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## THE ROLES OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF NIGERIA CITIES

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### ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the roles of architecture to the growth of Nigeria cities. Nigeria cities continue to grow and develop overtime, the paper looks at the forces that have shaped and patterned their evolution over time. This research work revealed that social changes particularly the shift from traditional community and ways of life, to more western ways of life have greatly impact and influence on building and residential labours. In view of the above, the paper concludes by suggesting ways to promote the practice of contemporary architecture in order to enhance further the transformation of Nigerian cities to meet world standard.

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**Keywords:** Architecture, Transformation, Cities, Housing.

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of housing to Rikko *et al.* (2011) came as an objective of fulfilling one of the basic needs of man principally in the provision of shelter, and comfort. In the practical establishment of homes, the planning and construction takes a pattern or form, which varies from society to society and country. Consequently, the form of housing chosen or built offers a direct insight into the study of various culture and societies of the people.

Nigeria as a nation for example, is an heterogeneous society comprising of ethno-geographical region like the north, middle belt, east, west and south. Each of these regions has its own culture and as such exhibits peculiar housing form. Consequently, the Nigeria traditional architecture differs not only temporary but also spatially and from one period to another.

The later is obviously due to trends of civilization, cultural infiltration and technological advancement. It is universal that certain architecture is identified with certain group of people either as a state or nation. For example, there is Chinese architecture, the American, the early Egyptian, the Greek, the Roman architecture there exists architecture of specific functions. Consequently, the Chinese pyramidal cake form is a depiction of temple whereas the ordinary linear design is reserved for housing, while in America; the simple wooden architecture is peculiar cottage buildings.

Architecture in the dimension could be seen as the art of design of buildings and structures for convenient human habitation and utilization, considering factors such as the variation in norms and social comfort in different societies. The tendency in exhibiting these values and the character of life coupled with factors like the materials available and the use of building, significantly suggest the kind of design

for the function in this society. The architecture evolved depicts the language the society in question can understand. A good architecture must satisfy a trinity of requirement in a user, that is his physical needs (satisfactory body reaction of feeling), his emotional needs (aesthetic and psychological) and his intellectual needs (logic orderliness and flawlessness); hence the appeal to architecture to be both art and science (Astrolabe, 2002).

Architectural designs and builds or fabricates, the former a process and the later a product, which are both significant in housing development.

### **THE EVOLUTION OF HOUSING**

According to Rikko and Gwatu (2012), the evolution of architecture can be traced back to the late Stone Age. As the hunter/gatherers of that age move about in search of food, they built the earliest temporary structures that appeared in archeological record. Human shelter was at first simple and perhaps lasted only a few days or months. Over time however, even temporary structures evolved into highly reformed forms. Gradually more durable structures began to appear, particularly after the advent of agricultures when people begin to stay for longer periods in one location. This shelter began to expand from mere dwellings, to serve other more specialized functions such as food storage, commerce, religious ceremonies, and festival and so on. Structures began to have symbolic as well as functional values; these became possible as the society evolved. Societal evolution also affected nature of building materials used as there was a departure from leaves, reeds and sticks which characterized early buildings to more durable materials such as clay, timber, stone and so on.

With passage of time, subsequent development in the intellectual and social ability of man took place. The development of man's inherent ability (his instinct) led him to the understanding of the social, political and economic consequences of the elements of nature within his sphere of existence. This subsequently led him to the assumption of the position of his environment. Consequently, there is the quest for master's abode which gave birth to the question of housing: a phenomenon so vital to our lives second only to food.

### **THE NATURE OF CITIES**

Talking about the nature of cities presupposes that we know what a city is or that; at least, there is agreement on what a city is supposed to be. On the contrary, there is hardly any such consensus. The problem arises because, one, there are various sizes of substantial concentration of population over the earth surface. Two, settlements vary in the special functions they perform. Three, their forms or morphologies vary quite markedly, and four they grow so fast and merge into other settlements thereby making their boundaries difficult to determine. It is no surprise therefore that the term 'city' is associated with various meanings, depending on whether it is defined by demographers, geographers political scientists, economists, sociologists, or historians. To students of Greek and Roman history, for example, it means not only the walled town such as Athens or Rome but the territory surrounding it, the inhabitants of which enjoyed the privileges of citizenship – in other words, a city state. (See the Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition, Vol. 6, 1974).

