

Considering Afrocentrism in Hausa Traditional Architecture

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Abstract:- This paper relates to a basic understanding of Hausa traditional society as Afrocentrism. Its goal is to learn how Afrocentrism can be applied to real-life situations in developing Hausa culture in Nigeria. This study aims to interpret the interest that Afrocentrism should show in Afrocentric architecture and, most crucially, the role of culture in creating the built environment. In addition, the paper discussed the significance of culture and Afrocentrism in architecture. The study allows architects to be more self-aware and critical of their cultural surroundings when setting up. Understanding Afrocentric Architecture can aid in the reconnection of modern civilization and the development of some of Afrocentrism's shared foundations with the contemporary world. As a result, this paper examined the role of Afrocentrism and culture in molding the built environment in depth using an extensive literature review.

Keywords:- Afrocentrism, Afrocentric Architecture, Culture, Hausa Architecture, Hausa Traditional Architecture.

I. INTRODUCTION

Afrocentrism is an approach to the study of world history that focuses on the history of people of recent African descent. Communities are created because of social interaction between members of a society and the environments in which they live. These linkages lead to the development of language, religion, morals, conventions, literature, technology, and art, which are tangible and intangible aspects of culture. Therefore, Hausa traditional architecture is defined as the art of shaping the environment to serve the requirements of Hausa Traditions comfortably and efficiently. Tradition is an opinion, belief, practice, custom, etc handed down from generation to generation. Architects shape the built environment based on their history, culture, experience, and design knowledge; they play a vital role in molding the built environment based on their history, culture, experience, and design knowledge. Architecture represents an essential emblem of a distinctive social system and set of cultural values, combining a diverse range of cultural aesthetics, and spatial concepts that govern the interactions of people and their environment, as well as the society's cosmologies.

Asante (2017) adds up that the aim of Afrocentrism is to help lay out a plan for the recovery of African place, and class and as an intense interest in psychological location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, and signs in buildings. It has been recognized that Architecture is influenced by social, physical, cultural, environmental, economic, political, etc. But do we pay serious attention to balancing such factors for good design affecting Human comfort??? A set of laws and regulations always governs architecture and closely relates to Human beings, the community's occupants, which is the product of culture (Falola 2008). As a result, humans always express themselves socially and culturally (Ikudayisi and Odeyale 2019). Architecture is the aesthetic art of constructing virtual habitable spaces for human beings. Culture is manifested and expressed via architecture (Selcanezgi 2019). As a result, architecture and culture are inextricably linked.

Nonetheless, Afrocentrism can be seen as Hausa architecture since it focuses on the history of a particular people who participated in a broader cultural agenda, serving as a mechanism and symbol for communicating concepts of power, religion, and visual arts, with royals and the wealthiest urban residents constructing extensive compounds with imposing edifices and intricately decorated façades, they employed a wide range of architectural features and designs in Hausa construction including vaulting, double-story buildings. According to some academics, architecture represents a turning point in the development of culture and innovation. Each civilization and culture begin when the previous society was unable to cope with or was in a state of chaos. Still, with one little and subtle difference: the new civilization restores the prior structure. As a result, when it comes to the direct influence of culture on architecture, it's only natural that changes in culture can cause fundamental shifts in the foundations of prominent conceptions and aid in the creation of new ideas that dictate the mutual understanding between theories and culture (Golany 1995). Architecture is a form of art that incorporates expression, technology, and the fulfillment of human needs (Hughes 2004). Its goal is to create environments that make individuals feel more human, alive, and satisfied. Concerning Vitruvius's words, Architecture is the art that combines Utilitas, Firmitas, and Venustas or Human behaviors, technology, and Beauty (Koirala 2016).

