwanda, which is now governed by an elected President and Parliament.



The former King's Palace.



A design found on the wall of the former King's Palace