Perhaps a somewhat universal definition of a city is a settlement with a relative dense aggregation of population of considerable size in which the condition of life can be described as 'urban' in contrast with the rural life of the open country. Here again, the question of what is 'urban' arises. In order to sharpen the focus of this definition, we may borrow Whyne – Hammord (1979) who associates 'urban' with 'diversity of function'; that is where all types of occupations, industries and services are represented. Cities are therefore much larger than towns and have a greater number of functions including finance, industry and administration.

The beauty of Architecture and physical planning in this regard lie in the fact that while they recognize the functional relationships between and among cities, they pay particular attention to the peculiar identities of individual cities. It goes further to preconceive what the identity of a new city is expected to be.

### **How Did Cities Develop Over Time?**

The life and achievement of cities are prominently represented in the earliest pages of recorded history. In the ancient world, estimates of scholars put the population of Athens at the height of its glory at a range of 40,000 to 140,000; Jerusalem at 30,000; and Carthage at not more than 300,000. Following the Barbarian invasions beginning in the 4th century A.D., cities virtually disappeared from Western Europe for a period of several hundred years known as the Dark Ages. Constantinople, at the extreme eastern limit of Europe, was the only European city to survive the Dark Ages with a population of 100,000.

There followed an urban Revival period which saw the rebirth of cities consequent upon the impetus which trade received in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This period was so remarkable that by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were six European cities – Constantinople, Paris, Naples, Venice, Milan and Lisbon – with more than 100,000 population.

The era of modern cities, however, appeared to have crowned the phenomena of urban development. Transpiration and trade are the factors that explain the urban revolution of this period. The age of exploration and discovery beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with far – reaching advances in navigation replaced local trade with world trade.

With the development of mechanized means of land transportation beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and later transportation, urban complexes like New York and London witnessed astronomical growth where workers could live far from work, amusement and shopping and goods could be moved to and from cities.

In the 1960s, cities were scattered over the world and at least, 40 cities representing all the continents, had populations exceeding 2,000,000. This 'age of the city' has become the characteristic form of existence for a majority of the people especially in the US and Western Europe.

Today, the population sizes of the world's 100 largest metropolitan areas according to the population crisis committee varies between 2,350,000 (Pune, India) to 28,700,000 (Tokyo – Yokohama, Japan). Looking through history from the classical era through the medieval and renaissance periods to modern times as sketched

above, it will be seen clearly that the history of cities is almost as old as history itself. But cities in history did not come about their locations, functions and forms by accident. They are results of planning thoughts, ideas and visions.

### **HISTORY OF NIGERIA TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE**

Nigeria has a vast and diverse culture with more than 400 ethnic groups, far from homogeneous in both its socio-cultural structure and ideological orientation – it is therefore useful to discuss building influences from regional perspectives.

Fifteenth century research indicates that traditional architecture existed in Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, famed for its ribbed vaults domes, sculpted and painted external murals, religious beliefs directly influence spatial arrangements. Buildings were composed for individual egg-shaped units of earth plastered adobe (locally termed tubali) presenting a monolithic form. A typical house comprised rectilinear and circular spatial units linked together by wall segments forming a border wall. Roofing essentially, consists of linking shallow domes and vaults.

In South Western Nigeria, people traditionally lived in large urban social grouping. The “public building” i.e. the kings palace (which was also the court house) and the market place dominated the central areas of old cities such as Ibadan, West Africa’s largest city-Houses were built in large compounds with each room opening into a common “courtyard” with large verandah-an essential components for environmental control and socio-cultural exchanges. The common architecture of South Eastern Nigeria is similar to the South West in terms of use of materials and building techniques. However, buildings were ranked in importance based on their relative distance to the community/compound head’s.