This study's findings are significant as they will provide an overview of the condition and review of Hausa architecture with respect to Afrocentric culture for the need for new knowledge in having better access to living conditions within Hausa culture education. This is essential to promote constructive personality among Hausa traditional individuals with an optimistic worldview.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Evolution of Architecture*

The evolution of architecture is traced through diverse traditions, regions, overarching stylistic trends, and dates in architecture history (Denyer and McClure 1978). These traditions are said to have originated when people met their most fundamental need for shelter and security (Maina 2013). Africa, except Egypt, has no place in the Western world's architectural scheme until recently. Many people did not believe African architecture was worthy of recognition, and many still do not think it was worthy of acknowledgment (Awoniyi 2015). To be sure, everyone acknowledges that "shelter" exists in Africa-all humans require some form of shelter-but the studied neglect or denial of a discrete, African architecture, it has suggested, lacks a sense of space as we understand it, and Africans have never attempted to use space itself as a building material (Oduaran and Chukwudeh 2021). Maina (2013) adds in her research that the most comprehensive ethnographic studies of African forms and structures frequently failed to transcend material culture in building forms and structures. In this paper, we are going to look at the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and how housing was transformed from traditional to current the context.

- **Hausa Architecture:** The Hausas are one of the prominent ethnic groups in West Africa and are among the three largest in Nigeria (Arenibafo 2017). Hausa Land is in Nigeria between latitude 3.5° east to latitude 11.0° east, and from longitude 10.5° north to longitude 14.0° north. The Hausas predominantly believe in Islam as their religion. Their religion has significant influence on them and permeates almost every aspect of their life and culture such as their dressing, social interactions and even architecture. Agboola and Zango (2014) are of the opinion that the Trans Sahara trade coupled with the new religion of Islam had the most enormous impact on the settlement pattern and local building practices of Hausa land in Northern Nigeria. Some of the effects can be seen reflected in the facades of their buildings as several the designs employed were borrowed from other parts of the Islamic world. A monolithic wall was constructed using plastered adobe. Shallow domes and vaults are timber beams roofed with laterite and earth (Batagarawa and Tukur 2019). Homesteads had surrounding walls, circular and linear interior partitions, and a single clearly defined entrance (Muhammad-Oumar 1997). The layout patterns of settlements as well as family compounds are affected by the culture and social practices. There are three important focal points within the settlement. These are the emir's palace, mosque, and market. The emir's palace serves as the administration centre of the community

while the market draws people from within and around the community once a week for trade and social interactions. The Hausa's build family compounds around these three focal points.

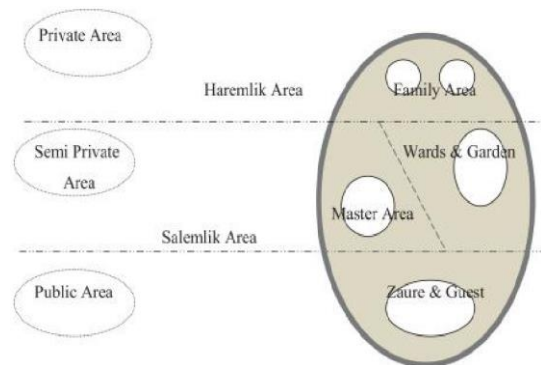


Fig 1:- Layout of Hausa Housing.
Source: Adapted by Umar, Yusuf et al. (2019)

➤ *Hausa Traditional Architecture*

Hausa Traditional Architecture therefore can simply be defined as the art of shaping the environment to serve the requirements of Hausa Traditions comfortably and efficiently (Muhammad-Oumar 1997). Tradition is opinion, belief, practice, customs etc handed down from generation to generation. The housing form has been influenced by climatic, religious, and socio-cultural factors of the environment. According to Sa'ad (1987), Islam had no doubt some influence on the layout. What people now have as modern architecture or contemporary Nigerian architecture is a preponderance of imported motifs and models that have little links with the socio-cultural heritage (Agboola and Zango 2014). According to Osasona (2007) urbanization, collision of cultural values, relics of the colonial experience and exposure to western education have all made what is imported from other cultures part of what is now passed down from one generation to another. This may probably explain the disappearance of the indigenous type of house in Nigerian urban centres and open space architecture and settlement pattern, all of which is obsolete now. Architects today have noted the contending arguments advanced for this alienating architecture.

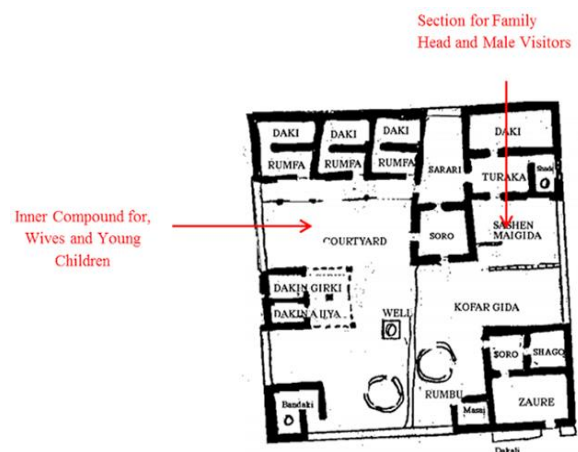


Fig 2:- Typical Hausa Compound.
Source: Adapted by Muhammad-Oumar (1997).

- **Yoruba Architecture:** Roof timbers were supported by cured earth walls, which were then covered with leaf or woven grass (Wahab 2007). Although wattle-and-daub techniques can be seen in some places, these walls were mainly homogeneous mud structures (Umar, Yusuf et al. 2019). Individual units were divided into areas, which were subsequently linked by proximity and borders to form a compound with courtyards and private spaces (Arenibafo 2017). Access to ancillary facilities such as kitchens was made possible through many entrances and exits.
- **Igbo Architecture:** Used comparable construction techniques and materials to Yoruba architecture, but the spatial arrangement differed significantly (Auwalu 2019). In the structures, there were no uniform compound walls. Individual units were instead linked to a central leaders' hut, with importance placed on relative size and position (Osasona 2017).

➤ *Relationship between Hausa Culture and Architecture*

The tradition of fine architecture has flourished with the Hausas in the sense that it is termed as most beautiful of the medieval age. Many of their early structures like mosques and palaces were made of bright, colorful intricate engraving or elaborate symbols which are designed on the facades (Noma, Bakr et al. 2022). These traditional buildings were designed in various shapes and sizes and carried a special aura as they are built to generate much delight and enthusiasm. Indeed, the way buildings are constructed as well as the sheer artistry deployed in the effort, combines to reveal aspects of a people's development, their history and culture, and goes a long way in projecting the precise conditions of a people's soul.

➤ *Relationship between Culture and Architecture*

It is necessary to understand that culture has a materialistic dimension, which consists of structures and monuments that evoke nostalgic sentiments and, more significantly, are based on beliefs and ideals (Hadi Zare and Kazemian 2015). Hadi Zare and Kazemian (2015) further explain that architecture may connect culture and society and is considered a part of people's cultural identities. Not only does architecture respond to consumers' most basic need for shelter, but it is also closely linked to culture (Johnson 2003). Architecture, as a cultural phenomenon, derives from and influences culture, and it can, of course, represent human concepts (Lawrence and Low 1990). According to some academics, architecture represents a turning point in the development of culture and innovation. Each civilization and culture begin when the previous society was unable to cope with or was in a state of chaos. Still, with one little and subtle difference: the new civilization restores the prior structure. As a result, when it comes to the direct influence of culture on architecture, it's only natural that changes in culture can cause fundamental shifts in the foundations of prominent conceptions and aid in the creation of new ideas that dictate the mutual understanding between theories and culture.

➤ *Theory of Understanding Architecture as a Culture Component*

Culture is manifested and expressed via architecture (Gujuluva 2021). As a result, architecture and culture are inextricably linked. Architecture is an essential aspect of any community's identity and communicates the culture of that society. As a result, architecture is influenced by the community's location, customs, traditions, manners, knowledge, and history. The shape and interactions of buildings and places serve as a 'culture marker,' describing the occupants' way of life and social position. Building architecture and layout, as well as their interior and exterior facades, are undeniably among the representations of any community's civilization and culture (Foroudi, Foroudi et al. 2021). The physical characteristics of architecture, such as shape, size, decorations, and construction style, are influenced by society's cultural framework.