### **INFLUENCES ON THE NIGERIA ARCHITECTURE**

During the late 18th and 19th century, the colonial administration brought with it “civilization” and the construction of public building (Schools/Institutions, ware houses, banks, hospitals courthouses) and residences. Relatively grandiose places of worship were built. Construction was mainly timber framed and masonry structures raised well above ground, covered with corrugated, iron sheet and large well shaded windows – so could it be that Nigeria Architecture evolved in this period as a marriage of local materials and expression such as large overhangs and verandahs, plus elements styles and symbols from the British?

The abolishment of slave trade led to the return of many, and with them, architectural influences and styles. Storey houses were introduced – typical of Afro-Brazilian architecture and churches with strong gothic themes. These were built with sand-crete blocks and embellished with heavy ornamental pillars and molded balustrades. Several of these survived and can still be seen in Lagos and a few old cities such as Calabar and Ibadan (Southern Nigeria) and Kaduna in Northern Nigeria.

### **INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE MEETS MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

At the end of the colonial rule indigenous architecture had become a mishmash of imported influences, super imposed upon elements which were either strongly

influenced by climate or religion. A time of growth and development led Nigeria architect (all trained abroad) often working with British counterparts to design buildings with attempted to suit climate and local conditions – simple geometric forms, concrete external walls with concrete steel and aluminium sun shading devices. There was little or no interpretation in terms of use of building materials, traditional or religious elements. So modern, functional and largely aesthetically pleasing building dotted the landscape, with no influences from the past.

Architecture historians say this was bound to happen after all, the architects were educated in the “modern world”. Unfortunately, even with the establishment of local architecture schools far little is being taught on traditional architecture. Where indigenous architecture exists, built structures tell a story and reflect the history. These structures are after identified, restored and preserved as being a notable cultural importance.

### **THE GROWTH OF NIGERIA CITIES: THE IMPACT OF ARCHITECTURE**

It is an established historical fact that urbanization in Nigeria predates the British colonial administration. Estimates of population of town by the early explorers, missionary and merchants as collated by Mabogunje (1968), indicate the existence of substantial human settlement in this part of world during the nineteenth century.

The colonial administration by the Township Ordinance classified town across the country into three categories. Lagos which was the capital was the only first class town: eighteen others were classified second class. While another twelve fell into the third category. This tended to have influenced colonial administration’s decision on investment in infrastructure of colonial administration on urbanization in Nigeria is that it brought about changes in the structure of cities. It introduced western planning tradition through the designation of Government Reservation Areas (GRAs) which developed side by side with the traditional residential areas.

From 1960 after independence till early 90s Nigeria architecture has not align itself with any defined architectural movement or trend based on time lines or periods. Construction and development were influenced by colonialism and other foreign cultures. The influence of the design of modern structures like churches, mosques, hospital, schools and other commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. “Design movements” as they are known in other parts of the world, were never introduced or harnessed in institutions of design education but over time, new and emerging designers have continued to implement the use of traditional Nigerian form of aesthetics with modern methods, techniques and materials of construction. This has resulted in the on-going pursuit, by indigenous designers, to find a “Nigerian Architecture” which would be symbolic of the culture and practice of the people but able to contend with international standards. Unwittingly, many recent architects have found their works conforming to the tenets of modern and post modern architectural movement. After years of study, training and practices, Nigerian design has taken on a new face with the construction of multimillion naira, state-of-the-art buildings and many other buildings which not only personify the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people, but transform our cities and also depict the effect of globalization and international flair (Enwerekowe, E.O. (2011).

## CONCLUSION

There is more than enough local expertise in Nigerian art, history and architecture to generate attention toward preserving history and culture through preserving built structures. Since architecture is a social activity that produces cultural legacy. Therefore identification and preservation of whatever is left of indigenous architecture is a good first step. Nigeria's history is steeped in symbolic buildings strong in style.

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