➤ *The Importance of Culture in Architecture*

For millennia, monumentality encompassed all aspects of spatiality: the perceived, conceived, and lived; representations of space and representational spaces; areas specific to each faculty, from smell to speech; gestural and symbolic spaces (Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991). Monumental space provides member societies with a representation of that membership, an expression of their social face (Bauer and Fischer 2018). As a result, it served as a more reliable communal mirror than any personal one. This recognition effect' is significantly more critical than the psychoanalyst's mirror effect. Everyone took part, and took part entirely, in this social space, which incorporated all the features mentioned above while still giving each its appropriate place albeit, of course, under the conditions of a generally accepted power and a generally accepted Wisdom. Architecture is a form of art that incorporates expression, technology, and the fulfilment of human needs (Hughes 2004). Its goal is to create environments that make individuals feel more human, alive, and satisfied. Concerning Vitruvius's words, Architecture is the art that combines Utilitas, Firmitas, and Venustas or Human behaviours, technology, and Beauty (Koirala 2016). It has been recognized that Architecture is influenced by social, physical, cultural, environmental, economic, political, etc. But do we pay serious attention to balancing such factors for good design affecting Human comfort???

➤ *Definition of Afrocentrism*

Afrocentrism is a paradigm founded on the belief that to reach sanity, African people must reclaim their sense of agency (Asante 2020). The Afrocentric paradigm is a paradigm change offered as a structural response to black disorientation, decentering, and lack of agency (Asante 2009). According to Asante (1998), Afrocentrism examines ideas, concepts, events, personalities, and political and economic processes from the perspective of black people as subjects rather than objects. Afrocentricity has become a revolutionary notion (Asante 2009). One of Afrocentrism's core beliefs is that all interactions are built on centres, margins, and distances between them. When black people perceive themselves as centered and central in their history, they see themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than

outsiders on the outskirts of political and economic reality (Asante 2009). Humans have learned that this paradigm expresses all phenomena in the fundamental categories of space and time. Furthermore, it is recognized that relationships form and knowledge expands to the extent that we can grasp spatial and temporal concerns (Asante 2020). The dominance of African cultural patterns.

Afrocentrism, which means "African-centeredness," does not confront anyone or anything forcefully, but it is a steadfast attempt to correct the records. It's about situating Africans inside their historical context. It demands that African contributions to all aspects of civilization be acknowledged in world history (Chawane 2016).

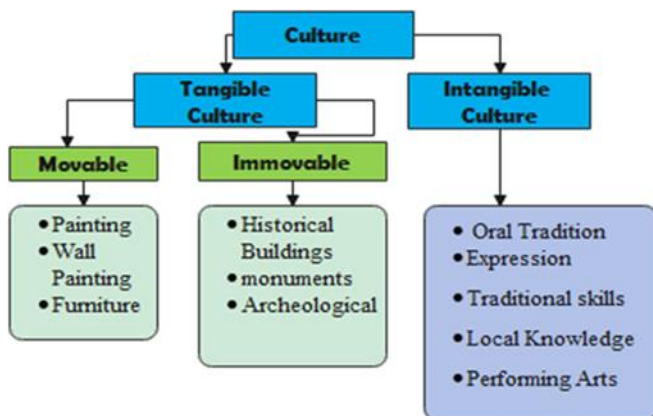


Fig 3:- Showing tangible and intangible culture.
Source: Author (2022)

➤ *Aspects of Elements that Influence Afrocentrism*

We can revive Afrocentrism through Afrocentric Architecture: Afrocentric Architecture is the Translation of culture, Aesthetics, spirituality, local Materials, and the development of Philosophies of African people into their built environment (Okwumabua 2020).

- **Culture:** Culture originates from the term cultivation, implying that one has "grown" through knowledge or experience (Falola 2008). To create synergy between the architect and the people, architects must embrace the people-centric approach while building for communities (Cobbinah, Asibey et al. 2020). Culture, therefore, should be understood as involving more than the values and needs of a group of people but the entire "way of life" of that society (Ochapa 2018).
- **Aesthetics:** As aesthetics concerns an appreciation of beauty, it is influenced by the subjective taste of an individual. Architecture is a process that involves planning, designing, creating, erecting, constructing, and executing various types of spaces that are functionally efficient, economical, and aesthetically pleasing (Erdoğan 2018).
- **Spirituality:** Spirituality in place" is a notion that seeks the qualities of the built environment that contribute to areas through their physical structure, allowing the user to find greater meaning in their surroundings. It is essential to understand and develop a link between architecture design and spiritual experience as these will later make its

user experience the importance, beauty, poetics, connection, atmosphere, and other ethereal, invisible aspects of a place (Benyon 2019).

- **Local Materials:** Since ancient times the first materials selected for construction were governed by local availability. Therefore, they had natural origins such as inorganic (e.g., stone) or organic (i.e., biological) based materials, for example, Earth, stone, wood, thatch, shells, and other natural materials are all examples of this (Okwumabua 2020).
- **Development Philosophy:** Architecture philosophy is a branch of art philosophy concerned with architecture's aesthetic value, semantics, and linkages to cultural evolution (Fisher 2015). Philosophies, in essence, impact artistic ideas, preconceptions about how the environment should be, and the architect's innate aesthetic inclinations and experience.

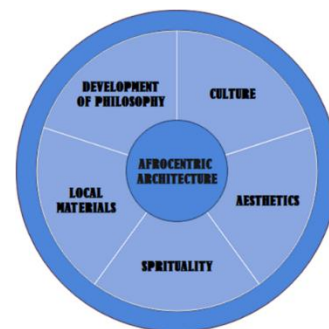


Fig 4:- Elements of Afrocentric Architecture.
Source: Author (2022)

III. CONCLUSION

As a result, understanding the environment in which our traditional architecture has evolved is crucial to gaining a thorough grasp of its history. This time, known as the "era of tradition," is unknowable to us and differs from (and before) the contemporary era. Without a thorough understanding of any era, we are unable to comprehend the architecture of that time, which is where Afrocentric Architecture enters the history of the region. Thinking and wondering about that era and its architecture today, means that we are not present in that period anymore. We are disconnected from that age and the theoretical bases of Afrocentrism. Thus, we cannot return to that era, nor can we have a traditional apprehension of it. Along with the termination of the traditional movement, our traditional architecture has also suffered from historical disconnection and has never recovered from it. Furthermore, we live in a period much different from the era of tradition. Since we are under the influence of modern thoughts, we cannot investigate the past from a traditional point of view. Any interpretation of the Afrocentric architecture will be made from a modern viewpoint. "Afrocentric architecture is like an absolute unknown for us, which emerges and manifests only in the light of modern thoughts"(Emami Koupaei, Nourouz Borazjani et al. 2018). Hence, the question is how to appreciate those (old) concepts using today's metaphysical language and modern thinking paradigm. The Nigerian government including developers and involved housing authorities should put all these into building

consideration and work together with home designers and the private sector in providing a better living environment to elevate the household quality of life in terms of comfort and health namely in urban areas. The study concluded that architects should put Afrocentric elements into consideration when designing, that will enable them to express the region's cultural identity these will influence the development of cultural identity in contemporary buildings. The use of Afrocentric cultural elements in architectural design will help in reviving lost culture heritage by utilizing elements from the traditional architecture of the region, thereby reducing the problem of debating culture. This paper recommends that when designing and building in any region, architects should try and express the cultural identity of the region to create a sense of belonging of the region to the building thereby making people appreciate the resident culture (Afrocentrism)

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